

California State Archives
State Government Oral History Program Oral History Interview with Miguel F.
Garcia II Executive Director. Californios for Fair Representation 1981-1982 February
21, 26, and May 14, 1990
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Restrictions on this Interview

None.

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Preface

On September 25, 1985, Governor George Deukmejian signed into law A.B. 2104 (Chapter 965 of the Statutes of 1985). This legislation established, under the administration of the California State Archives, a State Government Oral History Program "to provide through the use of oral history a continuing documentation of state policy development as reflected in California's legislative and executive history."

The following interview is one of a series of oral histories undertaken for inclusion in the state program. These interviews offer insights into the actual workings of both the legislative and executive processes and policy mechanisms. They also offer an increased understanding of the men and women who create legislation and implement state policy. Further, they provide an overview of issue development in California state government and of how both the legislative and executive branches of government deal with issues and problems facing the state.

Interviewees are chosen primarily on the basis of their contributions to and influence on the policy process of the state of California. They include members of the legislative and executive branches of the state government as well as legislative staff, advocates, members of the media, and other people who played significant roles in specific issue areas of major and continuing importance to California.

By authorizing the California State Archives to work cooperatively with oral history units at California colleges and universities to conduct interviews, this program is structured to take advantage of the resources and expertise in oral history available through California's several institutionally based programs.

Participating as cooperating institutions in the State Government Oral History Program are:

- Oral History Program
History Department
California State University, Fullerton
- Oral History Program
Center for California Studies
California State University, Sacramento
- Oral History Program
Claremont Graduate School
- Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley
- Oral History Program
University of California, Los Angeles

The establishment of the California State Archives State Government Oral History Program marks one of the most significant commitments made by any state toward the preservation and documentation of its governmental history. It supplements the often fragmentary historical written record by adding an organized primary source, enriching the historical information available on given topics and allowing for more thorough historical analysis. As such, the program, through the preservation and publication of interviews such as the one which follows, will be of lasting value to current and future generations of scholars, citizens and leaders.

John F. Burns
State Archivist

July 27, 1988 This interview is printed on acid-free paper.

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1. Transcript

1.1. Tape Number: I, Side One (February 21, 1990)

Vasquez

Mr. García, to start this interview, would you tell me something about your personal background, where you were born, when, and something about your family?

Garcia

My pleasure. I was born forty-seven years ago, January 11, 1943, in a small Mexican town in the state of Jalisco, Mexico. The town is called Zacoalco de Torres. And I don't think anybody knows about it unless you were born there. I went to school in Zacoalco until the age of ten. At that time the family moved to northern Mexico. My father [Miguel F. García] had been in local politics and at that time, if the ruling party was voted out of office, many times the ones who had been in office would also be eliminated-killed-and so it was made clear to my dad that we should leave that town for his own safety. We did.

Vasquez

What party was he involved with?

Garcia

He was with the PRI [Partido Revolucionario Institucional], but there were factions within the PRI. And the faction that he had been part of and had been in power for several years lost power. The faction coming in had been in power previously; they were known for their use of violence, and my father's life had been threatened. And after several months of his resisting, but coming close to being killed, we did leave our small town. Since both my parents had been to the United States on occasion, it was especially my mother's [Rosario Rodríguez García] urging [that we] move to the United States. And so we came in this direction. We stayed in Tijuana [Baja California], Mexico, for one year, immigrated through my mother already being an immigrated legal resident, and we settled in Los Angeles in June of 1954. I started school then. [I attended] various elementary schools, including Florence Avenue [Elementary School], Twenty-eighth Street [Elementary] School. There were one or two others. We moved quite a bit during that first year, but then we settled in the Florence area of Los Angeles where I went to school-junior high as well as high school-up until my last year.

Vasquez

What high school did you go to?

Garcia

I went to [John C.] Frémont High School for my first two years, beginning in the fall of 1958. And I attended through the spring of 1960. "Spring fever" came my way, and my first girlfriend [Rosalinda García]-I guess my first love-came along. We met in the summer of 1960. She was a student at Huntington Park High School. After that beautiful summer romance I followed her to Huntington Park High School, where I graduated from in 1961. Of course, when I went to this high school in 1960, it was 85 percent white, approximately 10 to 15 percent Hispanic, there were no blacks at that school at that time. I made an issue of that fact in my senior problems class in my twelfth grade. Presently, of course, it is about 90 percent Hispanic. [Laughter] So the situation has reversed.

Vasquez

You said you made an issue of it. How did you do that?

Garcia

In my senior problems class, I remember talking about that fact. My topic had something to do with discrimination in that community and in that school. And I was bringing to the attention of the students as well as the teacher that one proof of such discrimination was the fact that there was not one black person in that class and that, as many Latinos as there were in the surrounding community, that we also were in the minority as well.

Vasquez

Were you a good student?

Garcia

In high school I was a B+/A- student.

Vasquez

What were your favorite topics?

Garcia

My favorite topics were my favorite topics because I did well in them. Mathematics was my favorite topic. And at one point in high school I indicated to my father that maybe I wanted to be a mathematician. Of course, there was a very strong reaction on his part.

Vasquez

Why?

Garcia

My parents, especially my father, his goal for me was to be a medical doctor. And actually, of course, my father is a very strong individual, in terms of his mind, in terms of his authority. We come from a very traditional Mexican family background where the male parent is definitely the dominant figure. He is not disagreed with; everyone in the family is somewhat submissive and very respectful towards that individual. That was my father. And his goal for me was to be a doctor. I was so brainwashed by the pressure in the family-and my mother supported that as well-that for the longest time, up to three years in college, I was a premed major. Finally, I came across organic chemistry and I realized. I said, well, why are you putting yourself through this? You don't enjoy the studies. What is it that you want to be? And so faced with that dilemma, and not wanting to disappoint my dear family and my dear parents, I chose the second, what I at that time saw as a noble profession, and I went with law. [Laughter] Of course, one great benefit of that change in majors is that, whereas I found sciences difficult and required much study. . . . And in college I was a B- student, of course, with all those chemistries, and calculus, etc., etc. It was just not my natural abilities. When I changed over to prelaw, the very

first semester I was on the dean's honors list. So I went from a B- student to an A student at Cal[ifornia] State [University] Los Angeles.

Vasquez

You indicated this to a certain degree, but were you brought up in a traditional Mexican family? And what did that mean, apart from authority?

Garcia

Well, what it meant . . .

Vasquez

Culturally.

Garcia

Culturally, I think. . . . Well, let me approach it from a personal perspective, as well as maybe culturally. What it meant was that I was a late developer.

Because of the strong influence of the father, the self-sacrificing attitude of my dear mother, they were able to achieve a great deal of conformity from me as well as my other three sisters [Irma M., Rosario G., and Leticia García]. [There are] three sisters and I'm the only male in the family, and me being the youngest of the four. And so that my ability to think for myself came at a late point in life. The benefit of that has been that I was very focused, in terms of my goals and my ambition as far as my education was concerned. And with not having a great deal of money in terms of our family. . . . Because my father, being a self-educated man, having the facility to do a variety of things in our own native country. . . . When we came here he had the difficulty of language plus his attitude that, "We are here temporarily. We are going back to Mexico. There's no need for me to have to become fluent in English or continue an education in this country." And so that because of that language problem, he became a manual laborer. Our family income was limited. It required my mother to work as well. And so that had its limitations, in terms of the schools I went to, the benefits I had, how much exposure I had in terms of culturally in this country. For example, my very first date with a young lady I went to a restaurant, and the waitress says, "Soup or salad?" I first of all wasn't sure what she said. Then when I said, "What?" I then knew that she was saying "soup or salad." So I had the good sense to say "Salad." However, once I said, "Salad," then the next question was posed: "Blue Cheese, Thousand Island?" [Laughter] Coming from a culturally Mexican family, it was a choice, a first-time choice for me, being somewhat seventeen or eighteen. So my cultural background had that type of impact, which had to be overcome.

Vasquez

Were you encouraged to maintain your cultural roots, your Mexican roots, your Mexican heritage?

Garcia

Oh, definitely.

Vasquez

Were you encouraged to speak Spanish at home?

Garcia

Well, I was not only encouraged to speak Spanish; both my parents being only Spanish-speaking, I had no choice. And the benefit of that is that I am still fluent in Spanish. My business, my clients are approximately 60, 70 percent Spanish-speaking. So there is definitely a benefit to me because of that.

Vasquez

Now, you say you went to Cal State Los Angeles. Tell me about that.

Garcia

I started Cal State Los Angeles in the fall of 1961, having graduated from Huntington Park High School in the summer of '61. There were very few Latino students at Cal State L.A. And it was difficult for me to cope with that environment. And also, the studies that I was undertaking were difficult. And I had . . .

Vasquez

You were still premed at this point?

Garcia

Yes, I was still premed and I was taking chemistry, and calculus, physics, and all of those subjects. The combination of being isolated from friends that I had in high school, there being very few Latinos at that institution, plus the difficulty of work, I decided that I would go to East Los Angeles College, where I had friends, and I would at least eliminate the social isolation in the new environment, which was somewhat overwhelming for me. So whereas students go from high school to junior college to college, I went from high school to college to junior college and then back to college. [Laughter]

Vasquez

Who were some of your contemporaries at Cal State Los Angeles or at East Los Angeles College?

Garcia

Oh my goodness. Well, let me see, at Cal State Los Angeles, contemporaries, I cannot remember one. At least at that point. I do remember individuals after I came back. And there was some exposure or more public awareness of them just because of their involvement. And one of them . . .

Vasquez

Involvement with what?

Garcia

Their involvement with MEChA [Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán]. When I started East Los Angeles and when I started Cal State in '61, there were no such organizations, Hispanic, Latino-type organizations. So that the

visibility of the Latino was nonexistent. When I came back to Cal State L.A., it was about the time, I believe, when the MEChA organization was founded . . .

Vasquez

UMAS [United Mexican-American Students], at that time.

Garcia

UMAS, I think, preceded MEChA, you're very correct, and I think that Monte Pérez was the chairperson. Monte and I since that time, not because of my Cal State involvement, have become very good friends. He's a close personal friend. But I remember him from the time that I came back. At East Los Angeles College, of course, it was predominantly, or a good amount, maybe 50 percent, Latino. And so that the people I remember were my friends. [Salvador] Sal Mora, who I've unfortunately lost contact with, and that's. . . . I remember him the most. There were, of course, the fraternities, but I didn't join [them]. I married young. I married [Gloria J. Daniels García] at twenty-one years of age, ten days before my twenty-second birthday. My son [Michael F. García III], of course, is working in the front office. [Laughter] And so because I did marry young, I didn't have the facility nor. . . . I had the interest, but I didn't have the facility to be able to join those organizations. I was working part-time or full-time and going to school, I was very oriented in terms of getting a college degree, going to a professional school. It left very little time to do anything else other than work, study, and spend very little time with family.

Vasquez

Did you ever go into the service at this point?

Garcia

I did not go into the service, again because I did marry young. And at that time, I was married in 1965-in 1965, yes. If you were married, you were entitled to a deferment. I wanted the deferment because I didn't wish to interrupt my education. When being married was no longer a valid deferment, by that time my son, Michael Fernando García, had been born, and then that provided me with a deferment. And so there was no need for me to go into the service.

Vasquez

You went to law school. Where did you go to law school and why did you pick that law school?

Garcia

Well, I've already commented in terms of my change to the law studies, and I think it's been a wonderful selection. I'm very happy with what I do for a living. It provides me an opportunity to be creative, it provides me with a good living, it has provided me with opportunities to even make a bit of a mark in history. So I'm very happy with the choice.I was going to Cal State L.A. I didn't know anybody in the legal profession. My family also didn't know anybody in the legal profession. I had no awareness of what law schools there were in the local

community. And I also had some misgivings, in terms of my being able to enter law school. Because remember, there was a grade-point average that had to be considered when I was a premed major. So that my overall grade-point average was maybe a B or a B-. And so that I was concerned about my ability to be able to get into law school. And I was going to apply to a nonaccredited law school, which was Southwestern University School of Law. At that time I met an individual who helped me-without knowing it-and he was a real estate man. He even offered me a position with his real estate company. And as I look back I think that it was an opportunity that I should have taken advantage of.

Financially, I would be in a very comfortable position by now, I'm sure!

[Laughter] But he had his own real estate agency in the city of Pico Rivera.

Vasquez

What was his name?

Garcia

[Ben] Domínguez, maybe. I'm going to have to check. It's been such a long time. But he was a very personable fellow, and I think that we got along well. . . I don't think, I know we got along well. But, you know, he liked me. And he suggested-he called me Mike-he says, "Mike, I know that you're applying for law school. Why don't you have lunch with my attorney? He could probably give you a letter of recommendation. A lunch with him may give you some help in some way." That lunch-and the attorney's name was Patterson-turned out to be a very significant lunch for me. Because I was going to apply to Southwestern, an unaccredited law school. The baby bar comes along one year afterwards. Possibly the caliber of the education would not have been the same. Meeting with Mr. Patterson, he suggested, "Why don't you apply at Loyola Law School?" I was going to apply at Southwestern because they had an evening program. And I had to go to an evening program in order to be able to work during the day. He informed me that Loyola Marymount University's school of law also had an evening program and that they were an accredited law school. He explained to me the difference between Southwestern and Loyola. I applied to Loyola. In the meantime, I had taken the law school entrance examination. I did well in that examination. My score was in the 86th percentile. So that the results of that examination, combined with my grades in the prelaw part of my education, helped me to be admitted to Loyola [University] Law School. I think that was a significant event in my life. Because it meant that I could concentrate on studying law versus studying how to pass the bar examination, which is what law students have to do at unaccredited institutions. Of course, at Loyola I was terrified and horrified. I started in 1967, born in '43, I was twenty-four years of age. Getting back to in terms of my own upbringing being a late developer, at Loyola I was one Mexican kid out of 250 first-year students. There were three women, there were

no blacks. Law schools, as you probably remember from that movie *The Paper Chase*, it's an intimidating environment anyway. [Laughter] So it was a horrible, horrible experience for me. But I was so motivated to become an attorney, to get that professional degree, that I endured the four years at that institution, always feeling insecure, always feeling isolated. Because there weren't any other Hispanics. And my own personal development was not at the point where I could flow and move into circles of Anglos or circles within the law-school environment. Plus again, I was a full-time worker, I had a child, I had a wife. I had no time to become involved in law-school activities. And all I could do was to take myself over to Loyola, be at class, go over to the library, sometimes fall asleep in those little cubicles. And so most of the gray hairs that you see on my head developed during the law-school years. [Laughter]

Vasquez

Tell me, when you were growing up, who was the person that was most influential in your political development? Or your social ideas, if I may use that term?

Garcia

Without any question, it was my own father as I was growing up and as I was a young person. My father is self-educated, but he comes from a family of educators. My grandfather [Pedro García] as well as my grandmother [Margarita Dávila de García] were both directors. That's what they are called in Mexico. Here they call them school principals; over there they are directors of a school. My grandfather was still teaching and he was a director of a school up to the time that he died at eighty-seven. So was my grandmother. My father began teaching at the age, I believe, of seventeen without having a formal education. But he got his education at home. My father is a very intelligent man. I think he comes as close to [having] a photographic memory as [anyone] I've known. Very different from my own memory. My own mind, as I analyze it, is more like my mother's intelligence. She is better at reasoning, many times, than my own father. But my father's sense of history and just his pool of general knowledge is amazing. And he is a liberal to a progressive, in terms of his political thinking. And so that he's always . . .

Vasquez

Give me an example of what that might mean, a "liberal to a progressive."

Garcia

Well, his attitude in terms of the invasions by the United States of Mexico, his attitude in terms of United States policies towards Latin America, is very much that they're always carrying the big stick and not [allowing] independence and autonomy, recognizing the sovereignty of those nations. In terms of blacks in the United States or blacks in the world, he is very much in favor of equal rights for oppressed people. He made those types of viewpoints known to us, of

course, as we were growing up. He always has had very strong opinions on many subjects. He can discuss [anything] from science to politics to education to history. He's got a great memory, and he reads. He reads probably three, four, five books a week. And so he's been. . . . He was very influential and still is.

Vasquez

Tell me, when was what you consider your introduction to politics?

Garcia

I think that my awareness, in terms of my being part of an oppressed group of people in this country, really started in 1968. And that is a little bit different than what you've asked me, in terms of my political awareness. My political awareness preceded that. Because as I was going to Cal State Los Angeles I had some inclinations of running for political office. I saw so few individuals from my own group in Cal State Los Angeles. As I read the newspapers and I saw that there was a complete void in terms of Hispanics being represented in the professions and politics, etc., etc. And there were one or two or three individuals that would stand out that were running for political office.

Vasquez

Who stood out, if you can remember?

Garcia

[Richard] Calderón had run for political office; [Assemblyman] Alex [P.] García was already in office, I believe . . .

Vasquez

Richard Calderón you're talking about, right?

Garcia

Richard Calderón, [Assemblyman Philip L.] Phil Soto was an assemblyperson, [Congressman Edward R.] Ed Roybal. You could count them on the fingers of one hand. Because of that void, I thought that I myself could fill part of that void. I had some inclinations towards running for political office at some point. My real awareness about politics in our modern society came as I was working as a social worker at the Belvedere office [of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services] here in East Los Angeles. When I graduated from Cal State L.A. in the spring of 1967, once I had already obtained my degree and I was looking for some type of work that I could do while I was going to law school, I decided upon social work. It was somewhat in tune with my own philosophical and social outlook. And it would give me an opportunity to serve in some way, in terms of helping others. And so I became a social worker. I was assigned first to the El Monte office. A very short time thereafter I went to West Covina. It was a bit far to law school. Plus again, I was in a mostly white environment. I had a need to be much more, in terms of people, [with] my own culture. I requested a transfer. I was assigned to the

Belvedere office. In March of 1968, after I had been at Belvedere some six months or so, the [East Los Angeles high school] student walk-outs occurred. I read it in the newspaper: "Ten Thousand Latino/Chicano Students Walk Out!" That just really brought such an awareness to me. I began to think more about our situation in this country. Not so much placing the responsibility for a lack of an education on the individual, but placing some of that responsibility on the institutions in society as a whole. Because here were ten thousand students that were saying, "This education stinks!" With that event, that awareness was also felt by other Latinos/Hispanics, within the [California] Department of Public Social Services [DPSS]. And one individual in particular-his last name is [Ramón] Otero, a Puerto Rican fellow, very vocal. . . . He was a friend. We began to discuss the formation of a group within the DPSS for the purpose of bringing-not bringing, but for the purpose of causing change, in terms of Latino administrators. Because we felt at that time that that would be a positive change, in terms of improving the quality of services to our clientele, which for the most part were Latinos themselves. And soon thereafter, we formed the group that we called SALUD-Social Action Latinos for Unity Development-a group that became quite effective. And one of the reasons why . . .

Vasquez

Effective in what way?

Garcia

Effective in causing change, effective in causing awareness on the part of the social workers towards the clients that they were serving, and even improving the level of services to a small degree towards our clients. Part of the reason we became effective is-I don't remember the specifics-but somehow we joined forces with the Welfare Rights Organization, which at that time was headed by Alicia Escalante, a very articulate lady who didn't have any reservation about coming into the director's office and literally raising hell, and who . . .

Vasquez

That's interesting, because in a way they were your counterparts, weren't they? This organization was really there to make sure that you and all the other social workers and people involved in DPSS took care of its clients.

Garcia

That's true. Of course, we were very much in unity with them because our group's positions and goals were to give the best services we could to the persons who received the services. And so Alicia Escalante and the Welfare Rights Organization, they were just amazed and so pleased [Laughter] that we had come to be. And the coalition of the welfare recipients, our clients, the recipients of benefits would be a better term. And the social workers coming together as a group was a powerful coalition. And so we formed that group. And I forgot your original question. [Laughter]

Vasquez

Well, you were talking about your involvement in politics . . .

Garcia

Yes, um-hmm.

Vasquez

. . . and how the catalyst that got you involved in your advocating was the walk-outs of the ten or fifteen thousand Chicano schoolchildren from junior high and high schools.

Garcia

That's very true. Now, of course, it was 1968, and it was the beginning, the visible beginning, of what we would call the Chicano movement here in Los Angeles. There had already been indications of that movement in other parts of the Southwest. I myself had been very little aware of those movements. But with the walk-outs it hit me right in the face. That awareness encouraged myself and others to form that social workers group. And with the formation of the social workers group and the joining or coalescing with WRO-Welfare Rights Organization- that exposed me to the leadership, the active individuals within the Latino/Chicano community. And so that it is . . .

Vasquez

Like who?

Garcia

Well, Joe Razo, Raúl Ruiz. Antonio [H.] Rodríguez I knew from law school. . . . No, I didn't know Antonio yet. I did not. My God, who else did I meet? Actually, at that time, I was beginning to meet them. It was within our own group that we were doing most of the work within that department. But to give you an example of the kind of work we did at the beginning, we felt that it would be of benefit to bring a greater awareness and education to the social workers about Mexican/Latino culture. And we developed a program of information. We brought speakers to the department to speak about Latino culture. [Interruption] In respect to the informational sessions that we developed with the approval of the administration for DPSS, we brought in individuals such as, for example, Philip Montes, who at that time was the director for the United States Commission on Civil Rights. And he was a riot as well as very informative. We brought in individuals such as Raúl Ruiz, so he could hit the social workers over the head about what a bad job they were doing. We brought in Alicia Escalante to give the perspective from the clients' point of view. That's part of what we did. We also encouraged and actually pressured the administration of DPSS to develop ways by which there would be Latino administrators [in] greater numbers and supervisors than there were in 1968. And it took some pressure. There was not a turnaround in attitude until one evening from about 8:00 P.M. to about 10:30 or so. There were about two to

three hundred people that went to the home of the administrator for the department of social services, Mr. [Ellis P.] Murphy. And we demonstrated in front of his home in the city of Whittier. I happen to live in Whittier now, [Laughter] and it is a very easy-going, quiet community. And he was impressed. The lights in his home went on, they started playing the piano. The family, of course, was somewhat concerned because there were so many Mexicans demonstrating in front of their house. The good part of it is that Mr. Murphy became much more cooperative after that. And so there were some changes made from that. From my involvement in SALUD, I became acquainted with other individuals. I was going to law school at that time too. But Joe Razo from *La Raza* [magazine], Raúl Ruiz, Antonio Rodríguez. . . . And so that it was a natural evolution. And of course, at that time there would be two, three demonstrations a day. And I began to participate in a lot of those demonstrations. And I did become, I guess you would say, a rather militant individual in my outlook and about wanting to cause some changes. And so that was really my political awakening.

Vasquez

What was your interest or your involvement, if any, around the Vietnam War?

Garcia

Only in terms of demonstrations, and joining the [National] Chicano Moratorium in August of 1970, participating in antiwar movement demonstrations. I did not become personally involved in that because, even though there was a disproportionate amount of Latinos/Chicanos dying in the battlefields, I felt that our struggle, for me, was more on a local level. And for that reason I somewhat concentrated on that, such as SALUD within DPSS. Plus of course, up until the time I graduated from law school, you know, I had two jobs, I had law school, I still had a family, so I had very little time.

Vasquez

You were involved in something called Católicos por la Raza, is that correct?

Garcia

Yes.

Vasquez

Tell me about the origins of that.

Garcia

Well, the origins of that was at Loyola Law School. And an individual who's a good personal friend of mine whose name is Richard [V.] Cruz. And as I was going to law school there was a Jewish fellow, Henry Deich, who would tell me, "Do you know that there's another Mexican [here]? He's going to classes in the daytime." And he would tell Richard the same thing: "Do you know that there's another Mexican who's in the evening school? [Laughter] You guys should meet each other." Well, we finally did. I think that I was in my third or

second year towards the end of law school when. And one of my classes in the evening, here comes this skinny guy wearing a cowboy hat, and it was Richard Cruz. We became good friends. And Richard, along with other law students at USC [University of Southern California]. . . . His last name was Aragón, but I can't remember the first name. Robert Aragón, I believe it was; Antonio Rodríguez; Ricardo Muñoz from UCLA; [Guadalupe] Lupe Martínez; Ralph Ochoa from UCLA. They were students from three law schools that were coming together to form the Chicano Law Students Association. I didn't know about that association until it was already three to six months of age. Richard Cruz was already part of it, and he exposed me to it. And very soon after meeting Richard, and through his leadership, we placed a dozen or so demands upon the administration of Loyola. The main focus of [those demands] was that they should provide scholarships, that they even should have an admissions policy that was more conducive for Hispanics/Latinos being able to attend their prestigious law school. And of course, we had to follow those demands with demonstrations, with visits to the administrative offices at Loyola Marymount University. And so, again, I've lost my trend.

Vasquez

You were talking about your involvement with Católicos por la Raza.

Garcia

Católicos por la Raza, yes. Yes, yes, yes. Yes. And so, of course, I became involved in Chicano Law Students. Richard Cruz was brought up as a very devout Catholic. And he, more than any of the other students at the law schools, had a burning desire to make the Catholic church more responsive to the Latino community, an issue that had been discussed previously. But because Richard had such fervor and good leadership qualities and was an articulate law student and a good organizer as well, he was able to have the coalition of Chicano Law Students organizations take that on as one of our issues. And the organization of Católicos por la Raza was mainly carried out at Loyola University.

Vasquez

At the law school or at Loyola Marymount?

Garcia

No, at the law school. At the law school. And one of our first activities was to go over to the rectory, I believe it's called, where Archbishop [James Francis] McIntyre resided. We went there to personally state our position and displeasure with the lack of activism on the part of the Catholic church, even though a majority of its membership was Latino. Of course, we were very close . . .

Vasquez

It was already beginning to be predominantly Latino at the time, right?

Garcia

Well, it seemed to me that it was predominantly Latino. Maybe because the churches I went to were always mostly brown. [Laughter] But it was an interesting experience because, of course, they did not want to grant us an audience. We were some, maybe twenty-five in number. They would only see a limited number of individuals. And so that it was Richard Cruz, Joe. . . . No, excuse me. Also with us was Raúl Ruíz and a photographer for *La Raza* magazine whose name escapes me right now.

Vasquez

Tomás?

Garcia

It was a woman photographer [Patricia Bojorguez]. And she married Gilbert López. I can't remember her name at this point. The three were allowed to go in to see Archbishop McIntyre. They came out very soon thereafter, and they were dissatisfied with the audience that had been granted. And they refused-the bishop and his assistants . . .

Vasquez

What were the demands, do you know specifically? Do you remember?

Garcia

So much of a budget, in terms of Latino needs. Again, in terms of priests, I think that the numbers were not proportionate in terms of the membership of the church.

Vasquez

They still aren't, by the way.

Garcia

They still are not. Of course, a budget. In terms of housing, we had done some research and found that the Catholic church was one of the major landowners in Los Angeles County. We had detailed sheets with all the property owned by the church. We wanted them to use some of this wealth for the benefit of our community. Plus, again, for the church, because Loyola University was a Catholic institution, to address itself to the educational needs of Latinos/Chicanos. The audience would not be granted for the entire group to go see Bishop McIntyre. So at one point we pushed ourselves in. The name of the person [who] shall go unnamed threw a body block at one of the priests who was in the way. We did make it all the way in to see Bishop McIntyre, who was visibly shaken and very upset and saying, "Call the police! Call the police! Call the police!" But such tactics, I believe, were necessary at that time. And they did produce some results. After our efforts to obtain different admission policies or more responsive admission policies, it did come to be. And the next year, five Mexican students were admitted under the program.

Vasquez

You think there was a direct relationship between your demonstrations and that?

Garcia

Oh, no question. No question that there was a relationship. The demonstration itself was not sufficient. We had to do more. We had to have press conferences, we had to pass leaflets, we had to be a thorn in their side. But it did produce results. And of course, also, to give credit where credit is due, the president of Loyola University, President [Donald P.] Merrifield, he was very responsive. We thought that we were going to have an uphill struggle of months' duration. But when we went to see President Merrifield. . . . He of course had been made aware of our demands. We had communicated with him, and it was representatives from all three law schools who were there to see him and talk to him. But he agreed pretty much at the beginning of our meeting that our position had merit and that he did want to be responsive to it. He committed himself to a certain number of incoming law-student positions being made available to students from the Latino/Chicano community.

Vasquez

Were you involved at all in any of the demonstrations and/or arrests that took place at Saint Basil's cathedral?

Garcia

I was there Christmas Eve, I was there Christmas Eve. Plus other demonstrations that we had.

Vasquez

What were the objectives of those demonstrations? What was that about?

Garcia

Well, it was to put pressure . . .

Vasquez

This is after the meeting with McIntyre?

Garcia

It was after the meeting with McIntyre. And I believe. . . . I'm not sure whether it was before the meeting with Merrifield or not. It would be interesting to know that. I can't remember. Because definitely that demonstration Christmas Eve received national attention. A police alert was declared in the Wilshire District, in an affluent, white, Jewish community that literally was visited by Chicanos out of the area who were peacefully demonstrating. And it was not until force was used upon demonstrators that. . . . There might have been some force used by demonstrators, but it was mostly the other way around. The people who were injured that day were persons who were part of the demonstration, not the other way. I did participate. I myself was not arrested. However, there were some consequences to my participation. After I passed the bar examination. . . . I graduated in June of 1971. I took the bar

examination in July and I passed it in August, excuse me. I received notice of that in December. And my notice said, "Congratulations. We are pleased to inform you that you have been successful in the August 1971 bar examination." I almost remember that letter word for word, because my mouth dropped. But in the next paragraph it said, "However, we are not able to certify you for admission at this time." I said, well what does this mean? So I called my good friend or he called me, and he had received the same letter. That was Richard Cruz, who was arrested at that same Basil's Christmas Eve demonstration, along with twenty other people. I think the total number of arrests were twenty-one. And so I was there, I was not arrested. However, I had to go through a formal. . . . Excuse me, an informal hearing process. And my admission was delayed, I believe, by somewhere around five or six months. But at the informal hearing with Mr. McCloskey, he showed me a photograph. First, they asked me certain questions, and then he showed me this photograph of me with a bandage on my nose.

1.2. Tape Number: I, Side Two (February 21, 1990)

Garcia

There was a bandage on my nose. And the inference was, "You must have been involved in the violence, because your nose is all bandaged up." Of course, I never was hit on my nose, and I never had a bandage on my nose. And so I looked at this photograph rather carefully, and I said, "Mr. McCloskey, I don't know if you have noticed this, but take a look closely at this bandage. The bandage, part of it goes right into my nostril. And the nostril, the remainder, is visible. When have you ever seen a bandage this way? This photograph has been doctored." And in fact, it was. To this day, I think I know who it was. It was the Criminal Conspiracy Section [Los Angeles Police Department]: [Agents] Castruita, Ceballos, and Armas. Interesting. Because in some respects, I had an opportunity to pay them back in a small way. Because years later I defended my good friend, Carlos Montes. And on the stand were Armas, Ceballos, Castruita. And so, of course, I tend to be an aggressive cross-examiner anyway. And so it was interesting because in the cross-examination, Armas came up with the fact that, "Oh, yes, I do have some documents. And here they are." "Well, we've asked for discovery, Mr. Armas. And where were these documents when we made that motion for discovery?" He said, "Well, we didn't have them at the office. And it was later that I was looking in my home, and they were in my closet." So I did give them a bad time. And they gave me a bad time. Fortunately, they were not successful in preventing me from being admitted to practice law. Because after I pointed out the condition of that bandage to Secretary McCloskey, a decision was made shortly thereafter that I

would be certified to be admitted to practice law. I had, of course, also a very good counsel. It was Mr. Ben Margolis, who provided me with his services free of charge. He thought that since I had a totally clean record-I had had, excuse me, one arrest, but it was dismissed; no convictions-that my case should be taken directly to the California Supreme Court California to show an abuse of process in this case. The remainder of his firm thought that we should exhaust administrative remedies, and in the exhaustion of that administrative remedies I was certified to practice law. But I was involved in that demonstration. And it was, of course, quite a dramatic, emotional time. It was very impactful.

Vasquez

What did you learn from your participation in those kinds of demonstrations or movement activities as a practitioner of the law?

Garcia

It's given me a flavor in my practice of the law. And it definitely influenced me in my first ten years of practice. I am in my seventeenth year. Being at the demonstrations exposed me directly to the attitude and comportment of law enforcement with people who are exercising their First Amendment rights to protest and demonstrate. We would be demonstrating and they'd be taking our photographs. I was one of the plaintiffs in a lawsuit that was settled out of court where the photographs were returned because we argued, our attorneys argued-Ralph [M.] Segura and the Western Center for Law and Poverty-that it was a violation of our First Amendment rights and had a chilling effect upon those rights for photographs to be taken by law enforcement officers while people are demonstrating. Very much a correct position. But I was exposed not only to the taking of photographs but to people getting hit and getting beat up. I myself was chased many times. Fortunately, I was never beat up. I came close to it, [Laughter] but I was never beat up. But that exposure did influence my thinking and it influenced my practice. After my informal hearing with Mr. McCloskey, I believe that at that time I was already working with the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Educational Fund [MALDEF]. I couldn't practice, but I could do everything short of going to court. After I was admitted on March 2, 1972, the director of that organization-a wonderful man by the name of [Joseph] Joe Ortega-I remember distinctly as I was going to, I believe, lunch, he was coming into the building-we were on Fourth [Street] and Spring [Street]-and he told me, "Miguel, I have a case for you. When you get back, see me about it." He assigned to me the case of a young man by the name of Fernando Andujo. I remember it to this date. He was a young man in the company of two young ladies who had been stopped by the Highland Park/Los Angeles Police Department officers. And he had been arrested and he had been somewhat manhandled; he had a bruise or two on his body, including his neck. And so in representing Fernando Andujo (I had to get back to your question),

my background, in terms of believing that this would happen versus other lawyers who maybe wouldn't believe it or wouldn't care. . . . I also by that time knew other activists in the profession, such as Neil Herring, Antonio Rodríguez. They made me aware of a motion for discovery that could be made to obtain complaints by citizens against law enforcement officers. I said, "Great!" I made my motion, which was just to put my name on it, change the name of the defendants, and dates were different, etc., etc.; everything else was the same. And then, when it came time to present my motion to the judge, the judge said, "Denied." And I thought that definitely it made sense that these types of records would go to the issue of whether or not this officer had a propensity to use violence. I believed in the issue sufficiently, and I was getting paid by MALDEF, so I had the time. I said, "Well, I want to challenge this ruling by this judge."

Vasquez

Who was the judge, do you remember?

Garcia

The judge was a short judge—that he didn't even sit down; he would stand up in court—in the old Division 20. This was 1972. And I argued with that judge. Because my first request was, "Your Honor, I disagree respectfully with the court's ruling and would request a thirty-day continuance so that I can file a petition for a writ of mandate." "Denied." "Your Honor, it is an issue that has importance. Would the court grant me a twenty-day continuance?" "Denied." "Ten-day?" "Denied." He granted me a continuance until Monday morning, and this was Friday. [Laughter] So you know what I did that weekend, I worked. And I prepared my first petition for a writ of mandate and/or prohibition. I'd never done one. But there were books, and the more that I got into it, the more that I believed in the issue. I also realized that the language of the motion maybe was not what it should be. And that instead of having requested records for "assaultive behavior," the proper request would have been records for "excessive use of force." It would have been more specific. There's a principle of law that requires specificity. But I walked it through Monday morning to the appellate department of the superior court, and they granted me a stay. Which meant that I didn't have to go to trial on this case. And that the judge in Division 20 who wouldn't give me the continuance now did have to because a judge in a higher level of authority than him had agreed with me to the extent that he delayed the trial. I was expecting that opinion with much expectation because, in terms of being an attorney, one of the achievements that we have at some point in our career is to be able to have some principle of law established as a result of your work. And I saw that opportunity for me with this issue as I continued to do the research in the weeks and months that followed. I became convinced that I was probably going to be

denied relief, but I was hoping that they would make a decision on the case. True enough, they denied the writ because they felt that the request was overly broad and lacking in specificity. But in what is called dicta-they didn't have to really say it, but they said it anyway-they did make the statement that they felt that this information was relevant in material and should be discoverable under a properly presented request. This case of Fernando Andujo defined for me my work over the next two to three years. Because I made it a point of my legal work to establish this point. And I began to concentrate on representing individuals from our community. In fact, that's all I did-just represent individuals who had been beat up by police. And every time I had a case I would make this motion with new, good language. Sometimes judges would grant me the information. And of course, I was not the only attorney making these motions. When the judge would grant the information, the results would be that the law enforcement agency would refuse to give up the information, and the case would be dismissed. So either way it was a good result. In fact, a better result. . . . Because you could eliminate the case altogether. The man or woman would go back home or back to work through this motion.

Vasquez

But did you take it further to try and get redress for abusive behavior?

Garcia

Sometimes I would be denied. And when I was denied I petitioned the court of appeal, I petitioned the California Supreme Court. And over the next two years, the best I could do was that Justice [Raymond E.] Peters and Justice [Stanley] Mosk voted to grant me a hearing in one case. In another case I had a vote of Justice Mosk, I believe. [From] the court of appeal, I would always get postcards saying, "Petition denied." "Petition for hearing denied." However, some time in the late part of '72, representing an individual by the name of César Echeverría, I was able to convince the superior court judge, Gordon Ringer, to order the prosecution to obtain those records for me. The prosecution said, "Well, I don't know why I have to do it. He should do it himself." So the judge indicated for me to go ahead and serve a subpoena and that he would order the sheriff's department to give me those records. The sheriff's department came in, refused to give those records, and instead petitioned the court of appeal to hear the matter. When the sheriff for Los Angeles County, Peter [J.] Pitchess, petitions the court of appeal, the court of appeal listens. They granted a hearing. They heard the case, the arguments, and they made a decision. Which I was not in agreement with, because it would give us very little.

Vasquez

What was that decision?

Garcia

The decision was that the information sought, the records of complaints for abuse of those citizens, excessive use of force, were not sufficiently relevant to be discoverable when the complaint had been unsustained. They would only be discoverable when the complaint had been sustained. I had done enough research to know that when a complaint comes from within the police department, it has a good probability of being sustained. But when a complaint comes from outside of the department, a member of the public, they are sustained very infrequently. So in reality, the decision of the court of appeal would mean that we would hardly ever get the information. I worked like hell again, and I prepared my petition for a hearing to the supreme court.

Vasquez

The state supreme court?

Garcia

Yes. And as I was working in those lonely offices of MALDEF, I was having real reservations about even doing it. Because at that time, the point of view on the part of attorneys and on the part of political activists was, "It's not really worthwhile to practice law, or to attempt to obtain redress from these institutions. It is a system that is so abusive and so irrelevant." That, "Instead of practicing law we should be out in the streets demonstrating still." Some of my good friends whose names I've mentioned were out in the streets instead of practicing law. [Laughter] But I was concentrating on this issue. I petitioned the court, the supreme court, and they granted me a hearing. Later, they issued an opinion 7-0, unanimous, that the information was discoverable. The case became known as the "Pitchess motion." There are maybe fifteen, twenty motions in the criminal law that are used everyday. The Pitchess motion is one of them. Daily, there's thousands of such motions done in California. And so I'm very . . .

Vasquez

Summarize again what that Pitchess motion does. What does it give the citizen?

Garcia

It gives the citizen information of complaints by other citizens against particular Officer X, that on other occasions this particular officer has been, at least through allegations of the citizen, used excessive force. It would give me, the defense attorney, the name of those individuals so that I could speak with them and even bring them in as witnesses defending my client whose defense is: "I didn't use any force. The force was used upon me! It is the police officer who has a tendency for violence and use of force. I'm the one that has the injuries." By the way, that's the way it usually was. César Echeverría, his wife called me, crying, because he was in intensive care at General Hospital. And yet he had four felony charges of having assaulted and battered four sheriff's deputies. And so it didn't make sense to me. So this is what it gave a criminal

defendant, that information. Of course, ironic that the *Pitchess* decision. . . . The case came to be known as *Pitchess*-because remember, it was the sheriff Peter Pitchess the petitioner-versus the *Superior Court of Los Angeles County*, César Echeverría real party in interest. [Note: *Pitchess v. Superior Court*, 522 p. 2d 305.] And I'll get back to why that has made an impression on me. It gave that individual an opportunity to have a meaningful defense. Otherwise, it would be the word of that accused versus the word of the police officer. Okay, but it became known as *Pitchess*. Through my work in discovery, then, and with defending so many people charged with battery upon a peace officer, I felt that the statute-Penal Code Section 243-was being unequally and selectively and discriminatorily enforced. Because I never saw a police officer prosecuted for beating up the citizen. It was always the citizen for getting beat up by the cop. And I had had a little bit of exposure through the work of my good friend, who passed away on May 2, 1988, Ralph Segura. He had brought a motion to dismiss the prosecution of battery upon a peace officer on the grounds of a discriminatory or unequal enforcement of the penal laws. And it stuck with me. And after my decision in *Pitchess*, I began to raise the issue of dismissing prosecutions, because police officers were not prosecuted, only citizens: unequal enforcement, it should be dismissed. And I obtained dismissals in that way. At one point Judge [Patricia] Hoffstetter in the Whittier Municipal Court even ordered District Attorney [Joseph] Bush to come in and give testimony on that question. Of course, he refused. But the prosecution was dismissed. I'm mentioning it because that involvement with those issues gave me an opportunity later to raise the issue of discriminatory enforcement of the penal laws in a much more palatable, acceptable situation to the courts. I was never able to establish the defense of discriminatory enforcement in that situation because another opportunity came up. I now was asked to assist in the defense of some farmworkers in 1974 up in Bakersfield. There were quite a [few] demonstrations. The [United Farm Workers] Union had organized itself, was recognized by some growers, not recognized by others, and there was a struggle for its [organizational] life. And the sheriffs in Bakersfield had arrested eight farmworkers who had been demonstrating. Because of my involvement with progressive, liberal attorneys, they knew of my work in discovery through *Pitchess*, and they had heard that I was also raising the defense of discriminatory enforcement. So they asked me to work with them. And we raised that issue through a motion for discovery. We were very fortunate that the supreme court did grant us a hearing and did make a ruling which has a greater impact, really, than *Pitchess*, because it goes to the very foundation of fairness and the way in which law must be enforced: that it must be equal. It cannot be selective based on an improper classification or it cannot be discriminatory. So that it is now known as the Murgía

motion. [Note: *Murgía v. Municipal Court*, 540 P. 2d 44.] With my experience with *Pitchess*, I was disappointed that I called it more my motion, but it's called the Pitchess motion. [Laughter] So that next time I thought I had an opportunity to make some law, I had eight names to choose from. I had Goff and I had Martínez and I had whatever else. I chose Murgía because I said, "Well, people who will have to say Murgía are going to remember it." And it is now called and it is known as the Murgía motion. Most people say "Mor-jee-a." [Laughter] So those, I think, are some of my biggest accomplishments in the law.

Vasquez

Before we move on, have any of the recent decisions here in California having to do, I think specifically, with the right of privacy of police officers undermined any of this law? Any of this kind of redress that the citizen has against police forces or police officers that use excessive force?

Garcia

Well, it's an interesting question, and it's an interesting answer, because I think that more than the decisions of the court undermining my work in *Pitchess* was the response of the law enforcement agencies themselves. Once the supreme court decided *Pitchess v. Superior Court*, César Echeverría real party in interest, May 1973, police agencies had to follow the law and had to make this information available. And it had its impact. They had to develop discovery units, they had to assign law enforcement officers specifically to come to court and respond to these motions. Because literally thousands of these motions were being made every day once word got out that this was a case on the books. The police agencies chose not to deal with that. And instead, en masse-maybe, I believe, it was 1975-the Los Angeles Police Department alone destroyed twenty-five years of these records, five and a half million pages. And it was, I believe, three tons of the very documents that the decision in *Pitchess* said were discoverable. In addition, the law enforcement lobby went to the legislature, had laws passed so that now it is a bit more difficult to obtain this information. They changed their record-keeping procedures. So that now, instead of keeping verbatim interviews of the complainants and the witnesses, they keep 5 × 7 cards with the names of those individuals and the decision that is made after all the interviews are done. The Los Angeles Police Department was not the only department who went ahead and illegally destroyed these documents. San Jose, San Francisco, so many. When I argued *Pitchess*-and I keep calling it *Pitchess* now because that is the name of it that has been accepted and adopted-in that case there were briefs filed, as friend of the court briefs against my position, by San Francisco, by San Jose. Altogether there was about ten major entities that sided with the sheriff for Los Angeles County. For me, it was three professors-two from UCLA [Andrew

H. Fischer and Leon Letwin] and one from USC [Richard Wasserstrom]- and the public defender's office. But we were successful.

Vasquez

What is it that law enforcement fears by this kind of discovery?

Garcia

Your question was in terms of right of privacy, and this is one of their fears, that too much is going to known about this officer. That's one of them. Another one is criminal defendants are going to be able to successfully defend themselves. And once a criminal defendant successfully defends himself or herself against unfounded charges, then they are better able to file an affirmative law suit for damages, for the damages of the beating that they've suffered. So it has to do with money and it has to do with privacy.

1.3. Tape Number: II, Side One (February 26, 1990)

Vasquez

Mr. García, let's get into reapportionment. When did you first get interested in political reapportionment in California?

Garcia

It was for the 1970 reapportionment. Sometime before the actual process began, there was a series of meetings amongst some very distinguished Latino/Hispanic leadership, and I am not including myself in that description. I include Frank Muñoz. I include José Castoreña. I included. . . . My God, I'll have to do some recollection of so many people that were represented, persons who had been presidents of [American] GI Forum, LULAC [League of United Latin-American Citizens], individuals who had been involved in political issues of the Latino community for twenty, twenty-five years before we were having that meeting. Frank Muñoz definitely [was] in the leadership of that caliber. And I had had some awareness, in fact even before 1970, because I was the chairperson of the political committee for the Congress of Mexican-American Unity. And in developing the platform for the congress, definitely one of the issues that we addressed and considered was reapportionment as it affected political power of Latinos/Chicanos/Mexicanos. And that must have been. . . .

Vasquez

'Sixty-nine?

Garcia

'Sixty-eight, '69.

Vasquez

Before we move into reapportionment, into the seventies, let's talk a little bit about the Congress of Mexican-American Unity. Tell me as much as you can remember about the history of that organization, of that effort.

Garcia

What I remember is working with Estebán Torres, who was then the chairperson of the congress, with Richard [A.] Martínez who was also very much involved with the congress. There were many individuals. The congress had quite a great deal of credibility. It was the hope on the part of many of us in terms of answering the problem of too many Latinos running for the same political office, [thus] diluting our voting power. And we saw the congress as an answer to that. Of course, I came after the congress had already been established. I was a law student then. Because I was a law student, I was involved in community issues. It was natural that they would assign to me some responsibility here and there. And working with Estebán, somehow it came to be that I worked with the political issues committee. But I remember the congress before that time in terms of attending one of its first or second conferences, annual meetings. And I was there as a representative of SALUD.

[Laughter]

Vasquez

Now the idea was, was it not, to form a forum where you could get some kind of a unified endorsing apparatus for people running for office? Is that correct?

Garcia

That is very correct. That is very correct. I think that was the main reason why the congress came to be. And as it continued in just its existence, then of course its political shadows or parameters continued to grow. And then that growth had begun to take on a bit more than just endorsements of political candidates. Then it also took on developing positions on particular issues. But its main function was the voting upon Hispanic-and not just Hispanic actually, on candidates, period-for a particular office. And endorsing one of the candidates that came before its body as to saying, "This is the candidate we feel is the best one to represent our community."

Vasquez

Which were for the most part Democrats?

Garcia

For the most part, for sure, they were Latinos. And for the most part, they were Democrats.

Vasquez

How successful do you think that congress was?

Garcia

Well, it depends how you measure success.

Vasquez

How would you measure it?

Garcia

If you measure success in terms of bringing awareness to the community of the need for us to take that step, then I think it was quite successful. If you measure its success in terms of political candidates paying heed to its voice, it also had a measure of success. If you measure its success in terms of how many candidates were elected as a result of its endorsement, then its success is not as high. [Laughter] I think it was a successful organization.

Vasquez

That was one of your first political efforts, was it?

Garcia

Yes, it was. It was one of my first. I would say one of my more broad-based political efforts because the congress had as its membership quite a number of organizations and a diversity of political outlooks from our most progressive and radical, such as of course. . . . The Brown Berets come to mind. . . . To MEChA, to LULAC and MAPA [Mexican-American Political Association]. It was a broad representation. To SALUD, we were represented. That's why I was there at the first congress that I went to. It was quite well attended. It was a political event. It was, I think, our [first] political event. And individuals, such as Congressman Roybal, recognized it and came to it and were widely applauded and, sometimes, even challenged by some of the more vocal [delegates]. I think that in our last conversation, or maybe it was off just on a personal note, we mentioned that we were not always kind to our established leadership in the sixties. And so that some of that was manifested, I believe, at one of the congresses or two.

Vasquez

You can probably think about the one, [held at] the Record Street School, where some in UMAS were less than kind to our leadership. [Laughter]

Garcia

My recollection is vague in terms of which particular organization or which person that is. But I do remember that such an event took place. [Laughter] I'm not sure if that was UMAS, but one of the other organizations at that time I thought was not that productive. That it was being carried a bit too far and that it was affecting the orderly process of an organizational effort. We didn't have the system, the systemic means by which to deal with those outbursts. And such outbursts are difficult to deal by most organizations anyway. And I think to some degree the congress-not to some degree but to a great degree-the lack of an orderly process at some of these sessions affected the continuity, the congress as a viable organization.

Vasquez

Right. So let's go back to the '70 reapportionment and your involvement in that.

You were at the meeting, the organizational effort led by Frank Muñoz.

Garcia

Yes. Yes.

Vasquez

Tell me about that.

Garcia

I think my first effort was with the congress. My second effort was with a group that the name escapes me at the moment. But we even chose a name for ourselves. It was a group of about twenty individuals.

Vasquez

Was it Chicanos for Fair Representation?

Garcia

Ah, I was honored to be amongst that group. And I cannot remember the name of it, and [its goal] was broader than just reapportionment. But Frank Muñoz at that time was the chairperson of the group, and I discussed with Frank the need for the group to deal with the issue of reapportionment. He appointed me to look into it. I remember that we took a position, but it's been quite such a time and there was even testimony, I believe, before the local state committee or committees on the part of the group. But more than that specifically, I cannot recall except that we met and we had quite a few sessions on it. We realized its importance. We didn't have the time or the organizational capabilities to be able to carry it forth. And the reason that we couldn't is that in any such effort, you really needed the capabilities of a computer-supported operation. We didn't have that. We had to do the research the old-fashioned way, and the old-fashioned way was too time-consuming. And so that our efforts were very limited. And I think that it was to the point of testimony and stating a position, but our research was very limited.

Vasquez

What came of those efforts?

Garcia

No more than just pages of testimony and congressional committee history.

Vasquez

Okay.

Garcia

And maybe a bit of an awareness in terms of those committee members and some exposure on a very limited basis by this committee to our community at large.

Vasquez

Okay, let's get to then . . . [Interruption]. . . We were getting into the background or really what you thought the results and efforts of the 1970 reapportion organization that you were involved in were.

Garcia

Yes. And I think we went ahead and provided an answer.

Vasquez

Okay. Let's get to 1980: how you got involved, why you thought you could do something, and who it is that you got involved with in 1980 reapportionment. How does the context change between 1970 and 1980?

Garcia

Between those two dates, of course, there is much discussion amongst many individuals on the importance of reapportionment, the need to take some positive steps, get involved, and make efforts to have an impact and cause some changes. Sometime in 1980, maybe a little bit even prior to 1980, I received an invitation, as many other Latino activists received an invitation. It was signed by Dr. Richard [A.] Santillán, who of course I knew from years and years back when Richard was a student and I was a law student. He was a student at Cal State L.A. I was a student at Loyola Law School. I knew Richard. I trusted him. I believed that he was a sincere individual in his efforts to help our community. I was interested in the subject matter, and it appeared that the conference, which was being hosted by Dr. Richard Santillán at the Rose Institute [of Local and State Government], Claremont Colleges, would be a worthwhile effort to attend. And I attended that effort along with hundreds of other Latino activists. We participated in what I thought was a very productive and very informative conference. Richard, Dr. Santillán, did an excellent job in terms of the organizational and logistical efforts. And I was impressed, as everyone else there was, too.

Vasquez

Tell me what you remember of the conference.

Garcia

Well, at the conference, from having coffee and little pastries to getting you to chat with each other as you're drinking the coffee, people were getting to know one another. I knew quite a few of the individuals there, so it wasn't like it was a stranger's conference. It was more like a conference of activists. And I think Richard Santillán did real well in his planning. And that's how it began. There was a series of speakers. And, of course, the Rose Institute as I understand it now-I did not have that awareness on that particular morning-is an institute that is supported primarily by business interests. And those business interests are in the majority within Republican party ranks. And so that definitely . . .

Vasquez

Did you know that then?

Garcia

I didn't know it then, but what was apparent then was that it was not just a Democratic party philosophy conference. There were also Republican Latinos-Ralph Ramírez, for example-who were presenting the Republican point of view and how the Republican party actually should have a role within the overall

political aspirations and participation in the Hispanic/Chicano/Latino community. That was new to some to a great degree, not only to me but to many of the activists who were there. Because we, I think, saw philosophically the Democratic party a bit more in tune at that time with the political philosophy of Latino activists, the Latino community. So it was good to hear Ralph Ramírez and others such as he present a different perspective, a perspective that I think had merit at that time and has merit now. But I was impressed with the presenters as well as with the capabilities that the Rose Institute possessed as far as the computer system, because we got a tour of it. And they let us know what they were already doing as far as the demographic research into the political participation of Hispanics, such as: percentage in the Democratic party; percentage in the Republican party; independents; how many were registered; how many were not; how through color coding they were able to superimpose in a geographical map just where Hispanics were concentrated; and an overlay on top of that in terms of the percentage of registration; another overlay on top of that in terms of Democratic versus Republican registration. So it was a wealth of information, which of course we recognized because it was information we knew we needed. And that in 1970 we were hungry for. We were hungry for it in 1975, and we were still hungry for it in 1980. And there it was. So that it became apparent that the information was there and that the Rose Institute was a funded institute that at least in theory was to make this information available not just to the Republican party but to legitimate organizations. And at certain circumstances that we could. . . . That those organizations could obtain that information without having to pay for it. Because political parties and political organizations would have to pay for that information. And that information was very expensive. Before the conference ended, many of us had already reached the realization that here was the information. Here is the basis or the structure or the participants for what would be a very good organizational structure and effort on the issue of reapportionment. Towards the end of the day, there were several individuals—I for one, Armando Navarro for another—who without that issue being in the agenda, we brought out the question: "Before we leave today, let's circulate a tablet. Let's put our names, our addresses, our telephone numbers, so that we can continue to be in touch with one another on this issue and this issue only. Let's not leave today and lose this pool of participation." That began to be put forth. Then at one point since it had already been stated several times, Richard Santillán made the comment or took the decision of saying, "I'm going to go ahead and adjourn this conference because the business in which. . . . The reason for this conference occurring, that business has been taken care of. And if you here present want to go ahead and communicate with one another, there is no problem in terms of [using] this location, this conference room facilitating

that. However, I must call an end to this conference and thank all of you for your participation." And once he did that, then we did move forward and actually somehow or another. . . . Because I and Armando Navarro [Laughter] had been the most persistent in terms of, "Don't leave. Let's stay in communication." So I think it was Richard Santillán, in fact, who said, "Miguel García, why don't you chair that?" [Laughter] And so without really requesting it, Richard Santillán went ahead and gave me the opportunity to at least chair that particular impromptu, spontaneous coming together of what was to become Californios for Fair Representation.

Vasquez

What made you think on the basis of one day that you could put an organization together?

Garcia

I didn't have that thought at all.

Vasquez

What did you have in mind?

Garcia

That we could participate as a group really, but I personally didn't think that I would be the one to put it together. So maybe it was the way that the question was phrased. I think that the thought I did have was not so much in terms of the organizational effort, because the organizational effort of Californios didn't really begin to take on its magnitude until we met for the first time at a classroom in Cal State Los Angeles University.

Vasquez

That would be February 7, 1981?

Garcia

The very first meeting. And I think February 7 comes to mind. It really does. But that is what followed the coming together at the Claremont McKenna College Rose Institute.

Vasquez

Let's get back to that conference. That's an important conference. Was everybody as enthusiastic as you were?

Garcia

We were enthusiastic. We were enthusiastic. There were many individuals that had a strong realization of the importance of reapportionment, had a desire to contribute personally by their personal involvement, and also believed that the individuals who were present had a great deal of talent and commitment as well.

Vasquez

Do you . . . ?

Garcia

And experience. And experience. So with those components coming together we were encouraged and maybe even had illusions that a positive effort could be undertaken.

Vasquez

How many people that had been in the 1970 effort were involved in that 1980 conference?

Garcia

Most of them, I believe. Or at least a good half.

Vasquez

How about the elected officials at the time?

Garcia

The elected officials don't come to mind. They didn't seem to stay with me. I would think that they would have. And I think there were elected officials that came in.

Vasquez

Do you remember any of them?

Garcia

I don't remember them because I don't see them. . . . And maybe I have a vague thought that we might have had presentations by elected officials. But I'm not sure on that. If they did, it was merely just to reinforce pretty much the traditional positions and perspectives on reapportionment and to even echo what we had always said, that reapportionment screwed Latinos. There was no question about that. I think even the elected officials in their own way and with their own words acknowledged it. We were a bit stronger in our commentary.

Vasquez

Were there any people there at that conference, do you remember, who were reticent or a bit hesitant about going into an effort that was so handily underwritten at that point by really Republican-oriented [institution]?

Garcia

That reservation was present always.

Vasquez

Tell me about that.

Garcia

That reservation was always present.

Vasquez

How about in your own mind?

Garcia

We attempted to be on guard. We, as a group of Latinos/Hispanics, we attempted to be on guard. And I think sometimes overly so in terms of not being overly influenced by any particular political party or any particular individuals. We really did make an attempt to remain as true and as pure as we

could be in terms of our effort being for the benefit of Hispanics, mindful as to a great degree of those steps, mindful of what the consequences would be to either the Republican party or the Democratic party. Especially since at that time politically our philosophy was more in tune with the Democratic party platform, let's say. So that there was some overlapping of how at times our efforts may to some degree be more considerate of the Democratic party.

Vasquez

Tell me now what happened after that conference. Who did what? Who carried the ball after that?

Garcia

Well, I know that there was a list of individuals who signed indicating that they had an interest and that they were willing to participate in whatever effort would come out of us coming back together again. Because the commitment at that conference was, "Let's just come together again with a specific purpose to see what we want to do," and that's all there was. I cannot recall who kept copies or if we had copies made. I believe we had copies made right there through the Rose Institute. Facilitating copies being made, how many individuals received a copy, or if everybody received a copy, I cannot recall. I also cannot recall exactly how the notice went out so that we did come together at the California State University at Los Angeles. You reminded me it was February 7. And at February 7, we had I believe somewhere in the neighborhood of a good thirty or forty people.

Vasquez

Before we continue, what was the role of Alan Heslop in that first conference?

Garcia

Alan Heslop, whom I first met at that conference, as I remember, he. . . . I cannot really recall whether he was an administrator with the actual college or whether his role was being a director of the Rose Institute. I know that his connection was with the Rose Institute, as an administrator of the college or otherwise I cannot recall. I know that Alan Heslop, whenever I came in contact with him, was very courteous. He wanted to be very helpful. And we found him to be that. I also became aware that Alan Heslop, of course, was in some way connected with the Republican party. So we kept that in our minds in interacting with Alan Heslop, as we did in interacting with the chairperson for the Republican caucus. But we kept our own interest in mind when we met with [Speaker of the Assembly] Willie [L.] Brown [Jr.] at the Bonaventure [Hotel]. And so that whenever we met with a political individual, whether he was an elected official or whether he was a member of the Rose Institute, we always kept in mind who this individual was and what his background was and his political affiliations. Because we were very much on guard-of wanting to do

our best for our own community, and we knew that everybody had their own agendas. And fortunately, we had ours. [Laughter]

Vasquez

Okay. Tell me about that agenda.

Garcia

Well, that agenda began to be developed February 7. That was a great meeting, very productive.

Vasquez

Tell me about the people you most remember being at that meeting.

Garcia

I remember John [E.] Huerta. I remember Richard Santillán. I remember Leticia Quezada. I remember Carlos Navarro, Armando Navarro, Emma Castro. . . .

Vasquez

Castro or Carrasco?

Garcia

Emma Carrasco, excuse me. Emma Carrasco. And then of course the fellow. . . . Echeveste. John Echeveste. And I know by not mentioning everybody that was there, I'm doing them a disservice. But my memory doesn't help me. It was a talented group that came together at Cal State Los Angeles.

Vasquez

What came out of that meeting at Cal State Los Angeles?

Garcia

We decided that we would form an organization for the specific purpose of developing the best effort that we could as a group on the issue of reapportionment as it related to the interests of the Chicano/Latino community. And we had the structure for it. I believe that committees were identified, and chairpersons for those committees were identified as well. And I believe even maybe. . . . I'm not quite sure about a chairperson for the organization.

Vasquez

At that first meeting?

Garcia

Not at that first meeting, but four committees, I believe.

Vasquez

What committees were formed, do you remember?

Garcia

We had the research committee, Richard Santillán and Carlos Navarro co-chairing that committee. We had I believe the media committee being chaired by John Echeveste, and I'm not sure if Emma Carrasco was co-chairing or if it eventually came to be. But John Echeveste, I believe, chaired that committee.

We had a fund-raising committee chaired by José Calero. We had two or three other committees.

Vasquez

What role did John Huerta play?

Garcia

John Huerta, a key individual in the organization. Of course we had so much talent. So I cannot really say that. . . .

Vasquez

What was his relationship to MALDEF [Mexican-American Legal and Educational Fund] at the time?

Garcia

He was the director of MALDEF, and he was an excellent choice to chair the structure, the organization of Californios for Fair Representation. And, for sure, he was nominated. However, he was not able to accept that nomination because of his relationship with MALDEF. And MALDEF, I don't believe, could formally become involved. And so John waswearing a dual hat. But he was a key individual. [Interruption]

Vasquez

So you formed this, what, a committee, or is it an organization or a coalition? What would you call it?

Garcia

At that very first meeting February 7, we became an organization. We didn't have a name yet. And we had just the bare bones of a structure in terms of, I believe, committee chairpersons and maybe even some volunteers for those particular committees.

Vasquez

So you were willing to do outreach to organizations, right?

Garcia

I would have to review the minutes of that first meeting. I believe John Huerta kept our minutes.

Vasquez

Did he?

Garcia

I believe John Huerta served as our secretary for our first [meeting]. . . . In fact, John Huerta became the secretary for Californios for Fair Representation.

[Laughter] So I'm sure that the minutes are well kept. John is a highly intelligent, motivated individual. [I have] a great deal of respect for John, and I consider him a personal friend as well. Besides the beautiful political effort that Californios undertook and I think accomplished, some very good friendships came out of that involvement. And John Huerta is a friend for life. Yes, I have a great deal of respect and affection for him.

Vasquez

Tell me how you came about developing a strategy or a set of strategies and tactics for what you were setting out to do in the initial stages?

Garcia

A strategy committee. You just refreshed my memory. We had a strategy committee. And Armando Navarro was the chairperson for that. Armando Navarro, of course, was highly motivated, highly talented. His shortcoming at that time-I'm not sure at what point he's at now-was in terms of being able to get along with people and not being abrasive. Very talented but also very abrasive. I remember Armando Navarro when five or six of us went to Washington. And I believe that our plane tickets were paid by the Rose Institute. Of course, we went ahead and accepted when it was to our benefit, but we didn't feel that we were beholden.

Vasquez

You went to Washington for what purpose?

Garcia

Again, there was an issues conference, and I believe reapportionment was being considered. By that time we were already a recognized organization.

Vasquez

As Californios?

Garcia

As Californios. And Armando Navarro was one of the selected representatives. And as we are there at a roundtable with distinguished individuals.

Vasquez

Like?

Garcia

Such as Congressman Roybal, other elected [congressional] representatives, the national leadership of LULAC and GI Forum, political staff, representatives of [United States Senator] Edward [M.] Kennedy. I believe Antonia Hernández was there. At that time she was working with Senator Kennedy. She's now, of course, the executive director of MALDEF. I go back with dear Antonia to the time that she was a UCLA student and I was a staff person at MALDEF, and she was just graduating. So the progress of Antonia Hernández is beautiful to watch. As a Latina, she's now at a very effective position. But getting back to the Washington conference . . .

Vasquez

The roundtable.

Garcia

And Armando Navarro, that's how he comes to mind. But he was our strategy committee chairperson and an excellent one. And one, he was always pushing the organization in terms of taking extreme positions. But out of those extreme

positions came a happy compromise. . . . Or maybe not came a happy compromise, but some compromise was reached. And as a result of Armando's position, I think we went a bit further than we would have otherwise. So he had that role within our organization. But many times, I had to smooth relationships. Not many times. I won't say that, but at least two or three times. Individuals within the group were ready to quit because they just couldn't work with Armando.

Vasquez

What was the point of the conference?

Garcia

The [point of discussing the] conference in Washington is that Armando Navarro had a habit that he would point his finger at an individual and say, "Let me educate you. Let me educate you." [Laughter] And in Washington, Congressman Roybal had just spoken, and Armando Navarro went on with one of his commentaries to put it in more favorable terms. And he began to address himself to Congressman Roybal. And he was saying, "Let me educate you." And he was pointing his finger at Congressman Roybal. You always have to consider the psychological effect back of one's actions in a group setting. So, of course, it became apparent to me that most people there just turned him off and continued to watch him but didn't really listen anymore to what he had to say. But considering that aspect of his personality and his ideological and strategical positions, Armando Navarro was an effective individual. And so that is the way that I considered his positions. And so that when Armando would state a position. . . . But I as chairperson of the organization, which I came to be. . . . [Laughter] I think it was after the second session. And I thought about it because I knew it would be a- It would affect my life. It would affect my life. So I even discussed it with my wife at that time. And it was a decision that was kind of a soul-searching decision: should I take on the chairmanship or not of the organization? John Huerta couldn't do it. He was with MALDEF. Armando Navarro was a little bit. . . . I didn't think that the organization would survive if he was to chair it. And I don't think that he would have been elected to chair it in any case.

Vasquez

He was, however, elected to be the state coordinator. Is that correct?

Garcia

Yes.

Vasquez

What was that position?

Garcia

Well, he was the executive person to work with me as the chairperson. And so he was not an elected individual. Oh, I think he was elected. He was elected.

You see, I became the chairperson, but it was on an interim basis. And it was a question of whether I would even remain. But I remember that we had our own conference at a college. And by that time, we had our ten chapters throughout the state of California because, of course, of individuals who attended the conference at the Rose Institute. It was a statewide conference. It was not just a southern California or a Los Angeles conference. There were individuals whom I had never met. So that was a great opportunity that individuals from throughout the state were brought together. So that by the time we selected our permanent leadership, let's say for a one-year basis, we had already produced our own conference and organized the ten chapters of Californios which were represented. One of the largest chapters was San Bernardino, the Los Angeles chapter being the largest. But we had representation in Sacramento, Santa Barbara, San Francisco, San Diego, Los Angeles, San Bernardino. That's seven. Three to go. So by the time that we had our own conference then, it was a political conference with chapters voting in terms of how many votes you're going to have here or there, etc., etc. And so there was the compromise that Armando Navarro. . . . And I don't say compromise, but it was really actually somewhat of an agreement, that the San Bernardino chapter would support, I believe, my candidacy for chairperson of the organization and that we would support Armando Navarro becoming the executive director. It was a way by which to avoid a real divided election in a sense. Plus, I think Armando realized that he would not win that election.

Vasquez

What you're telling me then is that Armando used the strength of his chapter for some leverage for his own position?

Garcia

Yes. Yes, I think so.

Vasquez

But aside from Armando, all the rest of the leadership of the organization was Los Angeles-based?

Garcia

No. No, no, no, no. We tried to be as representative as we could. First of all, of course we had a board of directors. And each chapter had its own representative. And we had several meetings throughout the state. I remember one in San Jose in particular. Another one here in Los Angeles. We traveled to San Francisco, Sacramento. But for the first few meetings, I was elected to be the interim chairperson. And actually for the February 7 meeting, they asked me, and I did chair that meeting in terms of using the method that you see in my office to some degree [points to large wall charts], where I use the blackboard or I use butcher paper to put down on paper the meeting's decisions or issues.

Vasquez

The points of agreements?

Garcia

Points of agreement, yes. And so I did do that. And I think that my scientific method, training of the premedical education, plus the presenting cases in court, you do learn a certain way by which you try to put down on paper the consensus or whatever. And in that role, it was really the consensus of the group as a whole.

Vasquez

So you were that kind of a leader? A consensus coagulator, if you will?

Garcia

Ah. Yes, I guess, a consensus documenter. [Laughter] And of course I would contribute my own [opinions]. When you state a position of the particular individual, it does give you the opportunity to add some commentary as well.

Vasquez

Okay. Before we go on, let me mention some names to you, and you give me a thumbnail sketch of these people. They'll come back into our discussion again, but you tell me about these people. Marshall Díaz. Give me an assessment on Marshall Díaz.

Garcia

Marshall Díaz, an individual who made his contribution at the local Los Angeles chapter. An individual whose contributions were made more by his willingness to support. Marshall Díaz was not a natural leader or of the highest caliber, but he was a supporter. And he was a strong supporter. He developed coalitions with Los Angeles people. I forget the woman's name [Elaine Zamora] who was divisive to a great degree, but who had enough political experience to have support at the local level, and that way pushed their particular positions. And I forget her name, but maybe she's one of the ones. But that's my off-the-cover remarks about Marshall.

Vasquez

Leticia Quezada?

Garcia

Leticia Quezada? A very talented lady who contributed to Californios to a great extent, the chairperson of our Los Angeles chapter. She had good, of course, associational ties with her present husband, Steve Uranga, who was the chairperson of a city employee's organization. So that through those relationships they developed a strong political base within the Los Angeles chapter. And to some degree, they were in opposition to Armando Navarro's positions in the San Bernardino chapter.

Vasquez

Give me an example of that opposition.

Garcia

Ah, the sitting-in at [Assemblyman] Richard J. Alatorre's office here in Los Angeles. Leticia Quezada was opposed to that. Armando Navarro was in favor of that and the individual who most pushed for it. Let's see.

Vasquez

We'll come back to those incidents later on. Steve Uranga?

Garcia

Well, I mentioned him already. He was a . . .

Vasquez

In the context of being somebody's husband. What about his [contributions]. . . . [Laughter]

Garcia

He'll never forgive me for that one. Somehow also I seem to rub Steve the wrong way. And I think maybe because I supported the decision to sit-in at Alatorre's office. I'm not quite sure why, but I know that he had a chip on his shoulder against me at one point. He was under the influence at a restaurant. We were celebrating one of our victories. I was not aware of it up until some later point. I noticed that I think he was trying to get a little hostile. [Laughter] But I see Steve Uranga more in terms of Leticia's leadership. Following her leadership and supporting her.

Vasquez

Irene Tovar?

Garcia

Irene Tovar. A beautiful lady whom I know from my days of being a Chicano law student, a member of that organization and working with her within the Congress of Mexican-American Unity. And Irene, I believe, was even a chairperson of the congress at a point or another. So that's where I began to work with Irene. My impression of her was [that she was] sincere, honest, talented, intelligent. One of our leaders definitely. And at that time, one of the few leaders who achieved the exposure that Irene did and even a candidate for office, I believe, for the board of education.

Vasquez

Elaine Zamora?

Garcia

That was the individual that I was trying to think of. . . .

1.4. Tape Number: II, Side Two (February 26, 1990)

Vasquez

Elaine Zamora was the divisive force?

Garcia

Yes. Elaine Zamora was a divisive force.

Vasquez

In what sense?

Garcia

In the sense that she was a violent lady. She was talented. I think she's an attorney now. I even know exactly why Elaine Zamora began to feel that she was not going to be supportive of me personally as a chairperson of Californios. And that is, I tried to roll up my sleeves as much as I could and participate with the supporters in terms of folding the envelopes and stuffing the letters. But I remember on one particular occasion I was not able to do that. And Elaine Zamora remained with a group. . . . Marshall Díaz was one. [There was] another lady whom Elaine Zamora challenged to fight even at a function that the chapter sponsored. The function was so sparsely attended that Elaine was feeling, I believe, down and it didn't take [her] much to challenge this woman to fight. She even challenged me. [Laughter] Raúl Ruíz, Marshall Díaz, and a third individual were holding back Elaine Zamora. And she wanted to charge me. [Laughter] And I guess there is sweet justice in that. Now she's going to be in the state archives [as acting] in this fashion. [Laughter]

Vasquez

Emma Carrasco?

Garcia

Emma Carrasco. Totally positive impression. One of the greatly talented women, young ladies, and a total lady. Total respect and admiration for Emma Carrasco. She had so much knowledge of media outreach, and she was the right-hand person for John Echeveste and the media committee. She at one point was assigned to my law office to assist me with the work of Californios, because by that time the work of Californios was taking a good part of my time, probably half of my time. I was in a law partnership with Ronald Mendoza and Felix Martínez. And they were great in terms of law partners, allowing me to do so much work for Californios, which of course affected the law practice. But Emma Carrasco. Beautifully talented and a beautiful looking lady and human being as well.

Vasquez

Who else comes to mind that was a participant throughout the whole process of the Los Angeles effort of Californios for Fair Representation? Was Raúl Ruiz involved in this effort?

Garcia

Raúl Ruiz became involved towards maybe the last half of it.

Vasquez

As what?

Garcia

As a participant. And you know Raúl Ruíz. So Raúl Ruíz always has a Raúl Ruíz position. [Laughter]

Vasquez

His own? Is that right? [Laughter]

Garcia

But he contributed. Just because he does have recognition within the community, and he is a leader. Again, as Armando Navarro, Raúl Ruíz has the [same] impact [on] a great deal of people. You either support Raúl Ruíz or you don't like him. But I've known Raúl from my efforts with SALUD. And so that I think we give each other respect and room to express ourselves. So we were able to work together.

Vasquez

Okay. Let's look at some of the personalities. Let's get down to the organizational structure of that coalition. Is that correct?

Garcia

Exactly.

Vasquez

Okay. Let me read you the names of some of the groups that became a part of this coalition in Los Angeles County, and you give me, if you will, your recollection of the role, contribution, or a lack of contribution that they made. MALDEF, we've talked about it a little bit as an aside. You had your offices at MALDEF. Is that correct?

Garcia

Yes, we did.

Vasquez

So you had John Huerta from MALDEF?

Garcia

MALDEF was a key organization. First of all, they contributed John Huerta. And by that I mean that they allowed John Huerta to wear a dual hat and participate. I'm not exactly sure how that was acceptable, because they are an organization that has to be on its toes in terms of what work they can do and cannot do. And so John Huerta's participation had some limitations. Exactly what those limitations were I'm not sure. He was a great contributor. MALDEF also facilitated us being able to house our organization for a short period of time at their offices. And because we were a non-profit [effort] not in line with any particular political organization, we qualified for a taxexempt status. And we were very careful about that. We were also allowed and enabled to utilize the resources of MALDEF in our outreach to a limited degree.

Vasquez

Comisión Feminil Mexicana Nacional?

Garcia

Comisión Feminil Nacional Mexicana, of course. Its membership participated. Leticia Quezada comes to mind. Lita-whose last name at this point escapes me-from Sacramento I believe was a member of that. Oh my God. There were so many individuals with Comisión Feminil. Most of the women that participated in Californios also had a strong allegiance or organizational ties with Comisión Feminil. So Comisión Feminil was important in terms of the membership that participated with Californios and wore a dual hat as well.

Vasquez

LULAC?

Garcia

LULAC had representation not, for example, such as Comisión Feminil. It was not that type of representation, but they were represented. LULAC, one of the long-standing organizations. So by their participation, they gave us credibility more than we would have had otherwise.

Vasquez

The American GI Forum?

Garcia

The same.

Vasquez

How about the Los Angeles County Chicano Employees Association?

Garcia

Limited in terms of. . . . Of course Steve Uranga was part of it. I think they made a contribution. I remember I attended one of their meetings as chairperson of Californios, and they participated-excuse me-they supported our positions and might have made a money contribution, a couple of hundred bucks or so.

Vasquez

How about the Mexican-American Bar Association [MABA]?

Garcia

Well, that was another organization that I think ranked with Comisión Feminil in terms of the individuals who supported it. For example, Jaime Blancarte I believe was a strong [supporter]. . . . I believe he was. There were a number of lawyers. Dennis Landin comes to mind, who is now with the federal public defender's office. I think I believe at that time I was president-elect of the Mexican-American Bar Association. After my effort in Californios, I decided I wouldn't take the presidency of MABA and I decided that I would concentrate on my law practice. But the same kind of rank for MALDEF.

Vasquez

Long Beach Harbor Chicano Political Caucus?

Garcia

Ah, I can't even remember it.

Vasquez

How about San Fernando Valley Concilio of Directors?

Garcia

It's not one of the key organizations. But of course we attempted to obtain the endorsement of as many organizations as we could obtain.

Vasquez

How about Nosotros?

Garcia

Nosotros might have. . . . Well, they lent their name for the most part. And there were two individuals whose names I can't-my memory's not good for names, as I said before-who I believe helped us by educating us to some degree on fund-raising efforts.

Vasquez

What about TELACU [The East Los Angeles Community Union]?

Garcia

They allowed John Echeveste to wear the dual hat. And John Echeveste was one of the key individuals in the organization.

Vasquez

How about the Latin Business Association?

Garcia

There the connection was José Calero. And José Calero was the chairperson of the organization, a talented individual. But [like] many of our persons, they get so politically involved that they cannot develop the economics. So José was hurt by not having the economics to support his talents.

Vasquez

How about the Association of Mexican-American Educators, AMAE? What was their role?

Garcia

There were individuals from AMAE who wore Comisión Feminil hats. You know there was a certain number of political activists in that community, as you know. And some of these political activists wore two or three hats. They were in AMAE, they were in Comisión Feminil, and they were in MALDEF, they were in LULAC, they were in. . . . [Laughter]

Vasquez

How about the Lincoln Heights Legal Aid Foundation?

Garcia

Elaine Zamora was part of that. And really Californios was a coalition probably of about fifty key individuals. And then you had certain levels within those fifty. And those fifty brought in with them a good fifty organizations. And so that it wasn't so much . . .

Vasquez

Their membership and their resources, or [just] the name?

Garcia

Some brought all of those, and some just brought the name.

Vasquez

Hispanic-American Democrats. What do you remember about them?

Garcia

Nothing. Except that I know that they were with us. Who in particular was representing, how we obtained their endorsement, how much efforts or resources or money they contributed to us, I would have to take a look at some of the minutes and the reports.

Vasquez

Mexican-American Correctional Association?

Garcia

I cannot really recall the organizational ties there either. So I believe it was someone who brought that organization with them.

Vasquez

And La Raza National Lawyers Association?

Garcia

Who in particular brought that organizational representation I don't remember.

Vasquez

Mexican-American School Board Members Association.

Garcia

The same.

Vasquez

CAFE de California?

Garcia

CAFE was one of the organizations that were more involved with us through the Sacramento chapter. Rudy. . . . I forget his last name. A tall fellow. That's what I remember most about Rudy, how tall he was. Rudy Aros. Through the work we did with the Sacramento chapter, we became acquainted with CAFE. Also, Armando Navarro had good organizational ties up and down the state. I believe that his own organization had already developed chapters in various cities throughout the state. And in that way, Armando Navarro was actually a good political strategist, no question about it. Because through the organizational ties of his own organization, he promoted chapters of Californios in those same cities. And there was an overlapping [organizational effort] so that down the road there was a crucial issue, and Armando Navarro utilized those ties to win the day.

Vasquez

The Mexican-American Opportunity Foundation?

Garcia

More in name than anything else.

Vasquez

Image de California?

Garcia

I think it was a bit more active but not to the level of CAFE, not to the level of Comisión Feminil or MALDEF. Probably at level number two or three.

Vasquez

Some observers including some leaders within your group have said that Californios, more than a coalition or an organization, was a coalition of members or leaders of organizations that at that time were really symbols more than they were the grass roots basis of an organization. How would you react to that?

Garcia

There's some validity to that because the reality in our community in 1980 was not of organizations that had deep roots in the community. I think in that sense you have to look at organizations such as MALDEF, such as CASA [Centro de Acción Social Autónoma], such as . . . Well, those two really come to mind, who went a step further in terms of actually developing, in a grass roots sense, versus an organization that accepts membership and develops membership without a particular geographical location or community. And so many organizations were for the most part a group of twenty, thirty, forty, fifty individuals. And symbolically, they spoke as having a wide representation within the community, but in actuality that was not the case. So in that sense, it was true.

Vasquez

Was that the case with organizations like LULAC and the GI Forum, who in fact have quite impressive memberships?

Garcia

Californios was not that type of an organization, with the exception of its ten chapters throughout the state of California.

Vasquez

And most of those were built through the efforts of Armando Navarro and . . .

Garcia

Most of them . . .

Vasquez

. . . some influence from his organization?

Garcia

I would say that a good third were through the efforts of Armando Navarro. Some of the chapters were not Armando Navarro-related. For example, Sacramento was not Armando Navarro-related. Los Angeles was not Armando

Navarro-related. San Francisco, the same thing. The ones that were, of course, were San Bernardino . . .

Vasquez

Pomona?

Garcia

Pomona. And I believe. . . . I'm not sure whether Santa Barbara or one of those

. . .

Vasquez

San Diego?

Garcia

San Diego. San Jose was not. There we had an individual who was not Armando-dominated. So I think in that sense it was good that we had enough chapters within the organization that were not overtaken by Armando.

[Laughter]

Vasquez

Tell me what the reaction was to your efforts by groups like MAPA?

Garcia

Like who?

Vasquez

MAPA?

Garcia

Very positive. Of course, I knew the people in MAPA to a great degree.

Vasquez

The statewide leadership?

Garcia

Pardon?

Vasquez

Of the statewide leadership of MAPA? Or local MAPA people?

Garcia

Well, for sure local. I can't remember who was state and who was local. So I really can't answer that.

Vasquez

I guess the gist of my question is, were they threatened by the efforts that you were making?

Garcia

No. No. I think most of the leadership in our community were impressed with Californios. They were impressed with our sincerity. They were impressed by who was part of it. And they were impressed with our results. They knew Richard Santillán. They knew me. They knew John Huerta. They knew Leticia Quezada. They knew Armando Navarro. And so that I think that the individuals who were in leadership positions already had credibility. And that helped a

great deal, so that Californios did not become a threat. In fact, we were welcomed with open arms. They were happy to see the results that Californios could produce.

Vasquez

What was the reaction or the response of your initial efforts, at least by Chicanos, specifically, but we'll say Latino elected officials?

Garcia

I think you'll have to ask the elected officials to see what their perspective is, but I'll give you what I believe.

Vasquez

What are your perceptions?

Garcia

My perceptions were of elected officials. . . . They also were impressed, and for the most part there was no contradiction between our position and theirs. And they were supportive of our efforts. The only elected officials-and I won't say the only-[with whom] I think there were contradictions, we met with the Hispanic caucus, and we wanted them to take a more active position and to support our positions, to support our efforts in terms of contributions. And we received limited support. But there was some support.

Vasquez

On a continuum of most to least support in the Chicano caucus, how would you rank them?

Garcia

You're speaking about the Chicano caucus at the California level?

Vasquez

Right.

Garcia

At the California level. Because we even met with also. . . .

Vasquez

The national [congressional caucus].

Garcia

Yeah. That's right. Even national. We attended some national conferences. For the most part it was supportive, and our only disagreement is that it was not, we felt, as strong as it should have been. Elected officials, I found out, really have to develop in the art of compromise. And many times they cannot take the positions that they support even philosophically, because they are beholden to some interest that has made contributions to their reelection campaign or that bought tickets for their last fund-raiser. Sometime during the effort of Californios, I believe, and I believe maybe it was towards the middle, I gave up the desire I had to run for office. [Laughter]

Vasquez

Because of this?

Garcia

Of course, Steve Uranga never believed that. And Steve Uranga, to come back to Steve, always believed that I was setting myself up for a congressional race. And he always doubted me for that. [Laughter]

Vasquez

We're going to get back into some of the internal politics. How about the Democratic party? How did they react?

Garcia

The Democratic party was supportive, I would say, at the beginning, and we twisted their arms. I remember the chairperson of the Democratic party.

Vasquez

Who was it?

Garcia

Nancy Pelosi, whom I hang up on the phone on-Nancy Pelosi-two or three times. Because by that time we had moved. I myself had moved my efforts toward a voter registration campaign in the districts in which I believed we could elect a Hispanic/Latino.

Vasquez

Nancy Pelosi, okay.

Garcia

I'll continue with Nancy Pelosi.

Vasquez

So did they come to see you as a threat?

Garcia

The Democratic party itself didn't give us very much help. Individuals within the Democratic party who gave us help were, number one, [Senator] David [A.] Roberti. Well, of course, I'm excluding Latinos from this. I'm just categorizing the Democrats. And David Roberti, I have to classify him I think as a number one helper. I think he contributed money more than any other, anybody else. And even when we were doing voter registration, Roberti contributed money to our efforts. He was an individual that we did reach compromise with even though we had to push him. It's not that we didn't have to push the legislators. But he did help. We had to sit-in at David Roberti's office. In fact, my little daughter just came in and she's sitting in the next room. She was less than a year old. And I remember carrying her in my arms. Her mother [Lorraine Tafoya García] was with us too at that time. They were in Roberti's office. They were about to call the police because we sat in at David Roberti's office. He was the chairperson, I believe. No, he wasn't the chairperson of the committee for the senate, but he was the leader [pro tem] in the senate. That was his connection. So we had to push him. We had to push as much as we

could. Everybody that we could, that was accessible to us. The chairperson of the committee was [Senator] Daniel [E.] Boatwright.

Vasquez

Daniel Boatwright. That's right.

Garcia

And like most politicians, Daniel Boatwright at least listened to us. And they did compromise to a small degree. The Democratic party was in an inherent contradiction. The greater concentration of Latinos within a particular district, the greater harm to the Democrats because they would be concentrating Democratic voters, a Democratic block, within one district. And they would rather divide them into several districts because this way they can at least be more assured of the election of Democrats. That was the inherent contradiction. That if we concentrate ourselves too much, the Democrats were hurt, and then we would be helping the Republican party. We were sufficiently sophisticated. We knew we had to strike a balance somewhere in those numbers.

Vasquez

With the Republican party?

Garcia

The Republican party. They wanted to be extremely helpful. It was in their interest to be helpful for our effort to be successful because they saw that we could weaken the Democratic party. We ourselves did not really have a great concern as much as what would be the benefit to Latinos/Hispanics-keeping in mind too that the majority of Hispanics were Democrats.

Vasquez

But they were . . .

Garcia

They tried to be helpful. We met with Assemblyman [Pat] Naylor. We met with Assemblywoman. . . . I forget her name. She was a high-level Republican party caucus-excuse me-assembly caucus person.

Vasquez

Carol Hallett?

Garcia

Yes, we met with Dr. [Tirso] del Junco, whom I think at that time was not the chairperson of the Republican party but was one of the leaders. We met with the leadership of the Republican party. We tried to get their money.

Vasquez

At what point did you meet with them?

Garcia

At an early point. At an early point. We even met with individuals of the business roundtable. We had a great deal of talent within our group who knew where the resources were, the methods by which they needed to be approached,

and even how to twist arms to try to get those nickels and dimes out of their pockets.

1.5. Tape Number: III, Side One (May 14, 1990)

Vasquez

Mr. Garcia, the last time we met, we had gone over some of the principal actors in Californios for Fair Representation. I thought the way to start today would be to pick up on the kinds of strategy and tactics that you decided early on to follow in your quest for influence, in the matter of reapportionment. I understand that early on there was a debate within the organization whether or not to participate in the hearings that would be coming up on reapportionment. Some people felt, as I understand, that the hearings were meaningless. The legislators had already designed their own political districts. And all that Californios for Fair Representation would do was legitimize the process that was really being staged to satisfy the 1973 California Supreme Court mandate. On the other hand, I understand there were people who felt that as a result of participating in the hearings, CFR would receive valuable press coverage. That by publicizing their participation in those hearings, CFR could build some kind of a coalition. A united front of groups to engage in this process. It would also give you an opportunity to make recommendations to the various committees that you would be meeting before. To bring to the fore the responsibility for gerrymandering that would be going on if these things were held without public scrutiny and public participation. And that you would be able to confront legislators on these committees with your numbers, with your positions, with your articulation of community issues. The question is this: is that a fair representation of the two different views of proceeding? And who fell on what side? Expand on those, if you will.

Garcia

Okay. There certainly was a concern in terms of whether or not our participation, by lobbying legislative committees and legislators, would produce any substantial results. However, our approach, as far as Californios was concerned, was to test the system in that respect and to form the broadest coalition. The broadest representation within our community in terms of the groups that composed it. And for those groups to participate and to present themselves through individuals and to lobby for a particular point of view. So I think that definitely the consensus amongst the group was that we should participate and we would make that attempt armed with good information, especially statistical information. So I think in terms of that strategy, our decision was to participate as fully as possible. As far as strategies were concerned, it was also to participate as a non-partisan coalition. Not falling into

the camp of the Democrats or the Republicans, but really more in terms of Hispanics/Latinos/Chicanos coming before legislators and presenting what we felt was the most legitimate point of view from our community. So that was one of the main strategies. That we would not be coming to these committees as Democrats or as Republicans, but as Hispanics, as Latinos presenting a position on behalf of our community. Additionally, I think that as far as strategy was concerned, we wanted to utilize statistical information to our benefit as much as possible. And here again our intent was to obtain this statistical information without making any commitment or concessions as far as our philosophy or point of view was concerned. Because we were receiving the information from what was a pretty much business-oriented, more of a Republican-supported institution, that being the Rose Institute. So our strategy, again, was to receive the benefit of that information without making any concessions in terms of our philosophy.

Vasquez

Who was on what side of that debate? Who opted for the notion of not participating in any of those hearings?

Garcia

I don't think that was much of an argument that anybody made. Because by the structure of Californios, it was for the most part individuals who believed that it was worthwhile to go ahead and participate, to lobby legislators, to present the point of view. Another, of course, very important strategy was to utilize the media. The press. So that we would somehow put the legislative committees and legislators, their shortcomings or negative actions, before the public through the press. And by that means, to put pressure on those individuals-legislators and committees. I don't think there was ever that much of an argument made for not participating in the legislative process. In fact, that was one of our main areas of participation.

Vasquez

Tell me this. How difficult was it for you to project an image or to defend an image of non-partisanship given the attempts of some Democrats to lump you into the Republican camp? Or to characterize you as political people being used by Republicans?

Garcia

I think the greatest difficulty came from the fact that most of us were registered Democrats. Being registered Democrats, there was a greater allegiance, at least at that time, to Democratic party principles. So that it was actually trying to bend over backwards so that it wouldn't appear as if we were mainly a Democratic party group. And I think we did make a very honest and sincere effort not to be partisan in that respect. But the bottom line is that I

think our personal philosophies were, at that time, a bit more in tune with Democratic party philosophy. And to some degree, we were influenced by that.

Vasquez

On the other hand, you had very vocal and very visible participants in the organization who had been identified with-or identified themselves with a third-party effort-La Raza Unida [party]. How much did that impact on your projecting an image of nonpartisanship?

Garcia

Well, let's see. I guess, maybe, Armando Navarro comes to mind. Because I know he was involved in the structuring of political organizations up and down the state of California. But I don't remember that that was such an influential situation for the organization. It was definitely the majority consensus that we would participate as nonpartisans. However, there were many of us who in the past had registered as Raza Unida and then went back to the Democratic party, because we didn't see Raza Unida yet to be at a point where it would have a significant influence in California politics. And, therefore, we went back to being Democrats. So that many of us had a natural allegiance to the principles upon which Raza Unida was organized. And, of course, I think those principles are very much consistent with the principles of Californios. That is, we were pushing the Latino/Chicano/Mexican community more than anything else.

Which I think was in line with Raza Unida party principles.

Vasquez

All right. Now, on the other hand. . . . We're getting three hands here.

[Laughter] The La Raza Unida party principles, as you call them, were very much cast in opposition to both Republican and Democratic political doctrine. And more than doctrine, political action in the community. What happened to those principles when you went back to the Democratic fold?

Garcia

Okay. Now those principles, of course, were very consistent with Californios for Fair Representation.

Vasquez

Right.

Garcia

Because we were pushing Hispanics/Chicanos more than anything else. Now, in terms of your question, "What happened to those principles when we went back to the Democratic party fold?" I think that those principles pretty much remained intact. It's just that it was a step because of a pragmatic observation. That if you remain in Raza Unida, then, actually, your vote was not having any significant effect more than a symbolic one. And I, for one, wanted to have a say in terms of who was going to be the local assemblyperson, who was going

to be the state senator, as well as the statewide races. So that it was more of a pragmatic decision to go back to traditional parties.

Vasquez

What, apart from realizing that perhaps that it wasn't a vehicle ready to take its place in electoral politics in this country, did you garner from the La Raza Unida party that helped you in the 1981 reapportionment effort?

Garcia

I'm sorry. I didn't. . . . What did I garner?

Vasquez

Yeah. What lessons did you garner from the Raza Unida experience? Those are the. . . . Some of you were involved-I think you were involved-in Raza Unida efforts to some extent. What did you learn that served you well in the '81 reapportionment struggle?

Garcia

Okay. Let me first of all say that my involvement in Raza Unida was very limited to the extent of being aware of it, agreeing with the philosophy of Raza Unida party, registering as a Raza Unida party member. But that was the extent of my participation. So I don't have a very close knowledge or extensive knowledge in terms of Raza Unida more than you would read about it in terms of the Texas experience and José Angel Gutiérrez, I believe. [One] would be encouraged and motivated by the examples of those individuals. The examples of some of the victories in small towns here in California. And so, I guess, the example of those victories and the examples of what could be accomplished when Latinos/Chicanos came together for a common goal. So I think that was the lesson to be learned.

Vasquez

You were concerned about being and appearing non-partisan. Did you treat or approach the Republican party any differently than the Democratic party?

Garcia

I think probably to a small degree we did.

Vasquez

How so?

Garcia

I, for one, felt more comfortable among Democrats. Because at that time, my philosophy was more in tune with Democratic party principles. Well, I felt that the actions on the part of Democrats would be more in tune and of benefit to the Chicano community than those of the Republicans. And so for that reason I felt more at ease with them and had a greater allegiance to Democrats. That isn't so much the case now. I think that I'm in disagreement with Democratic party principles in terms of perpetuating, for example, a certain dependency upon governmental programs. And so I think in some degree the Republican

philosophy of developing a business or people getting ahead, I think we need some more of that in our community. So there's more of a balance now in terms of the way that I see things now than how I saw them ten years ago.

Vasquez

We'll come back to that. But let me do this. Summarize, if you will, what was it in Democratic party principles that you felt close to in 1981?

Garcia

Well, it's what I don't so much agree with now. [Laughter] And that is that the Democratic party usually allocates more money for government programs. That they express greater association with minority groups. There's a greater number of minority individuals who are part of the Democratic party. It was those types of association that made me feel more comfortable with Democrats.

Vasquez

And now?

Garcia

Well, now I see that there has to be a greater balance. And that we need to, as a community, adopt more of an independent, individualized, or individualistic approach to getting ahead. And that by more money being allocated for welfare, for example, that I think it creates a greater dependency upon individuals and that it perpetuates a cycle of poverty. So that I see the example of Mexicans coming from Mexico who have very little, but have a desire to get ahead. They'll start a little business. They'll start selling, you know, oranges at the corner. I see that in terms of the Latinos from Mexico versus the Latinos who are naturally born in this country. There is a greater ability to push and to work, sometimes, by the Mexican who comes in with a poor experience than the Mexican-American from the poor experience here in the United States.

Vasquez

Why do you think that is?

Garcia

Partly, I think, because the Mexican who comes here wants to get ahead and has a great drive. And also a greater sense of identity as a Mexican. They don't have as much of an inferiority complex in terms of their own identity.

Vasquez

What happens to the Mexican born here? Does the smog get to his genes? Or what? What happens to his drive?

Garcia

Well, it's the experience in the country where he is a minority. He has to grow up as a member of a minority, and so that creates a certain perception about one's self. Which is not the best thing for one's psychological and emotional well-being. When you come as a Mexican, there is no question what you are. You are not trying to assimilate. And you're not trying to be an American. You

already know that you're a Mexican. So you have a strong self-identity. I think those that are born here, their self-identity is not as strong. They want to assimilate. They are Americans of Mexican descent. And some are Americans, period. And they don't even recognize the Mexican descent.

Vasquez

How does that work against them in an entrepreneurial sense or an individualistic sense?

Garcia

I think that combined with the life experience of being born into an economic situation that is very difficult. And being perpetuated by a mother who is receiving welfare versus working. And the kids see that example. I think that continues for generations.

Vasquez

So you think that the welfare among Mexican-Americans is a voluntary choice?

Garcia

It's not a voluntary choice. But it has kind of a perpetuating quality. And so I think that in terms of there being an emphasis on self-development and creating opportunities for those individuals within those areas, I see that as a better approach than just continuing to allocate certain monies so that the welfare system can continue.

Vasquez

Does that mean that you have moved away from the notion of government as an active participant in social issues to one of a passive one?

Garcia

No. But I think government can be an active participant in terms of developing the economics of people, versus government being an active participant in just perpetuating a dependence on government.

Vasquez

Getting back to the question of 1981 and the way that you approached Republicans and Democrats, how did they respond, respectively, to you? The Republicans and Democrats? Say, legislators that you went to talk to about reapportionment?

Garcia

They all face-to-face, for the most part, responded in a positive way. But we were really judging them more in terms of their actions. Republicans, of course, their interest was to unite more Mexican-Americans into a smaller number of legislative districts. Versus the interest of Democrats, which was to divide Mexican-Americans into a greater number of legislative districts. So that they could have a greater number of safe districts. The Republicans, of course, wanted to welcome us with open arms and to persuade us to agree with the legislative districts which they had drawn. Which from our perspective

[concentrated] us to a high degree [and] would decrease the amount of [our] influence in terms of the number of districts. The Democrats, on the other hand, wanted to divide us into more districts. So that was the dilemma that we found ourselves in. What we tried to do was to strike a balance between those two positions. But, I think, overall, the Republicans [were] always so happy to see us. Because they saw Californios as a natural ally for them. On the other hand, we didn't want to be in the Republican camp. And we did have a greater allegiance to the Democrats just because of our own party affiliation as far as the percentage of Democrats who were part of Californios. So that was one of the fences we tried to . . .

Vasquez

Straddle?

Garcia

To straddle. And to do it with a sense of balance.

Vasquez

Do you think you succeeded?

Garcia

I think we succeeded to a degree, in terms of the results which the reapportionment effort brought. And we did increase our numbers from one congressman that we had for such a long time to three. We increased the number of legislative districts-in which representatives of Hispanic descent came to be elected, I believe-from two or three to twice that number. State senators, I believe, increased by one or two. So we had small gains. And so we were somewhat satisfied by that. We'll come back to that in a minute. In summing up the gains. Tell me your reception by the respective chairmen and/or committees-reapportionment committees of the assembly and the senate-when you first went before them. Okay. Well, in the senate there was Senator Boatwright.Daniel E. Boatwright.Daniel Boatwright. We had a very nice reception. But I think that we. . . . And then, of course, we had a very good reception, too, from Richard Alatorre, who was the assembly committee chairperson. I think the difference was, Richard Alatorre, being a Hispanic, really did take greater action in favor of the Hispanic community than Daniel Boatwright, just because of his background. And so I think that was the most influential factor. That Richard Alatorre was a Mexican-American himself. And that he was genuinely trying to help the community and maybe also help himself. He's a politician. He's looking at the future. But one thing made an impression upon me by Richard. And I think that it educated me too in terms of the political process, because Richard Alatorre was one of the top assistants to Willie Brown. As we met with Willie Brown, and I saw Richard Alatorre there, I really saw him in the Willie Brown camp. And I saw Richard Alatorre more as an adversary-because of the fact that he was a legislator, and that we didn't

have that much trust for legislators-than I saw him as a Chicano.But on one occasion after Willie Brown had made a statement that we found to be offensive in terms of, "Well, we can't do too much for Mexican folks, because they don't vote much. So if they don't vote, then what can we do for them . . ?" So we took offense to that statement. We scheduled several press conferences. One of our members, Gloria Molina, was then an assistant to Willie Brown. And she facilitated a meeting with Willie Brown. And, of course, we wanted to make a hard impression on Willie Brown to try to prevent such statements from being repeated.We were going to have a meeting at the Bonaventure Hotel with him. We had been waiting at the particular suite where the meeting was going to take place for almost an hour, and he was very late. And so myself and two or three other representatives from our coalition went downstairs to look for him. And as we reached the lobby, here came Willie Brown with his entourage, which included Richard Alatorre. And as we were traveling up in the elevator, Richard Alatorre whispered to me. He says, "Hit him hard. Hit him really hard." And so that disconcerted me a little bit, because I really saw Richard as part of Willie Brown's camp. And, yet, he was telling me something [like that].So I think from that I realized that actually Richard needed our help to be able to push Willie Brown a bit further. And so I think Richard, besides being a legislator, he has a certain allegiance to our community, and that helped in the reapportionment plan that he designed. Actually, I think that he would have done even better except for the limitations within the legislature that were upon him.

Vasquez

Why is it then that some of the leadership of Californios never seemed to trust him at all? Or never saw him as anything but an opposition member?

Garcia

Well, because Richard also straddles a lot of fences himself.

Vasquez

Tell me about that.

Garcia

He has limitations. I know that, for example, sometimes he wasn't with us all the way. There was one occasion when we were counting on him to be able to give us support so that the sit-in that we conducted in Willie Brown's office would have a greater impact. I can't remember the details exactly, but I know that we were in communication with Richard as we were conducting the sit-in. And that even though we were in communications with him and we thought we had his protection, let's say, that the legislative marshals still came down the hallway and took about twelve or fifteen of us away. [Laughter] we felt somewhat betrayed by Richard in that respect.

Vasquez

Do you think he could have done something about that?

Garcia

I think he could have prevented our arrests. And so he didn't go that far. So I think he only went so far, and then he had his own personal agenda as well.

Vasquez

What do you think that was?

Garcia

Well, to be even a more important and influential politician than he was then and that he is even today. I think Richard Alatorre has ambitions to be a statewide politician.

Vasquez

But isn't it true that probably one of the best organizational openings that you got, and some of your leadership has even said so, the only issue that you had at the time was Willie Brown's intemperate statements about the Mexican people?

Garcia

I think that the fact that he made those statements gave us an issue to rally around. And, of course, in our strategies, again-getting back to it-one of our most important weapons was the use of the media. So Willie Brown gave us an issue to again put forth before the media. Any issue that we could utilize to focus the public's attention on the issue of reapportionment and the importance of that issue to the Latino/Hispanics/Chicanos, we would utilize it. And certainly we did with Willie Brown's statement.

Vasquez

Let me see if I understand you correctly. The strategy, as I understand, was to create as many coalitions around the state as you could. Representatives of already existing organizations. To be present at every hearing that would be held around the state and to maximize the use of media to publicize the issue at every point. But not necessarily to build an ongoing organization that dealt either with repatriation . . .

Garcia

Reapportionment.

Vasquez

. . . reapportionment. You can see where my mind is today.

Garcia

[Laughter]

Vasquez

Or anything else. Is that right? Or was there ever a thought about building any kind of ongoing organization?

Garcia

No. In fact, that was discussed.

Vasquez

Tell me about that discussion.

Garcia

We did not want to build an organization that was going to be here after the reapportionment process was finished. That was very important. That was a very important discussion that took place, because we wanted to concentrate on the issue of reapportionment. However, all of that you said is true. But in addition to that, and something that was very important, is that we didn't just want to publicize the issue. We actually wanted to present the plan. So our approach and our goal was for our plans to be adopted or at least for some portions of our plan to be adopted. So it was not just to approach the legislators with a general proposition. "You need to do more for the Hispanic in terms of reapportionment. Would you please do so?" We actually gave them a concrete plan which they had to respond to. Lines were drawn. And so that was the advancement from the ten years before. And it was a very important one.

Vasquez

Well, I want to get at that. But what was the leverage that you thought you had behind those pieces of paper with lines and maps drawn on them?

Garcia

Well, the leverage, of course, was the media. To bring attention on the part of the public. Plus, also those legislators who had a high concentration of Hispanics within their district, to threaten them. And that if they didn't respond, then they would have to face the Latino/Chicano voters at the next election for their particular election.

Vasquez

How could you threaten them if you weren't also doing voter registration or had some kind of material leverage? Or materializable leverage over them? To a certain degree, Brown's statements weren't that far off the mark when he talked about voter turnout.

Garcia

But still, we do have a substantial amount of people who are registered to vote, even though it's not as great as in the Anglo population. There are legislators who have a high concentration of Chicano voters. And especially with those legislators, we tried to use that approach.

Vasquez

That's what I'm wondering. It was a threat? It was the politics of a threat?

Garcia

Yes.

Vasquez

And I'm wondering where you felt the threat lay. Where did you feel you had the leverage or the powers of leverage to carry out that threat?

Garcia

Well, it wasn't so much we had the power to carry out the threat. [Laughter]

Vasquez

So it was a bluff?

Garcia

It was the fact of just making it.

Vasquez

So was it bluff?

Garcia

Well, it was. . . . We had to use something. [Laughter] There was some validity to the threat, because this is why we used the media. So that in the future those media articles could be utilized against that particular legislator. Plus, we also utilized the approach of having individuals who were from that legislator's district go to see that particular individual.

Vasquez

Give me some examples of that if you can think of any.

Garcia

Oh, my God. No. I mean, I can't tell you that this individual person went to see this particular legislator. But that was our approach.

Vasquez

Gloria Molina was a member of your committee. Did she approach Willie Brown?

Garcia

Well, I'm sure that she approached him on an everyday working basis and tried to influence Willie Brown. Yes. Yes, she did. But I'm speaking about, for example, with the city council people. That we selected individuals from that particular council district to see that individual. The individual that represented the [San Fernando] Valley at the assembly level. There were individuals from that district who went to see him and made the pitch on behalf of Californios. So it was that type of an approach. So it would not be individuals going to see Senator Roberti from Senator [Joseph B.] Montoya's district. It would be individuals from Roberti's district going to see him. Plus, also some participation from leadership of Californios.

Vasquez

Tell me, do you think that you used litigation as effectively as you might have? Or the threat of litigation?

Garcia

No. Litigation. Well, nothing in particular comes to mind.

Vasquez

Let me quote from one recent interview that I've done with a member of Californios. He said, "When Boatwright presented his plan after giving us"-and I'm paraphrasing, of course-"after giving us all the assurances in the world that

he sympathized with us and was going to do everything in his power and even beyond his power to help us out. When he presented, when the senate plan was presented, we should have sued him. It was that bad." [Note: John E. Huerta, Oral History Interview, Conducted 1990 by Carlos Vásquez, UCLA Oral History Program, for the California State Archives State Government Oral History Program.] This is a legal mind in your leadership talking. Do you agree with that?

Garcia

My sense of Boatwright is, in a way, very similar to that statement. Not based on any specifics other than he received us well. But I don't remember that he did much for us. And so, certainly, we could have brought litigation. But we didn't have the resources to do all of that. So we did not do litigation to the degree that it should have been utilized. It was more of a public relations, public media approach, combined with an actual statistical drawn plan that our research committee was able to put together. It was a combination of those things mainly.

Vasquez

You didn't give a lot of attention to the Los Angeles county reapportionment or redistricting. Why?

Garcia

I think we gave it a significant amount of attention.

Vasquez

Relative to the other levels?

Garcia

Well, you see, the county reapportionment effort as I remember, I think, came more towards the end of our campaign. And our campaign initially was directed towards the state level. As we were finishing and we had already done quite a bit of work on the state level, then the county reapportionment committees came into effect. And an effort was initiated in that respect. First of all, it was towards the tail end of our organization. Things were beginning to fray. Personalities were beginning to come into conflict. The organization was not as strong. And so I think to some degree it was because of that.

Vasquez

Tell me, if you would, about some of the personality conflicts that dogged this effort almost from the beginning. Or, perhaps, it was more pronounced at the end?

Garcia

Well, let's see. It was more difficult to deal with towards the end, but there were some personality conflicts even at the beginning. But at the end, I think, people's patience was shorter. And we were exhausted. Fatigued. So that we didn't have the same stamina as we did at the beginning.

Vasquez

My interest is not names and individual personalities. But perhaps political styles and political types and ideological trends that were involved in a coalitional effort. Because even Californios itself, the leadership was a form of a coalition. Wasn't it? All of you had different organizational experiences, in fact had different organizational affiliations. What kinds of ideological, strategic, and tactical clashes went on?

Garcia

Well, one of the clashes was in terms of how do we pressure the legislators that were going to be voting on this plan. On the one hand I think the majority of the members of Californios were for taking a lower-key approach and using the method of presenting testimony, of lobbying the individual legislators, of using the media campaign. And more of a minority point of view was to use tactics that had been very prevalent in the late sixties, early seventies, in terms of picketing, in terms of demonstrations, in terms of sit-ins. So that it was those two types of approaches that came into conflict at times.

Vasquez

What ideological diversity did you have to incorporate into this effort that maybe began to fray towards the end?

Garcia

Well, we tried to be as broad based as possible. And we saw it as a healthy situation to have representation not just from the, let's say, more moderate or conservative element in the community but to also have participation from the more activist element. And, in fact, the majority of Californios was of an activist background. It's just that I think that by the time some of us were participating in Californios, our tactical approaches had changed to a great degree. And many who had been very heavily involved in demonstrations didn't see demonstrations as being the most effective means by which to publicize a particular issue. And there were others-and I say there were more in the minority-who felt that that was an approach that was still viable and still needed to be utilized. And we actually had a very serious kind of conflict, especially when it came to a sit-in at Richard Alatorre's office.

Vasquez

Tell me about that.

Garcia

There was some strong opposition.

Vasquez

Tell me about that, because there seems to have been greater unity for the sit-in at Willie Brown's office than over at Richard Alatorre's office.

Garcia

There was. And I think in part it was because Richard Alatorre was Chicano. There was a reluctance on the part of Chicanos to sit-in in Richard's legislative office locally. Plus, we also felt that Richard was doing almost as much as he could under the limitations that he was under. So, for that reason, I think that there was a strong opposition to the sit-in at Richard's. It was a decision that was made by the local Los Angeles chapter of Californios, that there would be a sit-in. And I participated in that. Since I was still the chairperson, I felt that it was my place to be there with everyone else.

Vasquez

Did you agree with it?

Garcia

I had mixed feelings about it. I had mixed feelings about it, but I decided that I would participate just the same.

Vasquez

Was it . . . ?

Garcia

I was not one of the vocal oppositions, though. [Laughter]

Vasquez

Was it a mistake?

Garcia

Was it a mistake? Well, would Richard have done any more?

Vasquez

Or any less?

Garcia

Or any less? It's hard to say. It's hard to say. It was a sit-in that was only half a commitment. Because when it came down to the very end, people decided that they would leave before any police were called. [Laughter]

Vasquez

Let me ask you a series of questions for this interview that I think you might have been asked in 1983 or 1984 in a poll or an interview that was sent to the leadership of Californios. But I want to incorporate some of that material into this interview. What do you think were the political strengths of Californios for Fair Representation?

Garcia

Well, it was broad based.

Vasquez

Okay.

Garcia

That was, I think, definitely [a strength]. That there was quite a bit of recognition from the community at large. I'm speaking about our community, first of all. And secondly, the Anglo community. They gained a great deal of

respect for the level of political organization that was possible within our own community. Californios was definitely a step forward in terms of a very effective type of coalition. In terms of professional individuals coming together. Working for a common goal. I think that was one of the greatest political achievements of Californios. I think also in terms of what it achieved. We did achieve results in a significant area, specifically, in terms of a better reapportionment plan than otherwise would have been produced.

1.6. Tape Number: III, Side Two (May 14, 1990)

Vasquez

What were, in your estimation, some of the political weaknesses of Californios for Fair Representation?

Garcia

We were not a true grass roots organization. And to a great extent, we were bluffing in terms of what we could do if legislators did not respond to our petition. I think that probably was our greatest weakness. That if our threats had been challenged or called upon, we would not have been able to produce as much as we said we could.

Vasquez

Do you think maybe that's what Willie Brown was doing by his statements? And they were not as inadvertent as you thought?

Garcia

[Laughter] Well, we were able to. For example, there was an event in Sacramento at which we had hundreds of representatives from Californios that attended those sessions. But it took a great deal of effort and organization to be able to produce I think about, maybe, six busloads of people. And we were able to do it once during the entire effort, during our campaign for a better reapportionment plan. Had we had better grass roots participation and organizing, then I think we could have done that, not only in Sacramento on one occasion, but in Los Angeles, in Fresno, in San Bernardino. We were not capable of producing large numbers of people on a consistent basis. It was more in terms of individuals preparing themselves, doing their homework, and going to lobby, and going to give testimony, holding press conferences for a particular point of view. I see that as the greatest political weakness. That we were not a strong grass roots organization.

Vasquez

In which of the four or five regions of the state do you think you were most effective at raising grass roots interest about this issue? I'm thinking of San Diego. I'm thinking of San Jose. I'm thinking about the Sacramento area. I'm thinking about Los Angeles. I'm thinking about the Inland Empire area.

Garcia

I don't think in any of those areas. I don't think we ever did other than through education by the media. There was not an organizing effort of really building actual strong coalitions.

Vasquez

It sounds like the media was your best ally.

Garcia

Yes. Yes. It was. It was our best ally. And we had beautiful press conferences. And I think it had its value because the feedback that we received from the people in the community was that they *did* see those television press conferences. They *did* read those newspaper articles. And they were themselves encouraged to participate to some small degree. Maybe register to vote. Maybe write a letter to their legislator. Possibly make a telephone call. Send a contribution of ten dollars to their local Hispanic/Latino politician. So that it was a multitude of small efforts that were generated through the media approach that we developed.

Vasquez

Do you think that the incumbents-Chicano incumbents-did as much as they might have for Californios?

Garcia

No. I don't think that they did anything at all. I think that they were somewhat wary of Californios for Fair Representation.

Vasquez

Why?

Garcia

They did have respect for us. I think that because all of the Chicano legislators were Democrats, and so they were concerned that we, by uniting with the Republicans-or at least by meeting with the Republicans-that our efforts could be counterproductive to themselves.

Vasquez

None of them came forward and tried to help you either covertly or overtly?

Garcia

In terms of help, I think the one that helped the most, in terms of finances, was Senator Roberti. Not any of the Hispanic legislators.

Vasquez

With information? Or anything like that?

Garcia

Gee, let me think about that one. Information. Because, see, first of all, we had Montoya, Alatorre . . .

Vasquez

Alex García.

Garcia

García, [Assemblyman Peter R.] Chacón, and [Senator Art] Torres. I can't. . . . Nothing comes to mind of something that stands out and says, "Gee, Torres or Chacón were really good." We had a meeting or two with the Chicano caucus. And it was attended by just about all of them. But there was some strong disagreement during that meeting. So I don't remember them being helpful to any great degree.

Vasquez

Tell me about that disagreement.

Garcia

I cannot give you details.

Vasquez

What was the general gist of the disagreement?

Garcia

I wish I could remember. I don't. I remember that there was some disagreement.

Vasquez

But they did not become a force you could count on or that you played to?

Garcia

No. Definitely. And I think part of the disagreement is that we wanted them to be that kind of force. We wanted them to stand side-by-side with us. We wanted them to have a joint press conference. And they wanted to have an arms-distance relationship with us instead. [Laughter]

Vasquez

Do you remember which of them articulated that best?

Garcia

Pardon me?

Vasquez

Do you remember which one of them articulated that best?

Garcia

No. I can't. I can't. But I remember, I think, that that was the issue around which there was disagreement. That part of our plan was to get their commitments to have a joint press conference with us.

Vasquez

When in the process was this? How early in the process, or how late in the process?

Garcia

I would say it was within the first third of the process. It was early on.

Vasquez

That's interesting. Tell me about your strategy towards approaching black and Jewish legislators. Did you have a different approach to them than you did Anglo or white legislators?

Garcia

Oh, la, la, la, la. Jewish ones. Anglo legislators. Hmm. Think. Can you give me a hint?

Vasquez

[Laughter] Was there a concern, for example, not to have blacks see the Latino efforts as a threat to them? And to try to bring them into a coalition approach?

Was there ever a discussion about that? Was there a concern about black . . . ?

Garcia

Well, I know we didn't want to alienate the black politicians. And that to some degree, we did see that our interests were not always. . . . Well, actually, that our interests were sometimes at odds.

Vasquez

Give me an example if you can think of one.

Garcia

Let's see. Maybe a particular district. [Assemblywoman] Maxine Waters maybe. About her district.

Vasquez

Maxine Waters. Was there an effort to move her district a little bit more into the black community? Was there a reaction on her part not to dilute what she thought was eventually going to be her congressional seat?

Garcia

I think the interests which are sometimes at odds comes more to mind in terms of the local level. For example, at the city council level where we saw that there's been a city council member who's been there for years and years.

Councilman. [He'd] be an elderly fellow.

Vasquez

[Councilman] Gilbert Lindsay?

Garcia

Gilbert Lindsay. And so that comes to mind. Where Gilbert Lindsay's district is one of the districts that has a greater amount of Chicanos within it. Yet, he has been representing them for such a long time. And we saw it in our interest to take some of those Hispanics and put them into another city council district. So we were at odds in that situation.

Vasquez

What was the direction?

Garcia

How do we approach it without creating an animosity or a counterreaction on the part of other black legislators? That was something that we had to be

careful about. And even though I cannot give you a particular example, that type of conflict also comes to mind at the state level.

Vasquez

Well, looking at the record and in interviewing others who were there, it seems that at the state senate hearings in Sacramento. . . . I'm not sure if they were the ones at Sacramento. But Senator Bill Greene was one of the most antagonistic towards Californios's proposals. Is that a fair statement?

Garcia

I don't have a recollection of that. But I do have a general recollection. That we were trying to be careful to present our plan in such a way that we would not alienate the black legislators who are actually people within the black community. And, yet, we did want to present the plan, which would deal with any benefits that blacks were receiving at the expense of Hispanics. I think at times we did take those steps. But I can only remember them on a general basis.

Vasquez

Okay. Do you remember anything at all about a proposal to collapse Senator Ralph [C.] Dills's districts into a Chicano district and get him appointed to the bench?

Garcia

That comes to mind in terms of, at times, our group developing a strategy whereby an otherwise insoluble problem could be solved in elevating a legislator to become a justice of the court of appeals or some other political position. That was a tactic that we utilized on more than one occasion.

Vasquez

Or proposed at least.

Garcia

Yes. That's right.

Vasquez

Was it naive or was it realistic?

Garcia

No. I don't think so. And I think that some of the individuals were even agreeable to such an action being taken, provided the governor or whomever the appointing authority [was] would take that step. I think, for example, at the city council level, if I'm not incorrect, [Councilman Arthur K.] Art Snyder was willing to become a court of appeals justice.

Vasquez

But what broke down?

Garcia

Well, I don't think that we were able to bring it about in terms of the appointing authority being willing to do that.

Vasquez

Why?

Garcia

Actually, my memory of that is vague. So. . . . [Laughter]

Vasquez

All right. Were there any people within Californios that perhaps had their eye on a judgeship? A judicial appointment as a result of that activity?

Garcia

No. I can't think of anybody. No.

Vasquez

All right. Going back to the general questions I was asking you, did Californios for Fair Representation achieve its political objective of increasing political representation for Latinos in California?

Garcia

Yes, we did.

Vasquez

Where and how?

Garcia

[At the] congressional level. We increased it from one to three. And, I think, to a great extent, because of the changes of the lines that were drawn. At the state senate level, there was also an increase, as well as the state assembly level. Also, of course, after the state reapportionment was completed, there was an effort by individuals within Californios. And we, in fact, formed an organization or organizations that went into, specifically, registering voters. And I think that those voter registration efforts definitely helped the candidacy of Estebán Torres, for one.

Vasquez

You headed up one of those here in Los Angeles, didn't you?

Garcia

I was part of one. And, yes, I was one of the co-chairpersons.

Vasquez

And the funds came primarily from Senator Roberti?

Garcia

Senator Roberti contributed \$10,000. Altogether, we probably raised a budget of about, maybe, at least three times that amount. The majority of the monies came from within our own community. We had a very successful breakfast at which \$21,000 was pledged by individuals within our community. And of that \$21,000, I believe we collected somewhere around \$13,000.

Vasquez

How many voters did you register?

Garcia

We registered several thousand.

Vasquez

How many voted?

Garcia

I couldn't tell you. [Laughter] Also, of course, we registered voters in a way which, in the long term impact, may not have been the most productive. But I think it did help.

Vasquez

What was that?

Garcia

We used gimmicks to register voters. We passed out free balloons. We went to shopping centers to register voters instead of doing it door-to-door. But we did pick localities that were within particular districts where we wanted to influence that election.

Vasquez

Can you think of any in particular?

Garcia

Well, certainly in the San Gabriel Valley. We wanted to influence the race for the Congress that Estebán Torres was in.

Vasquez

Uh-huh.

Garcia

I remember registering people in the Pico Rivera area. I remember going to voter registration efforts where Estebán Torres was present. And so were members of our organization. We were there with our helium-filled balloons and our literature, and we were registering voters. We did it in the area for [Assemblyman] Matthew [G.] Martínez also here in the Monterey Park area. And there our dual purpose was not only to help Matthew Martínez. . . . Was also a city council candidate, David Almada. And they were both elected. So we had some impact, even though it was on a limited basis.

Vasquez

What political lessons do you think can be learned from the Californios for Fair Representation experience?

Garcia

I think probably the greatest lesson is that if there is an issue that is one around which unity can be formed, that individuals can set aside their own individual perspectives, their political party perspectives for the good of the greater community. That is possible. And, probably, that is the biggest lesson to be learned. That we, as a community, can set aside our individual differences and work together for a common goal. Many times, when people talk about political efforts on the part of Latinos/Hispanics. . . . And it somewhat upsets me to hear

it. They say, "Well, Hispanics are so jealous that they just cannot work together." It's called "envidia." They say, "Oh, there's just envidia. And no matter what, Mexicans are never going to be able to work together."

Californios is an example against that particular point of view. And I think it's a point of view that needs to be exposed as being false. I don't believe in it. I think that is the biggest example which Californios can be proud of.

Vasquez

What do you think, if anything, that the 1981 effort did organizationally, intellectually, ideologically-however you want to cast it-in preparing a successful 1990-91 effort in reapportionment in the Latino community in California?

Garcia

Certainly, there is a greater awareness of what the issue of reapportionment means to our community. And I think that the individuals who participated in the 1981 effort, I would think, have a greater willingness to participate to some degree-if it is not personally, maybe economically-to contribute to a similar effort. And so it's a slow building process. You know, one of the realizations that I came to after the elections of 1982, which I really should have realized it long before, but that is, progress comes very slow. It comes very slow. And it is a building process where you build upon what happened last month. You build upon what happened last year. And you build upon what happened ten years before. So I expect that the effort in 1990 is going to have greater impact. That there's going to be a greater number of individuals that will be involved in some degree. Because of the work that was done in 1981. Because of the public discussion which occurred as a result of the efforts of Californios and other groups since and before that time.

Vasquez

Do you feel that perhaps demographics and political experience give that effort a little more clout this time around?

Garcia

They do. They do. And also I think that it's a matter of time. I mean, it's going to happen. Eventually, the Chicano/Latino/Hispanic in the state of California is going to be in control. And so it's a matter of time. What I also see that is very important is the economics within our own community. We need to have a greater financial base for whatever it is that we're going to do. And that by having a greater financial base, the changes which we strive for through the efforts of Californios are going to come through the influence of individuals who are going to be politically well connected because they have the money to contribute towards campaigns. They have the accessibility to call that particular legislator and express their point of view on a particular bill in terms of even on a first-name basis. "John, look, this is the way that I feel about- You know, I

was at your fund-raiser. And I bought those two tables. What do you think you can do?" So I think developing influence comes through the developing of the economic base. Which we need to do more of. This is why I, personally, in 1982, made a decision. That instead of continuing for another twenty years to be involved in organizing efforts, that I would instead concentrate on building a business and an economic base. And [in] that way, help political efforts that I believed in, by my contributions. Part of that decision too was because I was tired and I wanted to pay more attention to my own life and my own family. But I just contributed a modest sum- \$500-to the [1990] Chicano Moratorium Committee. But I wouldn't have been able to do it in '82.

Vasquez

You don't seem to feel any meaningful campaign reforms are going to take place. And that more bucks will give you the more cluck in politics?

Garcia

Well, I guess I'm at a point in my life where I just really see that it's very difficult to swim against the stream. And that you should have some folks who are swimming upstream and some that are swimming with the stream.

[Laughter] At my point of my existence, here, I'm swimming along with it and trying to help in that way.

Vasquez

We're gearing up for another reapportionment this next year. And there are different proposals being put before people in the form of initiatives. One of those calls for a blue ribbon-type commission to do reapportionment. How do you feel about reapportionment: should it be the job of the legislator, or should it be the job of a commission?

Garcia

At the present time, I think I would favor a blue ribbon committee.

Vasquez

Why?

Garcia

Because I think that the Latino/Chicano community would do better with a blue ribbon committee at the present time. On a long-term basis though, I would prefer that the present system stay in place. Because with the demographics as they are changing, eventually we're going to be the majority. We're going to have the power, and then it's going to be in our benefit. And I don't see that is such a long ways away when you look at it. You know, how short of a time we are in this lifetime. And so on a long-term basis, I like the present system. On a short-term basis, [under] a blue ribbon commission we would do better.

Vasquez

Let me tell you some of the opposition to that. Some of the concerns that people have to the notion of a blue ribbon committee vis-à-vis a minority

community, or what may not be a minority community. But let's talk about the Mexican or Latino community in California. They say at least with the legislature, you've got some accountability and you've got some representativeness. The kinds of folks that would be picked to be on this blue ribbon committee would very unlikely include anybody from the Mexican community. And, moreover, it would be a process at which there would be very little accountability to the Mexican community. How do you react to that?

Garcia

Well, it would depend.

Vasquez

I guess the question is, why do you think the community would do better with such a commission rather than in the legislature?

Garcia

Well, it's based on the assumption that the individuals who would be serving on this blue ribbon committee would be somewhat objective. That they would apply the criteria which are the legitimate criteria for reapportionment.

Vasquez

Which you understand to be what?

Garcia

Well, a community of interest. Natural boundary lines. Those types of factors. And utilizing those criteria in this instance. We are a community. And we do have, at some places, natural boundaries. I think that we would tend to be united, versus divided. And so, for that reason, I think that with the blue ribbon committee applying the legitimate criteria, we would do better. But in the long term, as I say, I think that we are going to be-no question-the majority in the state of California. We are going to have the most influential politicians in the legislature. So that, eventually, it's going to be-whether it's the Anglos, or blacks, or some others-that will be lobbying legislators who are Hispanic to apply the legitimate criteria. So I think that the shoe is going to be on the other foot.

Vasquez

How optimistic are you about the 1990 reapportionment? And what do you expect we will get?

Garcia

Just in terms of the natural process of improvement, I think that we'll do a little bit better. If history proves us correct, I think that the nineties are going to be a little bit better than the eighties. As the eighties were a bit better than the seventies. It's a natural progress of evolution. I don't think it's going to be any different in the nineties. We'll do a bit better. Progress, as I say, is slow. I don't think that we're going to see anything that is going to be a dramatic change. But we should have a slight improvement over the last ten years.

Vasquez

Is there anything else that you'd like to put on the record in this interview that maybe we haven't gotten to?

Garcia

Just generally to say that I feel very honored to have been part of Californios for Fair Representation. That I was chosen by the membership of the organization to be part of their leadership. Because it was an organization of leadership within our own community and that it was a very unique process that took place. I hope that it's going to be repeated again in 1990. It remains to be seen. I feel tremendously positive about the effort, no matter what personality conflicts there might have been. I think that with time, those personality differences become attenuated. That you become more accepting of those differences and that you forget those differences. You remember the positive side of the organization.

Vasquez

Thank you very much for this interview.

Notes

1. *Pitchess v. Superior Court*, 522 p. 2d 305.
1. *Murgía v. Municipal Court*, 540 P. 2d 44.
1. John E. Huerta, Oral History Interview, Conducted 1990 by Carlos Vásquez, UCLA Oral History Program, for the California State Archives State Government Oral History Program.

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