

A TEI Project

Interview of Jesse Marquez

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1. Transcript

1.1. Session 1 (April 24, 2008)

Collings

Today is April 24, 2008. Jane Collings interviewing Jesse [N.] Marquez at his home in Wilmington. Let's begin at the beginning, Jesse, and hear about where and when you were born.

Marquez

Well, to begin with, my name is Jesse Marquez. It's spelled J-e-s-s-e. Nikolas, N-i-k-o-l-a-s. Marquez, M-a-r-q-u-e-z. I was born in San Pedro, California, also called San Pedro, California, but I was raised all my life in Wilmington. Wilmington and San Pedro are two communities in the city of Los Angeles, so we are actually part of the city of Los Angeles.

Collings

Let's hear something about your family growing up. Do you have brothers and sisters?

Marquez

Well, both my mother and father are both alive, Jesse Marquez Sr., and Delores Marquez. I have one grandmother that's also alive, Rosie Villa, which is my mother's mother. I have five brothers and a sister.

Collings

Oh, lucky you.

Marquez

I'm the oldest and I'm currently fifty-six years old.

Collings

What kinds of things are your brothers and sisters doing at the moment?

Marquez

Well, as many people say, you know, normally you're the odd one and the rest of everybody else is somewhat normal. [laughs] And that's the same in my particular case; I'm the one that's different than all the rest of my brothers and sisters. What has happened, though, three of my brothers are longshoremen that work here at the Port of Los Angeles. One's probably been in now, going on about fifteen years, the other one's probably about six years. My youngest brother now is only about two, three years now as being a longshoreman. I have a sister that works for a merchandising company with pharmaceuticals and vitamins that she handles the distribution throughout the L.A. area. My second brother works for the Los Angeles Unified School District as a landscaper. My third brother, Edward, works at the U.S. Borax Company that makes the Borateen and borax that you use in soaps and detergents and some pharmaceuticals.

Collings

Tell me something about your parents.

Marquez

I've been very fortunate in that, you know, I grew up with my parents. They've always been there. They've always both been loving and caring. They've always been very supportive. Both of them have always been sort of outspoken, so that's one reason why we're not too shy when it comes to dealing with issues or expressing our opinions and concerns. One thing I have learned from a lot of other families, especially friends and kids that I grew up with, that people complain about things, but then do they really do anything about it? Whereas my parents, you know, were somewhat active in the church and the school activities, so they would do certain things. Then when we had concerns, they would tell us, "Well, go look into it." "Well, go talk to the teacher," or, "Go talk to the principal," or, "Go talk to your boss." So they always promoted that, you know, take the initiative type thing and that's been one of the biggest benefits for us.

Marquez

My dad has always been a little bit flexible on us. Since there was five boys before a girl, we never had the benefit of having our older sister sort of boss us around. So being with all boys in the family predominantly, we had a lot of our own initiative to run around on the street and do whatever. That was the poor circumstances of my mother, you know, but as Dad says, "It's okay." Then she would say, "Hey, well, I want them back by a certain time." And he'd say, "Well, they'll get back when they get back." [laughs]

Marquez

Then we sort of had another rule, kind of rule, too, that applies basically to guys, is that sometimes we'd go out with the guys or we were out drinking, for example, with the guys, don't get caught drinking, don't get in an accident. So if

you didn't come home that night, that was no big deal. When you didn't come back the second night is when we sent out the posse and started making phone calls looking for you to see if you were in trouble or you got hurt and you're in the hospital or something of that nature. So there were many different things for us, you know.

Collings

And what did your dad do for a living?

Marquez

My dad retired from the U.S. Borax Company here in Wilmington, where my third brother, Edward, works at right now. So he spent about twenty-eight, almost thirty years there.

Collings

Was your dad born in the U.S.?

Marquez

My dad was born in Guernsey, Wyoming. My mother was born, actually, in the backseat of a Model A here in California, in the Los Angeles area. My grandmother, Rosie, was born in Rose Hills in California. My other grandmother, Vickie, was born in Denver, Colorado. One grandfather was born in Texas, and my other grandfather was born in La Piedad [Michoacán], Mexico.

Collings

So the family goes way back.

Marquez

So we're three generations and then with my children and my brothers' children, we're now four generations.

Collings

And what kind of religious upbringing?

Marquez

Well, we grew up Catholic. My mother and father were participating in the Catholic Church, the Holy Family Catholic Church. They sent us to Holy Family parochial school, and so several of us were in the parochial school, but at that time it was very economically difficult, and so when I hit the seventh grade, there was an opportunity for me to attend summer school at Wilmington Junior High School. Well, remember, I'd gone to a Catholic school all my life, where you wore a school uniform, and then I go to a public school for summer school and got to see you can wear anything you want. [laughs] So that was pretty nice, and then plus there were more students there and so I got to like that environment, and so I asked my parents could I switch over and go, continue in the junior high school, which is now called middle school, there. Then after that, all of us switched over going to public schools. So I went

originally to Holy Family Elementary, Wilmington Junior High School, then I graduated from Phineas Banning High School, also here in Wilmington.

Collings

Were your parents religious?

Marquez

I would say they were probably more religious at the beginning. Something that's also happened within I'll say more so the Mexican American community versus the Mexican community, in that because here in the United States we're exposed to a lot more and other religions, as well as modern philosophies, that their opinions of how dedicated you must be started to change. Probably I was the most radical one to change, and actually I have excommunicated the Catholic Church from my life because I saw all the negative things that they did culturally to not only the Mexican culture, but all of the Latino culture, Native American religious cultures through the Americas. So I've taken a very negative look towards Christian religions overall and have adopted more of a Native American spiritual aspect of it.

Marquez

The other beauty of my growing up and my searching out there in the world of things, I've been exposed to other religions, so I had an opportunity to start reading, studying Islam and studying the Book of Quran, studying Buddhism and the teachings of Buddha, and so I've developed a very different perspective of the world, and actually, a more love for other religions and the philosophies of those religions, because what I've discovered is that when you look at the best teachings of any religion, they're all very much similar and they're all very beautiful.

Collings

Right. Did your family travel back to Mexico at all? You weren't identified with any particular village by this point, it doesn't sound like.

Marquez

No, but what happened is that our family, my mom and dad, did want us to know our culture and our roots, so to speak, and so we took off for like a three-week summer vacation one time and filled up the station wagon and literally drove from Los Angeles to La Piedad, where family is all the way down to Mexico City. So we actually got to travel and pass through cities to get to know that. That was back in 1968, right after the Olympics in Mexico City. Sadly enough, though, it's been our family, out of all my other cousins, that have been the only ones to ever have done that. Then myself, because of my interest in culture and history, you know, I've been back several times. In fact, this past December and January I was in Mexico for five weeks. One of the reasons was I always wanted to spend Christmas down in Mexico to see what the holidays were. I always wanted to spend at least one New Year's down there to see what

it was like to be down there, and so I made an effort to do that, and that's what I did.

Collings

And how was it?

Marquez

I just loved it. It was very different and it was a lot what I expected. The only thing, too, is our families are different in how they celebrate things, so other Mexican friends of mine that described how their family do things, our family did some things that were somewhat different than that. So it was kind of interesting to compare different cultures and different families and generations of how they do things, as well.

Collings

So they did things differently because they were different generations removed from Mexico?

Marquez

Exactly, yes.

Collings

So what are the things that your family did as a result of that generational difference?

Marquez

Well, I'll tell you there was one big disappointment. [laughs] One thing which I really wanted to do was to eat, like, homemade tamales from Mexico. Since I was going to be spending the time with my aunt and then my other cousins would be coming over and other uncles, as well, but I was looking forward for a great Mexican spread of food, Mexican tamales, menudo, everything you could possibly think of, and I ended up being in a state of shock.

Collings

Why? They were ordering from--

Marquez

My aunt made spaghetti. [mutual laughter] And she made a meatloaf. So here I was going with all these great expectations, whereas my family here has tamales for Christmas.

Collings

Well, was she doing that for you or is that what they were eating?

Marquez

I don't know if she did it for me, but I mean, you know, it seemed normal to everybody there. [laughs] Probably I might have had some influence on that, being from the United States, that they wanted to make sure I was comfortable with that, but then that's not what I really wanted. I didn't say anything about it, but I mean, that was a disappointment thing right there.

Collings

Yes. You said that you grew up in this neighborhood, is that correct? Right around here?

Marquez

Well, I grew up in Wilmington all my life. Now, Wilmington is a very small town. It's only approximately four miles by four miles, so like five minutes of driving, you leave the town. I actually grew up in the east side of Wilmington. Right now I live on the west side of Wilmington. So we're talking five miles' driving distance, okay. So basically I lived on the east side of Wilmington up until I was eleven years old and then my parents bought a house, and actually the northwest side of Wilmington, they built a few new homes. So my parents bought a home and then my grandparents were still alive, and we'd always lived behind them in the east side of Wilmington, and so then they bought the house next to us. So my grandmother on my mother's side, we've always lived neighbors. So I grew up in the Northwest end, now sort of like on the Southwest end closer to the port.

Collings

What was the neighborhood like when you were growing up?

Marquez

It's amazing, because as children sometimes you don't realize certain things. Like the east side of Wilmington, I grew up very poor. There were actually seven of us living in a one-bedroom house. At that time you don't realize that, okay? You don't realize that there's seven people living in--you realize you're crowded and you realize, you know, I wish I had my own room and I wish we had a bigger house, but then it doesn't really register quite yet.

Collings

Did your friends have similar circumstances?

Marquez

Oh, all of my friends had similar circumstances. Some had two bedrooms, you know. I think the maximum was two bedrooms of anyone that I knew. So the way it worked at our house is that it was a one-bedroom, but we also had a walk-in closet, so the walk-in closet was made into a second bedroom, and then a bunk-bed set was put in there. In the living room we had a dining room and a little kitchenette area. Well, that became the second set of bunk beds. [laughs] Okay? Then there was the baby, so there was two, two, and five with the baby in the crib and then my mom and dad. And that's how we grew up on that end of it.

Collings

What was the neighborhood like?

Marquez

I had a very happy childhood--there were other friends' kids that I grew up, we played together, run across the street, through the alleys, climbing trees.

Banning Park was only a few blocks away and we were technically supposed to walk over the bridge or walk down the street and not cross through the railroad tracks, but inevitably we'd take the shortcut through the railroad tracks. [laughs]

Collings

Did everyone go to the same church?

Marquez

Everyone went to the same church. I do remember there was a few other kind of Christian churches nearby, but I really didn't know too many friends there. Wilmington was probably about 70 percent Mexican American at that time. Wilmington is sort of unique, too, in that we have many generations. Basically once Mexican families move here, they stayed here, and so I would say out of the 70 percent, probably 60 percent had been here since the beginning, and then as other Mexican families came in, they also stayed. We also had a lot of Anglos, whites, we had Filipinos quite a bit, and a black population, although when it came to going to Holy Family, it was pretty much 98 percent Hispanic. We actually did have one black family, the Johnson family, but they weren't black-black; they were Panamanian and they spoke Spanish. Okay. So many people don't realize that if you're black from a Latin American country, you consider yourself Latino from that country, you don't consider yourself like Afro American, like Afro Americans in the United States, their roots would go back there. They speak Spanish and they've grown up with salsa music, eating Latin American tortillas and tacos and burritos, and things of that nature. So they're more indigenous Latin than they are Afro American. So we don't see the difference. There's no difference.

Collings

So how has the area changed since you've been here?

Marquez

Well, what has changed is that there was a lot of undevelopment in the homes. There was only one area that you would consider the rich area, and that was near Banning Park. The founder of Wilmington was General Phineas Banning and he came from Wilmington, Delaware, so he named the town Wilmington. Then General Banning was here because of the Civil War and he purchased part of the Mexican land grant. So he owned like 300-plus acres of land here and what is now Banning Park, and there's a big white mansion and horse stables there and garden, was his home. So you can actually go to Banning Mansion right now and take tours and it's all decorated way back from the 1800s. Now, General Phineas Banning is also a noteworthy person in history because he built the first railroad, had the first stagecoach line going from downtown Los Angeles, at that time, to the port, and he is the founder of building the Port of Los Angeles. Then after that was the railroad built from the

Port of Los Angeles going to downtown Los Angeles. So in the history books, he is very famous because of his historical aspect of that.

Marquez

So growing up in Wilmington, that's always been drummed into our history. Unfortunately, you had a few people like me that are a little bit different because we're Mexican, and I grew up claiming to be Chicano, which is completely different than a Mexican American. A Chicano is a Mexican American, but we're a politically aware person and a culturally aware person, so therefore our perspective is completely different, and while we're busy studying the history of General Phineas Banning, the question I'm asking is, well, how many Native Americans did he massacre that lived here along the coastal waters and the villages that used to be here and were never told that part of history? So some things are a little bit different like that.

Marquez

Growing up as a child, like I said, we grew up, I was pretty much normal. Academically I was pretty good. I was an A-minus student in elementary school, so there was a lot looking good for me there. If you had asked me at that time what I wanted to be, I wanted to be a scientist. You know, I really didn't know what kind of scientist; I would just say scientist.

Collings

Why did you think you wanted to be a scientist?

Marquez

Because I liked researching things. When we had good years, like on birthdays and Christmas, my parents would buy me like a chemistry set, they bought me an erector set, so anything like that, you know.

Collings

What years would these have been, just to refresh me?

Marquez

When I was like ten years old, eleven years old, twelve years old, I would collect insects and butterflies, so they would take me to the library and I would look up books on butterflies. So I had a butterfly collection. There is one cute little story in that. Since I had a lot of younger brothers, you know, one time the Fourth of July was coming, and so I wanted to do something special for that. I had my chemistry set and fooled around with that. Then I got a brainstorm, well, fireworks are made out of gunpowder. Well, maybe I can learn how to make gunpowder. Then I can make some fireworks for my younger brothers and sisters. So I go to the library and I look up in the dictionary "gunpowder," and it said it's made out of sodium nitrate, carbon, and sulfur, but then there was no formula for it and I couldn't find no formula for it. Then we had little Pat's Hobby Shop over here that sold chemicals for chemistry sets, and so I told my dad I needed to buy some more chemicals, so I found sodium nitrate there. I

didn't tell him what I was going to do. And I found sulfur there, but I didn't have carbon, but batteries have a little carbon rod in the middle, which I knew that from breaking open batteries to see what was inside of them. So I was able to clean the carbon rod over there, get a hammer and smash it and crush it to make a powder out of it, and then started my little experimentation.

Marquez

Well, one-third, one-third, one-third, lit a match, it didn't light up. I actually kept a log and I don't know how many hundreds of combinations it was, but months later, you know, one day I lit a match and, "schooo," it lit up. So I found the right little combination.

Collings

Did you have friends who were interested in science or were your brothers or your sister interested in science?

Marquez

Well, my younger brothers were always looking up at me and seeing those types of things, but my friends, really, no one else was sort of like that, you know. No one else wanted to experiment with me. Most of them liked playing Army and soldiers. We had, like, a bunch of empty lots, like during springtime when the grass would grow, you know, two, three feet tall, we'd play Army, we'd play wars. It's sadly enough that war was a thing that we grew up as being a thing to play with. Our dad bought us little Army men and little guns and stuff, and as a child I remember playing war, was the thing that we always did. We would dig trenches and we'd choose teams. I mean, we had a great time. There would be empty lots and these grass clods are your bombs and hand grenades. [laughs] We'd be all dirty and everything, but our parents didn't care because we played in an empty lot next door. You got dirty, you came home, you didn't get in trouble. No one got hurt seriously from it, and that was one of the things there.

Marquez

So I was sort of the oddball one interested in doing that, but I also loved reading. So we would collect comic books and so I would do a lot of reading. A lot of my friends collected comic books. That's one thing we all did collectively is buy Superman, Batman, you know, all those types. Fantastic Four. We were always reading.

Collings

Did you feel like you were being encouraged at school?

Marquez

Well, I got praised at school because academically I was doing good, but in Catholic schools most students are doing good academically. You don't have that many students not doing good or not doing well as compared to a public school, where you have your top 10 percent of the class, then middle, then you

have the bottom few that aren't doing good, and then it's obvious in class they're not doing their homework or they don't know what. In a Catholic school it's a little bit different than that. Everyone's pretty much on the same level. Now, I did have a problem, though; I was not good at math. That was my weakest subject. Okay? The problem, too, was that parents, like my parents weren't real good at math either. I mean, they did their best in helping us, helped the best they could, but I always had a problem with math. Math was always a problem for me, even to the point when I got to high school it was very difficult for me. In fact, I did not get good grades in math and in physics and chemistry, even biology I did not do that good, because it was getting too much of formulas. So, no, the reading was the big thing. I was excellent at reading. I had hundreds of comic books. We exchanged comic books.

Marquez

So, now to get back to my gunpowder story, so here comes the Fourth of July. Well, I wanted to make a volcano. Well, I don't know if you know, but in Mexican families our mom makes tortillas. Well, we couldn't afford to buy clay to make a volcano, but we could get flour and make masa. So I made this big, about a foot wide and about a foot tall volcano made out of masa. We were able to get some brown paint. I think my dad may have bought us some paint, so I painted the volcano brown and a little bit of green on it to make it look like a volcano. So we had some small little fireworks that day, that evening, and then the big moment came when I told my mom I had something special. Then we'd run outside and come walking in, my brother's helping me carry it in, a volcano, and we put it on the table, and told her we made a volcano.

Marquez

Everyone was, "Oh, how nice that is."

Marquez

So I light the volcano and there it is erupting with these flames coming out of it and it's sparkling, you know. So my brothers were all excited, my sister was all excited about that, because they got to see me do something really good about it.

Marquez

Later on, a few months later I'm in the patio with my erector set and I'm making something, and what I was making was a rocket. So I was getting coffee cans and I had a tin snip, and so I was screwing the cans together to make my little rocket. I got like a Purex bottle and I cut the top of it to get my little nose cone, I had little fins, and I'm putting this thing together and I'm outside on the patio working on it, and my mom comes walking out the door and she's washing clothes. "Oh, what are you making?"

Marquez

"Oh, I'm making a rocket."

Marquez

"Oh, that's real nice," and she goes in the house.

Marquez

Then about five minutes later, you hear, you know, pounding of steps, my mom running through the kitchen, she opens the door, "No, you're not going to make no rocket."

Marquez

Well, she realized if could make the gunpowder volcano, then I would make enough gunpowder to put in the rocket and it would probably blow up and either kill me or badly injure me or something. [laughs] So that ended my scientific engineering career as a scientist and I was prohibited from that point on doing anything really science and scientific.

Collings

So you didn't have like a science teacher who was kind of egging you on or anything like that?

Marquez

No, in elementary school. No, because we had nuns at that time, and so none of them were in the scientific world of things; they were all on the religious end of things.

Collings

Okay. Let's talk a little bit about what you were doing in high school, because you said, when we were talking earlier, that you had begun to be political active at an early age.

Marquez

Well, just before that, one other little thing. My father had found out that there was a Boy Scout troop here in Wilmington, and asked us if we'd like to join it. So all of us joined it. Actually, I was one of the older ones at the time. So that had a major influence on my life. They had an opportunity to take us camping. We got to learn from working on your merit badges, things about insect collecting, a little bit than I was doing when I was by myself. So we had leadership there. We traveled different locations, and it was absolutely great. In fact, when I got too old to be a Boy Scout, because I turned eighteen, then I became the assistant Scoutmaster to the troop. So we did that for quite a few years. So that's one thing we did get to learn.

Marquez

While I was young, also right after that, even though we were close to the port and to the water here, none of us had ever had a boat. None of us had friends that had boats. None of us knew how to go sailing, even though we were right here by the water.

Collings

Did you know how to swim?

Marquez

We knew how to swim. In Wilmington was Machado Lake and Harbor Park, and there's a Machado swimming pool. So we all learned, everyone from Wilmington would go there and the parents would take us to take swimming lessons during the summer. So all of us, as children, did learn how to swim.

Marquez

But what happened one year is that there was a gentleman who wanted to form an Explorer Post, which is the older students once you come out of the Boy Scouts, and he wanted to do a sailing one. So like I was all excited, told my friends, "Hey, you know," so I got like about a dozen or so of us that were all sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, in that range, and we all wanted to form this Explorer Post. He got a catamaran boat donated, but it needed to be repaired. It was about, oh, say, twelve feet long and about six-foot wide. So he brought it to our backyard since we had a nice big yard and my mom said it was okay to bring it, where we were doing the sanding of it and doing all that to get it ready.

Marquez

Well, we were just about done with this after a whole summer of working on this thing, and he announces to us that he can't be our Explorer Post master because he got a new job and he's going to be moving. And to make things worse and the insult to us kids, he took the catamaran boat away from us, took it, and I don't know what he did with it, but I mean, we didn't end up with it. So that ended our career of ever wanting to do that.

Marquez

Okay. So the next big step in my life was when I was sixteen years old.

Collings

And this is when you were in high school?

Marquez

I'm just starting high school. I'm like in tenth grade at that time when I'm sixteen years old. Well, what happened is that at that time in the city of Los Angeles they had, because of the sixties, we're talking about 1968 when I'm going into high school, we had the War on Poverty, where they wanted to create summer jobs for youth. So in the city of Los Angeles they created the Teen Post Program and it was throughout the L.A. County area. So Wilmington, they established a Teen Post Youth Center in Wilmington, there was one in San Pedro, one in Long Beach, one in Carson, Harbor City, Gardena, so most areas had one little Teen Post Center where kids could go hang out at. They had different activities there. We had a pool table; you could play pool. We had a jukebox to play music. They had arts and crafts. In Wilmington we were one of the more famous ones, because we actually would put on dances and we had some of the big bands and big local bands at that

time. Like, for example, in L.A. the most famous Chicano band was the Midnighters. So you ask any Chicano or Mexican from that time period, they were number one. So they would always play at our dances. Then when, like, Tierra came out and Malo came out, they performed at the Longshoreman Hall and we sponsored that. Then a lot of the local bands, we were famous for our local Chicano bands, and so we put on those dances and we were the ones that would work selling the tickets and the refreshments and stuff like that.

Marquez

But what happened is that one year I was hired to work on the summer youth crew, which is basically cleaning the empty lots and the weeds and stuff like that. Well, they told us we were going to make so much per hour, whatever it was, and we were going to work like thirty hours a week. But then it ends up we were working like eight hours a day. Well, two weeks later, we get our first paycheck and I've been keeping notes how many hours we worked, and so I look at the paycheck and I looked at my notes. We were supposed to make this amount of money and the paycheck was less. So I talked to my little crew leader, I said, "Hey, we worked forty hours. We got paid for thirty-five. What's going on?"

Marquez

He says, "Well, I don't know. Let me go talk to the supervisor," and he goes and talks to the supervisor.

Marquez

Then I'm called into the office with the summer youth job coordinator and he goes, "Hey, Jesse, I hear you're causing some trouble out there."

Marquez

I said, "No, I was just keeping notes and we should have made this salary."

Marquez

He says, "You know what, Jesse? The problem with you kids is that you don't appreciate jobs and how hard it is to find jobs. Yeah, we worked you extra hours, and, yeah, you're not going to get paid for it, but that's just the way it is. So we can't have you--you know, I understand that you got everybody upset outside now and all the kids now are asking how come they're all being cheated and now you've instigated all these problems now and we're not going to pay you the money. But I have some bad news now. We're going to have to lay you off now. You're being fired because we can't have no trouble here. It just seems that you don't understand."

Marquez

I said, "Well, okay, whatever." So I got fired.

Marquez

Well, about a week later, I get called up by the Teen Post director and he says, "Jesse, I found out that you got fired, and I realize it really wasn't your fault,

but I have something that's the perfect thing for you. UCLA has teamed up with the Teen Post, Incorporated, downtown for like a six-week summer youth leadership program and I'd like to send you and one other person to attend it. So what's going to happen is that they're going to pay you a stipend like two hundred dollars a month, you're going to live there on campus, you're going to live in the dormitories. They're going to feed you breakfast, lunch, and dinner. I hear they've got tennis courts and swimming pools; you'll be able to use that. They're going to teach you how to be a student leader, so you're going to have to attend classes, you get to see some films, and you're going to do some reading. Would you like to do that?"

Marquez

I said, "Hell, yeah, anything to get out of Wilmington and go to UCLA. All of us have heard of UCLA." [laughs]

Collings

Was this the High Potential Program, what they were calling at that time?

Marquez

Well, we called just a Teen Post. Now, there was the college recruitment, but this was not it.

Collings

This is different, okay. All right.

Marquez

This was different. This was like high school students.

Collings

Oh, high school. You were still in high school, of course.

Marquez

This was high school students, Student Leadership Program. So I went and I was attending that program. Now, here's why this was the most significant thing to ever happen in my life. This was not what I'll call the normal student leadership program where you have your high school student presidents go and your Student Leadership Council go. This was not that. Okay. This was an all ethnic minority student program. It was Chicano students; Latino students; it was black, Afro American students; and Native American students. And I think there were a few Filipino that was part of this, but there was about fifty of us students. Our instructors were from MEChA [Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán], the Mexican American students, MEChA students. We had the Brown Berets. We had Black Panthers. We had SNCC [Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee], American Indian Movement, ACLU, and then a few others. They were like our instructors. So at that time you would consider them the most radical left, communist, socialist organizations you could possibly imagine that were our student instructors and leaders and counselors in this program.

Marquez

We got to read all kinds of literature from different countries; magazines. We saw various types of films from all over the world talking about progress of things, cultural things, racial discrimination, cultural genocide, and that made a super impact on me. I really got to see the world how it really was compared to where I grew up. When you grow up in a small community like mine, you don't really travel anywhere, you know. You grow up there all your life, you live in Los Angeles all your life, you never go out of state, and since all my friends had always been Mexican, I didn't grow up with too many blacks until I went to high school, and there wasn't that many blacks in high school. Out of, say, a population of 1800 probably 1500 were Mexican, so we're talking about 300 that were white or black and other. So that was a big eye-opener for me and that really formulated my whole perspective of the world.

Collings

Did you share what you were learning with your parents?

Marquez

Well, when I would come home, on the weekends we would come home, too, I would show them some of the stuff, and it actually upset my mom and dad, and especially my mother. My mother was really scared to death and paranoid about what was going on, because she says, "Oh, man, you know, why are they teaching you that?" She couldn't grasp that and understand that. Then what really made it rough was me graduating from that and afterwards, because after that, I became a hardcore activist. I was in high school, to give you an example, like, in my senior year I had to take senior English, but then I was a B-plus student in high school, too. So at that time I was college prep, I was taking the college prep classes. So here I am in senior English, and we're in just the first day or two and we're sitting in class and our teacher explains that we're going to be studying the book "The Scarlet Letter" by Nathaniel Hawthorne, it was mandatory reading, and we were going to spend six, seven weeks critiquing this book. And then I raised my hand and the teacher looks around, "You have a question already?" and says, "Are you Jesse?"

Marquez

"Yes, I'm Jesse."

Marquez

"Do you have a question?"

Marquez

I said, "Yes. Why are we going to waste six to seven weeks of our lives studying this book way back then, that has no relevance whatsoever to us today? Why can't we read a book by a Chicano author, a black author, a Native American author?"

Marquez

She says, "That's enough. Come up here. I want you to go to the dean's office."

Marquez

So I was sent to the dean's office. So the dean looks at me and says, "Jesse, you're a very bright young man here and you've been active in a couple of things here already, but in my honest opinion, you'll probably die a young man or you'll be locked up, but since you are college prep, you might make it, okay? You have to have this class. You have to pass this class. Shut up and do what the teacher tells you."

Collings

Well, that's inspiring.

Marquez

Okay. So I go back to class. The teacher says, "Did you have a discussion with the dean?"

Marquez

I said, "Yes."

Marquez

"Do you understand what he had to say?"

Marquez

"Yes."

Marquez

"Okay. So I can expect your cooperation?"

Marquez

"Yes."

Marquez

Well, to give you the short version, at the end of the class she says, "Jesse, I don't know how every book that we've read, every poem that we've read, every critique of what you've written always has some political, racist, cultural slant and opinion about it," as simple as it was.

Marquez

And I looked at her and I said, "Well, Mrs. McKenna, there's a reason, because, see, I consider myself to be a Chicano student, and since this is my last year with you, you're a coconut." See, she was Mexican American and at that time didn't claim that she was a Chicana. She was an American of Mexican descent and didn't recognize the political movement of us next generation coming up.

Collings

How did your parents feel about the Vietnam War?

Marquez

They saw it as a war. They didn't understand the ramifications of it. My dad did go to the Korean War, so he was in the Korean War. He was drafted to be in the Korean War. My uncle went. So we understood that when it happens it happens, you've got to go, you've got to go. In my case I was absolutely against

it. I was a war protester. That really scared them, is the fact that I did protest. And the sad part about it is I got my, what do you call it, my number when--

Collings

Draft number?

Marquez

Draft number. I was like 76 or 176, which meant I was gone. The minute I turned eighteen, graduated, I was gone. Okay? Well, I was fortunate and blessed because I had to go for my physical, and many doctors at that time did not like the war. I happened to be fortunate there was a guardian angel up there. I got one of those doctors. Then something else had just happened a few months before that that I didn't know about, my parents did not know about, some of my friends had formed a club and it was called the Chemeria Club and it was made up of mostly Mexicans and Filipinos and a few Samoans. It wasn't a gang-gang, but it was more of a social club, but we learned one of the martial arts called Limalama, which is a fighting skill to protect yourself, that type of thing.

Marquez

Well, I wanted to learn how to do that, and so you're going through your karate-type exercises, and one of them, you stick your hand straight out, palms up. I could not turn my right hand palms up, like I'm showing you right now. Well, there's a bone deformation in my hand where I cannot turn my hand palm up. So here I am being examined by this medical doctor and he says, "Well, you're perfectly healthy. I've examined you and there's absolutely nothing wrong. Is there anything that you can think of that you should tell me?"

Marquez

I said, "Well, I just noticed something the other day, and I mentioned it to my mom and dad, too. I don't know what it is, but I'll show you. I can't turn my right hand up."

Marquez

He goes, "What? Show me."

Marquez

So I stick out my two hands, stretch them out palms up, and I can't turn my right palm up. He says, "Oh, well, you have a bone deformation in your arm, and I have good news for you, Jesse, I'm going to give you an F-4," or 4-F, "on it and you will not be eligible to go to the war and to the military, because, see, when you're in war, you're being taught how to put your guns and rifles and how to cock it. Not being able to have full access in rotary, whatever, of your arm could slow you down and endanger your life." So I was given a 4-F status.

Marquez

So I come home and my mom and dad are like in the living room waiting for me, because they're both nervous to find out, because here I am the first son

and I'm the oldest of the family, too. So like all aunts and uncles know. My mom and dad have called everyone, everyone is praying, "Please, please, please," and then I come home and say, "I'm 4-F." And there was like the big sigh of relief. Well, a big sigh of relief on one hand, and then not so much of a sigh of relief, because they know I'm an anti-war protester. [laughs] So I was. I was big time. Anywhere in L.A., at the high school, on street corners, I was war-protesting.

Marquez

Another thing, too, was that as a result of my teachings, learning at the Student Leadership Center, I also became interested in my history and culture, and so began to read other books by Chicano writers. After that I started building a collection of things, you know, and reading left-of-center literature, progressive literature. At the same time I started buying books on the history of Mexico, you know, the Aztecs, the Mayans, and I wanted to learn more about that. Early in the seventies a book came out by Professor Rodolfo Acuña, who was a professor at Northridge University, called "Occupied America: The Chicano Struggle for Liberation." I couldn't put that book down. It was everything I could want in a book, talking about the history of our people and the history of how our role was in the Americas, how the United States stole the Southwest from Mexico and invaded the country of Mexico. So that started filling a lot of the blanks of things.

Marquez

One sad aspect about our family as compared to many other generations, and now generations, in that when my parents grew up, Los Angeles was very racist, extremely racist. If you were Mexican or any Spanish-speaking culture and you went to, say, elementary school, like my mom and dad went to Wilmington Park Elementary School, the teachers--first of all, there were no Hispanic teachers; it was all white. And they were so racist, you could not speak Spanish on campus. You couldn't even speak Spanish before school, lunchtime, or even after high school. They would literally hit you and threaten you. Same thing in the parochial schools. If you spoke Spanish in a parochial school, the nuns would hit you with a ruler for speaking Spanish. So to protect me and my younger brothers and our generation, they did not teach us Spanish. So that's why in Los Angeles and other areas we have whole populations of Chicano students, Mexican students, that do not speak Spanish because of that. So our vocabulary is very limited to like "Hello," "Good morning," just the basics, but conversational, no.

Marquez

Well, I objected to that, and even though I did not grow up speaking Spanish, because of my political activity and my interest in literature, I started to learn a little bit more Spanish, my friends started teaching me Spanish, so that I'm not

real fluent, excellent Spanish today, I am Spanish-fluent where I can speak and carry conversations and I do that. I can read excellently in Spanish. So you write something in Spanish, or say--here's something I have done that's kind of a cute different thing. Friends of mine that are Mexican, okay, 100 percent born in Mexico, speak Spanish and write in Spanish, I correct their Spanish, their writing, because I can read and understand where you misspelled the word. So I'm good at doing that and I can read Spanish newspapers and books and magazines. Now, I have a couple of dictionaries there to help me with the words I don't know, and so I pick up a lot of that. So that is something that I did get involved with when coming right out of high school and in the movement fighting for bilingual education. At that time there was no bilingual education. In fact, it wasn't until 1964 that they passed a law here in California, in 1964, that says you could not discriminate against Spanish speaking and schools could not discriminate. So it wasn't until '64 that that transition began, but they were still racist for the next ten years after that. So the movement, my activities, were fight anti-war, and then fighting for bilingual and multicultural education. So the L.A. Unified School District, I was in their face like all the time.

Marquez

Another thing that happened in that early seventies because of the movement is that the board allowed several commissions to be created. So there was a Mexican American Education Commission, Afro American, Asian, and Native American Education Commission, which it would be people from the community would sit on the commission to make recommendations to the L.A. Unified School District. So that was up and running. I found out about it right about when I was eighteen, nineteen, right after high school. I might have been twenty about that time. But it was that they existed when I was in my meetings in L.A. So I started attending some of their meetings. Then some of the East L.A. people--it was everyone from East L.A. at that time, all forty members on the Mexican American one, said, "Well, hey, we should have a few other people. Jesse, how would you like to be a member of this?"

Marquez

I said, "Well, yes, great. Bring some new fresh blood." So I was the first one outside of the East L.A. clique to come into it. Then shortly thereafter, I started saying, "Well, we should have more members from other people, so we should maybe divide up and create little districts. So we'll have a Harbor area and then a South Central L.A. and then a West L.A." Then they voted to eventually start phasing in that. So I created the Harbor Mexican American Commission. I can't remember if it was five or six people. I had an election here. I made out flyers, passed them out to everyone, "Come join the Harbor Mexican American Education Commission," as part of the whole group, and I recruited other

people to join it, and then we started attending the meeting, and that really brought that organization or that little commission to really be a strong organization doing that and fighting for it. Since I was good academically, you know, I was a good writer and I found out I could do, I could read things and write things and prepare things, so everyone looked at me to help do things. So I would write proposals and stuff.

Marquez

So actually, you won't read it in any educational history books; you might find the Mexican American Education there. Raul Arreola was executive director. You'll read some things about him being mentioned in it, but then a lot of the others of us you won't find that anywhere. It's part of that lost part of history. But that was my portion; I was the first one outside of the clique to come in there and then propose and make a motion to add the other districts into it. Now, about ten, fifteen years ago, new board members killed it and eliminated it, so it doesn't exist any longer. But the foundation of bilingual education, multi education, was based on us commissions working together.

Collings

Well, that's wonderful.

Marquez

Another little thing that was a little bit different, too, is that they were creating community clinics, so there was free clinics. You know, the big one was the Hollywood one that you always heard about all the time, but we created a Wilmington Free Clinic. So I was supporting that organization.

Marquez

Another unique thing that I was part of that doesn't exist now, but I was one of the trailblazers was, is that there was the Los Angeles Family Planning Council and they wanted to do an experiment because it was always women in family planning, but they thought that if we could teach young men in high school, young youth, you know, how to do family planning, we wouldn't be having so many illegitimate children, things of that nature. So they created a men's component of it. So they wanted to have one Latino, one black, Native American, Asian, and one white. So we were the first five young men to be trained in family planning and go through the same training programs as the women were going to be certified. It was kind of interesting because we had finished the classes--we were beginning our classes and there were women that were not happy with us males participating. Some of them were very conservative--they came from--some of them might have come from, like, some of the churches and some of the religious foundations that were supportive. They objected to men being in the class. Their religion, their background, they just could not do it, and the director told them, "Well, hey, well, you don't have to be in the class." It was as simple as that. They were told, you know, either

accept it or walk. So we won that war to force them to allow us to participate in this class and this program.

Marquez

After that program there was one more class to go, where they were fighting it and they actually did win it. It was sort of iffy for us, because the next portion of the advanced thing that we never got to, because our program was cancelled the next year, they weren't able to stop us at that point, but eventually they did use a political pressure to stop the program. It would have been like going into doing the pap smear and all that end of it, so we never got to that point. But as far as I was concerned, even though it was only one year, it was an absolute success. It taught me about family planning, and so what happened is I went to the high schools, and since I already a relationship with the Teen Post Centers, I just traveled to all the Teen Post Centers. So my calling card was passing out a box of condoms to all the boys. Naturally I was guest speaker at all the gym classes for the boys in high schools. So I was one of the pioneers in doing that.

Collings

That's great. So let me just backtrack a little bit. You went to this camp, consciousness-raising session at UCLA, and you said that this was sort of the awakening for you. At that point when you came back to high school, I mean, were you planning to go to college or were you planning to graduate and get into all these kinds of--

Marquez

Well, I was college prep. I was looking at going to college. I only made one little mistake. So I was graduating, okay? Another thing happened that made me a little better person--it was another exception to the rule for me. My dad used to like to run when he was in high school. So I had joined the track and cross-country team. Well, I was a runner. I was a very fast runner. Okay? Well, we won city championship in track and we won in city championship in cross-country. I was the star athlete for Banning. I hold several records even to this very day there at Banning High School.

Collings

Wow.

Marquez

So again, that is an influencing factor, because, see, I had not lost. You know, I'm being nurtured by my family, loving caring, to be successful. I'm receiving this leadership training. At the same time I am blessed with a good athletic ability of winning. Okay? So running in my track team and cross-country team, I was a big influence there, because just before I went to high school, between junior high school and that first year, I heard about some track running events, and in junior high school we liked running. So I asked my dad if he would take us to some of these track events. So my dad would drive me and my friends,

and we would win. So we formed our own little track club. So my dad would-- you know, we'd fill up the car and we'd go to these track events and we would win. So here I come to Banning High School, you know a freshman, tenth grade, and the first year, you know, first thing is cross-country season, and the coach is looking at us, you know, these little scrawny kids out there. "Well, I'm your coach, Coach Pete Samporini, and this is the cross-country team. You'll be running a little over two miles. And just to ask any of you, have any of you ever done any running before?"

Marquez

Naturally, about ten of us raised our hands. "Oh, my god, you guys have done running?"

Marquez

We said, "Yes."

Marquez

He says, "What kind of running?"

Marquez

"Well, we formed a track club this summer, we ran all summer competing and we got medals and stuff."

Marquez

"Oh, my god." You know, "The gods have answered me." He couldn't believe it. I mean, that's never happened. Normally you have a couple of people that run, but not form a whole little club on your own and do this type of thing, and here I had started the track club with all my friends and we did this.

Marquez

Well, in the cross-country world of high school, the way you evaluate how good a team is going to be, if you're going to make it to the finals, for example, is how many guys or girls, for that matter, are under five minutes in the mile. Okay? Well, if you have five boys, you know, on your team that run under five minutes, you have a chance of placing in city championship in the top five. Okay? Well, guess what? We had ten under five miles. I was not a good long-distance runner. I was a sprinter. I was the tenth guy under five minutes. We slaughtered them in city championship in that freshman year. In fact, our second team--well, the way the points are added is the first five guys that come in, you win, because add have your first five points, and the lowest wins. So from guy six, seven, eight, and nine, you push back the other guys to make them score higher. Well, our second team, number six through ten, including me, would have taken third place in the city champion. It turns out I was a sprinter, so I would run the hundred-yard dash, the two-four-hundred.

Marquez

That year was also unique for us in my senior year because they did not have the four-by-four, where four guys run one lap each, the 400 or the 440 at that

time. That was the first time being introduced to it. Well, since I was a sprinter and they created that, I would run the 100, but I would run on the 4-by-100. So I ran the 4-by-100, and I was third man, then I would run the 4-by-4 and I was third man, and then I would run the 400. And if it was a close race, they'd put me in the 200, because I could always take a third place no matter what and gain one point. So those were my key races that I ran. So again, that's another evolving thing that added to my character and personality-building because of having that winning streak, you know. Nothing can stop me.

Collings

So were you planning, once you got out of high school, to start a career as a community activist, or were you thinking that you were going to go to college?

Marquez

I was still undecided. You have to realize I'm doing all this stuff, okay?

Collings

Right. You're so busy.

Marquez

There's nobody to guide me on that. My parents are, I'll say, against me. My aunts and uncles and others are basically against me. I'm like by myself. The Harbor community was not like being in East L.A. where you had a hard core of a lot. I was one of the few, you know, struggling on my own. When I did things, it was me. At that time the Association of Mexican American Educators was forming, AMAE. Most of the were from East L.A., but there was a Harbor chapter and they were Mexican American educators, teachers, and principals, etc., that were forming their little group. Some of them were very progressive. Most of them were very conservative. The progressive one recognized me as one of those, "Ah, here's an ideal little student." So they helped guide me also. They would sponsor me to attend other educational events and I would travel with them to their conference. So I would go to the education-sponsored events like that and they paid for me, they traveled with me, they would teach me. So a couple of them took me under their wings. Eventually that one teacher I mentioned in high school, she joined, and to tell you, at that time she was against me 100 percent. I was communist, as far as she was concerned, a bad influence, a bad American, and all that. Ten years later she realized she was wrong, and beginning ten years later, I haven't seen her that much recently, but whenever she did see me, she would come up to me, "Jesse, I'm so sorry. I apologize to you again."

Collings

Wow.

Marquez

You know, "You were right and I was wrong."

Collings

Wow.

Marquez

She now has her Ph.D. and she's no longer Theresa, she's Teresa Martinez, la-la-la-la, you know. She saw the light later. Okay?

Collings

Well, that's interesting, too, because it suggests that you continued to circulate within the same community if you were even seeing her ten years later.

Marquez

In the Teen Post I did something else; I started the first teen newspaper in Wilmington. So some of my friends got together at the Teen Center and we called it "The Paper." So we typed things out, cut it out, glue the paper, and one guy made some little fancy designs, and our Teen Post director would take us to a printing place and they'd print it. We got ads from our little local restaurants and we would write the stories for it. So that was my first publishing rite.

Marquez

Now, one thing I always did want to do in high school was write. The only problem I had was that my teachers ripped apart everything I wrote, didn't like anything I wrote.

Collings

The content?

Marquez

The content. So, in high school I was leaning towards wanting to be a writer, and I started writing some poetry at that time, but then I got beat up so bad, you know. I kind of wrote some stuff and then really didn't get into writing. So here I am graduating. Because of my track, I had universities and colleges offering me scholarships. I could have chosen any one of them, but I was in love, had a girlfriend. She did not want me, definitely, to go out of town to any college or university. The Long Beach Naval Shipyard had a four-year apprenticeship program where they would teach you a technical skill and they'd pay you also. So you would work, like, thirty hours a week, and like ten hours you go to classes, both during the day and at night and they paid you for the full forty hours. So I went that route, knowing that I was probably going to get married, which I did. I got married shortly after high school.

Collings

Were your parents encouraging you to do that, as well? Was that something that they were pleased with?

Marquez

Believe it or not, they kind of preferred that, too. Remember, no one in our family, and actually no one in our communities, ever went to colleges or universities. I mean, they kind of liked that idea. They were more concerned

having a job and having money, because it was so difficult having a job and having the money.

Collings

And you were still living at home at this point?

Marquez

And I was still living at home, definitely, yes. Now, by that time we had moved to a new house, which was a three-bedroom house. So I would say we were beginning middle class a little bit there. My dad had already been stable on a job, worked for quite a few years, so we weren't deprived at that time. It was just that I was so now so radical that things that I should have appreciated, the normal kid would have appreciated, wasn't enough for me. I saw too many social injustices and that was a factor for me. Fortunately, I hadn't done anything where I got in trouble, because as it turned out, I had signed up for fire control, the apprenticeship program, thinking it was a fire department fire and that would be good. Well, it turns out fire control in the military is not fire department. Fire control are weapons systems, electronics. So I actually signed up for the electronics program and didn't know that. [laughs]

Marquez

Another thing, too, another trailblazing thing, when I got accepted to the program I was one of three high school students straight out of high school. That had never happened in the twenty-year history of the semi-military civilian thing, because what happened is that vets, veterans, were the normal ones that came into the program, plus they had their veteran points and other points for whatever, whatever, whereas high school students never made it. But three of us high school students scored in the high nineties on the test, so they had to allow us to go in.

Collings

Now, what about your political views? Did you share them while you were working in this program?

Marquez

Well, that's what I was mentioning. Fortunately, I had not gotten in trouble, legal trouble, because what happened, going into the electronics program I had to get secret clearance because I'm working on weapons systems. So I was trained to work on three missile systems on the ship, the Taylor, the Talos, and one other one, and then on the radar and the sonar.

Collings

Was this a contradiction for you?

Marquez

Well, yes, because I was against the war, and all of sudden now I realize, oops, I'm in this electronics program that's paying me. But then I got married, you know, that first year, too. Well, back in those days when you came out of high

school, most or a lot got married. So I would say probably a third of all students graduating, of guys graduating, 30 to 50 percent of young men graduating out of high school, you normally got married out of high school. So that was very common then compared to what it is now. Okay.

Marquez

So I was now married, so I had to have a job. I couldn't like drop out and not do it. The other thing I was thinking, well, I'll finish graduating and leave, and it ended up when I graduated from the program that's what I did do. I just stayed long enough to graduate, get a few more months of experience--and then I went to a commercial electronics program. Now, during that time, because I was going to school at night, I was still doing my educational stuff, so I was still involved in quite a bit of that.

Marquez

Now, what was also happening, remember, is I'm also still getting my history and culture. I started building my library. I was going heavy into the culture now, studying Aztec history culture and the others. So I was becoming more native. So, yes, I called myself Chicano, but I no longer called myself Latino, Hispanic, or Mexican American. So when I started filling out my forms, I am Native American and identified with Native American. Then I also started attending Native American Indian pow-wows and started learning to do traditional dancing and started attending--whenever Aztec dancing was going to be somewhere, I would attend that, as well. So I was becoming more Native as time was going on.

Collings

And did you wife identify as Chicana?

Marquez

Now, at that time, yes, because we were all pretty much the same, but she was also Apache. Okay. Sadly enough, though, you know, we broke up, she left and wanted to go her own way and didn't go that way. In fact, every guy since that time was white. She never got married. She started living with guys. She was trying to soul-search what she wanted to do, and went totally white, totally dropped her culture, everything, background. So she never really went into it, whereas with me she was a little bit part of that, you know, but just didn't go into it. Okay.

Marquez

Now, I had my first child with her, my first son with her, and in second marriage I have two other sons. All three of my sons have grown up politically aware and culturally aware with me. So if you interview any one of those three, they're not hardcore like I am as an activist, but they are definitely politically culturally aware of everything that's going on in the world. Okay? They are anti-war. They know when to go, when not to go. They're anti-nuclear. They

understand the culture, as well. They identify with the culture, as well. My family planning did work out; none of the three ever got a young girl pregnant. All three are not married, you know. But that has paid off, they learned from that, they've gone to school and they're studying stuff like that, you know.

Marquez

So this is the seventies and eighties that I'm talking about. As I'm getting more Native, I'm still culturally active. Bilingual education, multicultural education is now getting adopted into the mainstream of things. I'm heavily supporting the farm workers, as well, so whenever they were doing the grape strikes in our markets and stores, I was here in Wilmington doing that. So that's where my life was heading at that time.

Collings

Hold on a second. It's rustling. Okay, we are back on.

Marquez

Now, you hear me talking about many of the things I've done here in the Harbor, but I've also done extensive traveling in the process. The Association of Mexican American Educators, as a student they had conferences throughout the United States. In terms of the anti-war movement, there were different rallies throughout the state and other states. So out of the fifty states in the United States, I've been to at least thirty out of the fifty. I've been to Canada three times; I've been to Mexico numerous times; Central America; South America. I've been to London, England. So in the developing of my personality, as well as my awareness, and the business things that I do and activities is that exposure. Just being exposed to certain things, you know, guides you, inspires you, and then empowers you to be able to do things. Had I not had Mr. John Mendez at the Wilmington Teen Center recognize that I had some student leadership, if he had not sent me to that youth leadership program, my life would be totally different today, absolutely different today.

Collings

Yes. To the leadership program at UCLA, that one.

Marquez

So that changed my whole life right there.

Collings

Right. Right.

Marquez

I would be a totally different person, absolutely without a question of a doubt.

Collings

Yes.

Marquez

I might have learned some of this other stuff later, but that formulated my whole psyche.

Collings

Did you stay in touch with or continue to work with any of the other people that were at that leadership event?

Marquez

Well, as it turns out that in terms of the fifty of us youth, you know, because we were all from different cities and everything, but there was a notable person there that I don't keep in contact, but I kind of know him and he kind of knows me. One of the MEChA instructors who was actually our little group counselor, too, was named Moctesuma Esparza, and what has happened is that he became a movie producer and writer. So the movie, "Selena" of the Tex-Mex singer--is his film.

Collings

Of the singer, yes.

Marquez

--he's the producer of that film. Okay. So over the years we've bumped into each other a few times already. In fact, I just read about him in the L.A. Times just a couple of months ago. He has some partnership now to start building movie chains in Hispanic communities. So, like, he's been one of the few that, you know, I know what he's doing and a couple of people have mentioned to him, and then I bump into him every so often. I do have an intention of getting together with him sometime in the next year or two.

Marquez

Another thing, big, big thing was happening through the eighties and nineties, as you heard me mention, I was becoming very deep into my archeology and history and culture. I was taking classes. Well, I had always been taking classes, but I did not want to take work-related classes. And since I was getting deeper into the history, I wanted to get deeper in the archeology. UCLA has an archeology program at night, and so I started taking the classes there. Naturally, since I've always worked full-time, I never had the luxury to go to a college during the daytime, so all my classes have been at nights and then special seminars on the weekends and things of that nature. Well, believe it or not, two years ago I finished the whole archeology program at UCLA.

Collings

Wow.

Marquez

The only thing I have to do is write my paper. Okay. So that's how deep--in fact, my library is over a thousand books on Aztec history and culture. I have some copies of the original Codexes in it.

Marquez

The other thing, too, is in the nineties is that I began to write again, some poetry and stuff by myself, and I decided that I wanted to be a writer and I also

wanted to publish. So I actually started preparing the book. Actually, I had some books already completed. Now, because of my unique progressive perspective of things and now having the archeological background to support all the historical stuff in my writings, it was very critical that I teach some of the things that I've learned. So my book, books are part of a series now, I haven't released any of them yet, but I mean, some of them are completed already, in that it's poetry and prose, and it's all divided into chapters and sections, so to speak. Like I have one chapter on family, culture, history, romance, politics, and spirituality. So in each volume there's like four or five pieces in each one of them. Okay. Naturally, at the time I'm writing them, things have happened politically in the world or here that have also influenced me. Like one time in the L.A. Times they had a color photo in there where it was in Oaxaca, where the government massacred the men during a little battle there. So in the photo you see these coffins with Oaxacan women in [Spanish phrase], dressed in traditional clothes; they are crying and mourning. So I wrote a poem for that.

Marquez

So there's been certain major things like that that emotionally struck me where I've written something that's in my book regarding that subject. So some things might be outdated and you would have had to have known at that time what's going on. At the same time, like, in my history and culture I teach things as well. Like in the Native American world, you pray to the four directions. Okay. Well, in the Aztec-Mayan world, you also pray to the same four directions, but unless you're an Aztec dancer or a Mayan dancer, you don't quite understand that, the history of that. So the rest of the population does not know that. Well, in one of my poems I describe that and what the colors are, what the meanings are, and I describe that from a historical context.

Marquez

The other thing, too, is that in some cases are mostly unique in that because I have an archeological background, I consider myself an archeologist, even though I don't have the Ph.D. to go with it yet. But I'm also making interpretations and changing some aspects of history that it will support.

Marquez

I'm also doing some of my own archeological research. Right now in the United States, there's about four groups doing a similar-type thing that I'm doing, in that the origin of the Aztecs, everyone knows, and it's written in the history books and all that, the Aztecs came from their homeland Aztlan, and that's where the word Azteca came from. Well, there was a Codex book that they wrote and they drew, that talks about their homeland and where they came from. Well, Mexico and Mexican archeologists, anthropologists, historians, are in a denial state, at least almost all of them--there's one exception to the rule--

whereby Aztlan is in Mexico today. They kind of believe the Nayarit, which is here in northern Mexico--there's a lake, because the island is in a lake, and they believe that to be Aztlan. Well, us over here, again, being radicals from our motherland, say, no, Aztlan is located here in North America.

Marquez

See, because in that Codex book, the Codex Berturini, it talks about the migration of when they left their homeland. But remember the Aztecs were very unique, too. They had a calendar and they know how to write, so they wrote this book that says that they left on this date based on their calendar. So every city they traveled to is documented--now, the Aztecs were not indigenous to Mexico City. They left their homeland, which was in the north, and arrived in Mexico City and then conquered it and made it their capital, but it took them over 260 years to get to there. Meanwhile, in this book they record the year that they landed in all the cities and pueblos along the route. So basically you just have to backtrack. So when they landed in Mexico City in 1325 A.D., you've just got to go back in time.

Marquez

Well, we have a problem. The problem is, is that nowhere in Mexico are the first two city names to be found. So I'm researching over here, as other [unclear] groups, to prove that it's up here.

Collings

Let me ask you a question. I just heard you on the phone talking with somebody about an Earth Day event at Banning High School.

Marquez

Oh, yes. Well--

Collings

You know, I had wanted to talk with you about how have your deep community roots made it possible for you to get involved in all of these different kinds of organizing.

Marquez

Well, because of my political activities, naturally I have an awareness for everything, you know, anti-war, labor rights, multicultural education, bilingual education, as well as the environment. So I've always been supportive of environmental issues and events. I've attended rallies, I've signed petitions, but I was never a hardcore environmental activist or a leader in that field. Then what happened in the beginning of the year 2001, the Port of Los Angeles, which borders Wilmington--and so that people understand, the Port of Los Angeles is a little bit unique compared to other ports in other cities in the state and throughout the United States, in that the residents live one block across the street. Most ports have an industrial complex or an airport, office buildings.

Well, that's not the case here. One block away, people live there, we have a park there, and that's the situation here.

Marquez

Well, the port hired a P.R. firm to begin to hold a couple of community meetings to announce they were going to build a wall in Wilmington one block away from the port. It was going to be twenty feet tall, 1.4 miles long, to separate the community from the port. I missed the first one or two meetings, but I made it to the third meeting where they talked about, you know, you have to think of it like the freeway wall for noise, you know, that helps prevent some of the noise. So I asked, "Well, I live four blocks. There is noise, but, I mean, it's not that bad. It's not deafening yet. Is there other stuff happening?"

Marquez

"Well, the port's expanding."

Marquez

"Well, how much is it going to expand?"

Marquez

"Well, it might be doubling or tripling, is what we hear."

Marquez

"Well, wait a minute. There's too much truck traffic now. You're talking of doubling, tripling? No, no, no, no, there's more to this. Let's call another meeting that you bring some port officials here so we can ask some more specific questions."

Marquez

He says, "Okay, well, we'll try to get some port people to come down here with us."

Marquez

Now, have you ever heard of the expression that you can't squeeze blood out of a turnip and you can't crack a coconut with your bare hands? Well, we did do that, because when it came to the next third meeting, you know, we started asking more specific questions. Now, here's what that P.R. firm did not tell us and here's what the Port of Los Angeles also did not tell us, or the public or any news release: on the other side of the wall they wanted to build a new six-lane diesel truck highway to service the port, and they wanted to move the port railroad track further north and add another line and they wanted to expand the port terminal that bordered Wilmington, expand it more into Wilmington. Another thing that had been happening is over the past ten years that used to be a light industrial zone for almost two miles along the waterfront. So there was a lot of small industrial businesses. They had been purchasing the empty lots and buying out the businesses as they sold out, with the intentions of expanding in the future, which we really weren't paying attention to at that time.

Marquez

The first reaction to the wall from the residents was, "No way. That'll be the biggest graffiti magnet on this planet." I was looking at it, "What are you guys not telling us?" The other way around.

Marquez

So what happened is that I said, "No way are we going to go along with this." So some of my friends were there. I said, "Hey, let's form a committee to fight that wall and that expansion." So we called our committee the Wilmington Coalition, just two little simple words, and we got together and we started meeting here at this house address. At that time, like I said, we knew nothing about ports. We knew nothing about international trade, you know, nothing about that.

Collings

When you say you and your friends, do you mean people that you had been involved with politically in the local area?

Marquez

Well, not so much politically as family and residents.

Collings

Okay.

Marquez

Like this house we're at right now with Cecilia and Eddy, I knew Cecilia and Eddy for over twenty-five years we've been friends. So actually I called up friends and asked them to join and do this, and that's how that kind of came into being.

Marquez

Now, we didn't know anything hardcore, but what happened is that other people, like from San Pedro [unclear] started coming, some of the Sierra Club members, like Tom Politeo, San Pedro residents like Noel Park, Janet Gunter, Kathryn Woodfield, started coming to some of our meetings here, because the port started to now hold some meetings regarding other port projects. They started saying, "Jesse, you know, you've got to learn more about the ports, come to these port meetings. You're going to have to speak against some the projects they're proposing. You need to go online on the Internet to look up some of the reports and studies."

Marquez

I said, "Okay," so they started giving me an education. Then I came home. Now, here's something that a lot of people kind of laugh about. The Internet. Now, we're talking 2001, which wasn't that long ago, I had never been on the Internet. I knew what the Internet was, I see it on TV, heard people talking about it.

Collings

Information super highway.

Marquez

You know, information super highway. I had two sons in high school, they talked about the Internet, they'd been on the Internet. I had never been on the Internet, but I knew what it was. I just never really had a reason before to get on the Internet. I didn't even own a computer. So now I'm divorced, this is my second marriage, so I call up my sons, because they live with their mother and grandmother in Compton, and said, "Hey, I need to get on the Internet. So I'm going to come pick you guys up so you can tell me everything you need to do."

Marquez

"Okay, we'll wait for you."

Marquez

So I went and picked them up, come back over here to Wilmington, and they're sitting right here. "Okay, how do I go on the Internet?"

Marquez

"Well, Dad, we need a computer."

Collings

[laughs] That's a funny story.

Marquez

Okay. Well, none of us have computers. So, start calling members of the family, "Hey, does anyone in the family have a computer?" So we finally found somebody in the family that has a computer. We said, "Do you guys have the Internet?"

Marquez

They said, "No."

Marquez

So I asked my son, "Well, how do you get the Internet?"

Marquez

"Well, you have to pay a monthly fee to get on to the Internet."

Marquez

Okay. Well, I tell them, "Okay, I'll pay for us to get on the Internet," and they're happy, because they don't have the Internet; they've just got the computer.
[laughs]

Marquez

So now they go with me to the house, we get it all connected, and they said, "Well, what do you want to know, Dad?"

Marquez

"Well, I want to do some researching about the air pollution." So I said, "Well, what do I do?"

Marquez

"Well, you type in 'air pollution' over here in this little box and you push 'search.'"

Marquez

So I type "air pollution" and push "search," and, well, everyone's going to laugh again because you get millions of hits. [laughs] Then my sons look at me and say, "Okay, Dad, we've got to narrow it down more."

Marquez

"Okay, 'port pollution."

Marquez

So there we go on through that. They say, "What do you want to do, just read it?"

Marquez

"Well, we need to print some of this stuff out." So we printed out some of the pages and like I was up till, like, two or three o'clock in the morning that night. Next day I come back, I'm on the computer all night again. We ran out of paper, so I had to go buy a ream of paper to replace the paper that I'd used up. Then that night I used up the whole ream of paper, so then I had to buy five, six reams of paper, and by a week later I'd used up the whole five, six reams of paper. In three months I was like going brain-dead, because every night I was going on, every weekend I was going on, because I was just finding all these websites, all this information, I would attend these meetings. I had a migraine headache. [laughs] I had bought a case of paper. Then I bought a computer. Had to have a computer. Got my own Internet and that's how I got started onto the Internet. Okay. So I was becoming, again now the leader of our environmental movement here.

Collings

Right.

Marquez

So in 2001, I established our group, and two other critical environmental issues also happened or events happened. San Pedro residents, there was like nine homeowner associations formed the San Pedro and Peninsula's Homeowners Coalition in order to fight a project at the Port of L.A., which was going to be the new China Shipping Terminal. So they found out about NRDC, the Natural Resources Defense Council, which was a legal environmental group, and asked them if they would represent them in a lawsuit against the port and the city of L.A. You have to understand that ports are a department of the city, so the city of Los Angeles oversees the port, although they kind of operate basically autonomous.

Marquez

So NRDC works with them and they file the suit. This is the beginning of the year of 2001. I didn't know them, they didn't know me. Now, six months later it's a whole different story. I know them, they know me, they know I'm getting my group and everyone's just trying to help us. They're giving us documents,

they're giving me new websites. At one meeting Noel Park tells me, "Ask the port about the MATES II" study.

Marquez

So I raised my hand, "Can you tell me about the MATES II study? Does it have anything to do with us here in Wilmington?"

Marquez

"Well, yes, it was put out by the South Coast Air Quality Management District in 2000."

Marquez

Well, here it is 2001 and the report states that Wilmington, San Pedro, and West Long Beach are at the highest risk of cancer due to diesel fuel exhaust or the emissions. So then we really got upset. Because as we were having a meeting here, we were talking about, "Well, my son was just diagnosed with asthma." Someone else says, "Oh, my child has asthma, too." Everyone in the room had someone sick with asthma or some respiratory health problem in their family.

Marquez

Then we threw together little basic surveys. We said, "Let's go survey some people and get an idea." Hell, we found out that, like, 70 percent of everyone we interviewed had members with asthma, some type of respiratory problem, and then we realized we're going on the right track. Maybe that's why so many people are sick in Wilmington. Then we realized, too, well, there is so much truck traffic in Wilmington, trucks running down the streets, and why is it so dirty due to blight. Then we found out that these were impacts from the port.

Marquez

So within twelve months later, I'm like an expert. I know exactly what's going on with the ports. You know, we're preparing public comments. My first document I submitted was like seven pages long. Years later, my written public comment was forty pages long. Okay.

Collings

Now, how were you able to organize the first group of community members?

Marquez

Well, the first group were just friends. Some of us just attended the meeting, just walked in, and then I called them up. Others seen us now talking together, saying, "Who are you guys? Well, we want to be part of your group," and then they gave us their name or phone number. Others got up to talk and we walked up to them, saying, "Hey, we're forming this one group." So what happened is that we were just a committee and then that was just like for the first six, seven months or so, and then we changed the name, said, "We need to become more of an organization." So we became the Wilmington Coalition for a Safe Environment.

Collings

And since this is a fairly small town, I mean, did any of these people know each other, like from another context before getting into this group?

Marquez

Well, two-thirds of us already knew each other.

Collings

Okay.

Marquez

Okay, like Raul Orozco, I didn't know him, never grew up with him. He got up and spoke, and then he heard me speak, and then I looked at him, he looked at me, we walked up to each other, "Hi," "Hi," and then, "Hey, I want to work with you guys."

Collings

But two-thirds of the other members--

Marquez

So then the other third of the people we really didn't know them, but they saw us and we were from Wilmington, and then I created the Wilmington Coalition for a Safe Environment. So we needed to create officers. So I was the chairman, and then Danny decided to be the vice chair. Cecilia said, "I'll be our secretary/treasurer." Then we said, okay, we need to get members and start recruiting people, and then started recruiting anybody. We were talking to family and friends and strangers that were attending these meetings. Then started approaching it that way.

Collings

How politically aware in the way that you have been, would you say that the residents of Wilmington are?

Marquez

At that time no one knew anything. There was only one other environmental organization--

Collings

I mean, in terms of like, you know, the cultural and historical stuff that you were talking about. I mean, did they have any kind of sense of environmental awareness--

Marquez

Well, now we're talking in the year 2000, okay? So everyone's a little bit politically aware of things. Everyone's culturally aware. They didn't have that same deprivation that I had there, because there was more respect for the culture. The whole Mexican community has more respect for the history and culture, which didn't quite exist back then. And, yes, Wilmington became more political over the years so that you do know Wilmington and San Pedro hate Los Angeles with a passion, because we've always been discriminated against

down here. We've seen other things develop. We never develop here. And that even gave us more impetus to fight the Port of L.A., because it meant everything that we hated, because we never benefited from it. The only thing we had going against us was the fact that the Longshoremen's Union is a union that works at the port; they make excellent money. An average salary for a worker is eighty to a hundred thousand dollars a year. They start at sixty-five thousand. So we do have many Wilmington workers that work there. So we had a problem in that here we're organizing it from the environmental issue end of it, and then we have longshoremen that were against us.

Collings

Well, your brothers are longshoremen, right?

Marquez

And I have three brothers, but they weren't longshoremen, you know. Two of them only became longshoremen these last five years; only one was prior to that. So that's only happened recently. But they knew me politically already, so they were concerned.

Marquez

What also happened was a major shift, too, in the Longshoremen's. The older generation, I'll say forty and older, okay, were the old guard. "Don't touch our job. We don't care what it is." What's happened with the forty and under group now, they have children with asthma.

Collings

Oh.

Marquez

Okay. Grandma and Grandpa have lung cancer.

Collings

Now, are these health problems relatively new? I mean, are you saying that--

Marquez

Health problems always existed. The world has been in denial.

Collings

Okay.

Marquez

While longshoremen have been in a denial, it was job-related. The rest of us, meaning 99 percent of the public, weren't even aware what was causing our health problem. We didn't know why we had asthma. One of our fights that we have now with, I'll say the medical industry, so to speak, in that, say we have a young couple, they go to the hospital, "Oh, your child has asthma. It's not really life-threatening. We'll put them on some medication. They're limited on their exercises. When there's smoggy days, keep them inside." That's what they're told. The doctor or nurse never says or asks them, "Where do you live? Do you have any industries near your home that put out a lot of pollution?" By the

way, air pollution now is considered, from the diesel fuel exhaust, is now a carcinogenic chemical. Therefore you should contact the Lung Association and any environmental groups or public health groups, like the Lung Association, and fight the pollution. They don't tell you that. So the public has never been told that.

Marquez

The other hypocrisy, our government agencies, our government health agencies, and our government air-quality environmental regulatory agencies, have deceived and lied to the public. We've been led to believe that government regulatory agencies are in fact protecting our health. It's a yes and a no. Yes, there are laws in effect, but there's also laws that are not adequate to protect the public. And yes, there are laws that are not being enforced, and yes, there are laws that say they're supposed to use new technologies and they're not doing it. There's a whole hypocrisy there and that's what I discovered. That's what our organization discovered. We are a community-based organization of members of residents. Ninety percent of our members have health problems in their families. So we're very unique in that aspect. Because of my background growing up in the community, I'm very well aware of how important it is for you to know these things, so every time I have learned something, I have taught all of our members. One thing that we do is extensive outreach. So I attend and we go to the Wilmington Citizens Committee meetings. We go to the Wilmington Community Organization meetings. We go to the Wilmington Neighborhood Council meetings.

Marquez

I was called up last week from Long Beach from the Gray Panthers. The Gray Panthers are the politically active senior citizens of Long Beach. They have a meeting, I can't remember if it's this Saturday or next Saturday. They want me to speak and give them an update on our activities. So we do extensive public speaking outreach to give updates on our activities.

Marquez

So what's happened now in six years--well, that would happen after three years, we did another change in our organization; we dropped the name Wilmington and just became Coalition for a Safe Environment, because what happened, we were becoming so powerful now and active, other people wanted to join us. So now this year we have members in over twenty-five cities in Southern California and some members in Baja California, Mexico. We are now the leading environmental justice organization on ports and goods movement. Anything you will read today about ports, in terms of new clean-air action plans, mitigation, the port goods movement industry and government agencies did not initiate any one of them. Every new idea has come from the public. Okay? It's come from our investigations and research that we have made it

come to pass. Then what happened is that we realized that when the ports were growing, that we had another problem in Wilmington, we had four major oil refineries here. We learned that a lot of our health problems was because of the air pollution from ports and refineries. So then I had to research that. The good news-and there's a good side and a bad side. The good news is that we're finding all this stuff. The bad news is that, you know, it's a lot. Because when I'm taking on the Port of L.A., it is the largest container port in the United States, number one. We're taking on God.

Collings

Yes.

Marquez

Okay? And that's never been done.

Collings

Forty percent of the goods come through there.

Marquez

Forty percent of the goods in the United States, 42 percent, and then combined with the Port of Long Beach, which is its neighbor, it is the largest complex in the United States and the fifth largest in the world.

Collings

I hear that there's a port being built in Baja that's supposed to compete with--

Marquez

Two years ago it was announced. It came out in the newspapers here that Mexico was considering building a port in a little town called Punta Colonet, which is an hour and a half south of Ensenada. So it's basically about four hours south of the border and six hours from downtown L.A. Well, basically, the comments over here from the longshoremen and from industry over here, it'll never happen. They'll never get the money. The area, the water isn't deep enough, there is no barrier, etc., etc., etc. Well, we have members that have family in Baja California, and asked us, "Jesse, can we look into it?"

Marquez

Well, we're funded by three small grants, and that's how we operate on donations, and so we don't have a budget. You know, for the first three years, the budget was all of us donating our paychecks. [laughs] And it wasn't till the third year I got a small grant. In fact, I was rejected for my first five grants because I just didn't know how to write a grant. So that was another little problem. But then you kind of learn and you start getting some help, start taking some classes. Liberty Hill Foundation recognized that here's a new group coming up and they gave us our first grant for \$7,500 just to help, you know. The second year they gave us \$35,000, the next year another \$35,000, and then they approved us for a two-year \$70,000. Then what happened is two years ago the Hewlett Foundation jumped in and gave us \$35,000 and then this

last year gave us \$45,000. Then this last year we teamed up with USC, Occidental College, and three other organizations, LBACA from Long Beach, East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice out of East L.A. and Commerce with Angelo Logan, and then Penny Newman in Riverside-Pomona and became part of that collective. So our budget's just about \$100,000 or so.

Marquez

Now, we do have one disadvantage hurting us right now, which I have to fix this year in that, yes, we are nonprofit organization, we're nonprofit in California, but we're not a 501(c)3. This is the last year we can receive money from anybody if we're not a 501(c)3. I'm eligible for at least a dozen more grants if I am a 501(c)3. So by the end of this year, but for sure by next year, we might be three times our budget. So I mean the future is bright for us right now and what we're doing. So it's because of these foundations that I was able to quit what I was doing. Also to fill a gap, too. So when I left the Long Beach Naval Shipyard, I went commercial electronics, because I was also very bright. I was a test technician and then at a company I became a night supervisor. Then I took a position as production manager for Sierracin Thermal Systems, and then the largest black electronic-owned company here on the West Coast, Accudata Systems, I met this woman whose husband was a consultant working with that company. She mentioned that, "Hey, by the way, there's this one guy, he's in electronics, too," the guy calls me up saying, "Hey, I'm consulting with this Afro American company, it's the largest one on the West Coast, and they're having a lot of growth problems and I understand you're pretty good. I'd like to recommend you to be hired as their production manager."

Marquez

I said, "It's black-owned?" I said, "Well, hey, I'd love to come over there to a minority company to work with them."

Marquez

So I came onboard with them to start, you know, building them up. Basically I was with them for about three years and they went out of business. They had some other problems; they were under investigation for some fraud and some other things before I even came into the picture. But in terms of the work I was doing, you know, I got military-certified to train the assemblers and the solderers and inspectors. The whole thing had been changed overnight, but because of some financial fraud in contracts and everything, it literally killed the company.

Marquez

So I started doing consulting, I went with contract engineering, was a consultant with contract firms. Northrop Electronics offered me a great opportunity. I wasn't working; I was unemployed. They were working on a project that I didn't really want to do, but I needed the money. Northrop

Electronics Division here in Hawthorne had a contract to build the missile guidance systems for the MX missile. What most people don't know in the United States is the thing that protects the United States are a hundred missiles that are underground right now. The MX missile is that system that protects the whole United States. Each MX missile carries ten nuclear warheads, and that is why no country has ever attacked us over here to start a war with us because these missiles can take out a whole city. It has ten nuclear warheads, so they don't miss. And we're building the guidance system for it. So I accepted a quality engineering position to help them out, and then that lasted for ninety days. They extended me for another ninety days. They offered me a manufacturing engineering position to help write some of their assembly procedures. Then the government asked them to create a Division Auditing Department, and since I was doing both production and engineering, I was the first what they call an auditor's specialist, to review these. It was actually a two-billion-dollar government contract. My job was to review contracts and make sure they were in compliance for them. I'm doing that. So here I was senior level, up here of this 4,000 populated company.

Marquez

Then a year or so later, about two years later, the government came by and said, "Look it, you know, you're doing good at this level. We would like to now have another level of division auditing where your inspection department will not just do their department." Like I was strictly in the manufacturing end. "We now want you to do cross-auditing for compliance," meaning that I would be a division auditor, so not only would I review a contract for making sure the manufacturing was compliant, I would have to review that the engineering department, quality department, everything was compliant with that same thing, having the bird's overall view perspective.

Collings

Yes.

Marquez

So here I was the first one to be moved into that position. Now, here's another thing to realize, when I went into this four-year apprenticeship program, I graduated from it. It's not a college degree. I have no college degree. So today I have no AA, no bachelor's, no master's, no Ph.D. I have none of that, but because of the way I am, I'm a quick learner, I absorb everything.

Collings

Well, it sounds like all of that engineering background put you in a really good position for absorbing all of that technical information about the port.

Marquez

Exactly. And they sent me for technical writing class. When that company went out of business, I went to work with Magnavox Advanced Technology here in

Torrance. I took some more technical writing classes. So that today when I went to--in 2001 began to begin researching, you know, technical documents, technical laws, and preparing public comments, I had that skill to do that.

Collings

You had that background.

Marquez

So I was able to work with that. In 2005 I was in a conference in Central California and I met a woman, Teri Shore, who was with the Blue Water Network, who specialize in oceans and stuff, but also on an international basis. They, here, were just forming or just joining, becoming a member of Friends of the Earth International, which has chapters in like seventy countries. She was telling me that they were going to attend the United Nations International Maritime Organization meeting in London, England, because her group, under the banner of Friends of the Earth, had teamed with eight other international organizations to propose lower ship-pollution standards. I said, "Wow, that's great. I would like to support you on that." I said, "By the way, I've been writing a document and I call it 'The Port Communities' Bill of Rights,'" where I'm using the United Nations Bill of Rights as the framework for it, but for port communities.

Marquez

She says, "Well, how far are you done with it?"

Marquez

"Oh, I'm about one-third done, with notes for the little articles that I'm putting together."

Marquez

She says, "Well, hey, this thing's not going to happen for another four months or so. What if you join us and you could distribute it over there. You wouldn't be able to present it, because it's not on the agenda, but you could at least distribute it there."

Marquez

I said, "Wow, yes, I'd love to do that."

Marquez

So I sent my draft to, like, forty, fifty organizations and individuals saying, "Hey, add to this whatever you think, because I'm going to go to London, England, now and I'm going to distribute it over there."

Marquez

So at that time there was a lot of activity going, so a lot of people didn't get back to me. There was maybe about eight or nine that did, and so I completed writing this thing. It's like three pages, and then the last page I wrote a little history of how it got together. I put everyone's name and whose group participated in it. Then I went to the print shop and I got like a parchment paper

and I had the printer make it to look like an antique kind of finish to it. We weren't funded to go to London, England, so basically it was my paycheck that paid for me to go over there. So I was part of that delegation under that banner to attend that meeting and just to just pass it out. So there was like 127 country delegates; in some cases there were several representing that delegation. So we passed it out and we're making headlines with that.

Marquez

Some not good things that happened at that time, if you recall, there was that bombing in the tunnels, and here we are arriving a week later, so it was really high security. We had planned to do a demonstration there in front of the United Nations. Everyone's heard of the United Nations here in New York. Well, this is a clone. It's the same thing there where they have the same seats. The only difference is it's only countries that have ports. The rest of the world, if you're inland you don't have a port, so you wouldn't necessarily belong, but it is under the United Nations called the IMO, International Maritime Organization. Well, part of our pollution fight that we had is that here we are fighting the port pollution, while the ports were saying, "Yeah, we can't control the port pollution or the pollution from ships because they're from foreign countries."

Marquez

Then we would talk with the South Coast Air Quality Management District, "Well, our hands are tied, too, because they follow international flags of other countries." Then the California Air Resources Board says, "Our hands are tied." Cal EPA, "Our hands are tied." The U.S. EPA, "Our hands are tied."

Marquez

So finally I said, "Damn. Well, who in the hell does have the responsibility?"

Marquez

Well, it turns out United Nations IMO is that international organization that does have that authority. So there's where we took our fight, over there. So I was so proud to be part of this delegation. Actually, the little folder I gave you, we had a special folder to put our little information in there that we passed out to everybody over there.

Marquez

And here we are, we show up. Okay. We've never done this before, our group and plus united as our little delegation. Under this United Nations thing there were 127 countries and there was like three what they call NGOs, non-government agencies, which are the nonprofits. Friends of the Earth was one of them, World Wildlife Federation was the other one, and Greenpeace was the other.

Marquez

So you can participate in this stuff, but we found out one thing we didn't know till after we got there, because we got there Monday morning bright and early. It was going to start like at nine o'clock. We're there at eight-thirty, right, all excited, you know, and then we're told that, "Here's a detail, by the way. You can participate in everything, but since you're not a country, you have to have two sponsors of your proposed whatever." See, because they had notified us in advance, "We accepted your paper," and then another paper for consideration by the committee, so okay, but they never mentioned in advance, you don't have two countries to sponsor you, it doesn't go before the committee. Naturally, they did that on purpose because, you know, if we didn't have countries, it can't be heard.

Marquez

So we all look at each other and say, "Well, we'll go talk to our country." [laughs] I said, "Well, I'll go talk to our U.S. delegation who's over there," which was about a dozen people or so. And some of them knew me already because of my activities over the years. I've been to Washington, D.C., and EPA and all these other meetings, so they've seen me testify and they all know me already.

Marquez

So I walk over there and some of them recognize me, "Hi, Mr. Marquez."

Marquez

I said, "Well, I came here, you know that we have two papers that we're presenting, one is this specific thing and one is this other, and we've just been informed that we need to have two country sponsors. So here on behalf of our organization, our delegation, we would like to ask you, the United States delegation, to be one of our sponsors."

Marquez

Then they look at each other and look at me, "Well, Mr. Marquez, I'm sorry, but you know the current administration can't support your papers. We're aware of the papers, we've read the papers. I'm sorry. We cannot do that."

Marquez

So I said, "Okay. Well, thank you. I officially had to ask you and now you officially know what's going to happen when I return to the United States."

Marquez

"Yes, Mr. Marquez, we will never hear the end of it again." [mutual laughter]

Marquez

So I walk back to our delegation and I say, "Well, no go." So they said, "Well, we may be able to get somebody else, but we may not till the day--." This is Monday, we come and do the agenda on Thursday, we're not going to know, because everyone's talking and some people aren't going to commit the first day; they're going to wait till the last day. Well, Thursday comes, agenda item

fifty-two, we have a paper that's been presented by nine NGOs and delegations, this group is from the United States, this group is from la-la-la-la-la-la. According to the policy of the IMO here, they must have two country delegates, so I am now opening up the floor to ask--is there any country who would like to be the country delegates?

Marquez

"Mr. Chair and members of the IMO, we, the country of Norway will be one of the delegates."

Marquez

"Mr. Chair, we the country of Sweden would be the second country."

Collings

Wonderful.

Marquez

And there was about three or four other countries jumped in.

Collings

Which were they?

Marquez

I can't even remember them now.

Collings

Very emotional moment.

Marquez

Yes. We just started crying.

Collings

Yes.

Marquez

I still cry today.

Collings

Yes.

Marquez

It was such an important thing for us.

Collings

Were the other countries northern European?

Marquez

It was a mixture, you know. I could probably look it up now, because I have the official records of that. And that's where we made history of doing that. Okay? So it was the first time communities went forward to present the changes of the country. In terms of the United States also submitted stricter air-pollution standards, but you have to remember the U.S. delegation is government agency representatives advised by industry.

Collings

Right.

Marquez

There is no public representation. Okay. And that's where we were coming from. And just to show you how politics comes into play, it was accepted by the committee and it's begun going to that committee process. Well, the committee process ended last year in 2007. Again, that's where industry, using its influence to lobby our government agencies, our government staff, backstab the public and backstab the world, because it turns out the committee came up with several recommendations, various alternatives of the recommendation, which basically were in favor of what we had proposed and how they were to be done. So here we even have the committee recommending and we were willing to accept any one of those three or four to make it a better, stricter law for the whole world. Industry comes in with its influence, lobbies the chair that, "This cannot happen. You better not let this happen." The chair announces he's not going to put it for a vote to be approved, since it's been recommended. Normally the committee recommends it, the whole body approves it. So that's what normally happens. He's going to create a special task force to further investigate, and that's what's happened and that's the status today on that.

Collings

Yes. Okay. Further investigation.[End of April 24, 2008 interview]

1.2. Session 2 (May 8, 2008)

Collings

Today is May 8th, 2008, Jane Collings interviewing Jesse Marquez at his home in Wilmington. Jesse, we were going to start off with you describing the scene at the end of your street.

Marquez

Where I live is a little bit unique amongst communities and typical residents, and even unique within port communities, in that the Port of Los Angeles is designed to layout a little bit different, in that residents border the port. So literally one block away is where you'll see residential homes, apartments, even a big open park there, and baseball field. That's very unique, because typically in layouts throughout California and throughout the United States that doesn't exist. There's an industrial complex that could be a business center, an industrial center, in the case of San Diego the airport, a Marine naval station, so those things could separate the port from the community, but in our case we're literally one block away.

Marquez

In my case, where my home is located, we're four blocks, and so we're talking, you know, less than 2,000 feet from what we call the TraPac container terminal, which is the one that borders the Port of Los Angeles and the

Wilmington community, and which has been actually the reason why I actually formed our organization, which was the Coalition for a Safe Environment. But at that time what had happened is the port had announced they were going to build a wall twenty-feet tall, 1.4 miles long, to separate the port from the community, and that's when we got very suspicious of that, because--

Collings

And that would have been right down at the end of your street.

Marquez

That would have been three blocks from here. You know, a lot of people might welcome that, you know, because people are familiar with them building walls along freeways to buffer some of the sound. But in our particular case, you know, the sound isn't deafening like being close to a freeway, at least yet, and so that raised our kind of suspicion there, which turned out that after two or three more meetings with these P.R. firms that the port had hired, that we demanded they bring some port officials there to answer more specific questions. That way we learned that the other plans were, on the other side of the wall was going to be a new six-lane diesel-truck highway, a new railroad track would be moved and built further north, and then the TraPac container terminal that bordered Wilmington would also move further north.

Marquez

Now, as a result of our organizing we fought that project, and this is starting, this is what actually kicked us off back in April 2001, so that in 2005 with our new councilman supporting us, we were able to stop that expansion project. Not only were we able to stop it, we were able to take back that ninety-five acres of waterfront that bordered Wilmington, and then to take it even further, one of my master plans that I designed that, you know, we would target a ten-year plan to take back so much property for our own community redevelopment.

Marquez

What's happened now is that by agreeing to give back the ninety-five acres, they also allocated \$120 million budget for that redevelopment, so that this year, 2008, towards the last quarter or beginning of next year will begin the actual construction of the first phase, and the first phase is approximately thirty-five, forty acres, which will be the open-space-park component of it, and then the second phase will take off from there, but it involves some of the downtown of Wilmington. So we're talking about from the Harbor Freeway, which is our western border, halfway to Avalon Blvd., to Lagoon [Avenue], and then from Lagoon to the main downtown boulevard, Avalon Blvd., going south to the waterfront.

Marquez

Now, at this time there's only one, well, what they say window to the water, to the ocean, to the port, and that's the Bannings' Landing, which is a community center that was built there. The only little problem with it being built there is that it's like out of the way, no one could really walk to it, and because you have to go through some of the port properties and stuff, no one really would want to go there, although it is a nice facility. What's happened now is that the community has now discovered that it's there, so you can find Mexican Ballet Folklorico dancing there. There's karate classes being taught there. There's arts-and-crafts classes, so it's used as an extended community center now.

Marquez

So what's going to happen now with the second phases is that from the park it'll include an L.A. Unified School District skills center, so that'll be modernized and brought up to date. It'll go to Avalon Blvd., which is actually a commercial-retail area, and half of it is not being used, and half of it is kind of blighted now, so that'll be redeveloped, so that'll be brand-new commercial retail center buildings. Then that border between TraPac and the Wilmington community is Harry Bridges Road, so beginning south of Harry Bridges Road will be a little bit different construction.

Marquez

One thing we wanted to do was to have a little bit more of a community-center complex, and at the same time developing our own Wilmington icon, so to speak, as a tourist attraction. So there'll be a bridge that'll go over. There'll be about a hundred-foot tower going up that right now is sort of designed sort of like a sail, windswept design. There will be like a lookout tower for people to walk up and take a look, and then along the Banning's Landing that'll be expanded a little bit more into a tourist site, visiting center, and so we look forward to that happening.

Collings

Yes. That sounds wonderful.

Marquez

The nice part about phase two as compared to phase one, in the TraPac expansion, well, since we stopped the expansion, what we actually stopped was them from moving further north from the current boundary, so that's what we accomplished there. But what happened is three years ago they did a revision of that to now expand the TraPac terminal, but not further north, but on the port side, and we were fighting that project.

Marquez

So what happened, this was part of the story I mentioned earlier, where on December sixth, 2007, they voted to approve that, and then we appealed that project before the city council. Now, what's happened since then is that our city councilman supports us on that appeal. Then just two weeks ago we had sort of

a new victory, and now it's turning out to be a very short-lived victory, in that the port agreed to sign an agreement with us to mitigate the off-port impacts, in which it would be a five-year agreement. They would kick in approximately \$50 million, which could go up, because it would be based on a container fee, that we would be able to install air-purification systems in two of our elementary schools, the ones that are closest to that, install soundproofing in the schools, and then identifying, you know, Wilmington residents and families, for example, children that have asthma, seniors that would have cardiopulmonary-disease problems. This way it would sort of protect them.

Marquez

At the same time we have a Wilmington Community Clinic, which provides free services, and it's predominantly funded by the L.A. County and a little bit of other funds, and that I already met with the director there to let her know that, you know, start writing up a proposal for 500,000 to initiate a children's asthma clinic as part of their normal services. Right now it's sort of a general med come in there for anything type thing, so that really geared to just have an all-asthma program there, and so she's just elated, because her budget is only about seven, eight hundred thousand now, and so this would represent over pretty much half the budget now, which would be great.

Marquez

And then I'll be talking with, say, the L.A. County Harbor General Hospital, because I would envision giving them one or two million dollars, but designated for respiratorial, cardio problems, and for emergency services, because what did happen in the last couple of years because of financial cutbacks, Harbor General Hospital lost over a hundred medical doctors.

Collings

Oh, my gosh.

Marquez

Okay? Now that also goes to part of our fight regarding environmental justice, in which, you know, the polluter is causing the environmental problem, and that environmental problem is causing a public-health crisis, whereas right now we have 24 percent of our children with asthma, while the port is not paying for that. None of the air refineries are paying for any of that healthcare. It gets dumped onto the public. Now, how does it get dumped to the public? Well, we pay our taxes, and then, you know, it goes towards the county. The county pays for the county hospitals, and so they lose money. They do not have enough money; that impacts us.

Collings

So these parks and additional services that you're talking about, is any of that money coming from the port?

Marquez

Well, in the case of the hundred and twenty million, that is coming out of the port budget. That'll be part of the redevelopment. In terms of what we just negotiated, the agreement for the TraPac terminal, that is also coming out of port funds. So that you understand, ports are public entities. They're a public-government agency. And even though the port conducts business, just like any other business and corporation, they are still a public entity. They represent the public's interest. They operate for the benefit of the public.

Marquez

Now, what people don't realize, yes, it's a port, but a port also in its trust agreement has other responsibilities, not for just importing and exporting products. It is also to support related business industries, while as early as twenty years ago the Port of L.A. and the Port of Long Beach were a major fishing-and-canning industry. Well, what's happened is that we've fished out all the oceans nearby here, so we actually killed the fishing-and-canning industry.

Marquez

The other thing that was happening at the same time was that containers were invented, you know. So when you invented a twenty-foot container, you know, six-foot wide by eight foot, you were able to store things in this metal can easily, from anywhere, put it on the back bed of a truck and haul it to a port, which greatly enhanced the ability to transport products and cargo. So that happened.

Marquez

And then with pressure from these international conglomerates and international companies and major-use corporations, they lobbied to influence the port as to what would be the future of the port. Well, the future of the port was their opinion of the future of the port, with their intentions being that, you know, they've sold out America, you know. They've taken their business overseas. They're purchasing products made cheaply. You know, basically slave labor is what they're doing, and in many cases it's indentured labor, which is unheard of. They violate every human-rights law, you know. They work twelve-, fourteen-hour days at minimum wages that are one-tenth of what we make over here, and in some cases they only make, like in India, you know, fifteen, seventeen cents an hour. You know, children are also employed there.

Collings

Yes. I wanted to ask you, as part of all this, how the people who are organizing against the port pollution feel about these other kinds of issues that you're raising. I mean, is this something that's discussed within the organization, the question of, you know, do we need these goods?

Marquez

Well, when I first started the organization, remember, I had no background in ports, and no background in refineries and petroleum industry. I did have a

conscious, you know, political, left-of-center, you know, socialist perspective of things, so I was quite a bit aware of many of those things, and so throughout my life I've advocated for that. I've participated in thousands of protests and marches and things of that nature. But now being in a position, creating my own organization with some of my own family and friends, that was a whole different world, because, you know, many of them knew me as being far left and way out there, you know.

Marquez

Even my own godfather disowned me, called me a communist and a socialist, and actually disowned my family. He wouldn't even talk to my parents, because of my political relationship, you know, not realizing that I was actually right and he was actually wrong, not really aware of things, because media influences public opinion, and when corporate America can own media and direct what gets said over media in all of its different forms, then that's real dangerous, because the public is not really aware.

Marquez

Here we had a port that was our neighbor, and we're all thinking it's doing great for the economy, creating jobs. But at the same time, we were never told it was the largest, number-one air-pollution source in southern California. So it was a major impact on air pollution, the ocean water pollution, all the coastal tidelands, as well as inland. Then the other secret they withheld from us is the public-health impact. We would not have 24 percent of our children with asthma if we knew the truth of the port pollution, and if we had known the truth of oil refineries' pollution here.

Marquez

So the task I had was really overbearing, because where do you begin? You know, I already have forty-plus years in the social-justice movement, you know, understanding things, but then now having to talk to my neighbors, and again explaining to my family, who could sympathize for me in a lot of things, because a lot of times they did see me doing good things, and especially when, you know, senators and Assembly members recognize some of the things I do, and some of our council members, so they saw some things, but you know.

Marquez

Like I had mentioned at one time when one mother actually asked me, "Well, what does your mother think of you?" And I was about maybe twenty-four, twenty-five, or right around that age. And my mother answered her, and it kind of shocked me when she says, "Well, if you want my honest truth, I don't think he'll live to see twenty-seven, twenty-eight, or twenty-nine. And if he's not dead, he'll probably be locked up in jail for life." And here I am listening to my own mother state this, you know.

Collings

And this was because of your political activity?

Marquez

Because of my political activities, you know. So then my dad was sort of thinking that, too, but you know, not being as mean and cruel, I don't think he would ever say quite that. He would probably say, you know, "I disagree with a lot that he's doing. I think it's too dangerous for what he's doing," and you know, that type of a thing. And then my brothers and sisters, you know, because I have six brothers and a sister, you know, all of them knew me to be really out there, radical in the stuff that I did. But they also know me as a brother. I'm a very loving and caring brother.

Collings

Well, who did they think that you were in danger from? Where did the danger lie, as far as they were concerned?

Marquez

Well, remember, I lived through the Vietnam War. I was a Vietnam War protester. I was always protesting. I was always marching. I was always challenging systems, you know, even collectively with other organizations I would belong to, within our own efforts, and so they figure that, you know, there'd be a hitman somewhere along the line, and I told them if I ever died and it was claimed it was a suicide, absolutely never would it have been a suicide, and absolutely, I was almost absolute, but, say, 99 percent it would not be an accident, you know. If I died it was because I was literally assassinated, and if I died through an accident it was a targeted accident, you know. So the cause of my death, because of my activities, recognizing that I've read so many different things, and my political perspectives were very radical and very different, the things that I was proposing.

Marquez

And then here I am now, years later, challenging the largest port in the United States, the third-largest port, the fifth-largest complex in the world, and like I said, most of the tenants are not U.S. companies. They are, in fact, foreign-owned companies, and in foreign countries, for me to do what I'm doing right now, and what I have been doing for the last six years, even if I had done it, being Mexican-American, being Mexican from Mexico, if I was doing this in Mexico I would be dead already. I would be dead right now. And if I was doing it anywhere else in Latin America, I would probably be dead right now, because that's the reality of what I do. You know, you take on major corporations, and then many governments are corrupt, no different from the corporations.

Marquez

You know, just like in Colombia where the paramilitary Right is blessed by the government to do what it's doing, you know. And I recognize that. But then

people like myself that are social advocates, we recognize that, and we're not afraid of that. I am prepared to die, even if I was to die today. I've lived a life, you know, ten times more than the average person has, not necessarily because of the work I necessarily do, but because I have traveled to thirty out of the fifty states of the United States, I've been to Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, I've been to London, England, so I've had an opportunity to explore, learn, and see things.

Marquez

And that's why with that perspective, in meeting with my neighbors and family and friends, you know, I can share those type of things, and then understanding the simplicity and limited knowledge and awareness they have, it was really difficult at the beginning, because whereas, you know, my I.Q. might be a hundred, I'm talking about at ten, and having to develop little information sheets, little brochures and fliers, very simply worded, because like I said, here in Wilmington no one in the harbor was aware that their illnesses were caused by the ports. They did suspect refineries, because no one trusted the refineries, because, see, they get on fire and they blow up regularly, and people would get sick when they blew up, and from the flaring and the mechanical breakdowns. So you would get sick instantly from that, so you knew they caused that. What you didn't know was the silent killer being the ports, and that's where I had to educate the public.

Collings

Yes. When you started getting that information out, did you feel like people believed it right away, or was it a tough sell in the neighborhood?

Marquez

It was really a tough sell, because in the port area many workers work at the docks, longshoremen, okay, and I had a major problem with the longshoremen. This is even before me having my family working as longshoremen. Because they have done everything to protect their job. Now, we're talking about a union that is the strongest in the United States, with the absolute best benefits. To give you an example right now, starting salary is \$65,000 a year. But because of the overtime, because when a ship comes in, you know, you don't stop at eight hours. You will try to work a ten-, twelve-hour shift to get it all done and out, so you can easily make 80[000] to \$100,000 a year. They have the best health plan, the best dental plan, the best eye-vision plan. They have two retirement plans, the best that you can get.

Marquez

And so they live here, you know, thousands live here with their families. They own the best houses, the best cars, and so we had to deal with that reality, too, because people want those jobs. But then--

Collings

So did they think that your work was going to cut back the size of the port, and reduce the number of jobs?

Marquez

Well, all unions were against me. All unions were against the whole environmental movement. What we had to do was take baby steps and educate the families, because most families with very sick children and very sick, ill family members are not longshoremen, because they have the best healthcare. So it's the other working class, okay, that has the biggest health problems, and then those with no health problems (sic) having the worst health problems. So we're talking to the poorest of the poor, and letting them know that the cause of your child's asthma is air pollution. So we had to create very baby steps in educating the public.

Marquez

Last year a candidate was going to run for political office did his own, hired a survey firm to do a survey, and had his various questions in the survey to get an idea of what the issues were in the community. One of the questions had to do about awareness of the port's business activity and its impact on the environment and health, and it was like over 80 percent of those interviewed saw, recognized and were aware of the direct relationship of the port's activities on the environment and on their public health. Whereas when I started in 2001, it was like nobody was aware of that, okay.

Marquez

So we've accomplished a media campaign. When I'm saying we, it's not just my organization. Collectively there's about, now today about sixty organizations in L.A. County overall that work with us together, so now over the years our army grew from a few to many, and all types, that that awareness is known all over the place. Then with our sister organizations, like at the Port of Oakland and Port of San Francisco, they've been doing a similar-type campaign, now, which really brought things to a head with something very different, in that we had the number-three and number-one largest ports here.

Marquez

In six years, because of our learning, and educating our public to back us up and to attend meetings, and to go before a city council, to go before a board of harbor commissioners, and not to be afraid to say, "My child is sick, and you're causing it, and you're doing nothing to help us." I mean, what's inspired me are being with these parents, with these mothers and their children. Like little Matan and his family are part of our organization, and here he is at seven, eight years old saying, "Thank you, Jesse, for taking care of me and protecting our health," because he has acute and chronic asthma.

Collings

Are there particular neighbors, community members that have kind of stepped forward and become like a regular part of the organization that you could point to?

Marquez

Well, yes, because what happens is that we've been actively recruiting members, and so we're talking to residents, so like when I first started the organization we were just a committee of about a dozen of us. We just called ourselves the Wilmington Coalition just to get it up and running. The people said, "No, no, no, you have to have an organization." So I said, "Okay, Wilmington Coalition for a Safe Environment." Then they said, "Well, you've got to have officers." And I said, "Okay." So now we had a president, vice president, a treasurer, and we started creating that little bit of a structure.

Marquez

Then, you know, another year or so later, "Well, you've got to be a nonprofit organization, and you've got to write your articles of incorporation and your by-laws." So I asked other groups, "Could you lend me copies of theirs?" and it turns up people are very protective of that, so it was difficult to get that. Then someone said that, "Hey, there's this book that you can buy. There's a publishing company called Nolo Press, that they do a lot of stuff like that." In fact, they sell a book and it has a CD in it that has articles of incorporation and by-laws pretty much already there, and you can just fill in the blanks and tweak it to however you want it, so I bought that, and that's what helped me to put my articles of incorporation, and then finally I found some samples and was able to tweak it a little bit better, so I was learning at the same time.

Marquez

But the thing that we have been most recognized, the fact that we do extensive community outreach. Now, even though we don't have like a monthly meeting location every month, we would meet here in the house, or in the backyard of someone else's house. But we would outreach to other organizations, so that like in Wilmington, on the third Thursday evening of every month, from seven to nine the Wilmington Citizens Committee meets, so I would go to their organization. Then they created the Wilmington Neighborhood Council. I would go do presentations to them. And then again, we had little political problems with the ports and with the Wilmington Neighborhood Council in that it was open to all stakeholders. Well, you could be a business owner and be a stakeholder in Wilmington, but not live in Wilmington. And then you could work for an oil refinery or for the port, and live in Wilmington.

Marquez

Well, they got appointed to the neighborhood council, so that half the time they would represent the industries' interests, because of job security, and not the public residents' interests, so we had a problem there. So there was another

Wilmington resident, Eddie Greenwood, who began to recognize that, and I started with teaching him and training him what I was doing, giving him information about what I was doing. He says, "Well, Jesse, what do you think we should do?" And I said, "Well, I think we should start another organization with the intent of it possibly replacing the Wilmington Neighborhood Council, or becoming another neighborhood council, because in San Pedro they have three neighborhood councils, okay?" So he says, "Okay. I'll go ahead and start that process."

Marquez

So he created the Wilmington Community Organization, and that one is basically in the North Wilmington side of Wilmington, and so they started meeting with a lot of homeowners in that area. So now, it's now approaching three years old and is very active, so I gave reports to that organization. Then I would travel to other cities and other communities giving reports. Two years ago the Los Angeles Environmental Justice Network started meeting on the second Tuesday of the month, and that is very unique because it is a very open-forum meeting where we discuss things coming up, but every organization, everyone there has an opportunity to discuss what they're working on and what their issues are, where they might need help, and in some cases giving us, you know, a heads up of, "Hey. This is coming up and it's going to impact all of you guys." And so those type of forums we did a lot of outreach like that.

Marquez

One thing is a lot of the other organizations pick on me because I'm paper intensive, because, you know, I print a lot of documents. I print a lot of fliers and stuff of that nature, a lot of little notices, so that I can distribute it and pass it out.

Collings

So do you think that a lot of the strength of your organization comes from networking with these other organizations, more than the community that's right here in Wilmington?

Marquez

Well, the ports and refineries are here locally, so the community has to be very much aware of what's going on. Many of the organizations do not work in the Wilmington community, okay, and they're dealing with other problems in their other areas. But what happens, they all recognize that you need to have a community base to make things change, so when there's a public hearing we need to have residents show up and testify as to how it's impacting their life. Like this home where I'm living right now, I'm actually a renter. I rent two rooms. One's a bedroom and one's for an office, and this belongs to Eddie and Cecilia Mora, okay. Well, what happened is, you know, six, seven years ago they're walking across the street from her mother's Thanksgiving dinner and he

collapses. Well, right now he has been seven years in Little Company of Mary Sub-acute Hospital, dying of lung disease.

Collings

Oh, my gosh.

Marquez

Okay? So here he is with lung cancer, never smoked a day in his life, never worked in any industrial environment where he would be exposed to any types of toxic anything, no family history of any respiratory-health problem, and here he is not well enough one day--they told him, "If you want to go home and spend a day." He has not felt comfortable enough, safe enough, healthy enough. Now, you can go to the hospital and visit him. He'll walk around, but he doesn't want to be away from that piece of equipment, that nurse and that doctor, in case, boom, it hits him. So here his life is. He was a small businessman, okay. He did accounting and bookkeeping and taxes, had his own personal health plan. His health plan honored him until the term of the health plan, and now he's on Medi-Cal, and that presents another economic impact, because, see, he's on state now, which means his wife Cecilia cannot work a full-time job, because if she works a full-time job she makes too much, which makes him ineligible, or if she gets a full-time job with a company that has a health plan, he gets transferred to that health plan, which could limit the services that he has available to him now. Or the costs would have a matching cost-type thing, which would take up all of her income.

Marquez

Now, why is it and how is it possible that someone like that with no health problem or history could come down with things like that? Well, that's where the public has been misled, in that a term that's used is called sensitive receptors. Children are sensitive receptors, senior citizens are sensitive receptors. But we've also learned to add to that list is that people are born with immune systems, and some of those immune systems are more sensitive than others. That way, that's why you could have someone in your house, like my second brother David, who never gets sick. I mean, this guy is like 99.99 percent healthy. If he gets a cold it's for a couple of days. If he gets the flu it's like for twenty-four hours. He's as strong as an ox, and that's why at many of these public hearings people show up, "I lived in Wilmington all my life, near the port. I lived in San Pedro near the port. I'm as strong as an ox," you know, that type of a thing.

Marquez

Well, yeah, that is always true. But then that cannot override and supersede the fact that, you know, people are sick with all these health problems, and it's been because of our research and network in associating, because what happened is that although I got our little organization up and running, I had to depend on the

expertise of other environmental activists and public-health activists who had been doing this for most of their life, twenty-five, thirty, forty years. And it was through my internship with them, and their mentoring of me, that I was able to learn the bigger perspective, collect some of these public-health surveys, I mean public-health studies and research, and then begin last year our own public-health surveys, so that now what's happened is that we were close to refineries, people were really concerned as to health problems, so we targeted one community near one of the oil refineries, BP Arco, and I developed and put together a leukemia public-health survey.

Marquez

Now, I did ask other organizations and individuals that had more expertise than I, and no one had the time to take the time to do that. At the same time, there was another organization forming nationally. A couple of people that are very close, dear friends of mine are part of that group, and it was their intent to develop a health survey, and then having sub-components of it specializing in like leukemia. But then, when is it going to be available? I need it now. I needed it yesterday.

Collings

Yes. And who were these friends that you were working with, just to get a couple of the names on the record?

Marquez

Oh, like, for example, Jane Williams, who's executive director of the California Communities Against Toxics. Her mother founded the organization, and she has taken it over, and so her whole life, you know, of fifty years has been involved in doing this, and she's one of the gods, she's one of the experts. Okay? If you ask me to name, you know, top five, who are the best in protecting the whole State of California? You know, she's like number one. I would put her as number one, the number-one public advocate in the state, the number-one most knowledgeable. You know, she's that type. She's one of those people.

Marquez

Dr. Joe Lyou is another one, and he's executive director of the California Environmental Rights Alliance. It's only a few years old, and he came from working with several other organizations. He would be like number two in the State of California. Now, they deal quite a bit with public policy, but with Jane's organization, even though she's very heavy with public policy, she realized that being community based was very important, and so her organization is a little bit structured different. It is also a coalition of organizations. Over seventy environmental-justice organizations belong to her group in the State of California.

Marquez

Joe Lyou is a little bit different. He's in public policy. What he's done is that he's gotten key people like myself and my organization to be on his board of directors, so he does not have community members. He's picked sort of like, say, the most elite and the most knowledgeable organizations to be part of his, and he specializes on public policy.

Collings

Yes. Are there particular community members that you could point to that play a role in your organization consistently?

Marquez

Well, yes, like when I pick my members to be like on my board of directors.

Well, at the beginning there was five of us, and we were all community people, and in all honesty, none of us knew what we were doing. None of us ever held those titles. None of us knew about the responsibilities of a board of directors. Then since that time we've gotten funding from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation to work with us on putting and developing our sustainability plans. So Hewlett gave us two years ago five thousand, where we hired a consultant to put together a two-year funding-sustainability plan, and then they came back and gave us ten thousand to put together a five-year plan, which has just been completed this year, so now we're going over that with our consultants on that. And through that we'll be able to learn our responsibilities of board of directors.

Marquez

What I've learned now in the last couple of years is that having your friends on the board of directors isn't necessarily the way it's worked out. The main purpose of a board of directors is to help raise money for the organization. But again, that's also a difference between mainstream organizations and environmental justice. We will keep a balance of community members in our board of directors, as well as those that were doing it. So, like the last several I've brought onboard was geared towards financing. So Eddie Mora's wife Cecilia became our secretary-treasurer. A couple of other people were attending some of the community meetings, and they came to the house, too, when we were talking about you know, forming the committee, the coalition. So Daniel Ruvalcaba, you know, he has a family, a wife and children, and then Raul Orozco, another father with children came onboard with me, and basically we got it started.

Marquez

Then from San Pedro we met Dr. John [G.] Miller, who's a medical doctor who used to work with Kaiser Permanente. He was an ER specialist, and he knew firsthand, you know, because he works in the ER, Emergency Room, where the worst of the worst came in. He became a big public advocate, and so we asked him to be onboard with us, so he came onboard with us, and so he was our first

real licensed, degreed professional, because none of us had degrees or [unclear] things of that nature.

Marquez

And then the last time he wanted, also recognized that we needed to expand, because now we had members in twenty-three cities, so Gabrielle Weeks from Long Beach came onboard with us. I asked her to join us, and she's actually with the Green Party, and so she's very active with that. So she came onboard. Last year we needed to expand it a little bit more, and so I brought Ricardo Pulido, who's in the City of Carson, and who formerly was part of the planning commission over there.

Marquez

Another person was Tim Grabiell. He's an attorney with NRDC, National Resources Defense Council. Then we also invited Peggy Forster. She's with Environmental Relief [Center] Foundation, and so they've been the newest members to come on as part of our board, and so they have more academic, professional experience in funding, so that like at one of our last board meetings we agreed that besides our annual dinner banquet that we have, that we would ask Dr. Miller to sponsor a little house party with medical professionals, and then with Tim being an attorney, for him to host a little house party for, you know, attorneys and legal beagles and staff, you know.

Marquez

And then Ricardo, he's like a real good hustler with industry, so we'll probably have a little house party there. We're able to raise a few thousand here and there, but you know, we would do that on a regular basis, too, to help supplement what we're doing. Peggy Forster is a retired registered nurse, so again she provides us a little expertise from that, and then her organization is donating a thousand dollars each year, which may not sound a lot to the big groups, but for those of us under \$100,000 budget, you know, every thousand dollars helps, you know. It pays the phone bill, because one of our biggest expenses is our phone bill and Internet bill, because we rely on that, and our cell phones. In fact, if it wasn't for the advent of the Internet and cell phones, you know, the environmental movement, we would be twenty years behind right now, I mean, because we didn't have, we could not afford offices and all the other things that full-time big organizations could have, but with the Internet and with cell phones and pagers--

Collings

You have a virtual office.

Marquez

--we have a virtual office, and we're on the road of things. And then, you know, I began to even expand our technology even a little bit better, you know. I bought a laptop. It did have wi-fi, but that still wasn't good enough, and wi-fi

wasn't everywhere, so that I bought the Sprint--they have a card you plug in with its own cell phone that I could be anywhere as long as the cell phone worked, and I could go onto the Internet and check whatever.

Marquez

Then Canon came out with a portable, battery-operated printer, and so I purchased that, so literally I could have a backpack with a laptop, with the Internet service and a printer, and would literally when we're strategizing, especially like when we're in Sacramento lobbying over there--things are happening by the hour and overnight. I was literally in my room, able to set up the Internet, type up, like, for example, floor notices and points for or against something, print them out right there, and then soon as we ran out the door the next morning into a print shop, Kinko's or whatever, and print out hundreds of copies.

Collings

Now, did all these items that you bought come in through the Port of Los Angeles?

Marquez

Probably so. Probably so. Well, Sprint innards are from Qualcomm. Qualcomm is a U.S.-based company for its main components. I would say probably like a lot of that would be, it would probably be closer to an 80 percent plus all U.S. The laptop, well, the first one we didn't own. First we had a computer we didn't own. I was borrowing it; it was an HP

Collings

But is that kind of thing an issue at all for your membership?

Marquez

Well, the thing we recognize, there are some things we can't do without. Then last year I bought like, I went to, knowing I wanted something for myself, dual-screen with all the whistles and ribbons and everything, the best of the best and looking at the future, for what I wanted to have for my own personal use, in addition to the coalition stuff, I consciously looked for a U.S. manufacturer of computers, and found a company called Polywell [Computers]. They're in San Francisco, South San Francisco, so they literally, they had a line and I just wanted to have a little more tweaked to what I wanted, and things that I was envisioning. I was envisioning some business things I wanted to get into, and so I had it designed that way intentionally. So here I did buy a U.S.-made computer, I mean a very expensive one, you know.

Marquez

Now, for my laptop I did have a Sony VAIO before, and it was a fifteen-inch one, but it was a very heavy seven-pound one, and then lugging that around was a problem, too. So towards the end of this last year I bought an HP, but it's a 12.1-inch screen, because I realized I didn't need to have a big one, I just

needed to have the basics, and so that's what I tote now, and take that with me. So, like, I am about as high tech as you can get, you know, in leading the organization. We bought another laptop, too.

Marquez

The other thing, too, with some of our foundation grants, a lot of them do not like allowing organizations to buy equipment, so a lot of them do not permit you to do that, and then some restrain you, no more than \$2,000, so sometimes we were restrained by some of the things we were doing. So over the last two years, our office is about the most high-tech that you could possibly imagine. You know, I have, like I said, two other--then a company donated--we didn't have a projector, so I mentioned to a company, because they asked, "What could we do to help you?" And so they donated a DELL projector and laptop, so now we have that.

Marquez

And then I bought another desktop computer, and we have two backup power supplies. If power goes out, I'm up and running for an hour. Each computer has its printer that's also a fax, scanner, and everything. Then I bought a bigger HP printer that can do poster-size things, and it can also do museum-quality photos that are guaranteed for a hundred years and don't fade. So, like, I mean tech-wise we're up there with the best. Now, I don't know how to use a lot of it yet, but we're capable of doing it.

Marquez

For the Hewlett Foundation on that second five-year, we looked around for a different consultant versus the first one. The problem we had with the first one, they were good, they did a great job, but they came more from the big nonprofit world, dealing a lot with corporate America, and they proposed and recommended things that we thought were way beyond our capability, and obviously didn't listen to us, too, because we had a five-year anniversary coming up, and we told them we wanted to incorporate that into it. They didn't really do it.

Marquez

So this time I asked other people who they had hired, and I went with GIFT. That's out of San Francisco. At that time they had an office also in Denver, but the contact person I was given was the Denver one, so I started communications with them, and submitted them to Hewlett to fund us for that. It turns out they closed the office down there, put me a little bit behind schedule over here, and then I told them what I wanted and what I was looking forward, wanted to do, and they were going to--most only like proposing the two-, three-year plan. I did not want a two-, three-year plan. I wanted a little bit more visibility, a five-year plan, and you know, reluctantly they said okay, "But let's

see who we could find that could fit what you want to do and your circumstances."

Marquez

And then we were blessed because they found someone here that works for them part-time in L.A., and that was Aurea Montes, and it turns out she was great for us, and so we worked very closely, and now she's finished the plan. We're going over the plan, and this is pretty much the final how we're going to do it. And I wanted some other things, too, if there was any kind of other books, training aids, movies, films, that type of thing, and she went out there and purchased that for us as part of our budget thing.

Marquez

So now this year we're going to be pretty well armed on things. We're only lacking on one thing, and it's actually a significant thing, so it's not just one thing, in that we've survived the last three years or so with grant funding, but we're incorporated as a nonprofit in the state, but we're not a 501(c)(3) yet. And everyone's on my case, you know, "Jesse, you've got to get it, you've got to get it, you've got to get it," but you know, we have been under so much pressure with all the stuff going on, getting the time to do it. So finally, you know, I'm doing it, I'm working on it, it's about 90 percent done and I've got to finish some more tweaking of it.

Marquez

The other problem we ran into is that they also want financials, detailed financials for every year you've been in operation, which means going back with every single receipt. So then one of the organizations recommended that, hey, one of our members, Cynthia Babich does the accounting for them, and then she uses this one small-business software program, and then if you buy that, then I was able to get another \$2,000 grant from Liberty Hill Foundation to hire her to put the program onto the computer and teach us how to work with it, and so now we're in that process of adding or downloading or inputting every single receipt for every single year for the last five years. So that's the time-consuming portion of it.

Marquez

Another thing that we've purchased was software program for donations, so now we could track everybody. It also allows us, it has a feature in there for mailing lists, so we could target mailing lists, as well as members and anything news media. So we're developing that, too.

Collings

Yes. So did you want to talk a little bit today, or you had sort of mapped out how you wanted to organize the interview. I didn't know if you wanted, since you are talking a bit about the coalition building that you're involved in, I wondered if you wanted to talk about these organizations that are involved in

the Trade, Health, and Environment Impact Project, and how they all work together.

Marquez

What happened is that a lot of times we look at issues from your own little perspective, your own little community, your own little local perspective, and sometimes we don't realize some of the other impacts that may be on a regional basis. So what happened over the years as we began our networking, we were very fortunate in that USC has a special center that the executive director is Andrea Rico, and she had the vision to be able to see, hey, some of these people need to meet each other. You know, Jesse's down here in the harbor, Angelo Logan with East [unclear] Communities for Environmental Justice is up in East L.A., Commerce, dealing with the railroad issues there. Penny Newman is out in Riverside and San Bernardino, working on some of the distribution-center issues over there. These people need to get together.

Marquez

So she put together the first little port conference three years ago in Long Beach, and asked all of us to put a table there and to be speakers there, so that we could discuss what we were working on locally, and that's where I got to meet Angelo and Penny, to hear their side of the story. Then again, it was a good thing and a bad thing, because I'm already burdened with me having to deal with my issues. Now I realize that what's happening here in the port is impacting--we're the cause of their problems, I mean, the southern regional area.

Collings

Right. So it becomes the goods-movement issue.

Marquez

So now it's not just a Wilmington issue, it's a ports and goods-movement issue on a regional state, and as we began to learn more and more, it was a state issue, too, and a national issue, too. You know, it became very taxing for me, and the topics, these issues that we work on, there are no textbooks. You know, there's no class I could take and have a professor explain, "Okay. Here's how goods movement works," and all that. [laughs] "And here's organizations that have been doing it for, you know, the last twenty years," that did not exist. We were trailblazing in what we were doing, just like Oakland was trailblazing what it was doing over there with the Pacific Institute, and the Ditching Dirty Diesel Collaborative with Margaret Gordon and their group over there. All of us were out there isolated, fighting these little issues on our own.

Marquez

And it was because of us now beginning to link up that network three years ago, four years ago, we began to really see the whole picture, and then educate each other so that like now, I will attend, or between me and the members we

will attend over 300 conferences, workshops, seminars, public hearings and meetings a year.

Collings

Jeez.

Marquez

So that's almost one every day. Now, in some situations, you know, we're attending three a day or four a day. Like yesterday I had two conference calls here, I had one meeting in Long Beach, another meeting in L.A., and so some things are four times things in one day. Then there was a political fundraising event for City Council[member] Tonia Reyes-Uranga, who is running for a State Assembly member in the 54th District, and it was being sponsored by Councilmember Ray Gabelich, also a councilmember in Long Beach, so I was able to come after my fourth thing, take an hour and a half, get up and then run down there to be part of that support group. So literally, when you're attending 300 things a year, that's quite a bit.

Collings

Yes, it is.

Marquez

Between conferences and conventions, at least twenty industry-related ones.

Collings

And these are sort of information-sharing events?

Marquez

These are information sharing. This year for the first time I got invited to be a participant, a panelist, from the California Wellness Foundation. Now, normally the people that attend it are the grantees, and I'm not a grantee. But the word is out, no matter where you read the newspapers and media, our organization is there. We're in the news constantly, all the time. In fact, the media has been one thing that we're a very unique organization. In fact, if someone just wanted to do a paper on how well an organization can do, we would be one of those poster childs, because in over five years we have been in one media a month, every month for five years.

Collings

And why is that?

Marquez

We were attacking the largest port in the United States, you know, for one, and then the third largest. We were attacking, you know, Conoco Phillips, you know, 76 gas stations, we were attacking Shell and Chevron, and so we were in the news all the time, and then testifying at public hearings. The media rarely in the past would attend a public hearing, but when they heard about these radical organizations, you know, attacking the industries, they decided to start following us.

Collings

Well, I know that Penny Newman's organization was very good at getting the media involved, and they would actually stage events that would attract media. Are you interested in that type of thing?

Marquez

Well, we have done some things. For example, another organization, a couple of organizations out of the Long Beach area. We had Dr. Gordon LeBedz and Diana Mann. They were part of the Surfrider Foundation. Then Diana has started the EcoLink, which would have a network of organizations, people attending that. Then in 2001 we created the Sierra Club Harbor Vision Taskforce. They were our Long Beach link that joined it, and the Wilmington, our group joined it, and the San Pedro group joined it, and then others throughout the region. And we decided to have a port victims memorial day in honor of those who had died of asthma attacks or lung cancer or things of that nature. So all of us got together to have the memorial beginning at the Port of Long Beach on their lawn, while we hired a bagpipe, we hired a hearse. We had a minister volunteer to do a memorial service. Then we got an idea of putting crosses on the lawn, and then what I did is I got an idea, okay, then I'm going to paint, write people's names, you know. Like Gertrude Schwab died of lung cancer, so I put Gertrude Schwab's name with a marker on one of the white crosses.

Marquez

Then a friend of mine who was an electrician with me, Afro-American, one day left work early because of not feeling well because of his asthma, and went to the hospital that Friday night for treatment. They kept him overnight. Saturday he went into a coma and died on Sunday, a young Afro-American young man, only thirty-three years old, with a wife and two beautiful children, and I knew both of them. In fact, I knew the wife and them before they even got married. So, you know, here I write his name on there. So we did a memorial service and then left there on a caravan over the Gerald Desmond Bridge, from Long Beach to Terminal Island. Then it connected with the Vincent Thomas Bridge to go to the Port of L.A., to the Ports of Call Village, and ended there. So that was one thing that hit all the media.

Collings

Yes, I'll bet.

Marquez

Another fun thing that we did, which was a regional one, and this was part of the Modesta Avila Coalition, because what happened is that Penny and Angelo decided to create another organization that would deal more with the railroad distribution center issues, and then I was asked to be on part of that. Then it included organizations in Colton and San Bernardino, Mira Loma, Pomona,

Riverside, and then Angelo [unclear], and then mine. So we brought that new link together.

Marquez

We decided to protest our governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and lo and behold, you know, Angelo found out where he lived in Brentwood. So we called up members and decided to do a rally in front of his house. [laughs] And so Angelo is an artist who created these puppets and masks, okay, and then Penny's group made some posters and banners, and since Halloween was approaching I was able to buy coffins, like black cardboard coffins that you can fold into a coffin. So I bought a small, medium, and large coffin, and then we got plastic black roses on a stem, and then I went next door to one of our neighbors, because she had a little baby, asked her if she had a used pair of little baby sandals or little tennis shoes, little white shoes. And she said, "Oh, here, take these." So one of the people carried like a little coffin, like a little baby coffin with the little white shoes sitting on top of it, and then we had cowbells. So I dressed Native American, you know, with all my clothes there, and here we were in front of his gated house, demonstrating it. And then people would come by and we'd pass out fliers to them.

Marquez

And then, you know, we were going to march from the sidewalk all the way to his gate, and then he called security, and then they called the police to come down there to keep an eye on us. Then from the window we could see some of his children looking out the window, wondering who was protesting their house. Then so that's one of those fun things that we've also done. In fact, we had actually video footage of that, too.

Collings

Oh, wonderful.

Marquez

Another thing that I did, this was with our network with Teri Shore of the Blue Water Network. At that time they were merging with Friends of the Earth. When we went to--this was when I presented our Port Community's Bill of Rights. We had asked to do a demonstration. We were going to have hundreds there at the United Nations Building of the International Maritime Organization [IMO], but that week before is when they had the bombing there, so there was going to be no such thing allowed. But because we were delegates they says, "Okay. Keep it down to fifteen people." Well, it's hard to do a big demonstration with fifteen people, so we're thinking, okay, how can we maximize that?

Marquez

So there at the Friends of the Earth office there in London, they said, "Well, let's dress up in costumes of some type or another." So I brought my Native

American outfit. I said, "Okay. I'll dress native." And they says, "Well, we'll dress up as pirates, and that way we'll say that the IMO is holding the world hostage, and giving in to the shipping community." So that was the demonstration with our signs that we did right there, in front of the United Nations IMO building, so it wasn't a huge crowd, but it was enough to get us in the newspapers, and actually as the 123 delegates are coming in the door, they know we're there, or we were doing it at the lunchtime. They knew at lunchtime, they saw it was there also. So I mean, we've done some little innovative things like that, you know.

Marquez

So what happened, going back with Andrea Rico, she's the one that put the first Long Beach together, where all of us got to say who we were, and introduce each other, and said, "Hey, Jesse, you're the cause of our problem," lovingly and caringly saying that. I said, "I know. I'm sorry." So that began the link up right there.

Collings

Well, your group is concerned with cleaning up the port. Are those groups interested in pressuring the port to slow growth, no growth?

Marquez

Well, that was part of the thing. They had to educate me as to how were we impacting them. Then I had to educate them that, "If you want me to stop polluting your area, then you've got to come help me over here, because I can't do it all alone." Okay? So like I was the first to introduce alternative technologies, because I recognized that we could fight something and we could defeat something, but if we can't find a solution to replace it--

Collings

Yes, because I understood that Penny's group was interested in restricting the size of the port. And so your group is over here trying to make port operations cleaner, but then you still have all these goods--

Marquez

Not quite so, because, see, you've only heard the tail end.

Collings

Okay.

Marquez

We took a position from day one, from April 2001, for a moratorium on port growth. All of us took a moratorium to fight port growth, so that has been--

Collings

That seems like that would be a much steeper hill to climb--

Marquez

It is. Yes, yes, yes.

Collings

--than cleaning operations.

Marquez

No, but see, as a result of that no-port-growth policy and moratorium, that has been our demand, and as a result of following that primary principle and directive for all of us, we challenged every environmental-impact report, saying, "No. We are not going to accept your EIR, and if you do approve it we're going to appeal it, and we're going to sue you in court." So we have followed that principle to this very day, so that we stopped seventeen Port of L.A., Port of Long Beach projects, following them, demanding they do a moratorium on it. It's only been because of this last, you know, two weeks ago agreement, which is in a settlement as to what we would allow to grow, and it would be under our terms. Our terms would be that it will be electrified at all docks. Every ship that comes here will use low-sulphur diesel fuel. All trains in the port will be the newest model, you know, the genset systems, which are using the lowest-sulphur-diesel fuel. All top-picks vehicles will either use natural gas or propane gas, or one of the types of gases out there, and so, you know, we're showing them that, you work with us and we'll work with you.

Collings

Now, is this going to push port traffic over down to this possibly this new port that's going to be developed in Baja?

Marquez

We have to understand that corporate America has sold out America, so they don't care what happens to the American public. They don't care what happens to the American economy, as long as they make their money. If they can bypass--

Collings

The clean, expensive, Port of--

Marquez

--the Port of Long Beach, the Port of L.A., the Port of Oakland, all the California ports that are going green and clean, and go to another port where they don't have to pay or negotiating mitigation fees, they don't have to pay high wages to the labor force, meaning the union longshoremen, then that's the route they're going to take, and that's the direction they're going to support, and that's exactly what they're doing.

Collings

Does any of this activity up here have anything to do with the development of that port in Baja? I mean, are they linked, is that linked?

Marquez

Well, what happened, this was a new announcement. It was announced in January 2006 that the Mexican government was considering building this mega-port. Well, the first thing that happened over here is the longshoremen

unions and others were laughing, saying, "It'll never happen. You know, where is Mexico going to get the billions of dollars to build it? We understand it's not a deep channel. They'd have to dredge it. They don't have a breaker, so that won't protect the ships in the waves. It ain't never going to happen."

Marquez

Well, I took the position, "You guys are wrong. I'm going to research it." So what happened, we have members that have family in Baja California, so this was in January where it's coming out in different news stories. So we took the position, we're going to go investigate this. So I told some of our members that even though we are not budgeted for anything international, that we need to do at least the minimum. You know, we're the most knowledgeable, so let's drive down there and do an environmental assessment of it. Let's photograph the area, you know, film some of it. Let's interview residents there, so that we'll come back and prepare an environmental-impact report, or assessment report, so to speak, and we'll translate it into Spanish as to what would be all the environmental-health impacts, all the environmental impacts and all the environmental-health impacts, and all of the public safety impacts if they were to build a port the size of Long Beach and L.A. there.

Marquez

And at the same time, they were advertising it down there, that it would be a port and it would be a tourist attraction. The reason that might not sound strange is due to the fact that in the City of Ensenada there is a Port of Ensenada, but it's a very small port. So that whole city and that port are well balanced. The port is only like one-fifth of the business activity there, maybe a fourth of the business activity, so it's a well-balanced thing. There is no major air-pollution source, traffic congestion. All that doesn't exist there. So they're thinking down there in the town of Punta Colonet in Baja that that might be the same thing. Well, that's not what this is.

Marquez

So what I did, what we did is that we photographed Wilmington, because we're a 90-percent Hispanic community, to give them an example, since they're 100 percent Hispanic community, what it would look like. And here we are there. So anyway, so we do the photos. Well, we go down there another day to go back with some of the people that we had met, saying, "Lookit. We would like to set a date and location where we can come and do a presentation." So we hired one of the local people there who does part-time writing with newspapers, and his little business, he sells satellite dishes there, and he agreed that he would work with us and they would join our group. I drafted a flier only in Spanish. We told them, "Okay, here's how we do things over here." But like we're talking different countries now, and different communities and intelligence levels, and media and how you do things. "Take a look at what

we've proposed, the flier. Listen. Do you feel this is adequate, or do we need to rearrange it, reword it? Whatever it takes that will be adequate for your community here." And so we did revise a good 15 percent of it, 20 percent of the wording in it.

Collings

Why did it need to be revised?

Marquez

We needed to bring it down to an even more common level of understanding, because they were looking at ports, again, creating jobs, okay, adding to the community, with no health-impact knowledge, no environmental-impact knowledge, no public-safety knowledge. So we had to go back again to our baby words of how we were going to do it, and emphasize it to them, and at the same time recognizing we didn't want the government to clamp down either. So we had to take some government stuff out of there, references out of there.

Marquez

Then he mentioned--and I said, "I would also recommend doing something else, hiring another service." And then my memory flashed back, way back when I was a child. In Mexican communities when I was growing up, you know, as a child in my teens we did something here, how we would advertise events and stuff, that doesn't exist today. Back in my childhood days, which still exist, I found that that's the way they probably still do it in Mexico, and I'm assuming that they still do it throughout Central and South America, when you want to notify the public of something, even if it's a sale at your store, you hire an announcer. So someone has a car, a station wagon or truck, and they put this giant speaker on top, and they drive around announcing it with a microphone, or nowadays they have a little tape that plays, and it's being repeated over and over again.

Marquez

So, you know, we gave them extra money. I said, "How much would it cost to announce it?" and so we literally hired this little guy and this car to run around block by block through the whole Punta Colonet community, announcing, "On Saturday, so-and-so from nine o'clock to so-and-so time, there's a community meeting, it's important that you come to it." And it was cute, because I had forgotten about that. In all these years it hadn't entered my mind anymore, because they don't do that anymore over here.

Marquez

So then another thing happened at that same time. In 2005 Sierra Club national decided to do a new film series for part of the Sierra Chronicles. They got budgeted to do five or six films. Tom Politeo, who was the founder of the Sierra Club Harbor Vision Taskforce recommended that they do an environmental-justice film, and that our organization be featured because of the

ports, and they chose to do that. So they came down there and they met with me to ask us, "Okay. Here's the plan. We really want to do a real, real, real story, okay? We've done a lot of stories but, you know, we really want to get down to the community nitty gritty. We would like to--and since you're only four or five years old, it's nice to be able to catch an organization at the beginning of your history, and then we've done some research on you. You guys have done a lot in about four or five years now, and so it's great. So we want to meet with you and interview you for this film."

Marquez

So we met and we started talking. They're going, they want to know about my childhood and my life, and then I told them, "Well, wait a minute. We can't do the film like that." And they're looking at me, "Well, what do you mean?" "I do not want the whole film about me and my life and what I've done." "Well, why not, Mr. Marquez? You know, everyone would be honored to have a film documentary about them." I said, "No, it's not about me. It's about me and my organization. So if you want to do this film, you will interview some of my board of director members, and you will interview some of my community members as part of this film project, or I'm not going to do it."

Marquez

So, I mean, they weren't fighting the whole issue. They just said, "Well, okay. We'll just adjust how we were going to do it, and that's okay, not a problem." The producer was there with the camera people, they said, "Okay, not a problem. We'll adjust it and do like that, and we kind of like your idea anyways, too." So the film does start off a little bit about me, you know, as a child, shows some of my pictures of me and my family when I was a little kid, you know, and then what got me started, and then they actually wanted to meet my parents, because, see, where I grew up there used to be an oil refinery that blew up there, and so that is also in my consciousness, too, in that, you know, you can read in the paper about a refinery catching on fire and blowing up, but it's a whole different story when you interview people that lived across the street and in that neighborhood, who got burned or killed or injured from that thing.

Marquez

Well, in this case what had happened is that, like I said, we lived across the street. We're talking about a storage tank a hundred feet away from our front door. That's how close we are to this oil-well field and oil refinery. What happened is one day two workers were there at one of the tanks, and it caught fire and it blew up. Now, it was very fortunate because it happened like about five o'clock in the afternoon, and I was actually coming down the hallway because it was dinnertime. Mom said, "Come and eat." I'm like sixteen years old at this time, too, which is again a key point was at sixteen years old, very

significant things happened in my life when I was sixteen. We see this big ball of flame going out there, you know. So naturally Mom and Dad says, you know, "Hey, everyone stay inside the house." In fact, the explosion was so powerful, if you were standing it knocked you down.

Marquez

We heard people who were like five, six blocks away, it knocked them down, because the ground shook so violently at that time, you know. And when you live across right from a refinery, too, another issue, too, is that you know you don't stay. You're not going to sit there and watch it as a tourist or a looky-loo. You're going to get the hell out of there. So Mom and Dad says, "Okay." And the other thing is our grandmother lived next door, too, so my mother says, "Well, let's go get Grandma. We're all going to get in the car and we're going to take off. We're going to leave and get away from it, because we don't trust what's going to happen here."

Marquez

So we're all jumping into the station wagon, and then a second tank blows up. Now, we're talking, you know, like million-gallon gas tanks, and these are jet fuel ones that we found out later that were right there. It blows up, and I'm already like in the car. The fire, the heat was so intense, we jumped out of the car and ran into the house, okay. So here now I'm talking about my four younger brothers and sisters, too, we're all children, you know, babies.

Collings

Yes, so now you don't know whether to stay in the house, or whether to go out-

Marquez

So we run back into the house, so that now Mom and Dad's panicked, and we're all scared to death, you know, because we're all children. So they say, "Okay, here's what we're going to do." Well, by that time, too, remember, cars were panicked from the first one, crashing into each other. Cars could not pass us, because everyone was stopped and people were running, and then you had the dummy looky-loos from blocks away coming there to get a closer look. Then it was, "Okay, here, we can't get out, we can't back up the car, we can't get out of here, so we'll grab Nana. What we're going to do, we're all going to hold hands and we're going to run to the corner, and then we're going to go," because we had an aunt, and my other grandmother lived like six blocks away, "So we're going to run to their house. We're going to go to Aunt Boopy's and Uncle Danny's house, and go see Nanny." So here we're all holding hands, you know, running out the front door--

Collings

And carrying your grandmother?

Marquez

No, Grandma's running with us.

Collings

Oh, I thought you said--okay.

Marquez

Then a third one blows up. This one is bigger than the other two. Now, everyone's seen on TV, when you see a nuclear bomb at Hiroshima, this big mushroom cloud. That's what we saw now coming at us. This thing was huge, and we could just feel the heat, and it just spread out. I mean, we're talking, you know, five, six hundred feet wide, so even if we were able to make it to the corner, we could see the flames spreading out and moving in our direction, okay?

Collings

Oh, gosh.

Marquez

So Mom and Dad yell out, "Run. Run to the backyard, and jump over the fence." Well, in our case we had a gate there, but our neighbors had a driveway that went all the way, so they said, "Just run to the back to jump over the fence." Now, my mother was pregnant with my youngest brother at that time, and so she was like six, seven months pregnant at the time. So everyone's helping each other jump over the fence, and people, I mean by that time we're talking about hundreds of people had lined up against the fence, and standing by their car if they were the car owner, all running. So hundreds of people were running in all directions to get away from this thing, and it was coming fast.

Collings

Oh, my gosh.

Marquez

And so I helped my brothers over the fence, and everyone just keeps running. Then I'm getting ready to take off and I hear a woman's voice. "Boy, boy, please turn around!" Remember, I'm like sixteen. So I turn around and I look back, and there's a woman with her baby wrapped in a blanket. Her face was burned and the baby's face was burned.

Collings

Oh, my gosh.

Marquez

And I could see it burned, you know. She says, "Please save my baby," throws her baby over this block-wall fence that's about, you know, five-feet tall, six-feet tall. "Take my baby and save my baby's life." So here I am, this baby flying in the air. I catch the baby, she says, "Don't look back. Run." And I just keep on running. I didn't know the woman, I didn't know the baby, and she didn't give me no name. I knew nothing.

Collings

So what did you do with the baby?

Marquez

So I just kept on running, blocks. Then I remembered there was a clinic on Wilmington Blvd., so I ran, made a left turn on the street, because I was only one block from that main boulevard, Wilmington Blvd., to get to the clinic, and ran in the door. Naturally they know what's happening, too, because they were only a few blocks away, and people were running in there for treatment. So I said, "I have a baby. It's not my baby, it's not my family, I don't know who it is," and I just said, "There was just some white, blonde lady, and that's all I know. Here's my name, and I'm going to my Grandmother's house. I don't know her phone there, and my aunt's house, but they're in the phone book, you know, so if you look in the yellow pages they're in the phone book, and I need to go catch my mother, brothers and sisters."

Marquez

And here's the strange part. My mind is actually blank. I cannot remember to this day how I found them or how we found each other. All I remember is that we ended up at my aunt's house, but, you know, I'm blank.

Collings

Yes, it was shock.

Marquez

Yes. And so many years have passed now. I've tried to remember what happened. You know, I knew I was at the clinic with the baby, but then, you know, where were my brothers and my sisters, my mom and Dad, I don't remember. All I remember is that we eventually ended up there, because that's where we said we'd all meet, you know. So somehow I just assume my mom and Dad were able to get my brothers and sisters and end up over there, but my mind went blank after that point.

Collings

Did you ever learn anything more about what happened with the baby?

Marquez

Well, no, not to this very day. No one ever contacted me. Well, in retrospect now I would have thought that maybe she would have asked, "Who was the boy?" you know, that type of thing, but the one thing is clear in my mind, that, well, first of all, all of us got burned.

Collings

Oh, really.

Marquez

I mean, everyone was burned, you know, so everyone got first degree, second degree, third degree. We all had second-degree burns. My grandmother actually had third-degree burns from her neck and shoulder. To this very day you can see the scar where she all got burned. But we do remember very clearly a

Beverly Hills law firm coming over there, saying that they're going to take care of us and they're going to represent us, and all they did was rip us off.

Collings

Really.

Marquez

We each got like \$10,000 for our family for everything, so all we remember is we got screwed by a Beverly Hills attorney, and we will never trust in Wilmington any Beverly Hills attorney ever again. If they say they're from Beverly Hills, we want nothing to do with them.

Collings

Well, do you think that this event made it easier for you to organize community members against the port?

Marquez

Well, yes, too, because what happened and because where I live now is six blocks from Conoco Phillips oil refinery, and people live across the street. It has had fires and several explosions, so there have been several lawsuits with some still pending where people did get sick and did get injured. So recruiting them was a little bit easy. We have an excellent relationship with that community.

Collings

Yes, yes, I see. Okay, so you went down to the Baja community and you were going to do some environmental-impact work, and you were advertising for this meeting using the announcer.

Marquez

So we show up that Saturday. Sierra Club has their film crew with us. They did interview everybody, my mom and Dad who talk about this explosion. My grandmother's on the film, too. She talks, she remembers about it, too. So we're going down there. We had a banner made, put our little banner up there. They helped us, and here we are, and some towns are towns, they're not like city cities, but they do have the little municipal buildings, the little police departments, the little meeting rooms, so we were able to meet in one of those meeting rooms where the community did come to it.

Marquez

We were surprised, too, because what happened is that the largest regional newspaper in Baja is called El Mexicano, and it's a statewide newspaper. The day before, Friday, they had a one-third-page story. They had picture of the Baja, of [unclear] coastline, with a story mentioning my name and organization coming down there to do a story. Then that day there was like four more reporters from other newspapers that also showed up. So here we do our presentation.

Marquez

Now, the other thing is that my Spanish is not great. You know, I can get by, but I'm not very fluent, because I was not a fluent Spanish speaker. So one of my board members, Raul, he was going to be our predominant speaker in doing the presentation in Spanish, and then also, even though he was born and raised in Mexico, you know, he grew up here, so he would even forget a little bit of your Spanish, too, based on the local locals, and in some cases we weren't even sure about some of the terminology, since we didn't have a Spanish dictionary, and translating environmental terminology and then technical terminology, and the public-health terminology, we didn't know a lot of that. So we were grateful that there was one young woman there who helped us with some of the translation and interpreting.

Marquez

And then so here we are, we have a document that's four or five pages, and they're like in a state of shock. Then we show them the color photos. "Here's Wilmington, 90 percent Hispanic, just like your community. There is no Hilton Hotel. There is no Marriott Hotel. There is no Holiday Hotel. There is no beach, so you're not going to have no beach here. There is no resort. There is no famous restaurants. There is no condos. There are no million-dollar homes." So they could see what it was going to look like, and they were like in a state of shock and awe. They just couldn't grasp it. They just couldn't believe that this was going to be coming to their community, because see, when I went out with them, they did have one little advantage compared to us here, in that the community is not up against the water. So they're actually about two miles inland from the ocean, so they drive to the beach to get there. But the beach is a fishing village, too.

Marquez

And so we got to interview fishermen mending their nets, you know, there, and then for the first time, since we have no clams here since our oceans are polluted here, you can't go clam digging here in the Wilmington beach since there isn't one, and you can't go clam digging at Cabrillo beach, because there are no clams. So I asked one of the families, you know, if I could learn how to clam from them, and they're kind of laughing at me like, you know, it's no big deal. Get on your knees, stick your hands in the water, you kind of dig, but they thought it kind of cute that here's this gringo-Mexican from the United States and L.A. down here, wants to know how to dig for clams. So there I am digging for clams like them, learning how to do it, you know, and then at the same time explaining to them that they will not be able to do this anymore in the future. See, because fishing there, and clamming there is also part of the diet and livelihood, okay, and now they're going to lose a major food source. You know, when they can't afford to buy beef, they're eating fish, you know, a very clean nutrient-based fish.

Collings

But how did the community feel about the jobs that the port would bring?

Marquez

Well, that was the thing that we were explaining, that, you know, yes they would create jobs. But then remember, these companies are going to negotiate with your government to exploit you, to pay the minimum wage. In the United States our dock workers are unionized, and when I told them how much they make, 65,000 a year starting, they just couldn't believe it. They could not believe it, because average for them is only five, six, seven thousand dollars a year. Then when the United States passed NAFTA, it destroyed Mexican agriculture and employment there, so we had to point out that yes, it's going to create jobs, but number one, they're going to exploit it to the maximum. They're going to want to pay you the minimum. They're not going to want to pay no benefits, no health plan. They're going to want--a normal work week is eight hours here. They're going to probably want a minimum ten, twelve hours there. They're not going to want to pay overtime. So this was part of the orientation, and teaching them, okay.

Marquez

So now, this is Saturday. Imagine now Sunday, Monday, five newspapers in the state, and you're the governor, you're the cabinet secretary of business and commerce, and you're the director of shipping and whatever, all of a sudden read in every newspaper this Los Angeles group now educating your community.

Collings

Mmm, ouch.

Marquez

And every newspaper did a great story for us, so we knew that they didn't like that at all. And then over here on this side of the border, the United States government finding out, and our unions finding out, the shipping industry, that we did that. So again, everyone said, "Jesse, you know, from now on you don't go anywhere by yourself. Try to have someone always with you, you know, because you're really making yourself a target."

Collings

Well, I would think that the unions here would be against that project down there. They'd probably support--they didn't support what you were doing down there?

Marquez

Well, first you have to remember they're in denial. They don't believe--

Collings

That the port is even going to happen.

Marquez

--it's even going to happen. While here's reality, okay. We went back down there again, okay. It is happening. It's an approved government project.

Collings

Yes, I've been reading about it.

Marquez

Foreign business is already going to kick in, you know, three to five billion. They're prepared to build a breaker. They're prepared to dredge it deeply. This year, 2008, they're going to issue the bids for the port construction and for the new railroad construction.

Collings

That's right.

Marquez

So we were right, they were wrong. Now they're scrambling, too, to try to do what they can do to educate that. Now, we are intending to go back again this year for what I'm calling our second phase, our second presentation. The first one was, what would be the environmental impacts, the public-health impacts, public-safety impacts. Now reality. Reality, there ain't probably no way they're going to be able to stop the project, even if they all organized, even if the whole state organized. They're not going to stop a federal-government project, okay. So the next best thing is, what will we recommend in terms of building and designing the greenest, cleanest port?

Marquez

So the report I'm preparing right now will be an outline, how the community can negotiate with the port, okay. So what will be examples of that? That all port terminals will be electric, electric power, shore power, just like over here. The cranes would be electric, all the vehicles would be LNG, propane gas, all those kinds of details.

Collings

Well, what would be the incentive for them to do that?

Marquez

Well, the communities are going to fight the project, and down there, you know, some will even fight it to the point of maybe taking very serious action, you know, like bombing it, lighting it on fire, and that type of stuff, because some radicals will go that extreme, so there's that danger and potential, okay. So we don't want to see a police state coming into the picture, but the incentive for the government is to recognize that, you know, we're doing that here in the United States, and then raising the conscious level of not only the State of Baja, but other areas in Mexico, to realize that that's the good thing to do, and that don't be a greedy government, that allocate money for mitigation in that design, and so there will be pressure to do that.

Marquez

For example, Maersk is converted all of their shipping fleet over here, so we can share that with them down there. You demand that Maersk also use the [unclear] for ships there as you would be using here. Another interesting thing happened just a week or so ago. I met with representatives of Union Pacific Railroad, and a very unusual part of the conversation came up, because they found out that I'd been to Punta Colonet, we have members at Punta Colonet, and we've done a presentation down there. And they are now aware that the Mexican government is going to issue a bid for the railroad construction. BNSF [Burlington Northern Santa Fe] railroad in the United States is going to bid on that, and probably a Mexican railroad, too. They want to bid on it. They want to win it.

Marquez

"So Jesse, what would it take for us to get your support and the community's support?" I said, "For one, it will not be a diesel-fuel locomotive train. It'll have to be an electric train, and preferably a Maglev train. If you're the first to endorse a Maglev train you will get it, and we'll be the ones to support it, and we'll get everyone else united behind it." So now they're going back and they're expressing that to their bosses.

Marquez

I also told them that because of them wanting to do their expansion project, the Union Pacific ICTF [Intermodal Container Transfer Facility] terminal here in Carson and Long Beach and Wilmington, it borders all three, that it would also have to be a Maglev system. Some bad news came to them in the last two weeks, because normally the Port of L.A. or the Port of Long Beach would be the lead agency for their environmental-impact report. Both ports are so busy with other projects, neither one of them wants to do it, and neither one of them wants to fight all of us environmental groups now that we're about fifty strong now, with all of our allies, so they volunteered the South Coast Air Quality Management District and recommended that they be the ones to be the lead agency.

Marquez

Well, [unclear] hates the railroad because of their attitude, just like we hate them, so in this meeting they're like, you know, quivering like, "Of all the worst ones, that's the one government agency we don't want to have do it, and we're going to be stuck with them. So Jesse, we're now reopening our arms and opportunity to look beyond what we were considering before for this facility, so what else can we do? We're asking you and the community to comport to us to help us make this happen." I said, "It's simple. Make it a Maglev thing." "Well, we've talked with the Maglev people." "Yes, I know you've been talking with the Maglev people." "Now we're going to retalk with some of the Maglev

people to how to make it happen, from the Port of Long Beach, Port of L.A. to your facility. Now we'll discuss that."

Marquez

And he says, "Yeah, just saying we also want to put up monies for any type of studies or stuff that you feel might need to be done, that the community might want also." So now we're discussing that type of thing, too. So yes, we've built up enough community support, political support, and now where the industry is recognizing that they've got to negotiate with us, too, and if things are going green and clean they have to find a way to make it happen, or fight us and lose.

Marquez

Now, what's our ultimate solution, too, is that, no, we don't want them to expand. We want a moratorium on that, and we do not want the other BNSF [Burlington Northern Santa Fe] proposed project, which is going to be, the application will be submitted there this year for the SCIG [Southern California International Gateway]. The ICTF [Intermodal Container Transfer Facility] is the other thing, too, is that the public and community has now learned all the terminology. It's a trucking company. It's an intermodal facility. It's a container facility, and no one wants one now, so the port what they did with the BNSF railroad, they called it the Southern California International Gateway. It is a container-intermodal facility. [laughs] They just didn't want it in the name, because you've got to advertise this thing, and as soon as they say container facility, intermodal facility, train facility, it's a gateway. So we're fighting that one.

Marquez

So what's happening now, and this is a new--you're one of the first to hear this. As of two weeks ago at Joint Powers Authority that is overseeing the UP, we announced that, no, we don't want it to expand, and we don't want the SCIG either. What we do propose is that right now the Port of L.A. has no property to build it on-site. However, there is a location at the Port of Long Beach that borders near the Port of L.A., which happens to be the import-car parking lot. There is no reason for you to have a zillion cars spread out side by side. Build a four, five, six-story car parking lot. Build the new intermodal facility right there on that land. Make it a Maglev system from there to the ICTF terminal in Long Beach.

Marquez

So in the next ninety days I'm preparing a little glossy brochure type thing with that concept, proposal put on it, explain, and that'll be in a campaign. Last night I met with two Long Beach City Councilmembers, Tonia Reyes-Uranga, and Ray Gabelich, and explained that we're coming out with that in the next ninety days, and that'll be given to all city councilmembers, all port people, and that'll

be a campaign we're going to be pushing, and I can assure you our colleagues at fifty organizations will all be behind it, too.

Collings

Let's see. Okay, we're back on and you wanted to talk a little bit about some of your cultural research and interests.

Marquez

When I was in--naturally, as you heard me mention earlier, when I was sixteen is when I really became culturally aware of my history and my roots and culture, and since that time, since I was just starting high school, I've been building my library. So I have a thousand-plus books in my library now, which includes the history of Mexico, but mostly pre-Colombian, so I would say 80 percent of my books all deal with Aztec history and culture. So in building that library I would be able to learn about a lot of the history and context of the Americas.

Marquez

And UCLA has an evening--well, they have the regular archeological program that you can join the archeology classes, etc. But there's also an evening archeological class program, where they did a very smart thing. Actually, several universities have done it; there's not too many. You have your graduate archeological program where you go for your A.A., your bachelor's and master's, and you get your Ph.D.

Collings

And you said that you had done, I think last time, all these extension classes in archeology.

Marquez

And so what happened is that you have those that are going to go through the traditional way of doing it. But then you have those people that may never get a Ph.D., okay? And reality was is that back in the day you had people that became archeologists and became the expert, who had never graduated from any university, but they became the expert and were acknowledged because of their books and what they have done. So UCLA had this extension-course program where you take the same classes that you do in the daytime, but instead of getting a Ph.D. at the end, you complete your core, you get a professional certificate in archeology.

Marquez

That's also good in the fact that there's not that many archeologists running around loose. You know, okay, there's so few of us, and then there's few fundings available to do a lot of archeological research. So historically what's happened is that individuals have become experts in their field at this point, who never graduated, and so UCLA fosters that concept. So in order to keep the world of archeology blooming over the years, over time I started taking

these night classes. Now, it took me over ten years to eventually take all the classes, but I've actually completed it. I've just got to do my dissertation paper to do that.

Marquez

So what's happened is that learning all the professional, technical skills of an archeologist has helped me in doing my own historical-cultural research, so that I can put the two together. Then by doing that, it directs my direction, too. So I've been doing a couple of very unique things. One of them, as I mentioned earlier that I always wanted to be a writer, but I never really have done it. I had written a few poems when I was in high school, but they're just too radical and I really never went anywhere with it. And it wasn't till the mid-nineties that I decided to really go for doing it.

Marquez

So beginning in the early nineties I started writing my poetry and prose with the intent of publishing them. So I basically had finished the first book. I had fifty pieces in it, and it was a variety. It was like different subjects. There was culture, there was family, spiritualism, you know, politics, and so I'd write five, six little pieces for each one of these things. So basically I had finished the first one and I was considering going ahead and publishing it. Now, as I was attending Native American powwows, this is when I'd be sitting down writing some of these poems and put it together. Friends would ask me, "What are you working on? Where's your latest poem?" They'd read my poem to see what I was up to.

Marquez

So eventually I had finished the book, and someone said, "Well, good. When is it going to come out?" I said, "Oh, I'm thinking maybe in the next six months or so I'll start looking for a publisher, etc." And then I started digging into the publishing world of things, and found out that they buy your rights to the book, and they own it exclusively, and they pay a royalty, and I just didn't like that at all. So back in the nineties was the advent of starting, you know, self-publishing, so I started exploring that, and that I did like. Now, of course, you had to come up with some money upfront to even publish it to begin with, but I did prefer that. I figured reasonably, I may not come out with 100,000 copies, but you know, for 5,000 I might come out with 1,000 copies, or 2,500 copies, or something like that. So I thought that was realistic for me to do.

Marquez

But then I ran into a problem. One of my friends--there were a couple here at the powwows were reading my book. "Oh, I love this! I love this. So when does the next one come out?" "Well, I don't know. I just barely--it took me a couple of years just to get this together." "No, no, no, no. Well, that's a problem, Jesse. You've got to write more, because, see, if someone like me

starts reading it, then I want another one." So then that night I come home and, damn, there I was happy finally, finally finishing something, and knowing that I really want to do something, so I said, okay, I'll create a series, and every two or three years I'll come out with a series based like this. I would write fifty pieces. I figured in two or three years I could come out with fifty things, put them in each little subject area. And so next time I saw my friends at the powwow I said, "Yeah, I've decided that every three years that I'll come out with that." "Jesse, that's still too long. We're supposed to read a book and then wait three years till the next one?"

Marquez

So then, you know, they hurt my feelings. I thought I came out with an idea. Come home again, so I'm pondering it over the weekend, and I said, okay, well, here's what I could do. I'm on a writing streak now. Actually, I had more than fifty done already. What I'll do, I'll complete several books. So if I get three done, then I'll release one, then, say, six to nine months later I'll release the second one, then next year I'll release the third one. So basically in two years or so there'd be three in the series. Now, they might have to wait another couple of years for the next one.

Marquez

But I also had two other things I wanted to write. There was a couple of novel stories I wanted to write, and there was a play I wanted to write. So I figured realistically I could do one of those, so by the time the second year would be done, in that third year I could release one of those books. Okay? So that was the plan I started on. Now, I realized one thing, too. This was in the late 1990s now, where in the year 2000 is where I made that midlife career change where I was going to be a writer, a theater producer-director, and that was the route I wanted to go.

Marquez

So now mentally, I'm mentally set for the year 2000 to begin the new millennium of what I've always dreamed I wanted to do, and I was willing to work part-time, starve, whatever it took, but to make that happen. But then in 2001 that's when the environmental world started, and you know, it just crushed me because I didn't have the time to do that.

Collings

So why do you say that the environmental world started in 2001; started for you?

Marquez

It started for me, in terms of the port issues, that it would absorb my time. Now, I did finish a second volume, and I did start a third volume. By the end of 2000 I had finished my play.

Collings

What is the play about?

Marquez

Okay. The title of the play, "The Marriage of Prince Chimal Popocatépetl to Lady Iztaccíhuatl," and it's an Aztec play. The play takes place in the year 1400. It's a wedding ceremony, and again, that is the result of my research, and studying Aztec history, and then also from the archeological aspect, to see what is the correct way of things. So I wrote a play, and it's the first of four, and it's meant to be a set. It's a set of four, with a specific intent.

Marquez

Remember, 2000 I am now going native. Culturally, life-wise, my writings were going to be supporting that complete endeavor. Going into theater and my book writing was going to encompass that as well, okay, so this was a major, major thing. The other thing I wanted to do, start my tribe, my own tribe, literally a new tribe in the State of California, thinking that as a future goal and objective was that building a foundation for that. My poetry and prose writings would begin educating the Chicano and the Mexican-American about our culture, thereby enlightening them as to our cultural heritage. My writings would teach our history and culture, okay, leading us, or leading them to my little tribe I want to form in the future.

Marquez

But then I was wondering, well, wait a minute. That's still not enough. But if I write a play or a series of plays, actually from that time frame, now, maybe we can't do everything 100 percent exactly, but as damn near as I can get it, you know, that'd be very close. So I came up, okay, I'll write four plays. The first will be a marriage ceremony, and what will happen, it'll be a prince marrying a young girl. The girl will come from a poor village. I will teach the marriage ceremony and the marriage vows, okay. The second play will be the birth of their child, so it'll be the birthing ceremony, the prayers, the naming ceremony, and the baptism ceremony. Aztecs practiced baptism. On the fourth day when a child was born, every child was baptized, almost identical to the way the rest of the Christian world does it, yet there was never a Christian here to teach them that, okay. So that would be the second play.

Marquez

The third play would be when the young girl turned fifteen, for her coming-of-age ceremony, so I would be teaching the coming-of-age ceremony, the change of clothes, the hairstyle, everything for that. The fourth play would be the death of the father, the funeral rites. So literally, by January first of 2001 I had over thirty people signed up to be part of this play. The nice part about the play is that because of my historical research, and because of my archeological research, I can do something in a couple of circumstances, and that is recreate something that does not exist.

Collings

So why was it important to reintroduce these Aztec feelings and values to the community?

Marquez

A couple of things were happening as a result of the Chicano Movement. The Chicano Movement, political movement of the late sixties and seventies, opened up the eyes of the Mexican-American, and the American of Mexican descent, so that all were culturally aware that, hey, we aren't just this. We have a nice, rich historical-cultural background. The next thing I recognized is that, where do you go from here? What is a Chicano? Yes, it's a politically, culturally, consciously aware person, but awareness is not just enough. It must become part of your essence, part of your soul. It must become part of your life.

Marquez

So if I walk into your home and you claim to be Chicano, or Mexican-American, or even Native American, but you're an urban person, what cultural attributes are in your house? Will I see an Aztec statue, a Mayan statue? What artwork will you have on your wall? What will you teach your children and share with your children? That's when I realized, whoa. The movement needs to go in another direction, a complete cultural revolution, and that's what I termed it. It needed to go native, 100 percent.

Collings

And this was about--I mean, earlier on in the African American community it had started to be, well, Kwanzaa, for example, and some interest in discovering African roots.

Marquez

Well, see, and that's where I realized there was nothing wrong with that. I would go to a Japanese cultural festival, and they all dressed up in kimonos and Native American clothes. I'd go to a Korean one, they're dressed up in their cultural clothes. Why is it that Mexicans and Hispanics and [unclear], we're not allowed to do that, you know? And so that's where I decided, no, it requires a whole new direction.

Collings

And what did you think that that would add to this, to the community?

Marquez

Well, it would show, because in the Chicano portion of it we realized it was political. It was colonization, and that colonization process meant that the Catholic church had one intention, and that was to wipe out our language, to wipe out our cultural identity 100 percent, and to make us little Catholic slaves, and that's what they accomplished, because when they came here they allowed the Spanish--

Collings

So you, in fact, were reintroducing the religious theme?

Marquez

I would be reintroducing all aspects of culture. I would be reintroducing the language, I would be reintroducing some of the music, the dance. I'd be reintroducing part of the cultural dress, all that, as well as the religion I would be reintroducing again. Now, yes, you can go to Mexico to an Aztec village, and they do a lot of Aztec stuff. And yes, there's Aztecs from Mexico living here that are teaching their children and everything, and yes, there's Aztec dance groups [unclear] that teach dance, speak Aztec, and all that stuff. But it was still not a complete thing. Because of the Catholic church influence, they were still doing Christian things that were not native things, and some native things were equal to Christian things.

Marquez

For example, I discovered in my research that the Aztecs, like I mentioned, on the fourth day of a child's birth did do a baptism ceremony. They literally said a prayer. They literally poured water over the baby; no different. But see, the Catholic church knew that. They would not recognize that. There's a thing called a quinceañera that's done throughout Mexico, Central America, but especially Mexico, or even here in Los Angeles, the United States, where young Mexican girls want to have a quinceañera ceremony. That's where they turn fifteen years old, they put on a white dress, they go to church, a mass is said for them, then they have a reception for them.

Marquez

What does the average Mexican family and girl know about the history of the quinceañera? Nothing. What it is, and what it was, is that every child, boy and girl, when they turned fifteen had a coming-of-age ceremony. This was done in all Native American tribes in the U.S., Mexico, Canada, Central America, South. That was the tradition. But in that ceremony the girl would change from her little-girl dress to the adult-woman dress. Her hairstyle would change from a little-girl hairstyle to an adult-girl hairstyle. They would have religious prayers at the ceremony, speeches at the ceremony, traditional music at the ceremony. Catholic church would not want that, did not want that.

Marquez

So as a result, you know, of all this religious influences, allowed the Spanish to murder all the priests, destroy all books about religion, so that now 99 percent of all religious information has been lost; 99 percent. Where I've come into the picture now is that in my collecting of Aztec history and culture, I have collected also replicas of Aztec codex books, and of their cousins the Mixtecas, for example, and other fragments. There was also Spanish priests and others, too, that sort of fell in love with the culture, but also recognized it'd be nice to

know a little bit more about them, so they began in their journals, and some wrote books of Aztec culture, history and culture, so they included information.

Marquez

And then with my archeological research from UCLA and taking classes on that, and taking classes on interpreting the Mayan language and Mayan hieroglyphs, I began to learn to interpret Aztec hieroglyphs, Mayan hieroglyphs, and then using my archeological skills now, in digging and verifying fact for fact, detail for detail, I can reconstruct a lot of the prayers, but especially the ceremonies on how they were performed. So in my play--there's actually two versions of the wedding ceremony--I chose to blend the two together, so I have actually reconstructed an actual wedding ceremony, exactly how it was performed in the year 1400.

Marquez

And then having liberty of not knowing every little prayer and thing that was said, some of my writings that I've written are included in there. In fact, one of them is because the girl is talking to her older sister and some friends, you know, because one of the poems I wrote is very unique, because every woman that's read it says, "You didn't write it, Jesse. Only a girl can write that kind of a poem." Because what it is, it's a young girl talking to her older sister, and what it is is that she has found a boyfriend, and she's eyeing the guy, and the guy is eyeing her, and she's talking to the sister as to how should she dress to go out into the courtyard, knowing the guy's going to be there. So she asks the sister, "How should I wear the feather in my hair? How should I paint my face? How shall I do this, my dear older sister?"

Marquez

And so sisters talking, and so since I only have one sister and never had two sisters, you know, they don't believe it, so I've been able to interject some of my stuff into it, which makes it a little bit prettier, too. So, like, in archeological research it allows you to go a little deep, go beyond. So, for example, we use varied incenses that we light, but one of them is called copal, so throughout Mexico, Central America, copal is the incense that is burned for everything, religious ceremonies, spiritual things, whatever, and it's a sap that comes from a tree, okay.

Marquez

Well, in my readings copal was carried in a bag. In a different book reference it was carried in a leather bag. In a different reference it was carried in a deerskin bag. In another reference the bag was painted white and had the directions symbol painted on it. Aha. So now I was able to go back to the original codex books, which are the actual manuscripts painted by Aztecs back in that time, looking for someone carrying a bag in their hand. So now there are numerous drawings and illustrations I've found now with some Aztec somebody carrying

a bag, and lo and behold, that bag is painted white or has the directions symbol on it, and I know exactly what it looks like. Well, that copal bag does not exist now. It is not carried by any Aztec dancers, anybody. It does not exist anywhere. I can now reconstruct that bag. I haven't done it yet, but I'm capable of reconstructing that item that no longer exists.

Marquez

In my writings, so that's where I can blend my historical research, my personal, cultural relationship with archeological research, to document things. Here's another couple of examples. One of my professors, who's Flemish, okay, in one of my research areas that I do also is the homeland of the Aztecs. The Aztecs get their name from their homeland, Aztlan, A-z-t-l-a-n. And where is Aztlan? Well, that's a problem, okay, because nowhere in Mexico is a town named Aztlan, which caused a problem because Chicanos, like on our side of the border, who question everything, wonder, well, wait a minute. Mexico, you've had and you have today the most brilliant archeologists, physical anthropologists, cultural anthropologists, and historians, and in all these centuries you can't pinpoint Aztlan? Could it be it's not in Mexico?

Marquez

So there's been a movement here over the last twenty years or so, to prove that Aztlan is actually in the United States. Now, you have to remember, too, parts of the Southwest was part of Mexico, going way back, too, so it could possibly be. But Mexico denies that. They claim that there's a state, a town, Nayarit, that there is the island there, and there is an Aztec temple there, that that was probably Aztlan. So they're kind of happy and content with that.

Marquez

Unfortunately, there's one professor from the University of Guadalajara who teamed up with an American professor here up in Fresno, Orozco, who says, "No, it's up here in North America." And in the last twenty years there's several now that all state that it's up here, and we've got to find it up here. This Flemish professor says he agrees, too. I agree that it's up here, too, see, because there is a book, a codex book, called--that's actually the history of the Aztecs when they left Aztlan to arrive in Mexico City.

Marquez

Another thing in history, you've got to educate the public. Aztecs were not native to Mexico City. They arrived in Mexico City, conquered what was there, and they made it the capital, but they were not indigenous from there. They came from north. Well, in this one codex book of theirs, it is the history of when they left their homeland until they landed there, so they state--and remember, they could write, they had hieroglyphs, and they had a writing system that included what, the Aztec calendar. So they were able to document the date they left, and the date wherever they landed, whatever city, pueblo they

visited, or mountain pass, they have the date when they passed it. And because of the hieroglyphs, every major thing has a hieroglyph, and when you decipher the hieroglyph you find out it's the name.

Marquez

Well, in most cases, 99 percent of all hieroglyphs for cities, towns, mountains are already known, okay. So logic says, well, simple. If they landed in 1325 here, you've just got to go backwards, okay, to find out when they left, which is 1060 A.D., or some controversy says 1160 A.D. So you run into a little problem, because you can identify everything except for the first two stops. You can't find those first two stops in Mexico. You also can't find the two names here either, meaning that somewhere it's been lost, okay. So following that research is what's happening now. There's at least five strong professor groupies, and that one from Guadalajara that all say, "No, it's up here."

Marquez

And so I've read what everybody else has read. I have what everybody else has. I haven't been to every location that some have claimed it is, but as it turns out, this Flemish professor, I believe him as being the most authoritative and documented. So I found him online when I was just doing name research, because, see, Aztlan was the name of the town where they came from. But it's also stated in the books and stories that Aztlan was located in the Valley of Anahuak, A-n-a-h-u-a-k. Well, valleys are always named after what, or traditionally, 99 percent named after what?

Collings

The river.

Marquez

The mountains, okay. So my research would be then several things. Place-name research, because not only do I want to look up Aztlan, I want to look up the Valley of Aztlan, and then valleys are located in mountains, so why not look up mountains of Anahuak, or in Spanish, Sierras, Sierras de Anahuak, or anything like that. So then I put my pool of words to research. But now I need a place-name research. Well, I'm looking through, you know, books, historical books, and then I went online, which is again the beauty of the Internet for doing search engines, and I type in Aztlan to see what comes up, Valley of Anahuak that comes up, mountains of Anahuak, Sierras of Anahuak, and lo and behold, a couple of things pop up.

Marquez

There was a traveler in the 1800s or early 1900s traveling, and back in those days when you're traveling you kept your own journal of where you traveled. Well, this guy traveled through mountains, and basically the title of his book, I can't remember the whole thing exactly now, but it's "Incidents of Travels Through the Rocky Mountains and the Sierras of Anahuak." Whoa, okay? And

so, you know, I click on that, and it turns out there's this museum in Arizona that found this memoir whenever, and publishes this little book in a little hole-in-the-wall little museum. That's the title of it, and I ordered it. So that tells me that as early as the 1900s, or at least the 1800s, that they knew the mountains of Anahuak were up there right alongside where the Rockies were, or at least just north of that.

Marquez

And that led me now to begin to look at maps. So I started going online to different universities and museums, looking at their maps the best that I could. Some allow you to zoom in and stuff, and I started discovering these place names on maps in the 1800s, 1700s, 1600s, 1500s, going way back. Even the earliest map and maps have Aztec names on them, okay, so that's when I really got excited in the nineties, with this new revelation coming out that, whoa, you know, all North America had Aztec names throughout it, you know. Then I was starting to find maps that had Aztlan. I found a map that says, first house of the Aztecs, second house of the Aztecs, third house of the Aztecs on the map, found out that in the illegal invasion of the United States into Mexico when they conquered Mexico, and then created the Treaty of Guadalupe, which was the agreement where Mexico seceded the land to the United States, they had to create a map of what was the property that the United States was now taking, okay, and a cartographer put a map together.

Marquez

Well, naturally the maps are in Spanish at the time, and it says right there, Antiqua, Residencia de los Aztecas, with a dot on the map, and that just like opened my mind that this was the right way to go. So I bought that map, because one of the vendors, some of the Chicanos were printing it and selling it, so I got that map, and then I started, well, where else can I buy maps that are freely available reproductions, but then found out that most of these maps I was looking at are like reproductions, and most of them are not for sale, okay. They're in museums.

Marquez

But then I knew about antique books, since I was buying antique books. There's also antique maps for sale, and sold by antique-map dealers, and started exploring their websites and dealing with them, and so now I have started buying antique maps with these key place names on it, and they're not cheap. I bought a map when I was in London, England, for the IMO, because I went to one of the map dealers there. Whenever I would say--90 percent of all books on the Aztecs, which are, I mean, if it's a generic Aztec book, not a specialized Aztec pottery, but I mean a generic historical one, normally shows a map of the time when the Spanish arrived. So it shows [unclear] on the island with the

causeway bridges going out to the mainland, okay? And so they always show that map.

Marquez

I bought a copy of that original map from the 1500s, so I own a very expensive map, an original one of them, and so I've been buying some of those original maps. So, you know, I don't have a huge collection, but you know, I've got like five, six maps, and some of the particular maps that I'm building up. Again, it's one of my wishes that one day I will own the largest personal map collection of Aztlan Aztec maps, so that's a target I'm shooting on.

Marquez

Now, that leads me back to that Flemish professor I was mentioning, because what happened--well, let me mention his name. His name is Antoon Leon Vollemaere, A-n-t-o-o-n L-e-o-n, and then his last name is V-o-l-l-e-m-a-e-r-e, and he had a website about his Aztec research, and several books, and in 2001 I contacted him, saying that, hey, I love your stuff, you know, what are you doing lately? He says, "Well, I'm coming to the United States to do an archeological aerial survey. I did one back in '93, '94, whatever it was, but I seriously want to go back because, see, I'm following a path which is in search of Aztlan, the homeland. That is what I'm doing. And I've collected all this data, all this stuff. I've come up with new findings and stuff, pioneering stuff, but when I was on that last time we were in a helicopter, driving through the Four Corners Utah area, looking for new locations to find Aztlan. Well, it turns out we got lost and passed an area of this canyon, and there was a whole," what he's calling, "Anasazi village there." Anasazi are the descendants of the Aztecs and part of that family, "And I wish to go find it and go back there."

Marquez

Now, he took pictures of it, okay, and it was not on any book, which means it's a whole brand-new one that exists there right now, that no one has been to, and he wanted to find that. So how great. So we talked, and I told him I'm into that research, too, and I support what he's doing, and I'm working on a little paper, because I called up and then we hung up and everything else, and I'm thinking, damn, I want to be on that archeological survey. What's it going to take to get me on there? Okay, number one, I'm researching the same thing he researched. I've got that in common, okay. I'll e-mail right back to him again, I'm a photographer, so I'll be--I mean, he took photos but I'm a professional photographer with long lenses and all the good stuff to go with it, so that's a big plus.

Marquez

But he said he was lost, and can't find it, but they know the general area. But when you're over there, there's a zillion canyons, so I said, aha, I'll buy a GPS receiver, so if we do find it I can record a document, the longitude and latitude,

and we'll always be able to find it. So I told him, so I write back saying, "Hey. I know you're in a helicopter, and you probably might only have one seat left or whatever, but I'd like to be part of the expedition. I'm willing to pay all my expenses to get there. I will be your photographer. I'll photograph everything. I'm also a GPS owner." So instantly I get an e-mail back, "You're on the tour with us."

Marquez

So there's only five people. There's a pilot, him in front, and three in the back. His financial sponsor has always been an enthusiast and supporter, and then his wife was the other one, so I got to participate in this thing.

Collings

That's marvelous.

Marquez

Now, by participating, that also meant another thing. I am scared to death of heights. So here I am committing myself to be in a helicopter, knowing I am scared to death of heights. I can barely walk over a bridge. I've learned as an adult to do that, but I can do that, not a high bridge, but I mean a low bridge. Even watching TV sometimes, you know, the special effects, you see an airplane going through these canyons, and some of that even makes me a little wheezy. So I'm here, oh, my god, what am I going to do? So I talked to all my friends. "What's the best thing for height sickness, motion sickness?" and everyone's telling me, you know, Dramamine, and someone says, "No, this is better than Dramamine." So I figure I'll take one or two of those.

Marquez

So the day comes, you know. I take one in the morning, and I'm still as nervous as hell. I take a second one. I'm going to be at least a little drugged up on this stuff, you know. Well, it turns out that, you know, we're on a plateau, so the helicopter is flying fifteen, twenty feet above ground. That's not so bad. I can handle this. That's not so bad. Well, now we get to the canyon that drops, you know, a couple of miles, thousands of feet deep, and we go over. What happens, the helicopter drops to adjust, so it just does a little dip, and boom, you know, the panic button comes on, because your eyeballs all but see the little ant people downstairs, you know, and I'm just doing everything. My heart's pumping a hundred miles an hour. I'm scared to death and I'm trying to maintain and not show this to my mentor here that I'm scared to death, you know, and I'm trying to maintain the best I can, and fortunately I'm doing good. I'm doing good.

Marquez

So anyways, we're on this thing. There's no intention of landing. All we're going to do is zip through at, you know, seventy-five, a hundred miles an hour. If we see something we'll hover there, photograph it, you know, make some

notes, and then click, click, you know, longitude, latitude. Now, the one I got was also another beneficial thing, because it was like the new model that just came out at that time, which included altitude, which is very important. It cost me more money, because we're talking, these things are expensive at that time. We're talking like \$500. Today I'd get it for a hundred, you know. But I had to make a decision, because I knew there was going to be canyons there, and it makes a big difference when I click-click to know if I'm on top of the canyon or at the bottom of a canyon, so I chose that one that had the altimeter built into it, too.

Marquez

Well, helicopter can only fly so many hours. Gas tank runs out, you know. It's not a twenty-four-hour, eight-hour-day thing, you know. It can just about go eight hours on a full tank, but remember, you can only go four hours out if you're going to have enough to get back. So basically, our flight time is four hours going, and that is the furthest distance. And he's trying to zip to the furthest point where he was at, at a zillion miles per hour, to look for that one lost cave dwelling that's significant, that's not documented. We're flying around, we're flying around, we never found it. We couldn't find it.

Marquez

But meanwhile we did spot one location. It was a cave dwelling, a very small one. It had two alcoves. We could see some rock art on it. We could see a collapsed building in it. We saw another rock structure, and so we snapped photos. I got the longitude on it and latitude and all that on there, and we kept on going to search. But basically he was disappointed. He couldn't find it, and this was a very expensive trip not to find what you're really looking for, but at least this little thing was something. Okay?

Marquez

Well, there was another reason for the trip, too, that he wanted to do in his research, and why we also became best friends. In my research, my place-name research and stuff, the Hopi Native American tribe have always acknowledged, always through the centuries, that they were related to the Aztecs. But how they were related to the Aztecs, and when in time they were related to the Aztecs no one knew. Well, Professor Vollemaere figured it out. In this codex book that I was talking about, it talked about and has illustrated, and naturally the hieroglyphs and pictures and drawings, the people, the town, the names, and all that. Well, it showed in the story in the first several pages of the codex that there were seven families that were part of this tribe, that were going to leave to travel south. They begin to leave.

Marquez

Then you look at one of the next pages, and all of a sudden one of them decides not to leave. They're going to remain behind. And you can tell, because you see

the speech scrolls in their mouth, and tears in their eyes, because they're not going to leave. It's the other six that travel and end up in Mexico, okay. This one stays behind. Professor Vollemaere has deciphered those seven hieroglyphs in terms of which tribe and culture they are, and has now said, "Okay, Hopi, you are this symbol. This hieroglyph is your family, your tribe. You're part of this. The Aztec symbol is this, you're part of this family," and etc., etc. "And you were in where you're at now, but you were originally more over here, too." So he identified who that tribe was, the Hopi.

Marquez

Meanwhile, I was just completing my own little study, because it kept on puzzling me, and I'm one of those people that I'm a light sleeper, and it's one of my curses that I get so jealous of other people. They lay down and they're knocked out, and they sleep all night, you know, like a rock. Me, anything enters my mind while I'm in that twilight zone it will keep me up all night, so here I am tossing and turning about the Hopi, and I said, wait a minute. If the Hopis are related, which they are, they say they are, linguistically they're part of the Nahuatl language, which is the Aztec language, too. So I figured, well, wait a minute. Their name has to be Aztec, Nahuatl, okay. So I started looking at my maps and I discovered that in the year prior to the year 1900, they were never called the Hopi. I presume that the while man changed the name in the 1900 to 1901 time frame, because after 1901 is when they're called Hopi, and they call themselves Hopi after that time frame, too, that they were not called Hopi, H-o-p-i, they were called Moki, M-o-k-i.

Marquez

But then as I did my place name going back, following maps and books and references, the word kept on changing. It was M-o-k-i. I'm talking about I'm going back in the 1800s, 1700s, 1600s. The word spelling was changing. M-o-k-i, M-o-q-u-i. Q has a K sound, okay, in the Aztec it has a K sound. Then I saw M-o-q-u-i, then before that it was M-o-q-u-i-s, and then M-o-q-u-i-u-x, and then, whoa. But then here's the other problem I ran into. I had a Hopi dictionary that had just come out that year, another blessing. I had several Aztec-Nahuatl dictionaries. I can't find Moki, M-o-q-u-i-s, I can't find any of those in the Hopi dictionary or the Aztec-Nahuatl dictionaries. So again, after months of sleepless nights doing this, you know, there's got to be something else.

Marquez

Then another one of those nights I wake up. Aha! Maybe it's because it's formed from two words, and I'm trying to find one word. Maybe that q-u, q-i, q-u-i-s, maybe that was another separate word that eventually got put together at some point in time. Flip on the light switch, jump on top of my bed, grab my dictionaries out, open them all up, and lo and behold, I was right. The 'mo' came from a Mo word, and the Q, Qu, Qua, Qui came from a Q-kwe [phonetic]

word. And guess what? The Mo word, origin, root word was, remain, or to remain, or to remain behind. The Q-kwe word, root word was to separate or be separated from. And then like I, oh, my god, linguistically I have proven that the Hopi are, in fact, the tribe in the hieroglyph that Professor Vollemaere has claimed. I can validate his claim linguistically, which had never been done before.

Collings

I think at that high point we should--all right.

Marquez

There was another element to this archeological trip. Professor Vollemaere was very much interested in sharing his research with the Hopi people, but didn't know any Hopi people. And here I am a powwow traveler, member. He asked me, "Well, do you know any Hopis?" "Yes, I have Hopi friends." "Great! Can you arrange a meeting with Hopi elders so I could show my work?" And then by this time, well, just about the same time I told him, "I'm going to e-mail you my research. I have validated your cultural interpretation of the hieroglyphs," and he just became overjoyed. "I can't believe it." And I said, "Okay, I will make that arrangement."

Marquez

So I contacted my Hopi friend. He gave me a phone number to talk with someone over there. They called a meeting of their spiritual leaders and the elders and chief, and there was like about a dozen of them there when we arrived, and Vollemaere gave his whole presentation, and then I gave my presentation, and they were like shocked to hear and see this. Now, another thing, it's sort of a good-and-bad thing, too, is that many Native American tribes and cultures are very reluctant to learn new things, especially history and cultural things, because of the impact it may have on their future. To say you're practicing something a certain way, and you find out, well, that's not the way it was done. Well, do you deny the way you've been doing it now for the last 500 years, and try to go back to the way it was done prior to 500 years? Well, that's the dilemma with the Hopi. Other tribes, many adopt and recognize the old way, and try to go back to that way. Hopi are very unique, and they're not that ready to jump and make that kind of change. They will listen to you, they'll respect you, they will acknowledge aspects of it, but will never come out with an official statement, okay, and that's where we're at on it.

Marquez

What will happen, and I can say this because it will come to pass, that at some point in time, you know, a third generation, fourth generation, somewhere in the future there's going to be a Hopi native who's going to study archeology, is going to read my paper and this other report, and is going to say, "Grandpa, they're right. Dad, they're right. Tribal chief, they were right, and you know,

maybe we do need to tweak our history a little bit, and our culture a little bit, and make it a little bit more open to accept this." So I foresee that. Hopefully it'll happen in my lifetime as we do more research.

Marquez

And so this is what we did. We did meet with them. We gave actually a copy of the full codex book, scroll, and then so they have that to include as part of their work and their research in what they do. And they did recognize when certain symbols were there that, yes, that is the correct symbol for that, and the fact that this happened, we agree that that did happen, okay. But there will be no proclamation, and has been no proclamation.

Collings

At this point.

Marquez

So that's what's happened at this point in time. Now, two more things came out of my participation on my first expedition, archeological expedition. I was the official photographer, so literally I took hundreds of photos, and so I made several sets, one for myself, one for Professor, and then one for the financial sponsor there. I wanted him to feel extra special doing it, okay. Then what I did is I typed up my report, since I'm formally an archeological student, trained, I followed the format for preparing an archeological report. So I typed up my report and e-mailed him--well, in fact, I sent him a signed one. I e-mailed him a copy of my student report, so that if he had done any archeological study here in the United States, this is the standard format you would follow.

Marquez

Well, his institute publishes publications every so often, and he came out with one in his series called "America, Antigua III, Volume One, 2001," which was on that expedition. He included my archeological report in its entirety in the document, in this publication, along with several of my color photos, because he took color photos, too, but naturally mine were the better photos, so I have several color photos in this publication, especially the one of that little Anasazi site that we found that shows the crumbling building and all that. So I'm actually published in this book, in this volume.

Collings

Oh, that's wonderful. But as we were just saying off tape, one of the things that really concerns you is that the tribe accepts the idea.

Marquez

Like I said, and I understand that. I understand it. Acceptance of it; they will not come out with a proclamation. But I do know in my heart and conscience that at some point in time it'll come to pass and that will happen, just like I'm revealing things about the Aztec culture and tradition that is upsetting some of the Aztec dancers, because it is different than the way they do it and have been

doing it, and believe it to be. But that is part of what I do, and I will be acknowledged.

Collings

Well, is it more threatening to them because you are doing this research with an interest in sort of bringing the Aztec culture alive, rather than doing it in this sort of like dry scholarship?

Marquez

Well, like some of them look at me, "Jesse, you know, if you're so Aztec, how come you're not part of our dance group?" That type of thing. So we come in different clothings, you know. I'm an urban Indian so to speak. I do dress traditional, but my research in the long run will be a significant contribution, and a significant direction for the future.

Collings

It certainly sounds like it.

Marquez

And so that has happened. Another thing that happened is that one day I was looking at the photos, and I was trying to identify some more of the symbols, because like I said, there was rock carving, but there was a painting also, and I wanted to get a little bit closer. So what I did is I took my negatives and had them transferred to DVD so I could do digital viewing of it. So in the process I was doing something I was not expecting to do, but I ended up doing it by accident and it turned out to be a whole new revelation, in that my main thing was looking at--there was two cave openings, but they were separated. They were both dark, but one looked a little bit more forward so we could see the buildings, and that's where we zoomed in then. We never paid attention to the other one, because there was no building you could see out in the sunlight like this one did.

Marquez

So what happened is that I'm looking at the one that we saw in the open light, and I could see, you can see in the photographs there are some paintings on it, but I wanted to get closer to see if there was any other paintings, and then what colors, because I wanted to identify the specific colors. And so digital will allow me to zoom in and zoom out. It would also allow me to contrast light and dark, and change colors. I could darken the blue, lighten the blue, darken the green, yellows, I could play with the whole color spectrum, to help me in this new generation of technological color research.

Marquez

What happened was that I was able to pick up more detail on that color painted thing, and it was a Sun symbol, so now I was able to enhance that Sun symbol. I then looked into all my archeological books and could not find another copy of that Sun-symbol design with those colors. So I was happy with that, you

know. And then one night, again these restless nights of mine, an idea struck me. Well, hey, Jesse, you never did look at that other cave, you know. Now that you've learned you could play with contrast, take a look at it. So, you know, boom, I zoom into the other cave, because it's kind of pitch black, and start lightening it to see if I could pick up any details on--I was looking mostly on the floor, expecting to see something on the ground, maybe a beam or something like that.

Marquez

And you're not going to believe this. By playing with the contrast and the colors, and because there was a little bit extra dark, and we were in a hurry and all that stuff, there was a whole granary complex in the other cave that I could pick up in the subtle lighting. So I'm the only one aware of that, and I have photos now, and I have that on the DVD, the CD, that I can show that there are granaries there that are a major thing that we did not see.

Collings

A major find. Okay.

Marquez

Now, where I can leave off now is that no one has been to that site, so it is my dream, if not this year, next year I want to lead an expedition to that location. I have the exact measurements of it. The beauty of it, no one has been there, so the rock art, the paintings, everything there is untouched, and we'll open up a whole record of things.

Collings

That'll be fabulous.

Marquez

That building that collapsed had wooden beams. It was burned. It could be carbon dated. So that is the first expedition I hope to lead, is to be able to see that site and document it.

Collings

Oh, that'll be wonderful.[End of interview]

1.3. Session 3 (May 16, 2008)

Collings

All right. Today is May 16th, 2008, Jane Collings interviewing Jesse Marquez at his home. Good morning, Jesse.

Marquez

Good morning. Nice to see you again.

Collings

Yes. We were going to just pick up a little bit with your archeological find, which was called Jesse's site, before we got back into our topic at hand here.

Marquez

Well, in all archeological programs, no matter what university you go to, you have to get your field experience, and so the field experience means you have to go out onto an archeological dig. Unfortunately because of the work that I do and the schedule that I keep, I really can't go to, like, another country and dedicate a whole month or two there, so I have to find something that can meet my schedule.

Marquez

In this particular case, Brian Dillon was one of the professors at UCLA, and was going to be doing some research work in the Mojave Desert, and it would be taking place over about eight weekends, so that would work out great for me, you know, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and if there was a four-day weekend, I think one of them was a four-day weekend, that all that would work great, and plus it's only like a four-and-a-half, five-hour drive from there, so that was really convenient for me.

Marquez

So the way the classes worked out is that a lot of times you'll divide into teams, and one team will work on one site, another team will work on another site. In this particular instance there in the northwest Mojave Desert, the rangers up there in that area had identified different rock art and different things at sites that were there that had never been documented, so part of our task is to drive through the area and try to identify these locations. So as it turns out, we identified eight sites in one geographic area that was about, oh, I'd say maybe five miles by five miles. It could have been a little bit larger than that, and just like you see on some of the National Geographic specials, you know, you basically form a line and then walk in one direction just to get an overview of the whole area, and then you try to find surface artifacts that are just laying on the ground. Most of the time those might be like arrowheads or little flint pieces on top. You might be lucky and find a bead or shell.

Marquez

We found one area that was obviously a fire area, and so there are certain identifying marks that you can see out there. So basically, we were down to our last day. We actually had found eight sites. We documented them. In California there is an official Archeological Department in the state. There are forms and a specific procedure of how you document information. This way it's uniform, so that any researchers coming later on can come back and they're familiar with the format and the forms and the documentation, how things are done.

Marquez

So basically, you know, we have to take measurements, your longitude and your latitude and your altitudes. You look for identifying marks throughout the area, you know, and then you form your north-south-east-west perimeters of it.

You sort of divide it into squares and rectangles, and then you just choose a location, and basically once you've finished the surfacing area lookout, you then begin to dig an area to see; you start going down several layers.

Marquez

Well, we basically had completed that over an eight-week period. My team had basically finished about thirty minutes before our schedule, and we were going to wrap it up for the day, and I decided to just walk a little bit up to this little ridge and take a look to see what the view looked like from there, since I had extra time. Well, it turns out as I walked up there I found a rock art. Now, we had found some rock art already, like about two things and that was about the extent of it. But in this one area where I was at we found seventeen different rock-art formations.

Marquez

It was kind of unusual, too, because you could actually see grinding stones, you know, that they used, because there was like lava-rock formations there, and as we walked a perimeter along that ridge you can see the various stones that they had used for grinding the seeds, you know, the corn, maize; they loved the seeds. And right above it, or right below it I should say, were these rock-art formations. Now, none of them were very elaborate, and then one of my conclusions I wrote in my report--well, here's the other thing, too. When you find something, basically you become the leader of it, so all the other students, your classmates there, have to all jump in and you basically are in charge of that whole thing, you know, so that puts a little bit more responsibility.

Marquez

And so at the end you have to write a report as to what your opinions are of it, and I actually came to the conclusion that my professor really liked, because it was kind of interesting how all of this rock art was there, but none of it was really elaborate, and then all the grinding stones seemed to all be in one area as well. My conclusion was that the reason the rock art down below was not very artistic and graphic is because they were children practicing. So basically, a mother is grinding the corn and she tells the kids, you know, play right there where I can see you, practice some of the rock art, and so it's actually children playing. So naturally you have different ages of children, you know, so some are just tapping just to get a rock in to tap, to do something to copy and imitate the older brothers and sisters, and naturally the older brothers and sisters can draw circles and a flower design, and in one picture you could see an alligator.

Marquez

Now, the strange thing about the site is, we mentioned it's [unclear] Mojave Desert. Well, the thing is, well, why would there be people in a desert? Well, you have to go back a thousand years or two. It was not called the Mojave Desert a thousand years or two ago, it was the Mojave River.

Collings

I was going to ask you about the alligator as well.

Marquez

So there used to be a river there, and this was a village along the river. In this case it was a little bit higher up the ridge. So, you know, the river would be down below. The mothers would be grinding the corn all along this ridge, so I would say we found grinding stones, oh, maybe every ten feet or so, and then the rock art was spread out basically in a line, too, along about a hundred-foot area. So that was my conclusion as to why the rock art wasn't all that artistic is that basically the mothers were above, keeping an eye on the children, and they were practicing.

Collings

Yes. So is anything known about how the rock art is transmitted? I mean, are young people allowed to just sort of do that? It's not sort of the province of priests or something?

Marquez

No, because many times it's thought that only specific people are gifted to do that, I mean are responsible to do it, like priests or someone of that nature, but not really. It's a family thing. Like today where I participate and dress up to go to American Indian powwows, the whole family dresses up, you know, Grandma, Grandpa, Mother, Father, your cousins. You all dress up in your regalia. You all learn the traditional dances. Then those that are gifted with skills to sing will sing, those that learn to play an instrument will play an instrument, those that are artistic will become an artist. But then when you're a child growing up, you know, just like you're taking your basic elementary-school classes, everyone has to get their crayons, and everyone has to color. Well, the same thing applies in Native American history as well. Children are growing up, you know. Who knows who's going to be an artist, who's going to be a great hunter? You don't know that. So you know, and when you're three or four years old growing up, you can't really go to school, so you're going to be with Mom. Get out there and do something. And if the older brother and sister are right there tapping, making a flower, well, you're going to try to imitate them and make a flower, you know. And naturally when you get done, Mommy, Daddy, come and see. And, "Oh, that's pretty," you know, whatever it is. And that's sort of how that was.

Marquez

And so the rule in archeology is that whenever you find a site that has very unique features, you have to give it a name, okay. So like I said, there were some flowers, there was an alligator on there, so you know, that night was the last night, you know, so it's all around the campfire. We're all kicking back. Some of us have brought a few cases of beer, so we have some Tecate and

Coronas, and I brought a bottle of tequila, and others brought some Heineken, and others--

Collings

Potluck.

Marquez

We had a mixed-ethnic group, too, so everyone brought a little bit of something to celebrate the last day. So anyways, you know, a few hours later Professor Dillon says, "Well, it's time, you know, guys. We've got to come up with a name for the site, and so I want you to think all creatively, because the other sites are just Site Number Eight, Number One, Two, Three, Four, XL, whatever, but this one is going to get a name." So everyone's thinking and thinking, and I'm telling everyone, "Hey, well, let's name it the Alligator Rock Site, or whatever." But by this time all my friends are a little tipsy there, the classmates, and, "No. Let's name it Jesse's Site." And I'm looking at them, "No, no, please, come on guys. Take a vote. Let's come up with a nice name." And then even my professor says, "No, you guys. You've got to come up with a nice name. It's going to be in the official California archival records and all that stuff." And I'm saying, "Yeah, yeah, yeah," because I don't want it named after me.

Collings

Why?

Marquez

I just didn't want to, you know. I don't know. I just felt the site deserved something more to it, you know, even if it was the tribal name, you know, anything but my name to give it more of an ethnic-cultural reference. Well, after three votes it came out to be Jesse's Site, so to my unhappiness and dismay, forever Site Number Nine is called Jesse's Site, as un-unique as it sounds and as it is, you know. And so that's how that occurred. And so now if you go to the archeological records there'll be two volumes.

Collings

Wow.

Marquez

Now, in the two volumes, like I said, we take measurements. We also photograph everything, so every step of the way there's color photographs. Every artifact is photographed. And another requirement, every artifact must be hand drawn, so there must be a black-and-white illustration of the artifact for publication. Now, this sort of goes way back in the day when they didn't have cameras and all the printing facilities that we do now, you know. But it is a requirement that everything must be drawn.

Marquez

So one of the things unique at UCLA--I have noticed in other universities that have archeological programs, they don't necessarily have an illustration class. So, you know, I find that kind of unusual because what happens when you're by yourself somewhere, you know.

Collings

Yes, exactly.

Marquez

And so the other thing is that it's my responsibility to draw all the pieces and the rock art that I saw, and then also photograph it. Now, another thing, too, in photographing you have to remember, just like in any type of a situation when you're photographing, the lighting can affect how it looks. So I had taken photos like in the morning of locations, and then took photos in the afternoon to sort of get a different play, you know, for the shadowing and things of that nature, and so that's included in the records, plus naturally all the people that participated in it.

Collings

Right. Okay.

Marquez

I did want to share some other things sort of related to that, too. Some universities like UCLA offer linguistic classes. In this particular case, every summer UCLA would host several professors that would actually conduct a Mayan class in interpreting Mayan hieroglyphs, so there's an introduction to Mayan hieroglyphs, an advanced, and an advanced advanced, and so I was taking all those classes, because many of the hieroglyphs are, in fact, similar. Even some of the Aztec ones are similar. And when it comes to like the mathematic symbols, they're the same in all of Mexico and Central America. They're pretty much the same.

Marquez

Like, for example, the numbering system was a very simple system. A round dot was a one, two dots was a two, three dots was a three, four was a four, and five dots was a five. But it then had another change. Instead, if you didn't want to write five dots, you could draw a thick line. So you could draw a thick line and then three dots on top of the line; that meant number eight. Then a seashell or a fist, but most of the time it was a seashell, represented number ten, so that's how you could do that.

Marquez

Well, since I had learned all this thing, a lot of times I would get to attending American-Indian powwows, or I'd do presentations at elementary schools and high schools, where I was teaching some of my archeological things, and public schools that knew I was studying archeology, so they'd invite me to be a speaker. So I actually put together a little presentation where I made shapes

showing the numbering system, and then there's actually--some professors had developed a coding system to how to color certain things so they would stand out, and so I copied some of those pages so I could actually go to an elementary school, teach them the numbering system. Now, I wouldn't have time to teach them how to read all the hieroglyphs, but there were certain symbols that would stand out, so they would always be able to identify the numbers. Now, they might not know if it was the year or if it was somebody's birth date, or if it was the age of somebody, or if it was the calendar day, but they would be able to recognize the number.

Marquez

The other thing is that in the hieroglyph script writing there was always a specific symbol at the beginning. So what I did, I would copy a page out of one of the codex books, and then show them, "This is the symbol. Now, look at the page so you can see where the story begins amongst all those symbols." And students were able to look at the symbol, and look at it, and I would tell them like, color yellow. So you now know that's where the story begins, or that chapter begins, or that subject begins, so they would always be able to tell that. Then by the numbers I would tell them, "Look for the numbers and color those orange." So they would look for the lines and the dots, and be able to identify the numbers, and so certain things I was able to teach.

Marquez

And then two years ago through our organization, the Coalition for a Safe Environment, we bought one of the little mini-DVD cameras so that we could photograph some of the events, and our members speaking at different things. Then I had an idea, because the Wilmington branch library knew that I do these types of things, and asked me if I could speak and do a couple of presentations for classes for children. So I came up with four classes that I could do on four different related subjects. I would do it on a Wednesday evening, and repeat it on a Saturday.

Marquez

Well, one of the things that I had also begun doing was collecting some of these artifacts. Now, the average person thinks, well, all these things are in museums, but the reality is that museums probably only have about half of the archeological stuff. The other half are actually in private collections that, you know, rich people had and had been collecting way, way, way back, and the laws can't do nothing about it. Well, what happens is that a lot of times, you know, say the husband or the wife was a collector and they passed away, then the spouse ends up with it. Then they have a choice to donate it or sell it. Well, many choose to sell the collection piece by piece. Now, many pieces are very expensive. Large statues can run into hundreds of thousands of dollars. But then small little things can run for a few hundred.

Marquez

The other thing I realized, too, is that collectors buy this stuff. The average person wouldn't even know where to begin to look for some of the stuff. So my feeling was, well, since I do a lot of these community children's presentations at schools and at libraries and colleges, that, you know, well, if I can afford it I'll buy it. That way it never gets put away and hidden away, and I could use it as part of my presentations. So at the Wilmington branch library what I did was begin a series of classes. The first one was introductory to how to do archeology. Now, kids and children have watched on TV, and in their classrooms teachers show them films about digging for dinosaurs, and this was going to be a little bit different because, you know, watching a film and then standing in a museum twenty feet away and looking at something is a lot different than sitting at a table and having something in front of you.

Marquez

So what I would do, so when the class came I actually took artifacts. I own some real charred corn that was Aztec corn from the year, you know, the 1400s, 1500s. I have some little pottery shards. I have some arrowheads that are authentic that I purchased, and so I took that with me. I took like a large magnifying glass, a little microscope, and caliper, which is like a ruler for measuring, because I wanted the children to have an opportunity to be able to pick up some of these things and examine it. And so what I did is I wanted to make a little movie. So I told the kids in the class, you know, "Here's what we're going to do. We're going to make a little DVD movie, and then when we're done I'm going to make copies, and each one of you gets to take one home."

Marquez

"So here's what we're going to do. I'm going to start the class. I need a volunteer, because I need someone to turn off the camera. So when I give you the little sign," which is just moving my little hand sideways, "you have to push the stop button, okay?" So one of the girls volunteers, and I said, "Okay. So when you see my hand go like this, you get up there and push the button." So she's all happy because she got picked, and she goes up there and I said, "Okay, I'm going to begin the class, but here's what's going to happen. I'm going to say my name, and I live in Wilmington, I'm an archeologist, and then what's going to happen, when I get done with the introduction we're going to stop the camera. Then I'm going to come up to each one of you, and you're going to say your name. So you say, 'My name is Jose Martinez, I am thirteen years old. I go to Hawaiian Avenue Elementary School, and I live in Wilmington.' Okay? So each one of you say that, okay? So I'm going to go to each one of you, then you stop."

Marquez

So I went around the table with each one of the students, where they got to introduce themselves. Then I started the class again. Then what I did is that each student was going to have an opportunity to pick up something, and so I was going to videotape, video each one of them. So I'm shooting the camera in a front view of them picking up and examining it, and then I stopped the camera and went behind them, looking over their shoulder, taking another view. So at the end of the class I actually made a twenty-minute film of these students. So imagine, you know, you're nine, ten years old, and you come running home, "Mommy, mommy, I'm in a movie, I'm in a movie with my DVD," and they're able to put it in the little DVD player, and the whole family gets to see it.

Collings

That's wonderful.

Marquez

So to me, this is real hands-on archeology, where children get to experience something.

Collings

Let me just ask you, you said that you--oh, before we do it, could you adjust your mic a little bit? I see that it's pointed downward rather than pointed up. There we go. You know, we were talking before about how you saw your view of the environmental-justice movement and the context of the larger environmental movement, and you talked a little bit about what you thought the roots of the environmental-justice movement were as far as you were concerned, and we're going to get into that I'm sure. But the reason that I raise it now is because you were saying that you had been asked in the context of your organization, Coalition for a Safe Environment, to do these classes, so what is the connection, in your mind, between the environmental organization and the archeology classes?

Marquez

One of the things that I learned as a student growing up, and having had some outstanding teachers that guide me and inspire me, is that, you know, I've grown up with a worldwide perspective. I've had an opportunity over the years, through my jobs and being sponsored by organizations such as [unclear] educators, where I've actually traveled to about twenty-five, thirty states of the United States. I've been to Canada, Mexico, Central America, South America. I've been to London, England. So when you have a worldwide perspective, I'm actually really able to realize how little we are exposed to in a small community, and even though I'm talking about a Chicano or Latino community, it's no different being grown up in a small rural community somewhere out there where there's only a population of 2,000.

Marquez

I worked for Northrup Electronics Division. I became the liaison to a facility in North Dakota, and the town population was only 2,500. So having that perspective, I also recognize that I also have to teach. Now, me starting off as a high-school student, I was very active in the Chicano Movement at that time, and our whole thrust was civil rights things. It was a Civil Rights issue, because we're talking about the sixties. It was an antiwar movement, because of the Vietnam War. I was involved in the Mexican American Education Commission as a commissioner with the L.A. Unified School District. It no longer exists now, but at that time, you know, I was helping in guiding the L.A. Unified School District in helping force them to adopt bilingual education, multi-lingual education, as well as multi-cultural education.

Marquez

So that started to set up my frame of mind, and then as I then began to study my archeological background, and my roots and my history and culture, I began to see how in the Native American world, protecting and guiding our cultures and relationship to our mother Earth became a very important issue. In fact, when I drafted the mission statement for the Coalition for a Safe Environment, here's what I actually wrote, and this is what it is today. [reads] "It is our mission to protect, promote, preserve and restore our Mother Earth's delicate ecology, environment, natural resources, and wildlife, and to attain environmental justice in international trade, marine ports, goods movement, transportation corridors, petroleum-energy industry communities," so that's what began to formulate that.

Marquez

Now, over the years the Chicano Movement was the strongest during the sixties and the seventies and into the eighties, but then there was a good side and a bad side. The good side is that they did pass in 1964 the anti-discriminatory laws in terms of languages in schools, and then bilingual education was being adopted. Multi-lingual education was also being adopted. Textbooks were being revised, maybe at not the pace that we wanted it to be, but that was being kicked in. And then Latinos and other ethnic minorities were being elected to political office, so all of those were changing, and had an impact on the Chicano Movement, because what do you fight next? Okay, where was the movement going to go from there?

Marquez

Well, at that point I recognized that there had to be another movement, and because of my interests in my cultural heritage, and then really digging deep into the archeology and taking classes, I then recognized that going back into our historical roots was one of the next waves of the direction we should be going into, learning about our history and our culture, what our traditions were, because basically what I have learned as a result of studying the psychologies

of cultural genocide, when cultures--well, to give you the perfect example is the Catholic church coming into Mexico and Latin America.

Marquez

The Catholic church only had one purpose, which was to convert people to Catholicism by any ways necessary, and that literally meant murdering, killing all the priests, all religious leaders. But then they realized they had to start exterminating the teachers as well, because the teachers would teach the culture, and religion was part of the culture. And my example, good example of that was, like I mentioned the last time, was having the coming-of-age ceremony for boys and girls when they turned fifteen. The Catholic church was eventually able to stop the families from having the young boys when they turned fifteen having a ceremony, so that's been eliminated now. But they could not eliminate the young girls. There was too many mothers and aunts and the grandmothers who refused to give that up, so what they did, instead of a young girl changing her native clothes to an adult Native American clothes, and instead of cutting her hair to a native style wearing jewelry, and instead of having the prayers and the ceremony, the church eliminated that. So now the young girl wears a white dress, and they have a Catholic mass for her, and have eliminated all the cultural history of it.

Marquez

So I recognized that, and that's what became part of my writings. I realized, wow, you know. Where are they going to learn this? And the only way they could learn it is by being taught this, and being taught either in school through a textbook, or being taught through presentations, and then you know, I'm only one person. There's only so few of us to go around. How are we going to share our knowledge with so many? So that's why it became important to me to recognize that I had to write and share what I learned.

Collings

But is this activity something that you see as being separate from your community work against the port?

Marquez

Well, no, because what happened then is realizing that, okay, in the Native American world, being part of mother Earth and the environment and ecology was significant. So then I recognized the environmental movement was also part of that cause, and part of that direction. I would have to lead us, or lead my community and my family to understand, and so that's why it was not a very difficult transition in 2001. I mean, yes, it was, because I had never done that before, and I was very weak in that area, but I had, basically, the skills and the organizing background already, and then now seeing the bigger picture realized this was a missing link in the political movement, not just in the Chicano Movement, but in the community that I lived in, that they had to also learn.

Marquez

And also recognizing that my community was also changing, because when I grew up, Wilmington was probably about, I'd say about 70 percent Mexican-American, then a mixture of black, Filipino, Japanese, and white, and there were very few Central Americans. Well, now I participated as a crew leader in the Census 2000. You know, probably about 15 percent of the Wilmington population is Central American, you know, meaning Guatemalan, from Honduras and El Salvador. In fact, in Wilmington we have three restaurants that are from El Salvador, and back in my day if you were from Central America or South America, you never said that, because you were so dominated by the Mexican Americans, you just said you were a Mexican, and that's just the way it was.

Marquez

And when I went to elementary school, we only had one black family there, but it turns out it wasn't a black family. They were from Panama, and the father spoke Spanish clearly, and the children spoke Spanish pretty good. So in 2000 in creating the Coalition for a Safe Environment--well, at that time it was the Wilmington Coalition--you know, I had basically a good organizing background. I did recognize what it would take, which was forming our little committee and then taking it to the next stage of forming an organization, because the committee was just, you know, a dozen, fifteen of us getting together for a couple of months.

Collings

Right, people that you had already known.

Marquez

People I already had known. Then we said no, we've got to make ourselves an organization. We've got to have a president and vice president, and we've got to get some other people. So as we were attending some of the Port of L.A. meetings, you know, other Wilmington residents attended, such as Raul Orozco, and then Danny [Daniel] Ruvalcaba, they attended the meetings and I met them there because they got up and spoke, asking questions. And I told them, "Well, we had just formed a committee, and we're looking at forming an organization. Would you like to join us?" "Well, yeah. We'll come. Where are you going to have the next meeting?" "Well, we're going to have it at the house over here," so then they became part of my board of directors. And where I live now, which is Cecilia and Eddie's house, you know, Cecilia became our secretary treasurer, and then Dr. [John G.] Miller was a medical doctor from San Pedro. And then we thought, well, we need to have someone really smart with us, so who knows a doctor or anything else? "Well, we could go ask them and see what they say. I kind of know him, because we've talked a few times."

And he graciously said, "Yes, I'm more than happy to join you guys and help you out." So he's been a key element to help us in that direction.

Collings

Yes. So within this group is there ever any--I mean, how do the members of this organization see the environmental-justice movement overall, in terms of social justice?

Marquez

Well, you have to realize that at the beginning it was only a one-issue thing. It was only stopping the port expansion. What they realized is that there was not just that one project. There were several more projects, and they wouldn't necessarily border Wilmington. There might be a San Pedro a little bit further out, but they would still impact us. So then I started teaching them that you have to realize that this might be a little bit longer now, because we've got to stop these other things. Then we realized there was the Port of Long Beach, and then we had to take on some of those issues. And then some of our members live next to the refineries, like on the other side of the fence, and then they said, "Well, hey," you know, "we have the oil-refinery problem, too. They're polluting the air." So our little campaign started expanding as the members participating were saying what some of the issues were.

Marquez

Now, like I said, at the beginning none of us were experts in this field. We all had to learn, and basically I was the main leader in doing the research, but then realizing, like I did way back in the sixties and seventies, we've got to take our baby steps, I would create one-page fliers and one- or two-little-page things. I would type up the information there, and we would make hundreds of copies. I'd bet you today I probably have printed out twenty, thirty thousand pages of just environmental stuff that we have published and printed just to get the information out.

Marquez

Even though the port would send out a notice, what the Port of L.A. would do, they would mail out a postcard, and it's the standard-sized postcard, half of it in English and half of it in Spanish, and they would say the port is going to have a public hearing on this project on this date and time, and that was it. Well, no one has a clue what that means, and traditionally most people never attended these type of meetings. Like my mother or father or my grandparents would have never attended this type of a public meeting.

Collings

Okay. Why is that?

Marquez

Well, because the port is a government agency creating jobs, so they know what they're doing, and they'll do good for the community. Whereas my

generation is completely different, and then my three sons have learned from me, we don't trust anybody until we have an opportunity to review it and understand what not only the consequence is today, but if there is none today will there be one in the future. So my three sons would never just roll over and say, "I go along with this," or just shine it on. They will investigate it, just like what I do, and they'll inquire into it. So I'm really proud of that aspect that, you know, they have been influenced by me, and are now truly good civil residents out there in the world that have taken what they learn and what they see and what they read in the newspapers and hear on television, the news, very responsibly, and they all do vote.

Marquez

So walking my neighbors and even my family through these baby steps is what I did learn in that movement as well. And then many of them have seen me dress up traditional, where I'll wear Aztec or Native American clothes when I go to speak, because the other thing was it's important for them to recognize it's okay to dress traditional. Like you'll rarely, like here I live in a community that's today 90 percent Latino, but all Latinos being from Native American cultures historically in the past. Only occasionally on the street will you see someone wear a traditional, ethnic shirt, in the case of a man, or a woman wearing a traditional ethnic blouse. You rarely will see that. Then that's when I recognized I've got to be an example for that.

Marquez

And so like, for example, one time we were organizing to attend a public hearing that was going to be held in Oakland. The U.S. E.P.A. was going to have hearings not in the normal San Francisco, but in an Oakland community, and we organized buses to take residents up there, so there was going to be buses from all California coming to it. So there was going to be one leaving San Diego, one leaving Los Angeles, and so I organized Wilmington, every resident here to go with me on the bus, and so we all filled up buses and drove all the way up there. Well, on the day of the public hearing I wore traditional pants, a traditional shirt, you know, my necklace. My belt is a hand, ethnic-designed belt. My shawl or blanket is worn over my shoulder, and so I wore it, and I was the only one like that, male.

Marquez

There was an African American woman who wore her African regalia, and it just so happens there, there is a Laotian community from Laos. But it was a senior-citizen organization group, and the whole group dressed traditional Laotian, and it was just so beautiful to see all these seniors, seventy, eighty, ninety years old, you know, women here coming to this event, and they had their spokesman. Well, their spokesman was only like about four-foot-two, couldn't even reach the podium, so they had to take the microphone off and

hand it to her for her to speak. She spoke in Laotian, and then someone translated. So my members and my community have seen me numerous times dress up traditional, and that even in my personal wardrobe here at home I would say half of all my shirts that I have are traditional. You know, they're from Oaxaca or from Guatemala, so that our community understands that it's okay to dress traditional.

Collings

Yes. So your notion of environmental justice is very much tied in with the idea that this is an authentic position for a Chicano activist.

Marquez

For a Chicano activist, and even here's another strange part. When I visited my family in Mexico even this past December and January as I was there for five weeks, I would wear traditional shirts, whereas they're all wearing American [designs]--

Collings

Yes, Simpson's T-shirts.

Marquez

--things, yes, Simpson's T-shirts like hers, Raiders and all that stuff, trying to be more American, and I was talking to them about being more cultural, not being ashamed of your cultural heritage from Mexico. Now, naturally there are some in Mexico, many that are, more than so over here. So I could have been that little link to help bring things together, and I've always sort of done that.

Collings

Well, let me ask you as well. One of the slogans that you always hear in the environmental debate is reduce, reuse, and recycle. I raise that in the context of the goods-movement debate, because clearly if we didn't live in this hyper consumer society we wouldn't have as acute a goods-movement pollution problem as we do. But do you find in the community that you're working with that the notion of, that these ideas of in particular reduce is as important a message to get across?

Marquez

Well, using my clothing as an example, educating my family, my children, and my friends that to buy handmade things, to buy cultural things, to buy made-in-USA things is important, because one of the expressions I use is that corporate America has sold out America. They have used the excuse saying that, you know, international competition has forced them to move overseas to reduce their costs. But then when that is brought up at all these major port, trade conferences, I come back and slam them immediately. I said, "I'm going to give you an example. Let's use all red, white, and blue Disney, and Disneyland and Disney World. My cousin worked for a baseball-cap manufacturer who made baseball caps, you know, Mickey Mouse for Disneyland, and they were \$2.75

wholesale, and they were sold for \$19.95 at Disneyland. Well, Disneyland eliminated them as a subcontractor, and here they claim to be all red, white, and blue, United States of America, now buying it from Communist China, just the opposite of American values, paying slave wages over there under the most harshest working conditions, environmental conditions, and hours that can possibly be imagined. Well, yes they're getting it cheaper, but guess what? The price of that baseball cap did not go down. It is still \$19.95, if not higher now. So you are perpetuating a lie. They are pocketing more profits."

Marquez

And in my environmental movement with my community here, it's teaching them that buying things that are foreign made isn't necessarily always great. Teaching your children that they have to have a pair of Levis, you know. There's no more Levis manufactured in the United States. They're all made overseas. So why pay \$29.95 for an overseas-paid pair of jeans when you can get jeans of almost the same quality for, you know, \$10.95, \$13.95? Don't kill yourselves trying to compete with everybody when you do not have to do that.

Collings

Yes. Well, is this something that you transmit just kind of on your own, or is this something that the Coalition for a Safe Environment is addressing?

Marquez

Well, we teach this as part of our principles, but we also attend conferences, like although I may know many things, you know, I'm not the expert at many things, and then to my organization I have to provide them an opportunity to listen to others, and so we do attend conferences. Like, for example, I had mentioned one earlier where Jane Williams is the executive director for California Communities Against Toxics. Over seventy environmental-justice organizations belong to that. Once a year we hold an annual conference where the organization membership are the ones that conduct the seminars and workshops, and then we will invite other outside speakers to also come in to do that.

Marquez

Now, locally one of our experts on that subject is Tom Politeo, who's co-chair with me with the Sierra Club Harbor Vision Task Force. He's one of the most knowledgeable on that. The good news, too, is that surprisingly, many university and college students have sort of caught onto that, so actually I've been impressed that there's been a very huge college, university-student movement who do understand the international trade issue very well, and fortunately there's been some excellent professors who have been teaching that, and showing these films and books that have been written on that subject. So many of them are available that we also invite to come down and do these presentations to us.

Marquez

So the E-J network has a very, very close relationship in cross pollinating and having opportunities, and then always allowing our members to learn and do things as well, just like with our negotiation with the Port of L.A. on the TraPac Terminal. On Monday, you know, several weeks ago basically, they had made an offer and told me, "Well, can you let us know by tomorrow, Tuesday or Wednesday at the latest?" I said, "I can't." I said, "I will have to have a meeting in my community with some of my board members and discuss it with them," because I needed time. When you're under pressure sometimes you're going to miss things, you know. And so I said, "We're going to have a meeting on Sunday afternoon in our backyard, and so I'll get back to you the following Monday." So I forced them to wait until we had that meeting.

Collings

And what did the community decide on that issue? I don't think we talked about that.

Marquez

Well, there were some very pressing issues, because we had appealed it, appealing the approval of the Environmental Impact Report.

Collings

You introduced this last time, but just to sort of put it all in one place, why don't you mention again what the proposal was?

Marquez

Okay. Well, just briefly, in the last six years our organization, being one of the lead organizations with many others have actually stopped seventeen Port of L.A. and Port of Long Beach projects. This includes new-terminal project proposals, and expanding of existing proposals. We were able to do that because we learned the California Environmental Quality Act laws, how to interpret them, therefore being able to dissect the Environmental Impact Reports to find out how much they comply with the law, and as a result of learning that we were able to stop all these projects, force them to go back, rethink them. In the case of the Port of Long Beach, on the Pier J they had actually released it three times, and we defeated it three times, because we overwhelmingly were able to document so much about the inadequacies of the report that if they were to prove it, it just stood out too much.

Collings

The inadequacy of the EIR?

Marquez

Of the EIRs themselves. So what has happened now is that the Port of L.A. released the first one in those seventeen that had been held up, meaning a new version was released. This was the Transpacific Container corporation, which we just call TraPac, T-r-a-P-a-c. This is the one that actually borders

Wilmington. It's right at our waterfront. It's four blocks from my house, and it's the one I can see where the ship and the cranes operate.

Collings

Yes, right. We can see them right out the window here.

Marquez

On December sixth the board of harbor commissioners, which are political appointments, five commissioners by the mayor, voted to approve the EIR. Over thirty-five organizations opposed that EIR, because I used the statement that I made at the public hearing. Even though it was the best one that had ever been written by the Port of L.A., why should we accept a two-star EIR when the law entitled us to a five-star? The other thing is that we were prepared to go to court. We had a new law firm willing to work with us on this.

Collings

What's the name of the law firm?

Marquez

It was Arias, Ozzello, and Gignac. They are a different type of firm. There was also another one that we're working with through Texas. Gabe Reed, it's his group, and he was actually the one that introduced us. He was looking to represent some environmental things. But another new element is evolving now as a result of the environmental movement, in that most lawsuits have been using environmental laws. They were now thinking of a different approach, which is using the civil courts, tort-type cases, meaning that if you got in a car accident--

Collings

A personal-injury case.

Marquez

--and you broke your arm, it was a personal injury, and if they total out your car it was personal property damage. Well, no firm of those types ever wanted to handle our type of air-pollution cases.

Collings

Yes. Now, the Stringfellow case was a personal-injury case, as I understand it.

Marquez

Yes. But there had never been one against a port. There had been some of those personal injuries that have been won in court, but there had never been one challenging the ports. That had never been done before.

Collings

Right. Yes, this was against a defunct dump site, and here you're talking about the busiest port in the United States.

Marquez

And no port had ever been sued on that issue, so we were being one of the first to do that. Now, we do have a member family, the Bradfield family out of San

Pedro. All three daughters have acute and chronic asthma, and then the mother has some respiratory-health problems, and then unfortunately a year or so ago the father turned out having Meniere's disease. You know, it's kind of interesting because one day I went to go visit the family and David was home, where I knew normally--he was a professor. He would teach music at Cal[ifornia] State University, Dominguez Hills. "What are you doing, Dave?" "Well, I've been sick leave." And he says, "You're not going to believe this, Jesse. I got the strangest disease I never even heard of." And I go, "What's that?" "Well, it's called Meniere's disease, and I lost over 70, 80 percent of my hearing. Now I'm down to about 50 percent." And I go, "You know what, David? My sister has Meniere's disease, and I've been finding out several other people here in the harbor have Meniere's disease." And I told him it is my firm belief that air pollution, because of the toxic-chemical elements of it, does either cause or exacerbate or hurt your immune system so that you are now prone to some of these other diseases, and I believe Meniere's disease is one of those, just like we have found out that there's been other higher incidences. A study out of I think it was New York University showed that, someone did a study that showed a correlation that cities and communities that had high pollution rates had a higher than normal diabetes rate, and Wilmington has a high diabetes rate.

Marquez

So that's led us with our work that we've been doing with lymphoma, leukemia, where now we know for a fact our exposure to these toxic chemicals and air pollution is, in fact, causing numerous health impacts to us, and many of them yet to have been documented, but we suspect them, and we fervently will continue to do that type of research so that, you know, our organization has been a leader on that, and pointed out to the other organizations.

Marquez

Just like yesterday I was invited, you know, three weeks ago to speak at UCLA at a student rally that was occurring there regarding various policies, one being the tuition thing, so students from all over California were going to be at this event. So they asked me to speak on port sustainability, so I prepared a paper, because again, well, every time I speak I will try to prepare, if I can't do a nice long version of something, I'll at least put a one-pager together of points this way, so the students have something in hand that they could refresh their memory, go back to their classes and discuss amongst themselves.

Marquez

So I prepared a paper, one page on sustainability, and basically the points that I included in that--let me see if I have it right here. Actually, I've got it in my bag, I didn't take it out, but I'll get back to it later. So when we got done--actually, I was only supposed to speak for about an hour, and then come back

for another meeting over here in the port, but I had a great group of students who were really, seriously interested in it, and they were asking a lot of really legitimate and thought-provoking questions, and so I actually stayed with them and did not attend. I spent another extra hour, just didn't go to the other meeting, because it was so important for me to work with students there. I've had a great relationship with students, doing research and studies and reports and internships with me, that I will never pass up an opportunity with students.

Collings

Right. So you were talking about how the port had finally put this proposal on the table, and asked you to get back right away, and you went and met with your community group. What happened at that meeting?

Marquez

So I pointed out there was basically two issues, two significant things they had to make a decision on. If we agreed to go with the offer, that means we could not sue them today, we would never be able to sue them in the future, because I'm going to sign an agreement that's going to state that we will withdraw our right to sue.

Collings

And what were they offering in return?

Marquez

Okay. What they were offering, and what we were demanding to also occur was a very unique thing. So I told them that in turn for not doing that, they were going to allow us to create a nonprofit organization. They would fund the nonprofit organization with approximately \$50 million over five years, to mitigate off-port impacts. Now, that was very significant, because we never believed that they would ever want to create a nonprofit organization apart from them. It's just that over the past six years we have battered them so much at all the public meetings, all the public hearings, and all the conferences, they are just tired of us, of an onslaught, because remember, when I started six years ago there was only three or four or five organizations.

Collings

So is this nonprofit supposed to take over the work of your organization?

Marquez

No. This was going to be a nonprofit group that's going to administer monies, and mitigate port impacts. Now, it would start with the TraPac terminal, but they identified three other subsequent projects that would be part of the first four, and monies would be contributed by those projects into this fund. Then those of us that--because what happened, too, is when they approved that EIR on December sixth, we appealed it before city council, which stopped the project. So what happened between December and now April was that negotiating, and now we're at that final offer point. Okay?

Marquez

And some of the elements that differentiate our organization as an EJ group compared to a mainstream environmental group is that we draw the line on certain areas where they're deal breakers. For example, we absolutely wanted to have air-purification systems and soundproofing put in our local elementary schools, and some of our residents' homes, and we identified the first two elementary schools, Hawaiian Avenue Elementary School, and Wilmington Park Elementary School, which were the two closest to the port. There's actually one more, but it was a new one just built and just opened up in September last year, so it's fairly new and they would not have the same antique--no air-conditioning system. Well, they actually don't have any air conditioning, but air-ventilation systems.

Marquez

And so I told them, having a nonprofit organization outside of the port was very significant, because it had never happened in the United States. And if we had gone to court, we would fight the battle and it would take at least three years. They would probably never agree to that. They would take that away, whereas right now it would be separate from the port. Our EJ organization would be the only EJ organization on the board of directors, and some of the other appellants. And it'd be important, because we would win it today. It would start effective this month, April, so that other EJ communities and port communities such as in Oakland and San Francisco, and then as far down as Houston, Texas, that are negotiating clean-air action plans for their ports can say, "Well, look what the Port of L.A. just did. So we want that nonprofit organization also, and we want you to charge extra for the container fees to go into this fund." So this would be something that would start this year, 2008, and not something, you know, three, four years down the line.

Marquez

So I explained that them, okay. I also explained that by not going to court it would be another significant thing in terms of court records. When you go to court and you sue somebody, like in these environmental issues, you're referred to other court cases similar to yours, and you quote things from that, that helps build up your case as having precedents. By negotiating this settlement out of court, it is not part of the court records, so if the Port of Oakland sues, the Port of Oakland, they can never reference this as a court case. But they can reference some of the other elements that came out of it, but not as a legal court reference. We would lose that, and other people would lose that as well.

Marquez

The other thing is that we wanted certain studies to be done, and they agreed to three studies. Two of them, basically the mainstreams were iffy about. It was no big deal to them. The one that they did agree on was having a port-nexus

study, because as it turns out with the California State Lands Commission, they are sort of an overseer of the ports and how they spend public monies, and part of the argument they have had is that, you know, ports can only spend money to mitigate issues that they have identified in the Environmental Impact Reports. So naturally, there might have been fifty off-port impacts, but they never state them in the EIR, therefore they never legally have to address them.

Marquez

So what we did is that we forced that to happen. In our settlement agreement, they had to use the word that there was off-port-nexus impacts, and in the document it mentions some of those, you know, such as land-use decisions, sound blight, noise, so we actually spelled out some of those things. So now what's going to happen is, you know, monies will be used to hire a consultant to do a professional study to document the off-port nexus. So basically, everyone agreed to that

Marquez

But two that they were kind of iffy on at the time were, should we demand the port do a health study in the community, and then the one they were really kind of laughing at me like, are you serious, was, we wanted to have a wetlands study to help support our campaign to create wetlands in Wilmington, where we identified three properties of about 150 acres, and even some of the rest of the group members of the other plaintiffs were, "Come on, Jesse. You know, we're getting all this other stuff. Are you going to be the only one to hold out over the wetlands?" And I said, "Yes. We are going to hold out over that. If you guys want to settle it, go forward, that's fine, but you know, that is a deal breaker for us." Well, it turns out we got it.

Collings

So your whole Coalition for a Safe Environment group was with you on the wetlands question?

Marquez

They were with us on all of our points. The only big thing they had to decide was to go to court or not to go to court. That was one of the bigger decisions right there. And then, you know, again when you hear fifty million being waved at you, and, of course, that's still conditional, too. I told them, "Remember, the port has to expand and increase their business, so more containers have to come in before we start tapping into some of that monies, okay." Now, they did agree to do some things that had nothing to do with that, that we were arguing were part of the cleaner-action plan that they were negligent in doing.

Marquez

One of those was, you know, they had stalled last year from going officially and approving the fact that they would purchase 16,000 new trucks. They were

supposed to do that last year; it hadn't happened. We were at this negotiation. We told them, "As a good faith you do it now, or we're going to make it one of our court issues." So they went and approved that. Approving the incentives for foreign ships to use sulphur fuel, that got approved. A container fee being charged per container for infrastructure, that got approved, and so they were moving forward on some of theirs. Then naturally we do have some real harsh critics to that, you know. "Hey, how do we know they're going to do this? How are they going to do that?"

Marquez

But, you know, they overall said, "Yes, we support you. Let's go forward with it," and so with that blessing I went forward with them to do that. Now, most other organizations probably would not do that. Their executive director would make that decision. One organization who would do exactly what I would have done would be Angelo Logan with the East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice. They're a very democratic organization, as I mentioned before. He would take it back to their group and their membership to vote. So EJ organizations will traditionally do that, go back to their community for a vote. So when there is time, we will absolutely do that. When there is time, you'll either take a neutral position or in my case I will make that decision when there is no time.

Collings

Now, when you started this discussion you sort of made a distinction between your stance on this as an EJ group, as opposed to an environmental-movement group per se. What do you think the difference is?

Marquez

What we refer to are your mainstream organizations. Traditionally those are Natural Resource Defense Council, NRDC, Coalition for Clean Air, Environmental Defense, Sierra Club. Those are considered your mainstream groups. Sierra Club Harbor Vision Task Force has been a little bit unique, because they have supported us on some of the other EJ issues that the other ones normally would not do. But those groups traditionally would have settled without the wetlands, without the health study, without the air-purification systems put in school; they would have settled without that, okay. Whereas to us, we have to live here, and even though it may benefit the region, the state, the whole universe, we're going, "Wait a minute, but you don't live here and it's not your kids sick with asthma, and it's not your uncle that passed away and died of lung cancer," like it was my uncle Danny Cisneros that died, okay, so that's where the distinction is, is that we feel the impact right here in our home, in our communities, whereas other organizations are not like that.

Collings

Right. Yes, they're making decisions on sort of a broader scale.

Marquez

And we do have conflicts, and we do have problems. Another example of a problem like that is our issue with the potential this year of the new hydrogen-power plant that BP Arco is proposing to build in the City of Carson. Well, it turns out NRDC, Environmental Defense, support the use of carbon sequestration, and what that means is that everyone knows that hydrogen is a clean-burning fuel, everyone knows you can get hydrogen from water, water isn't toxic, but that's not where they're getting the hydrogen from. They're going to reprocess the petroleum coke, which is the byproduct of the crude oil which looks like coal, and they're going to extract the hydrogen from that. But this plant will also create four million tons of carbon dioxide, which is a major global-warming gas.

Marquez

What they're proposing to do is to use what they call CSS, which is carbon-sequestration storage, which is underground storage. They're proposing to pump it into old oil wells underground, which basically sounds good. They say, "Well, that's where oil came from, that's where natural gas is from, so why not?" Well, the only problem that's an issue for us is that we live in the Wilmington oilfield, which encompasses not only Wilmington but San Pedro, Harbor City, Lomita, Compton, Long Beach, Signal Hill, a wide region, and there's tens of thousands of oil wells and abandoned oil wells, which means that just in Wilmington alone we would have a potential of a minimum of 400 leaks or potential leaks, because we also discovered that those potential leaks come from several potentials, one being that they're not pumping gas. They're converting the carbon-dioxide gas into carbonic acid, and it is corrosive, and that corrosiveness would impact us here, because we live by the ocean. Our ocean bed and foundation of the coast is built on limestone, okay?

Marquez

The other little detail is, the traditional way of capping and sealing oil wells is with cement, and cement is made out of limestone, okay. So there is a big increase there. The other thing is that yes, they have been doing this for years, but we're talking about maybe a million tons or so, whereas now we're talking about four million tons a year, you know, ten years is forty million tons, so you know, we're talking fifty to a hundred million tons. There has been no test on that. Then the other argument we've had, too, is that we live in earthquake country, and just only a month or so ago in California they predicted a big one will hit California in the next thirty years. So what happens when it cracks it open? Well, if it cracks open right here, that carbon-dioxide gas will escape and will kill all of us that live right next to it. So from an environmental-justice perspective, that's unacceptable to us. It is absolutely unacceptable.

Collings

Yes, and whereas from the environmental-movement perspective, the production of the hydrogen--

Marquez

They see hydrogen as being important, and the fact that it's been successful in sequestering some of it, now that is the answer to the global warming, that's how we're going to get rid of the carbon dioxide. Whereas our argument is, wait a minute. Don't create the carbon dioxide in the first place. We don't need to do that. Let's build more solar cells, more wind energy. Let's develop better conservation programs. Let's do our homework on that end first, before we jump.

Marquez

The other big danger, too, is that right now there are eleven new power-plant applications pending here in the South Coast District, besides ours. Well, it will be ten more besides ours, but there's eleven total, and over twenty proposed in the State of California. So here we are with the Global Warming Act, A.B. 32, trying to decrease global warming, and here we are, all the measures we would propose to reduce would be completely eliminated by the new power plants. So, you know, there's a contradiction there, and us EJ groups, we recognize that and see that, and have to teach the others that, so that's why that gets adopted as part of our overall campaign.

Marquez

Now, you have to realize, too, there are so many integrating factors of things in terms of technologies and industries, it is very overwhelming. You know, I'm the leader of my organization. I'm also the think tank and writer, and it's very overwhelming for me. Then I have to turn around and then teach my members, and then they turn around and teach their children, their brothers and sisters and relatives, so you know, overall it all comes up. In fact, a candidate was going to run for political office here, and contracted to have a public-opinion survey done, and one of the questions he asked was--this was of harbor residents-- "What percentage of harbor residents thought there was a relationship between port air pollution and public health?" And it was like over 80 percent recognized a direct relationship. Whereas, if you had that same survey done in 2001 when I started, it was maybe 5 percent recognized that, so in six years we have incredibly changed public opinion--

Collings

You've really gotten the word out.

Marquez

--and not just the harbor area, but all of Los Angeles County. So residents living in other cities throughout L.A. County also recognize and see that, that it is a pollution problem, so we've done a tremendous, tremendous contribution.

Collings

Yes. What kinds of contacts has your organization had with the ILWU [International Longshore and Warehouse Union], the longshoremen's union? I mean, they went out on strike on May first--

Marquez

Well, fortunately--

Collings

--not for the environmental reason, but there's clearly a social conscience there.

Marquez

Fortunately, something happened in the last few years. The International Longshoremen's Union, which is Local 13 here, were always anti-environmentalist, because in our campaigns to stop pollution we were also demanding a moratorium on port growth, which means no new jobs for them and their family. But remember, they are the elite in the worker-union industry.

Collings

Yes, you talked about their salaries, yes, and benefits.

Marquez

So at that time they've always hated us, but what has happened in this last six years again, we've had new generations joining the longshoremen ranks. So now we have young men and women in their twenties and thirties, approaching forty, who have children with asthma, who are friends with me and my neighbors and family, and they now see that relationship, and they were put in a position of, "Man, our union says no, these guys are bad, but you know, I don't know now." So now there was a question, whereas the old guard, basically forty, fifty, sixty years and above, were adamantly anti-environment.

Marquez

Well, you know, the guardian angels have once again inspired the longshoremen leadership so that they with the mayor of Los Angeles got together and announced at the Faster Freight Conference held here at the Long Beach Convention Center a year and a half ago, a union clean-air initiative, that they would now adopt a policy whereby they would ask the port to stop its air pollution, because their union workers' health was being impacted by the diesel-fuel emissions. So now what has happened, they are no longer in denial, that it was, in fact, in their life. They have adopted it.

Marquez

Now, they will still not join us in terms of wanting to oppose a project, but they will support and demand that they have cleaner ships and equipment, etc., so that has happened. In fact, in this new contract negotiations going on now, they came out with a poster and even a button, and the poster has, like, the three points, you know: new contract condition, la, la, la; number three, no air pollution, so that is now part of their campaign.

Collings

Very interesting.

Marquez

So we have actually influenced one of the most important unions in the United States to adopt that as one of their initiatives. So that has happened. And then not only that, the Teamsters have not adopted it, but they recognize it as a result of us working on the clean-truck program. The independent troqueros, truck drivers have recognized that it was their vehicles causing the pollution, but now also recognizes that we weren't after them personally, because they hated us as well before. It was our working with them, it was with me going to their meetings, their being helped--at that time they had no meeting hall. They were just creating their organization, which eventually became the Port Drivers Association [PDA], and they held the meetings at Bannings Park, which is right next to McDonald's--and they would hang out next to where McDonald's was, and get the coffee.

Collings

Well, has the Port Drivers Association proposed any plans for helping those drivers with meeting the new costs associated with cleaner vehicles?

Marquez

Okay. Well, what happened was that they weren't really sure. They knew they needed to form an association or unions to demand better wages. They didn't understand the bigger picture, and that's where I was instrumental for that. I was the first one to come to them, to talk with them, to explain the bigger political structure, and then to guide them as to what would have to be the points of negotiation. So what happened is going back to last year, there was public hearings on the clean-truck program. I told them, this was the time you would have to submit a written public comment. It's okay to speak there saying that you support it, but you have to say what you want in it.

Marquez

So I actually was the ghost writer, and drafted their letter for them, and then I gave it to them and then they sort of tweaked the wording a little bit, you know, and they submitted that as their first public comment. So for the first time in U.S. history, troqueros submitted a written public comment on their behalf to the Port of L.A., as well as submitting ours and other groups, numerous groups submitting theirs at the same time, so that was a very historic landmark for them as well.

Collings

Absolutely.

Marquez

Now, they ran into a problem, and it's a sad situation, because it was an unavoidable problem. All truck drivers were united in joining them. One of the sad things that I had to teach them and share with them was the fact that right

now any truck driver can go in and out of the ports. But I had to let them know that in the future, if you were not a citizen or a legal resident, or with a special permit due to NAFTA to enter the Port of Long Beach, you would not be able to work as a truck driver. I tried my best that night at that meeting, knowing that, you know, probably half of them were not documented, and trying to do my best. I tried in all sincerity to let them know I wasn't being cruel, wasn't being mean, I wasn't threatening them, that this was reality. I wanted to be the first to share that with them so they could understand that was coming.

Collings

Now, this was coming as a part of the Clean Port Program?

Marquez

Well, not so much the Clean Port Program as part of the government TWICs [Transportation Worker Identification Credential] Program, which is the ID system that was a result of the Homeland Security.

Collings

Okay, yes. So you're saying these things are just happening at the same time.

Marquez

They're happening at the same time.

Collings

Yes, okay, that's what I thought.

Marquez

They had heard about the TWICs thing, but it was still kind of fuzzy a few years ago. It became law as of last year, okay. It's mandatory to sign up this year and next year, but I was the one who had to break that news. So what happened is that a fight within the organization. Do we stand together, or what's going to happen? Well, it was inevitable. For the organization to continue, only the legal residents and citizens could become a port driver. They would have to. There was nothing they could do for the undocumented. Remember, some of them were officers on the board of directors, and it was so sad for me to really know that this was going to happen, and it did happen.

Marquez

So naturally, the ones that were not documented felt betrayed by their best friends, left the organization because there was nothing really they can do. PDA is no longer in existence now. They formed another international truck drivers something now, so they kind of evolved a little bit, too. What happened, too, with some of the PDA guys, just like Al Abrica, who was the V.P., he got hired by the Teamsters to be a Teamster organizer, who didn't want another PDA organized or forming, because it would be competition to them. None of them had ever been in a truck union, so Teamsters were teaching them, longshoremen were teaching them, because longshoremen have truck drivers, too. So they were just learning about that, and so that is what has happened

now. The independent troqueros know that their days are numbered. They're going to have to find work doing something else, and that's just, there's nothing that can be done for that.

Marquez

But you know, but I was the one to tell them that, and so they all know that. They respect me today if they see me, and they wave at me when I show up at the meetings together. Last night was another historic meeting, yesterday, because the Port of L.A. released and approved the concession plan. I did not attend the meeting. Yesterday I was at UCLA on three other things, and I was too burnt out. They didn't need me to be there for that. And so that came to pass yesterday.

Collings

Okay, we're back on, and we just said that we were going to pick back up with a little bit more of your background, and you wanted to talk about some of your mentors, and some more of your activity as a youth which led you in this direction.

Marquez

One thing I wanted to share with you, in one of my classes at UCLA, classes are taught by cultural spheres, and when you're studying the Aztec Nahuatl sphere they have the cousins to the Aztecs, which were the Mixtecas, so in this one class on the Mixtecas we take an in-depth study of one of the codex books that survived, the Codex Nuttall. But in the class what happens is that one of the homework assignments is you must take two pages out of that codex book and translate them, so literally you're looking at these hieroglyphs and you have to figure what the hell they say, you know, just like with that Pee Wee's Big Top Circus, when they had stolen his bike, you know. He has all his friends down in the basement, and it's hot, they're tired. He's questioning everybody, and finally one gets up and says, "But Pee Wee, what does this all mean?"

Marquez

So that was sort of like this, you know. We take a look at this book and it's called the Codex Nuttall, N-u-t-t-a-l-l, and what it is, it's actually about the life of one of the Mixtec kings, okay. So I titled it "The Family and Birth of Lord Eight Deer," whose other name was Jaguar's Claw, who was the second ruler of the second dynasty of the Tilantongo in the year 1063 A.D., through the year 1115 A.D. That was another thing great about the Aztec and Mixtecas, they did have a calendar system, so they were able to record their dates and time frames of things.

Marquez

So what I'm showing you right now are a couple of pages, and what you see are different individuals all dressed up in different traditional garb. Some are standing, some are sitting, but everyone is dressed up fancifully, and so what

I've done is that I've chosen my two pages out of this ninety, might have been a hundred-page-plus book. Then you have to find where does the story begin, so I have little arrows pointing out to the figure. Also unique was that they would read from left to right, so like on this top page you see the arrow on the left-hand side pointing up, because the story goes from left to right.

Marquez

So what we have to do is that we look at the symbols and try to see what the story is telling. Well, it turns out when I got done writing mine my professor said, "I want to talk with you after class, Jesse." I said, "Okay, fine." So after class we get together and he says, "I was really impressed with the way you wrote this, because you wrote it from a little different perspective than most people. You really got into a lot of the detail, or expressing that detail, and I want to know if you'd be interested in preparing a new translation. I mean, there have been translations of this. There's probably a half dozen if not a dozen by now, translations of this whole book and the story, but I think yours would be a very unique and different version of the story. But I want you to seriously consider doing that."

Marquez

Well, for me to do that would probably take me about two years, you know, every week or month doing something out of it, you know, to translate all those pages. But I did want to share the first few paragraphs of what I wrote, to give you an idea, because we're traditionally reading books, but a lot of times, you know, there's photos and illustrations that are just part of the story. You really sometimes can't grasp the whole story, because they're just spot photos and illustrations, whereas these, every picture, everything in the diagram is part of the story, that you have to interpret it in the whole context of it.

Collings

Interesting.

Marquez

And so what's happening is that one of the symbols here I picked is actually a date symbol, and what it looks like, it looks like the letter A in the alphabet, with like a little square circle around it, and has sort of an oblong, pointed thing under it, and then there's one, two, three, four, five, six circles, okay. So what I'm going to read is going to help explain part of that symbol, as well as the rest.

Collings

Okay.

Marquez

Because next to it on the other side is another symbol, and it shows a bird, what happens to be an eagle, and it has seven little round dots, so we know the seven means something. Well, here is how the story begins. [reads] On the day, Seven

Eagle, in the Mixtec year, six flintstone, which is the year 1040 A.D., as indicated by the interlaced A-O sign upon a red-and-white flint, in the little black townhouse of heaven named Tilantongo, shown as a temple upon a pyramid, with a step-fret roof design, and a band of red-and-white star eyes surrounded in a band of blue on the roof, representing heaven, with pyramid steps. A black step-frieze design at the base of the pyramid, meaning the town of, with a yellow-thatched-reed roof trim, and painted with the royal red-and-white-and-black priestly colors, in the presence of Lord Nine Wind, who wore a jeweled flint-skull headdress, a jewel-bead ear ornament, a gold-bead or ball necklace or collar, and a red-and-white heaven bundle, and a round, feathered-disc back ornament, who in his royal and priestly capacity is sitting and officiating the marriage of Lord Five Crocodile to Lady Nine Eagle, who sat upon a royal jaguar-skin throne seat with royal red bands. And so that was my interpretation of that first little page of information.

Collings

It sounds beautiful.

Marquez

A couple of other things I'd like to read are actually some of the poetry and prose that I have written. I was kind of in an odd position, trying to think of a title. Sometimes titles of books come relatively easy, but then sometimes, you know, that's I guess why sometimes they have what they call a working title till you come up with what you really want it to be. I couldn't really come up with something, so I just called it "Reflections," because it would be my personal reflections of things that I'm experiencing today, and things of the past. In the book it was meant to be a series which would always be continuing. I originally had envisioned doing one every two, three years, but as I discovered with my friends, when I'd be sitting down writing at powwows and picnics and things of that nature, they got excited reading some of my things, and then told me, "I can't wait two, three years for the next book."

Marquez

So what I went ahead and started doing was writing more than one in the series, with the anticipation I would release one, then, you know, nine, ten months later the next version, and then the following year the third version, so basically within a year and a half to two years, three volumes would have come out, and at the same time I was anticipating writing a play and a couple of novels, so at least one of those would be shortly thereafter. So it would kick off my writing career.

Marquez

So basically I call it "Reflections, A Book of Contemporary and Traditional Mexica Literature." And this one, the pieces I've written in this one was written during the years 1995 and 1996.

Collings

Let me ask you, you had the opportunity to go and do an liberal-arts bachelor's degree, and you chose not to. You chose to go into the electrical program. Do you think that if you were a young person today that you would make that same decision?

Marquez

I would never make that decision. I had wanted to be a writer, you know. Unfortunately I had a terrible English senior teacher, who hated my Chicano and socialist perspective of life, and so she just ripped apart everything I wrote. Then even when I took some college classes, I think I took philosophy class at Long Beach City College there, that professor hated what I wrote also. He found it interesting and different.

Collings

And just that year would have been, just to put it in the record again, that would have been early 1960s?

Marquez

Well, I graduated from high school in June 1970.

Collings

Oh, 1970, excuse me.

Marquez

Yes. I graduated in 1970, so that's when I had the scholarship opportunities to go to college and to universities, and I went to Long Beach Naval Shipyard into their electronics program, so my senior year was '70, okay, or fall '69 through '70. Then that philosophy class, I probably took it around '73, '74, about that time frame.

Collings

Right. So still at that time you felt that you--

Marquez

I wanted to be a writer. I had written some small poetry things, no big deal. But there were other students, friends of mine that were, you know, writer-writers, and they were prolific writers. I mean, there I am in senior English and a friend of mine, she had like ten, fifteen poems she wrote in the last couple of months.

Collings

And when you made that decision not to go to college, but to pursue the technical route--

Marquez

Well, there was a specific reason.

Collings

--you were married, I know.

Marquez

I got married, too, so I needed that money coming in.

Collings

But I mean, was that a hard decision for you, or was it just an obvious, you know, sort of no-brainer?

Marquez

It was a hard decision.

Collings

Was it.

Marquez

I really wanted to go to a college and university. I was a track star. You know, I held the record at Banning High School. I'd been on two championship teams. We won city championship in track, we won city championship cross country, so I was good. I wasn't great. I was only eleventh in the state in terms of the 400 meters at that time, but good enough to help a team, that you know, I could lead us to a championship. But again, I was there to explore more of what I really wanted to.

Collings

Yes. But your family and your community supported your decision to do the technical program, as I recall.

Marquez

Well, they supported me, but it was more Mom and Dad saying, "You need a job. Finding a job is more important than anything else. You can always go to college at night."

Collings

Right.

Marquez

Well, it just so happens that the job I had required you to go to school at night, okay, so three, four nights a week I had to go to class. The class was related to that program, you know. And in between I would take one or two of my classes, okay. So I would never make that decision now. I would never force my sons to ever make that decision. Each one has been fully open to do whatever they wanted to do.

Collings

Yes. Well, I mean a lot of the reason that you might feel that way now is because of the work that people such as yourself have done.

Marquez

So anyways, so here I am, like twenty years later, finally saying, yes, I'm going to write, because I had mentioned, too, in that 1999-2000 year time frame I made another midlife change decision, whereas I was going to do this. I was going to become a full-time writer. I wanted to be a publisher-director, and that's what I was planning to do. So 2000, this is what I was gearing up to do. It

just so happens 2001 is when the port started its campaign to expand, and stopped me.

Collings

Yes, fate intervened.

Marquez

Fate intervened, exactly.

Collings

So you said that you also wanted to talk a little bit about your mentors.

Marquez

Well, I did want to read some of these other things, too, before. That was going to be the next thing I wanted to get to, because I did want to share a few of these things with you--

Collings

Okay.

Marquez

--and whoever might listen to this, to get an idea. Sometimes I wrote things because sometimes you have a desk calendar that gives you an inspirational thought for the day, so I wanted to think of things like that as well. Other times, you know, it was historical or cultural that I wanted to share, and sometimes a paragraph was enough to say it. Other times it was several lines. Other times I was teaching something, so it required it to go beyond a page, and so this is one of those inspirational things. It's called "A Vision," and you'll understand when you hear it, too.

Marquez

[reads] Have a vision, not clouded by a lack of confidence. This one's called "Never Believe." Never believe you cannot change your life. That dream, that wish that came into your thoughts today is one that you have had many times before, but you did not have the courage to pursue it. "Place of Peace." Each of us has a place of peace. You must seek it, so that your spirit can rest and renew itself, and have the strength to face the challenges of life. "Forest of Peace." Each one of us has a responsibility to plant one seed for the forest of peace. "In Our Hearts." In our hearts it was written, in our soul it was engraved for eternity, the sacred revelations, the words of infinite wisdom, our love for our creator, our love for all mankind, and they must never be forgotten, aho.

Marquez

This is one sort of like when the Spanish first arrived, and the priests first arrived in the Americas, you know, they would ask the natives about their religions and their beliefs, but at the same time, you know, they asked questions back, too. So this one is called, "You Have Said." You have said not to question the order of life, and to accept what you say, but I cannot, for it is said, for it is painted, for it is written, for it has been handed down to us from our

elders, from our teachers, from the ancient ones, that our people, our culture, our traditions, our language, our spiritual ways have always existed since the beginning of time.

Marquez

Here's one both my mother and father hated, because it's very political. "Our Sister Nations." Support our sister nations throughout the world, whose daily struggle is life or death, stand in defense and be a vanguard against those governments, against those religions, against those individuals, against those businesses, against those organizations, and against those foreign-investment companies, who are corrupted by the greed of wealth, who have no concern for indigenous peoples, for they use their influence and power to keep all Native American people forever enslaved in economic poverty. Do not be blinded or fooled by their claims that business opportunity benefits all, when, in fact, only a few will reap the most financial gain, or by their false claims to fight terrorists, guerrillas, socialists and communists in the name of democracy, when the truth is that the poor are leading the battle for their freedom against exploitation, against social justice (sic), against racism, against discrimination, against fascist dictators, against falsified government elections, against their forced removal from their homelands, against the theft of their lands and personal property, against religions that practice cultural genocide, against the torture of innocent men, women, and children, against the mass murders by police death squads, against the mass murders by military death squads, against the theft of the nation's assets, against U.S. government military aid intervention, against FBI-CIA operations authorized to kill and suppress indigenous people freedom fighters. Support our sister nations.

Marquez

Here's the one I had mentioned that, you know, women can't believe that I wrote, because it's more of a sister-sisters type thing. It's titled, "What Shall I Do?" Shall I wear a red feather? Shall I paint my face? How should he see me, my future companion for life? Shall I wear a jade necklace? Shall I braid my hair? How should he see me, my future companion for life? Shall I walk alone near him? Shall I take a friend? How should he see me, my future companion for life? Shall I look his way? Shall I give a small smile? How should he see me, my future companion for life? Shall I use a fragrant scent? Shall I place a flower in my hair? How should he see me, my future companion for life? Shall I speak a word? Shall I be so bold? How should he see me, my future companion for life? What shall I do, my dear older sister?

Collings

Thank you very much for sharing those.

Marquez

And so I just want to conclude with that, and then just lead into one other area, which has been who were some of my inspirational leaders throughout my life? Some of these I've known, and some I do not know, but one of them being Cesar Chavez. I grew up during the era of UFW organizing the farmworkers, and so I got to participate in that, in the rallies, the marches. Even here in Wilmington sometimes I was the only one with a sign protesting in front of a market.

Collings

Yes, I was just going to ask you. And your family and neighbors did not support Cesar Chavez's activities?

Marquez

Well, many did, but I mean not people who were going to go in front of a market and protest. So many times I was a trailblazer, so like one time I went and I was the only one. Then the next day someone else showed up, and the next day another person showed up, so sometimes there'd be two or three of us, or sometimes it was more organized and a whole group was there.

Collings

But at home and in the neighborhood, people would be--

Marquez

Well, most of Wilmington, since it was Mexican-American, we would all support him, you know. But again, you know, saying you support him and getting out there doing something is something else, you know.

Collings

Yes, of course, yes.

Marquez

And so we would put signs in our front yard. My family always did that, and my friends would always do that, wearing the buttons and those type of things, we would always do that.

Collings

And what about the boycotts?

Marquez

Well, we would not buy grapes. That's one thing we would all do. But then there was always those that would not, or didn't care, so that's why it was important for us protesters to be there in front with our signs, demonstrating them and explaining to them why they needed to support the cause. So in Wilmington we had overwhelming support for Cesar Chavez. So I got to meet him several times. I didn't get to know him on a personal level; he would not recognize me. But it turns out his wife Dolores Huerta, since she has survived his death, I've had the opportunity to meet with her many times, and when she sees me she does recognize me, because I have attended so many conferences

where we're both on the same platform, we've both had an opportunity to talk. So she sees me and I see her.

Marquez

Just a couple of years ago the family was honored by Cesar being put on a postage stamp, and I was invited to that ceremony in downtown L.A., because it was kicked off. Actually, it was strange enough. It was actually kicked off here in L.A., and not in Delano, strange as it may seem. But the whole family was here in Los Angeles. I guess they wanted to have a big city and they'd get a lot of publicity by doing it here versus over there, and so I was there to photograph it, and so I'm one of the few people that has outstanding photos of the whole family. There must have been like thirty, forty members of the family there for that day, so I have that.

Marquez

And then I've seen her many times since then, one important thing being is that one of our environmental things that did occur, in 2005 I participated in a national toxic tour, and they were looking for people who would like to be with it for the whole seven-day duration. And literally, they rented a bus and you could sleep on the bus. They had all the facilities for living on the bus. But the bus was going to start from Northern California all the way down to the Southern California border, you know, of Calexico and San Diego.

Marquez

And over thirty communities signed up to participate in it, which meant several things. You know, we would make a stop for sure in that community, and meet with the community. Now, in some cases people just showed up at a park to speak with us. In some cases they had a community center where we showed up to speak with them. In some cases we met at a specific point, and they took us to a tour to show us their toxic community, so that was basically how it occurred. In some cases we were going to the neighboring community, so some would jump in the bus, and it was a big bus, it could hold sixty, seventy people, so we'd have a lot of company with some of the legs.

Collings

Now, was Jane Williams organization involved in this, California Communities Against Toxins?

Marquez

There were many organizations that participated in it. She helped us because of her contacts up and down the state, so she helped coordinate part of that, so some of the organizations would not normally have known about it, it was because of her. But the other key organizer here in Los Angeles was Martha Arguello, and she was with Physicians for Social Responsibility. It was her organization, one of the sponsors of this. There was like four primary organizations in the United States.

Marquez

And so I was going to participate on the West Coast-California tour. There was going to be another segment in Texas and Louisiana area, and another one in New York-New Jersey area. We weren't able to get enough for all across the state as it turned out, and so I volunteered. First of all, consciously I wanted to participate in something like that, and also I was a photographer, and I volunteered to be the official photographer, so I was the photographer for this event. So there was myself, two others, Martha was one of the ones on the tour, one of the foundations, believe it or not. Very few foundations actually participate in a lot of the local stuff. Once in a while they'll show up at a meeting or a convention, but actually participating in the event-event itself, very few do that. But there was one young woman, Japanese, who was with her foundation that was also one of the sponsors, that wanted to participate, so she volunteered to be like our coordinator for the whole thing, so she was our mother hen to keep us on track and on schedule and all that. They also had hired two filmmakers, two video guys, one sound guy, one video guy to video every place we went to.

Marquez

And so we did do that. We started from Northern California, all the way down, so that, you know, we ended up stopping in Delano and all that area. So I actually never physically--I had driven by, but I never went to the UFW headquarters office. So she was there, and then Ricardo Rodriguez, who is the current president of the UFW, he was there. They didn't know we were there for that, but he used that as a community center, and as it turned out that, you know, when we got there I saw that they were there, and asked if they would come and participate in the community meetings, so they came down and like everyone was just, well, to use the word stoked and excited that they would come to our meeting, that they were presenting with us there.

Marquez

And just to give you one little example, a woman was complaining about the water quality. Now, all different types of EJ issues were being discussed. In her case she says, "Here is a plastic bottle that water was in it, and I just opened up my sink and filled it up so you can see the quality of the water that they are providing us here in the farming areas." And you could see all this little dust, floating particles in the water, and that was their drinking water. That was their tap water, so that was like one of their issues right there.

Marquez

I did get an excellent photo of her. I mean, there was another opportunity. When we left there we were driving away, and there was farmworkers actually there picking. And so we pulled over because I wanted to get some shots of it, and I have some really great photos of some of the men and women working

there, picking the fruit there, where some of them are wearing masks because of the pesticides and breathing in, you know. So some of my most memorial shots are a couple of those shots right there. And so again, that's where I got to see Dolores there at that event--

Collings

Oh, that's wonderful.

Marquez

--and then she's participated here numerous times in the Wilmington and the harbor, joining up with some of the other unions. One of the other key people that was significant, who I've never actually met, and he probably doesn't know who I am, maybe he might but I doubt it, is Dr. Rodolfo Acuña. He was a professor of Chicano studies at the Cal State University, Northridge, and in the seventies he published and released a book called "Occupied America, The Chicano Struggle for Liberation." That was one of the most inspiring books for me in terms of modern history of colonization of the United States and the Southwest of Mexico. So his book has inspired me quite a bit, and filled in part of my blank in terms of history over here, since I knew pretty good the old history, but not the more recent history. So his books have been a great inspiration for me.

Marquez

Another individual who I've never met that someday I hope to is our current Dalai Lama. I would love more than anything to have that opportunity to meet with him, and someday I hope to fly to wherever he's at in India now, but more so to go to Tibet, and to go over there. Although I think very spiritually myself, and have studied many different religions of the world, I am convinced of one thing, that even though I'm Native American with our religions over here, I believe that Tibet was the center of religion and spirituality in the world. I do believe they traveled throughout the world. I do believe they landed and traveled here, and taught some things over here as well, and so I do believe that is part of our Native American history, although it's been lost way back in time at some point in time. But I do believe that.

Collings

Right, across the Bering Strait perhaps.

Marquez

No, I don't believe across the Bering Straits. Well, since you brought that up it's a good point, because there are literally thousands of Native American tribes in Canada, the United States, Mexico, Central, and South America. Over 90 percent of them, over, claim no crossing of the Bering Straits. Nowhere in their history says anything traveling from the north. They either state they were always here, which is the majority, and then there's others state that they came from the East, and a very few came from the West, so none of us Americans

believe in the Bering Strait as to where we came from, and that is why your archeologists and anthropologists haven't been able to prove that. They proved that yes, there are tribes in Alaska that are native and did cross the Bering Straits, but they are not the foundation of the rest of the people of the world here, and so that's caused a big dilemma right there, so where did you come from? Okay, so there's various theories on that as well. And so I do not believe that. None of the art in our tribal histories believe that. Even in Mexican history and Mexica history that is not true. Even we say way back, way back, we originally came from the East, which means not from the Americas.

Marquez

Now, unfortunately many Native Americans will say, "We've always been here." But then I've studied enough to know that it's not necessarily true, but I'm not going to go say nothing about that.

Collings

Yes. We're not going to get into all that right now.

Marquez

I'm not going to get into all that. I just respect that for that.

Collings

Yes. So the Dalai Lama, and--

Marquez

And actually I was really, really inspired just a couple of weeks ago, because he was here in Oregon, or was it Washington? No, Washington, okay. He actually spoke at one of the stadiums there in Washington, live and in person, and it was like a sold-out type thing. But the reason I got inspired, because KPFK radio, which is 90.7 here, they were there and they interviewed people, and they interviewed three students, and like two of them were thirteen, and one was fourteen, okay. And they asked them, "Well, what did you think about the Dalai Lama, what you heard him say?"

Marquez

And I was so impressed. All three students came from the same school, okay, and it didn't sound like a public school, so it might have been a private school, or equivalent to like one of our charter schools. I was so impressed with these young adults, how they spoke so eloquently, how they were able to perceive his teachings so well, and understand the wisdom and spirituality he was saying there. I could not believe it, you know. I could not believe it. So it's a credit to that school, and one day if I ever have the time--I actually wrote the school down. I'd like to write a letter to that school principal and say, "Hey, congratulations, because I would not have believed it." If that had happened here in Los Angeles, I don't believe we would have had three thirteen-, fourteen-year-old students that could have spoken as well, and comprehended and interpreted what he said and what he meant so well.

Marquez

So I mean, it's so beautiful, and that's a tribute to their parents as well, because it had to have been their parents to support that school and for them to be there, and I wouldn't have doubted that the parents were there as well.

Collings

Yes. So we were going through the list of your mentors. So you want to end it with the Dalai Lama today?

Marquez

Okay. Well, I'll just spend briefly a couple of others. I had mentioned about when I was in that student-leadership program at UCLA, and there was a young person there who was one of those leaders, and his name was Moctesuma Esparza, I bumped into him every five or six years or so, who was always part of a Chicano Movement, and one of the key leaders of that movement going way back. But he turned businessman, okay, and he was the producer of the movie "Selena." It's beautiful because that film is the history of this young tejana girl, Tex-Mex music, but also shown from a Chicano perspective, and that little point being very specific in that in the movie she did not speak Spanish. She had to learn Spanish in order to sing some of the Spanish songs, which is the dilemma of many Mexican Americans that grew up, that were born in the fifties, in the early sixties, that we had that same dilemma. So it was great that in his film he wanted to show that, that even though you could be born and raised with a certain cultural limitation, but then recognize the beauty of learning something, and growing beyond that, okay.

Marquez

At the same time, he took a very controversial position when he chose the starlet to play that part.

Collings

That was J Lo, wasn't it?

Marquez

Yes, that was Jennifer Lopez, and the controversy was that he did not choose a Mexican girl to play the Mexican-singer part, and naturally, every Mexican and Mexican American were upset. You know, "How could you be Mexican yourself and not choose a Mexican to play the part?" But again, that's the business end of it.

Collings

That's the business end of it. You want to get the movie up on the profile.

Marquez

You want to get the Puerto-Rican/Cuban element into it, and the New York-rican New Jersey end of it, and that's what you do, and so that's what he did, and it turned out to be an outstanding film. And then just a few months ago he's now leaping--well, a year or so ago he took, like two or three years he started a

chain of movie theaters, building a brand new--directed towards, you know, the Chicano and Latino community, and then just a month or so ago he managed to get a large investment firm to partner with him to open up, like, a huge chain of you know, forty or fifty theaters throughout the United States. So he's doing very well, and he's produced a few other films, too. I understand he has a couple of others that he's looking at right now to do.

Collings

That's great.

Marquez

So he's one of those people I've followed his life. Another key person when I was coming up was right after I got out of high school in the early seventies, I had mentioned about there being a Mexican-American Education Commission that was part of the L.A. Unified School District, where I'd heard about them and went to East L.A. to attend their first meeting, and they liked the fact that, you know, here was an activist from the harbor, and they ended up voting me to come in. Then once I got in they liked the idea of bringing in more members to help reinforce them, so I caused that to happen so that there was now five regional areas of representation in it.

Marquez

But the executive director was named Raul Arreola, and he was the E.D. that directed that organization. He was an educator. He had been a school principal himself there in East L.A., and he was one of those key people that, you know, during my teens and early twenties that being a member of that commission I spoke many, many times with him, you know, for guidance and direction as to things that I was concerned about, and what to do, because at that time, you know, there weren't too many out there I could talk to. So those were a couple of the key people.

Marquez

At that time, too, there was a new organization that had just formed that I have to give a lot of credit to, which was the Association of Mexican-American Educators, called AMAE. They pretty much have disbanded. They're not as strong as what it used to be, and I can't understand today why, you know, but it has. There still is a harbor chapter. It really doesn't meet that often, but some members still are around here. But you know, in my early twenties again, and in my teens I was a student member, and so they would sponsor me to attend conferences and conventions, and so some of them were really important in supporting me, because like I said, at that time my parents were not there. You know, there wasn't anybody else in Wilmington, there were no other Chicano leaders in Wilmington, you know, so when I was doing it, I was it.

Marquez

The only other thing happening was that the Brown Berets did start a chapter in Wilmington, so they did have a chapter in Wilmington. In fact, one of my cousins belonged to it. But I was not a member of the Brown Berets. I chose not to do that. I was active with my stuff.

Collings

Why did you choose not to become a member when your cousin was a member?

Marquez

They were a very militant group. I wasn't quite that militant. I still believed I could negotiate, and will and deal. They were going to do more radical things that would cause them to be arrested. I didn't want to be arrested so much for some of those things. Like, for example, they took over Catalina Island and reclaimed it on behalf of Mexico, so naturally they all got arrested. So some things, you know, I was not ready to be arrested for, and other things I was willing to be arrested for, and a good example of that was just this past year. Here in Los Angeles we had, oh, I can't think of the name now, our Central Farms.

Collings

Oh, yes.

Marquez

Okay. For the Central Farms, Angelo Logan again was one of my close friends, and so he was telling me, "By the way, did you hear what's going on with the Central Farms?" I go, "Yeah, I'm really concerned with it, and I've showed up a couple of times just for an hour or so." And he says, "Well, hey, I'm going to go this afternoon, because I think I just got a message that any day the police are going to come down there to arrest them." "Well, hey, I'm not doing anything. I'll go down there, too, so I'll meet you there." And so I got there and got to meet some of the organizers and other people that were there every day protesting, and so what happened is that they were now taking a sign-up list. They knew--the police had already announced that they were going to raid, and they'd probably end up arresting people, and so they were getting ready for that.

Marquez

So they already had attorneys that were going to represent people. They were actually taking up a sign-up list of who would probably be the ones that would hold the line and get arrested, and they wanted to have your name, address, phone number, your contact family members, so that once you got arrested they knew who you were as part of this group, and they could bail you out and contact and notify your family, that type of thing. Well, I signed up. So I signed up to actually be arrested, and I was going to hold the line on that issue.

Marquez

So I took pictures of us there, and actually there's a photo where I asked one of the guys to hold the camera and take a photo of us, because they had a telephone tree. We had our cell phones and we were dialing people, letting them know that we need more and more people to come, because the bust was going to happen any day now, so whatever spare time you come, we need you to come down there to be there, you know. So there we are on the phone all calling up the phone list of people. "Hey, it's going to happen every day. We need you to come today or tomorrow, or what day of the week can you commit to?" and so we were all doing that, you know.

Marquez

So it turns out--this was like, I think it was like a Monday or a Tuesday, and then the following week was our normal Environmental-Justice network meeting in downtown L.A., where we'd meet at the Union Station patio, and I was taking--well, normally when I go by myself I will not drive if I can avoid it, unless I have so much stuff I have to go to that I can't get to by public transportation. So from Wilmington here I walk to the corner, I take the bus to the Long Beach station, and then I take the blue line train, and it goes all the way to Union Station--

Collings

Yes, that's right.

Marquez

--so you can't beat that, you know. So here I am on the train that Tuesday morning because I have to leave early. The meeting's at ten, and it's like eight-thirty, between eight-thirty and I'm on the train, and I just look over to the side, because you can see the Central Farms right there as you go by on the train, and the raid is happening. I can see the police chasing people, hitting people, people are already lined up on the fence, people lying down. I go, "Oh, my god, it's happening now. Let me out the train." And I go, "Oh, my god, no, no." And so, "Okay, when's the next stop? I've got to get off the train."

Marquez

So I'm getting on the phone and I'm calling all my family and friends to see who's home that can come and get me, because I wanted to come home, get my car and my camera, and get back there. Okay, so I wanted to get as many photos as I could, too, to capture what was happening. So I called my sons and I called my dad, I called everybody, and then finally I couldn't get a hold of anybody. So in the meantime I'm on the train already. I had jumped off and I'm on the way coming back this direction now, and then Cecilia calls me up, "What is it? I just got done with my dad at dialysis." I said, "Well, come and get me now. Hurry! You know, the police are raiding the Central Farms." "Okay, I'm heading there. Where do you want me to meet you?" "Okay, where are you at? Okay, then meet me at the Del Amo station, and then I'll jump out

and get in the car and then come home and get my car. I'm going to go back with a camera." "Okay, okay," so that's what happened.

Marquez

So by the time I got back they had already arrested everybody, okay. Then the police had its perimeter there. There was probably about five, six hundred people, protesters, but they already had a perimeter around the whole farm, so no one else could get in. Then they pushed the perimeter slightly back. For those that don't know where the Central Farm is, but on the east side of it, that's where the train track is, so they held the people on the other side of the train tracks, so the train track was the line on the east side where the five hundred, six hundred people were. There was a few hundred people scattered on the other side, but basically that was the area right there.

Marquez

So I was able to drive, park there, get there, okay. So I'm with my camera. They already had arrested everybody. The buses had just left, but then there was still the mob there, and the police pushing everybody, everything back, and so I'm snapping my photos. But then I can see on one of the corners, on the southeast corner there were some people, photographers on top of a roof, and so I go in the business, because it's an industrial business of some type, there was a little industrial park there, and I asked the guy. He says, "No, there's too many people up on top right now, but check back in in a while." So, you know, I'm all anxious, you know. Thirty minutes later the guys says, "Well, okay, you look like you're serious, I'll let you go. But here's the situation. Go back to the next gate back there. I'm going to open the gate. I'm going to lock the gate. Then I'm going to put the ladder up so you can get up on the roof."

Marquez

So I get up on the roof. The photographers who were there were like L.A. Times, Associated Press. Those were the main people that were on top of there, with a few community people. So now I'm in a key position to photograph everything that's going on, okay. So I figure, well, maybe this is my destiny, to get as many photographs, too, from my perspective. So I was there, and then I was there also with Daryl Hannah and John Quigley, who were in the tree. So what happened, the police got the fire department and they had the fire department send the ladder up to the tree to get them out of the tree, so I got photos of them in the tree, coming out of the tree, and then waving at us, and I'm photographing the police downstairs and everything else.

Marquez

Now, this day was like summertime. It was like ninety degrees. We're on a roof, and like other photographers are getting down, so it's getting fewer people, but it's still like about ten people, and then we're like boiling. It's boiling hot there, you know. I'm toasting, because I didn't take no water or

nothing, you know. Then even more police are coming, and then the word came out that the police set up another perimeter like three blocks away, so the five, six hundred people that were in could not get no more reinforcements, and Angelo calls me up saying, "I'm here, but I can't get past this perimeter to get to the inside where you guys are at. So, you know, bless you and good luck, but I can't come in. No one else can come in here; they've got this extra perimeter out here now." I said, "Okay, well, hey, I'm in here for the duration. I ain't going nowhere."

Marquez

So then right about one-thirty, two o'clock, the police announce through the loudspeakers there that, you know, that they want all the people and the photographers on the roof to get off the roof, because they're going to remove us. So then that's when everybody gets down, with the exception of me and then two community people with their little small cameras were there. But all the big media gets down. Then what happens is that the police come into the building to tell the guy that, "We want your permission to go up there." And bless this owner, who happens to know, I guess, this much of the law that if you don't have a warrant, I don't have to. And so he asked them if they had a warrant, and he said no and didn't allow them, and they couldn't force him, since we weren't doing nothing illegal, okay. You couldn't say we were inciting anything, because we weren't inciting anything, so you know, there were just three or four of us left.

Marquez

And so I got to shoot for the rest of the day, until approximately five p.m. when the guy closed the business. "Hey, you've got to come down because otherwise you won't be able to get down." And so you should have seen me. I was burnt to a crisp. Fortunately, within that block perimeter of the other perimeter there was a paleta man, and you know the paleta man is the ice-cream guy, and basically he saw potential customers of five, six hundred people there, so he's rolled his little cart there, and he was smart, too, because he threw water, bottles of water inside his little ice-cream cart. And I see him rolling over there, because I'm like dying of dehydration there, and so I threw money down there, and he throws me a bottle of water up there, and he throws me an ice cream up there, and I say, "Thank you," and we're happy, you know, like at least we've got some refreshments now. And by that time, you know, other people are able to smuggle some cases of water, so in the last few hours there was enough water to go around for people there, and there was even a little stand there selling some food, the little neighbors and people. Neighbors that live close there were starting to barbecue, and make sandwiches and burritos to feed all of us, and so it was great to see the community locals there really jump in to support the five, six hundred of us that were there.

Marquez

So right about five-thirty, six o'clock-ish, is when basically it was dead, you know, there was nothing more to do. The people chose not to take on the police and fight them, okay. It came very close, where they were bumping heads of people throwing a few things, but the mayor called it off. That was the other disappointing thing. We wanted the mayor to be there, we wanted the city council, the mayor to be there.

Collings

Yes, I remember that.

Marquez

They did not come. No elected came to support us there, and so it basically ended about that time. The police, hundreds of them, several hundred all packed up and left. Now, there had been about twenty-five or so people that were arrested, and by six p.m. they were all bailed out and they were coming out, and at seven p.m. was a scheduled vigil, candlelight vigil that was going to be there, but on the Alameda Street side, on the northeast corner there. So people were again marching, and they arrived, they spoke there, and so again I was there to take photos of all that, even to the candlelight vigil.

Marquez

So actually, I have a couple of outstanding photos where I have some of the Central Farms, the key organizers there, speaking with Daryl and John Quigley right there by their sides. I got a couple of special ones with Daryl Hannah. One was a mother crying, sitting down by the fence with her children, and Daryl is hugging them, crying, with John Quigley in the background. It's just one of those Time-Life front-page photos, is that one, so I'm proud to really have that one, and the only person to have that shot. Another key shot I have is Daryl with some of the came children, sitting on the curb lighting a candle, and I have another couple where one of the actresses, and I can't think of her name any longer, she's an Afro-American actor, she came, too, and was there, too, and that's another key photo that's one of those for the records.

Marquez

And so since that time I actually put a photo album of my eight-by-ten color photos, the key shots from that day, and then about a month ago I received an e-mail from Tom Politeo from the Sierra Club about a film that had been made documenting that.

Collings

Now, why did you think that it was worth being arrested over the Central Farm issue?

Marquez

Well, to me it was like in my port issue. I was prepared to chain myself to the fence at the port here in Wilmington, and be arrested here. So some things were significant enough for me to want to do.

Collings

And when are things significant enough? Why was this significant enough?

Marquez

When a whole community is involved, when that event is significant that the general public can sympathize with it, where doing that will catch national media attention, so there are certain criteria that I want to make sure that there's a significant benefit by my participation in it, and the fact that, you know, I am a photographer and writer, that I'm not afraid to tell the story, and because I do travel so much, that I would speak on it. The same thing with the farmworkers. If the farmworkers had an event here or somewhere else that I could get to, that was not conflicting with anything else that I had to do, I would be there and I'd be prepared to be arrested for them. So there are certain things that, yes, I have no question that I would do.

Collings

Meeting that criteria that you just outlined.

Marquez

Meeting some of that criteria that it's important enough to do.

Collings

Okay, all right.[End of interview]

1.4. Session 4 (May 30, 2008)

Collings

Okay, Jane Collings interviewing Jesse Marquez at his home in Wilmington, on May 30th, 2008. Good morning, Jesse. I'll let you get situated, sorry. We were just looking at this article that you gave me, published May twenty-ninth [2008]. Did you say it was the "Daily Breeze"?

Marquez

Well, what it is, that's our press release that's released by the NRDC, Natural Resources Defense Council, dated May twenty-ninth, and what it's announcing is that our filing of a lawsuit against the U.S. EPA, which is United States Environmental Protection Agency, regarding their rubber stamping of the California State Implementation Plan. Now, most people have never even heard of the State Implementation Plan, but what it is is that under the Federal Clean Air Act, each state must develop a plan, and it must be revised regularly, that states how it will come into compliance with the various air-quality standards.

Marquez

In this particular case, the state submitted theirs. We objected to it because there were many inadequacies in the document, and those were presented to the U.S. EPA during its public-hearing, public-comment process, and they still went ahead and approved it. Now, the problem with it was that we're talking about the ozone standard, the PM2.5 standard, which is your particulate matter, and particulate matter is the black smoke or any exhaust you've seen coming out of trucks and trains and vehicles. Our issues are that many times it's looked at from a regional basis, and we're saying regional, in this particular case on a national-regional we're talking about large areas of land. It could be statewide and within a circle, a radius of several states, that type of a region, so we're not talking about, like, within several cities or several counties. It's a different type of region.

Marquez

And many times what happens to us environmental-justice communities and urban cities is that we may have a more grave problem at a local level. But then when you calculate and estimate things on an interstate-regional level, it's not so bad, and so the plan defuses the seriousness of the problem. So in this particular case we're pushing for more stringent ozone standard, and a more-stringent PM2 standard. The reason we're going for a more-stringent PM2.5 is that before it's been PM10, and what we're talking about is the micron size of smoke that's in the air. In the past the ten was the basic standard, but as we began to study the environmental impacts of exhaust, we began to realize that the smaller the exhaust particle--as in the past, it would get trapped in your lungs, okay. But as a particle gets smaller, 2.5 down to 1.0 microns, it's now at the microscopic level, the micron level, so that it actually goes through your lung linings and is absorbed into your blood system at the cellular level. So now we're talking a whole different situation, which is a more serious situation, so we believe standards must be stricter.

Marquez

The other thing is that they did not require any monitoring stations to be installed, and so when we're talking about truck traffic and automobile traffic, we're talking about along transportation s. Now, the standard mostly emphasizes highways, but we're talking about highways, freeways, bridges. In our particular case, in port communities we're talking about like the Alameda Corridor and the port-transportation corridors, and so we even expand that to include your railroad-locomotive centers, such as the Union Pacific Railroad ICTF terminal, which borders Wilmington, Long Beach, and Carson. Then we're talking about the East L.A. Commerce Railroad Yards over there, and then all the way to the port, and we include the distribution centers as far out as Riverside and Mira Loma.

Marquez

So from our EJ perspective, we have to look at it not just as a local, but how it will affect other communities so it doesn't impact them. So that is another area of critique right there, because of the fact that there are no monitoring stations at any highway or at any freeway right now. Now, there was a comment by the local AQMD that, yes, they would put one. Well, putting one is not acceptable. You'd have to have a permanent one at the Port of Los Angeles, Port of Long Beach, and then at every major what we call hotspot area, or hotspot community. So this would include the ICTF terminal, the Alameda Corridor terminal, the railroads as well as distribution centers, so there's a big difference between one and then many that are actually needed.

Marquez

The other thing is that they did not look at the fact that in urban cities versus regional areas, the freeways and highways and transportation corridors are adjacent to residential communities, so when you're out in nowhere land, no one lives by them, okay, whereas in an urban city 90 percent of these transportation corridors border residential communities, so people live within a few hundred feet of the freeway or of the highway, of the bridge or one of these railyards, so it's a little bit more different.

Marquez

The other thing that was lacking was their research. They did not study or assess adequately all the scientific and medical research that's come out that shows that people living closest to freeways and transportation corridors have the higher risk of cancer and other respiratory-health problems, so they totally ignored that. So this lawsuit seeks to stop the adoption of the standard, and will force the state to review it and change those standards to meet what we're challenging.

Collings

And in this case, as we were discussing, you were working with the Natural Resource Defense Council.

Marquez

In this case the NRDC has teamed up with two other law firms, or two other groups that also have legal staff, and they also need to have local community organizations to support the lawsuit, so that when we're talking about local communities, and then children and families being impacted, well, us local community-based organizations are the ones that have members. In my case, 90 percent of my membership are families, and these are families that do have public-health problems, and so in this case we've teamed up with the mainstream organization of NRDC so that the case is a stronger case as it goes forward.

Collings

Right.

Marquez

Now, the other thing that we did notice is that we sent the press release everywhere, and so NRDC has its media network, and then I have my media network. So I sent a copy of the press release, and then I prepared another document of my personal comments, which had about five additional statements as to where we look at it from a real local level. Then we attached the lawsuit itself, and then some other comments that had been submitted earlier, and typically there are three L.A. Times writers that follow and track the types of things in the port and the community, and so I personally sent it to all three of these writers.

Collings

And who are these?

Marquez

Well, one would be Janet Wilson. Another one is Louis Sahagun, and I can't think of the third person right now. But if you looked at today's L.A. Times, there's not a single story in it. Now, I also sent it to our local newspapers, which are the "Daily Breeze" out of Torrance, the "Long Beach Press Telegram." They had a story, but here's the thing that bothered me is that I was contacted yesterday by the Associated Press. Well, that writer, Nayoki Swartz, was the one doing my interview, and received the information. Well, instead of local newspapers writing their own stories, since we're a local-based organization, they didn't. They used the A.P. story. So instead of doing a more in-depth study, they only had a limited story based on what she wrote, okay.

Marquez

So it gets kind of upsetting, because you know, like in the L.A. Times they have a big old story about, you know, Stonehenge, and today what archeologists found, which takes up about two-thirds of a newspaper if the story carries on, and there's zero about the impact of this lawsuit and what decision was made, because literally thousands of people are going to die every year as a result of this. Tens of thousands of children will have asthma. There'll be other cases of sinusitis, bronchitis, and other health illnesses which are going to be inflicted upon people by the lack of these standards, the lack of the correct data, the lack of the monitoring, and the lack of enforcement, because enforcement was another issue. Nowhere did they in what they adopted state how they're going to enforce compliance. And then when they're out of compliance, then what are they going to do to bring it into compliance? Are they going to slap them on the hand? Are they going to give them a penalty? Are they going to shut the business down? Nothing of that nature. So where is the policing?

Collings

So in this case you're working with the NRDC, and last time we were talking about the difference between the agendas of environmental-justice groups versus environmental groups. Can you point to a particular time when your group was sort of at odds with an environmental group?

Marquez

Well, for example, our organization teamed up with Long Beach community organizations where we were opposing the reopening and what they call re-powering of a closed-down power plant at the Port of Long Beach. In this particular case a company called NRG, which is an electric-power company, had been given a ten-year contract by Southern California Edison. Well, Southern California Edison had gotten the approval by the California Public Utilities Commission. Well, there's only a few problems. This power plant was built in 1929. It's been closed down. There is nothing they can do to make it equal to today's clean standards. They can change equipment, you know, they could put filters and stuff, but it would still never be as good as new.

Marquez

But the other thing that was really upsetting was the fact that it's a done deal-- and this is things that they did not want to disclose to us, but we found out, you know, was that this ten-year contract was a \$300 million contract, which means they would get \$30 million a year to be on standby in case there was a power outage in Long Beach. So therefore, you know, they're making \$30 million a year to be on standby for 150 hours a month during the peak season, which is the summer season. So we objected, number one, because of the environmental impacts it would have, and then we objected because when they would turn on, they would turn on during summer, which some of the peak of the smog season, which means people would get sick during that time season.

Marquez

The other issues with it is that the Port of Long Beach had not told the city council that they were negotiating this deal, and so the Port of Long Beach Board of Harbor Commissioners approved the contract. And when I testified there, I stated, "How could you approve this contract when you didn't negotiate the fact that if there is a power outage, you would still get the power from them? That's not in the contract."

Marquez

And then I went to the city council; I appealed it before city council. I went before city council and explained to them, "You, the City of Long Beach, also did not negotiate with them, so if there is a power outage you would get the power. So right now you could have a power outage at the Port of Long Beach and at the City of Long Beach, and you will not get the benefit of this deal that was just cut." Well, in this particular instance we had relatively short notice on it. I'm not real familiar with this end of the industry itself, and we did ask

NRDC to take a look at it to see if they would consider working with us on a lawsuit that if they approved it, we could challenge it. Well, NRDC felt it was too little and too small, and not really worth their time to get into it, and so that was an instance where we were at odds with them on doing that.

Marquez

A more recent one would be with our appeal of the TraPac terminal. As an environmental-justice community, and since we're locally based and community-based, we have many issues unique to us here, like in the process we had always wanted air-purification systems to be installed in homes, as well as the local elementary schools, and then soundproofing. Well, over the years that's never been a major issue for them. To them it would never be a deal breaker, and it wasn't only till this last time that they began to say, "Okay, we'll kind of support that," but it was more grudgingly than willingly, okay.

Marquez

The other big example was Wilmington, we were fighting for the restoration of wetlands. Well, right now we identified three areas. One is an import car parking lot which is asphalt, so it's not a wetlands. It would have to literally be torn up down to water level. Another one had been pretty much of an abandoned oil-well field and dump site that has no wetlands, and then that's part of--in this particular case, the Port of Long Beach owns this property, but it's in Wilmington, in the Port of L.A. area. And then we identified a third land area that is owned by the Port of L.A., but it's used as a dumping area of dredged sludge materials from the water channels in the port, where it gives it an area to dry out and they're able to reuse it again. So we've identified those as three wetland areas that we would like to target to restore.

Marquez

Well, NRDC did not see it as a priority, you know. We're getting all these other benefits. You don't have wetlands now, you know, why make that a deal breaker? Well, it is to us, and it was to us. So they sort of, just in this case, kept silent on it, but it was obvious that it was not a priority for them. So there are oftentimes little issues like that, you know, where it's not a high priority in their particular case, but it is to us.

Collings

And are there particular people that you've worked with on these negotiations at the NRDC?

Marquez

Well, the NRDC has different attorneys, and some of them specialize in different areas. So like in this case, the one that was just filed, Adriano Martinez was assigned to be the attorney to represent us in this case, and he has also been one of the lead attorneys working on the TraPac end of it. In the case of three lawsuits we have against the South Coast Air Quality Management

District regarding power plants in the trading-credit program, we have Tim Grabiell working with us on that particular one, so their staff sort of divides up to work on different things.

Marquez

Another one that worked on the TraPac was Melissa Lin Perella, and so she worked with Adrian as part of that project. Other groups like the Sierra Club, in this case Sierra Club and us have been teamed up, but it's been the Sierra Club Harbor Vision Task Force, and so because they're involved in the port-harbor area, they've been the main ones to support us. Other groups like the Long Beach Sierra Club really didn't come into the picture when they should have, or the downtown Sierra Club should have come into the picture, but they really didn't. They pretty much have left us alone to do that, so we can see things like that which are lower priorities for other groups.

Collings

Yes, okay. All right, so why don't we get--unless you--I know that there were some things that you wanted to discuss, but one of the things that we were talking about talking about today was THE [Trade, Health, and Environment] Impact [Project] and how that came together, and what you've gained by forming this larger grouping.

Marquez

Well, going back about four years ago, USC via Andrea Hricko established a community public-health outreach center, to be able to work with the public and community organizations to understand public-health problems, and it turns out that Andrea and the center chose to work with ports-and-goods movement as the area. You have like the Asthma Association, and Lung Cancer, and those types out there, which are a little bit different, you know, and they really didn't get involved too much with the port and goods-movement issues.

Marquez

The only one that has come forward out of those other groups has been, like the American Lung Association. They have been working with us.

Collings

On goods movement?

Marquez

On ports-and-goods-movement issues, and the relationship to lung cancer and respiratory-health problems. And so Andrea started to attend some of the community public meetings, and decided to sponsor in Long Beach, like the first Port of L.A.-Port of Long Beach public-health sort of town hall meeting, and so in doing her research and attending some of the public meetings, she met us, our organization, and then she met like Angelo Logan's organization,

and then other groups invited us to be speakers and panelists, and allowed us to have a free table out there to pass out information.

Marquez

And so that began the first little process of uniting some of us together. Then she put on a second forum where again we worked with her a little bit more closely. Now, as a result of those two--now, the second one was a little bit more outside of the Wilmington-Long Beach area, and spread out more like in L.A. County, so there was a little bit more advertising on it, and who could participate. And after doing that, you know, we began to meet regularly. I would say almost every month we were in contact. Every week we were sending e-mails back and forth. Since USC has the funding and staffing, we were able to subscribe to different medical journals, environmental-health journals, scientific journals and stuff of that nature, which are priced in the hundreds of dollars, and there's no way we can afford those type of things. Like many of them are like six hundred, seven hundred dollars, even up to a thousand dollars annual subscription, and you know, that would just wipe out many of our budgets to do that.

Marquez

So as a result of her having access to that, and some other Internet database-type subscription services, she's able to funnel hundreds of news releases and stories and medical-journal stories and articles to us that we never had access to before, and that's been a great, great service to us in terms of informing us about information, because as one of the examples I gave earlier on the South Coast Air Quality Management District, in 2000 they had issued the MATES II study, where in that MATES II study it stated that Wilmington, San Pedro, Long Beach were at the highest risk of cancer due to diesel-fuel emissions, yet none of us knew about this document. There was not one press release. There was no distribution of any fliers or brochures, and there were no public hearings or meetings. None of us knew about it.

Marquez

So with Andrea, you know, she's been a godsend, because she understands that without that information, you know, it hurts our cause, and to be able to justify the type of campaigns and the mitigations and demands that we make. So what happened is that in some of our meetings that we were having collectively, we thought that, okay, since we have now been networking with other organizations statewide, such as at the Port of Oakland, the Port of San Francisco, Port of San Diego, some of them thought that, you know, we should do a little bit more, because they needed to learn from us. So then we brainstormed about doing another town hall, but this time on a bigger scale.

Marquez

So about a year and a half ago we put together a proposal, a grant proposal in which USC would be the lead on it, and then our organization, the Coalition for a Safe Environment, East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice, LBACA out of Long Beach, and then Penny Newman's group would be the four co-sponsor community organizations. So it would be USC, and then they teamed up with Occidental College, which is another private college, to work with them. So it was submitted to the California Endowment as a three-year proposal, with the second year basically being the conference itself, and so that gave us some funds to be able to support us to do these things.

Marquez

Like oftentimes community groups like us, there are many things that need to be done, but because of our budgets, you know, we can only do so much. So even myself--typically, many groups only have one really good leader, and that leader is the one that does all the scientific research, all the technical studying, attends most of the big meetings, then our communities depend on us to come down at the local level and explain to what they learn. Then what I do is that we have our little local meetings here, and, in fact, we have backyard meetings in literally my backyard here. We invite neighbors and our members to come here, and we have a little lunch or a little barbecue outside, and we pass out little fliers and brochures, and we explain what we're doing.

Marquez

The other thing that's unique to our organization is that we do a lot of community outreach, so, for example, last week I went to the Wilmington Community Organization, and they gave me a fifty-minute time slot to do a presentation. The Saturday before, I was in the City of Long Beach at the Gray Panthers Saturday morning monthly meeting, giving them an update. And it's really great because the Gray Panthers is a senior-citizen group, but they're the more progressive-liberal senior citizens in the state, and so this is the type of thing that I do. I go out to these different organizations doing presentations and giving them updates.

Marquez

In fact, one thing that they had asked us, to give them a nice summary, so I was able to come up with a one-page, you know, in a nutshell, like here's nine issues that we're working on that impact Long Beach residents, to make it more local to them, and they really like having that type of piece of paper.

Collings

Now, I know that one of the things with regard to these presentations, I know that one of the things that Penny Newman is interested in, in terms of the goods movement, is actually stopping it, you know. For her it's not so much about cleaning up the trucks, or reducing emissions and so on. She's interested in sort of rethinking what this engine of Southern California economy really should

be. When you go out and talk to a group like Gray Panthers or another civic group, I mean, are you able to raise issues of that sort?

Marquez

Well, yes. It has always been the position of our organization for a moratorium on port growth, and as a result of that, that is what we've been teaching all along. But part of the justification for the moratorium on port growth is because of their failure to be able to mitigate those impacts. Now, here in the case of the harbor areas, we don't have major warehouses and distribution centers, which are more unique to Penny Newman's group up there. And just like Angelo Logan out of the East Yard, you know, communities over there with the rail facilities, they don't have major warehouses and distribution centers, so we have to sort of be aware of that.

Marquez

The other thing, too, is that I try my best to be able to try to represent all facets, too. Unfortunately, Penny Newman's group is so far away that they rarely come down here, and again, I have my priorities, too, which is to deal with issues down here. So while at the same time I do bring up distribution issues, that's not a super-high priority for me as taking care of the local issues here.

Collings

Right.

Marquez

She would be able to achieve more by having some staff time being assigned to physically coming down here at these public hearings and public meetings. That way they're able to better represent their position. Now, that is why for the past six years, collectively with our colleagues and other associations and other organizations, we've been able to stop seventeen Port of L.A. and Port of Long Beach, challenge them because they were non-compliant with the California Environmental Quality Act, Environmental Impact Report process.

Marquez

Now, as a result of the last EIR, which is the TraPac Container Terminal, we also stopped that using the appeal process. But what did happen was there was a major settlement which addressed, you know, I would say 80 percent of all of our major issues and concerns. Now, negotiating issues is just like what you hear in the news all the time about union negotiations are very difficult, and at some point in time you do have to settle, and you have to agree to something. And at some point in time you may not necessarily get everything that you wanted.

Marquez

Now, Penny's problem over there is the growth of warehouses and distribution centers, and the only way to stop that is at the local level, too. So she has to be addressing it at the city level. In her case it's multiple cities that the

organization works with, and then at the county level, so in her case it'd be the Riverside County, and I think it dovetails a little bit into the San Bernardino County, because they do have another organization that's affiliated with them up there. So that's an area that I can't deal with, over there.

Collings

Yes, but your organization doesn't have a problem with the existence of the port. You are concerned about stopping the growth, and cleaning it up.

Marquez

Well, another way to--the port has existed and has always existed, and there is a point where a port can, I'll use the term live in harmony with the community, where it's not an overbearing thing. So when I grew up as a child, the port was one-tenth the size that it is now, so it wasn't a major environmental problem, therefore it wasn't a major air-pollution and public-health problem. And here were are, you know, ten generations of growth later, it is a major problem. But at that time we weren't aware of that growth being a problem. We didn't recognize it till later. And as I've mentioned in the past, like my parents and my grandparents in their culture and their generations, just the fact of having companies employing people, that was the priority, no matter what public-health impacts might occur out of it, or any environmental impacts.

Marquez

Well, now a few generations later they realize that, wow, you know, working with asbestos on ships or in housing or industrial buildings wasn't so good after all, because now every person that worked with asbestos has become ill, and most now I would say that I'm aware of, 90 percent plus of all died in their early forties. Very few have lived into their fifties. Then the other sad part is that they brought that asbestos home on their clothes, so their wives and children have gotten asbestosis, so it passed down to the next generation, unfortunately. So many times, you know, they don't understand that.

Marquez

Now, in my case I've learned that, and I have three sons that are adults now, and I've taught those consequences now, so that they are very conscientious of businesses, of business growth, and of industries where that, you know, they will take a critical look at it, and they will not just say, "Oh, it's creating jobs," you know, even if it is a good-paying job. A good example of that, too, has been the longshoremen, where they adopted a clean-air initiative, where they began to realize, well, hey, maybe these environmentalists, you know, ecoterrorists, aren't so bad, and maybe they're not so wrong about the public-health problems, because now we're seeing an increase in public-health issues with our members. So now they've seen the light themselves, and have made a very wise decision, and a very grateful one, because their families will benefit from it now.

Collings

Do you think that the union was pushed in this direction by rising health costs, health premiums?

Marquez

I would say rising health costs was an issue, but it was more, in my opinion, of a generation change. In conversations that I have on the subject, the way I put it is basically, you have your old guard, and basically I would say it's people over forty, members, who have been there to support their job no matter what. But what's happened is basically the young men and women becoming longshoremen now, that are in their early forties and under, have now lived the last six years reading the news, and hearing on the news the environmental impacts of their jobs, and then also seeing their children have asthma. Like in the case of Wilmington, you know, 24 percent of the children have asthma, which means one out of four longshoremen is going to have a child or two with asthma or some respiratory-health problem, or their parents or grandparents, or aunt or uncle might have lung cancer, and so that has risen to their awareness, so that now they say, "Yes, I love my job, and I love all these benefits, and the great outstanding pay," which is some of the best in the United States, "but why can't we also clean up the air?"

Marquez

And now, 2008, this year is the year the ILWU is working with its new contract, and if you look at their banner, and if you look at their buttons that they wear, "better jobs, better benefits, and cleaner air," which reflects their working environment. So we're pleased to see that, you know, even though it was difficult at the beginning having them as enemies, you know, now here we are united in a common front on an issue that's important to them. Then when you look at the public-health costs, they've just been skyrocketing. But now the public is realizing, wait a minute, the polluter is causing this.

Marquez

Now, part of the campaign we're now teaching is that, okay, yes, there is a polluter, but then who is this polluter in business with? So yes, the Port of Los Angeles is a major polluter, and yes, the trucks are polluting and the trains are polluting, but who is utilizing it? So the way the industry sort of tweaks it and spins it, well, the consumer is the one that's buying the products. Well, yes, that's true, but then that's also not the whole story. The real story is you have manufacturers and retailers are the ones causing the spin, because they don't want to be looked at as the bad guy. You know, Levi's wants no bad publicity, but the bad publicity is the fact that they have eliminated all the union, United States manufacturers of their jeans, which means companies close down and thousands of people have lost their jobs. But they don't want to discuss that. It's gone to overseas. But then the price of Levi jeans, the typical 501s, the price is

\$32.95, and on sale it's \$29.95. The price did not go down. So even though they're getting them at wholesale, half price overseas at slave-labor costs, that price did not come down.

Collings

And it all has to come through the port.

Marquez

Okay. And then when we go shopping at Wal-Mart or Costco, you know, they want to wipe their hands and look squeaky clean, but they again are supporting, you know, the fact that corporate America has abandoned America and gone overseas, so they want no responsibility. So now we're doing our public education and educating the public that now we have to force the Wal-Marts, the Costcos, the Sears, JC Penneys and K-Marts that you have a legitimate moral responsibility to help us with the environmental problem, and part of the problem is because you want to pay truck drivers and truck companies cheap wages, and make massive profits. Well, no. We could eliminate our environmental problems and health problems if you'd contribute to that by making less profit, and then create a better working environment for these truck drivers, and that you encourage the ports to use clean technologies so it doesn't affect your consumer-buyer.

Marquez

So that is now the next phase that you'll see, you know, beginning from 2005 is where we began that process, slowly but surely, and so that is now occurring, and I would say over the next five years that that'll be more and more of our campaign, is putting pressure on retailers that you have a responsibility for environment, too, and not just to go plant trees. Planting trees is not going to improve your customers' health, you know. What good is a family coming in getting asthma, when they can't afford to buy your Levi jeans, okay?

Collings

Yes. Okay.

Marquez

Now, getting back to the Moving Forward Conference, so we did get the funds from the California Endowment. They supported us. We began a year-plus in advance planning for it. It also evolved, because we were looking at it more in a Southern California, you know, as the focus of who's going to come to it. But then what happened is that some other states who had begun recognizing the things that we were doing, were contacting us or contacting Andrea, saying that, "We would like to attend this thing, too." So it started to become a statewide conference, and then it became, like, a Southwest or West-Coast conference, and then some of us at our little organization began to have a little bit of a problem, because yes, we were saving some monies to help mush this thing along, but then when you start planning things on a bigger and a larger

scale, again it's becoming more time consuming, requiring more planning, therefore more meetings. And so some of us were getting a little bit leery, and both Angelo and myself expressed concern, well, wait a minute, you know, I thought this was just going to be this, and this thing's mushrooming, and it's taking up a lot more time. So now that was beginning to bother us a little bit.

Marquez

And then as it was getting now two-thirds to the way, the East Coast wanted to attend, so now it's becoming a nationwide ports-and-goods-movement conference, which was, again, getting a little bit frustrating and strenuous for us. And then a few countries heard about it, and they wanted to have one or two people come, and so now we were advertising as the first, like, international conference. So it was becoming very strenuous for us little guys, trying to keep up with that type of thing.

Collings

Yes, I can imagine.

Marquez

Although we recognized the value of it, because we were the experts on it. Now, the beauty about the conference, since it is a community-based conference, and we know who the experts are, the workshops and the panelists that we recruited were actually the best, the best in every field that you could possibly think of. We created the workshops that we determined that were the ones that were needed, and we handpicked the people that we already knew, and then in areas that we're weak in, we cross-referenced with other references, other scientists or key community leaders that have come up to participate in the workshop.

Marquez

So as a result, we had over 500 people all across the United States and a few internationally that came to the conference to participate. Then as the workshops were going on we had numerous opportunities during the course of the conference for public speaking, so there were open mics at every aspect of the conference, so people could come up there and voice their pleasure or displeasure on the issues and concerns, so the rest of us could be aware of them. Now, the one thing about when you do have environmental-justice and community-based groups, we're very conscious about, you know, concerns of others, because we know what we've gone through in the years that we were silenced and the underdog, and recognize that yes, we've come to the point where we're at now, but then other port communities and transportation-corridor communities are nowhere near that. They're just at that beginning stage of understanding, where we were at five, six, ten years ago, and so it takes a lot of patience from our side, too.

Marquez

But the need to provide them that opportunity, and the beautiful part about the conference was during these open-mic opportunities, numerous individuals from their communities throughout the United States and throughout the world got up there and sincerely thanked all of us planning organizations for doing such a thing. And it was beautiful to see how many actually broke down and cried, because they were so thrilled that this would even happen, because it was something that they don't have in their communities, and recognize the value.

Marquez

Another thing that we wanted to make sure was that we put together a three-ring binder of information, and we've done it every year, and in this binder of information we include, you know, numerous scientific-medical studies, magazine and newspaper articles, so that people have something to take home with them that they can use as a resource, because many times when you're going up against, you know, the administration or a government agency, yes, you know you have problems, but you don't know necessarily all the health issues, and the causes of those, or you don't know what kind of mitigation to ask for. All you're complaining about is the air pollution and health impacts, and you want them to clean it up. Well, we've learned that's enough just to say you want to clean it up. We have to be very specific on how we wanted to clean it up, and when we wanted to clean it up, and so that's the value.

Marquez

The other thing, too, is that many of us have learned through our years to prepare information to hand out. So in my case, everyone always picks on me because I make it a point 90 percent-plus of the time wherever I publicly speak, to have a handout or two to give to the parents, to give to the organization so that they have something to go home to read, study, and it helps them understand what we're doing.

Marquez

Now, we also had a couple of other things. We also had an exhibit area, so you could put some of your posters, some of your photographs to share with others your campaigns that you had been doing, and so that was really nice to go and see that area. The other thing that we had was film viewing, because there's been various filmmakers out there, a lot of them just beginners, you know, putting together their first little documentary, and so we had several people send us theirs. So like the Sierra Club two years ago did a documentary on our organization, called "Breathless in L.A.", which is a thirty-minute documentary that's been shown nationally, and even as recently as four weeks ago the Sundance Channel had picked it up; it was now showing it. And so I had people calling me for the first time saying that they saw it on the Sundance Channel, when I knew it came out in 2005. It was shown since then.

Marquez

Then another person that it was great to hear from is that there was a young woman that grew up here in Carson, which borders Wilmington, and her parents still live in Carson. Well, now she had graduated from college and was working on her dissertation in communications, and she is a park ranger at Yellowstone Park in Wyoming. So for her dissertation she wanted to do a film project. So she recruited two filmmakers over there from her college, her university, to come down here to interview me and others regarding ports-and-goods movement, because her family still lives here. And so she wasn't quite done with the film. It wasn't like 100 percent in the can, but it was like 90 percent there. But you know, we contacted her and she sent us a preliminary copy of it, and it was actually pretty good. I felt it was good enough to show it, even sell it for that matter, and we showed that film there.

Marquez

CBE, Communities for a Better Environment, had been working with students, and so they wanted to do their little film documentary, so they had their little hand-held CAD-CAM camera and got out there interviewing different community ladies and parents and students, and put their film. Now, their film was still very, at the ground-making film, so I would say it was probably about 50 percent done, but they threw it together so we could be able to show something, so we premiered some of these little film projects right there, so that the public would be aware of it, and what's happened now, all of these films are now finished, in the can, and they're available for sale and distribution, so we were able to help them get started.

Marquez

Now, it did finish. The conference did wrap up. Everyone filled out evaluations, and we were just thrilled to be able to read the evaluations to see how much and how well the people appreciated it. Now, doing one of these every year would just be impossible. We have been doing them every two years, so by the end of this year we'll have to make a decision if we're going to be doing one the following year, because it was very, very time consuming and strenuous for all of us to do.

Collings

Yes, of course, yes.

Marquez

It took a lot of coordination for us to participate in it.

Collings

Yes. Now, would it be possible for consortiums of community-based environmental-justice groups to network, in your opinion, to network in this way, and form something like a regional or national goods-movement movement? I mean, once the EJ groups lose touch with their direct contact with their community, have they become something else?

Marquez

Okay, well, actually we're doing something. THE Impact Project right now is developing a website, and it is going to be a national website, and what it is is that--and we just saw the preliminary preview of how this website is developing, and it's going to be an interactive website. So say, for example, you live in a port community somewhere else in the United States. Well, you go to this website, you bring up this map of the U.S., and you can actually click onto your state, and then your state will show up enlarged, and it'll show you on there other organizations in your state that work with ports-and-goods movement, so that'll give you one contact there. Then it'll also give you an option to check for resources. So then you can click onto that and see, click onto, okay, scientific and medical information, studies that have been done, newspaper and magazine articles that have been done, and then experts that you could contact. So we are in the process of developing that right now.

Collings

And who is we? That sounds like a lot of work.

Marquez

Well, it's THE Impact Project. It's Andrea Hricko and her staff, and so they're putting that together. What happened is the actual programmer that's designing the website put a little presentation together. We saw it just three weeks ago, and they asked us for our comments on it, and so we started making comments on it. Then they're going to come back and show us another little go-round on it, and then we're going to come up with some more ideas. So I would say before the end of this year, 2008, it will be up and running, so you will be able to click onto it and take total advantage of all that information.

Marquez

The other thing we're going to be doing is part of it will also be like a toolkit, like, for example, I prepared the port community's bill of rights. That would be on the toolkit of information that would be available. Another thing that I did, but it's only a California thing, but it'd be a similar thing that could be done out of state, in California we have the California Environmental Quality Act law, and so what I did, this law is ninety-six pages long, and believe it or not, you know, people have said, "What was wrong with you?" When I went on my five-week vacation to Mexico this past December and January, I actually had downloaded a copy, a Word document copy of it, and during my little in between things I actually for the first time was able to read it from the beginning to the end. Then I realized, no way was the public or user-friendly. It was just one continuous long text of legalese, so there was no way that an average person--I mean, it was difficult for me to read it and pay attention. So I thought, I've got to make this thing user-friendly.

Marquez

So what I did is that every paragraph and section I broke up and put a space between it, so wherever there was a breakup and a new title of a section, I put that in bold letters. And then wherever there was Section 20.1 I highlighted that, and then if it went to 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, I highlighted that. Wherever there were key words and key sections that I thought were very significant that we use on a regular basis for our mitigation and legal court cases, I highlighted that, so I did that for the whole law.

Marquez

Now, that covers many things, including building construction, that had nothing to do with ports. So then I made another version where I eliminated all that, so it's just strictly ports-and-goods movement related, and so I want to contribute that to that toolkit, so someone in the Port of New York-New Jersey or wherever can see how I did it, take the time and do that for them.

Marquez

Another key thing I'm working on right now which is very unique. Another difference between mainstream environmental groups and then an EJ group is that we live with the thing at a local level, and so we are able to see what is missing and what needs to be done at the local level, whereas the big groups, they don't live here, so they don't see that. So we think really out of the box, and so what I've been doing over the years is preparing a listing of both port and off-port impacts. The reason that was important is because we found that, this is part of the legal process of things, is that ports, if they do not acknowledge an off-port impact in their Environmental Impact Report or in the EIS, they do not have to mitigate it.

Marquez

And then when we do force to port to want to do something, like in the case of Wilmington there is some property we want to develop as a little community pocket park, okay. The port says, "Okay, we'll contribute some money to buy it, and support you as some off-port mitigation." But see, evil-minded, they knew damn well that the state lands would have to approve the monies going for that. So when it comes, the California State Lands Commission rejects it, saying that there's no nexus between the need for that pocket park and the spending of public monies from the port. So the port got away with it, okay?

Marquez

So there has never really been a detailed outlining or listing of all these types of things, and since that is our specialty area, I have now been completing such a list, and there's nowhere else on this planet you can go to and find a list like this, where we itemize every single little detail, okay. So that is what I'm completing. The other thing that's going to be the addendum to that, for every one of those details what do we deem to be an appropriate mitigation measure? So then this will be another contribution I'll make to that toolbox.

Marquez

Now, somebody at another port out of state might take a look at my list and say, "Hey. We have something a little bit different that's not on your list, but it is here." Now, what could that be? I have no idea. Maybe a port community has, like San Diego, just to give a wild idea type thing, they have the navy there. Well, there's navy ships there which are military ships that carry military weapons, like nuclear missiles, okay. There are nuclear missiles onboard ships and submarines. So maybe, you know, those missiles are stored off port property in an area that's naturally fenced in with security guards and all of that. Well, in this particular case, you know, maybe that community might be concerned about radiation or one of those accidentally blowing up, what would be the impact. Or maybe security isn't that well. Or maybe when they transport it from that location it has to go through the community, on the highway to the freeway to get there. Well, maybe having a two-Jeep escort may not be enough. Maybe the community feels, wait a minute. Maybe there should be, you know, a tank with it, and a police escort, and a few other things in case terrorists come. So that might be an example where a unique thing over there might happen, okay, so this would allow for that.

Marquez

And again, because we're community based and this is an EJ type thing, where it's an evolving thing, it is interactive where the communities can participate in the growth and development of it.

Collings

Yes. Now, what would happen to your organization if you were to--I don't foresee this, but if you were to retire? What would happen to Communities for a Safe Environment?

Marquez

Well, in the case of my organization that has been a concern. Normally when you're first getting started it's not that big a deal, because you're just getting started. So in my case and then many other cases, us leaders and founders are the think tanks for the organization, and so we have to be able to develop the next generation. Now, up until a year ago, none of my community-based members are really at the skill level where I am at, okay. We have many that are good in public speaking now, so we have many of our members now that can go to any public hearing and bring up their issues. The one thing that we have that I have developed, which is the legacy of our organization, is our documentation. So we have extensive documentation, so if I was to get hit by a semi-truck today or tomorrow, this documentation exists and lives on. So someone could go to the computer and be able to download that.

Marquez

Now, one thing I am putting together this year so it's an easy-access thing is a notebook of all the key documents and the file names, and I'm going to burn some CDs in the notebook, so that every board of director member will have a copy of it, so that is on Jesse's, you know, preparing in his will in advance type thing, so that's one thing I'm doing this year. The other thing is that our website has not been really utilized, because we've never really had a webmaster to be able to do it, and I'm hoping by the end of this year that we'll be able to allocate a little bit of money to hire somebody part-time to keep that up, so that all the resources that are basically in the computer will be put online, because right now 90 percent of our stuff is not online. We just have some preliminary public information.

Marquez

The reason I said up until a year ago, because we've been blessed with a new thing that just happened. I was called less than a year ago, or actually an e-mail was sent to me by a student who was studying and was going to be graduating-- actually she graduates, thank God, this coming Saturday from the Drew Medical Center, and she's graduating with her master's degree in public health. Well, last year she took a class at Cal[ifornia] State University, Long Beach, and one of the professors there teaches classes in environment and sustainability, and every year I'm invited to speak to his classes. And she walked up and said, "Well, hey, I have to work on a practicum, and do you have any ideas of what I could work on?"

Marquez

And she says, "Well, hey, there's this organization." He says, well first of all he asks her, "Where do you live?" and she says, "Well, I live in Wilmington." He says, "Well, do you know one of the most-active organizations is in Wilmington?" and she goes, "Well, I didn't know that." So she immediately e-mailed me saying that, "My name is Adriana Maciel, and I'd like to meet with you to discuss working on my practicum, and how I could work--because I live in Wilmington, I'd like to work on something that benefits my community." So she came onboard and introduced herself, and I described some of the projects we were working on.

Marquez

And I said, "Well, while we're working on air-pollution issues, what we really focus on are the health impacts of that. And right now you're coming in perfectly, because we actually have a public-health survey we're doing door to door, and then we're going to be doing a similar one, but another type." And I told her, "Specifically, we're doing a leukemia-leukemia symptom one, because of the fact that we have so many oil refineries near here, and you could help us with that. And then the one that we have coming up would be a similar type of

public-health survey, but with Port of L.A. neighborhoods that border the Port of L.A."

Marquez

So she was able to actually work with my survey team going door to door, interviewing Wilmington and Carson residents, and many of them, you know, families and people that she knows, too. Then she had additional skills so that I was able to hire someone, because we had a little bit of money, to develop a database using the Access program, and then she volunteered to enter the public-health surveys into it. So she entered, like, 80 percent-plus of all the public-health surveys into our database.

Marquez

Now, since then, you know, we get money from time to time to help us with certain things, so I'm able to sometimes pay some of our surveys and to do other things for us. So she's actually been able to physically work for us about six months, you know, part-time. We don't pay great, but \$10 an hour is not too bad, \$12 an hour is not so bad, in some cases I can go up to \$15, depending who's helping to sponsor the project. So she's gained valuable skills. And then what happened, even after she completed her practicum, which was the end of the year, she has stayed with us, so here we are now in May, and she is now still working with us part-time, and then now we've kind of run out of money, and so now she's just still volunteering her time. But she's attended numerous meetings with us, she's testified with us, she's gone through training with us.

Marquez

One thing that's critical to all organizations like us is, you know, being able to sustain ourselves and raise monies, and so she's been working with some of our other people, like one of my board members gave her a week in Long Beach, and then we have my community organizer, Sofia Carrillo here, lives here in Wilmington, you know. We have been now focusing in some of our trainings, so we've been taking training classes as they've been offered to us. So what happens, foundations that support us will also support us in attending some of these trainings, because normally we would not be able to afford them.

Marquez

So what happened is that the Hewlett Foundation three years ago had given us a \$5,000 grant to hire a consultant to do a two-year sustainability plan. Well, basically that plan had ended last year, and they had some extra money the year before and said, "Hey, Jesse. Would you be interested in \$10,000 to work on something?" So I said, "You know what? The two-year one was okay, and even a three-year one I don't consider adequate." We do things a little bit longer-term, because I developed like a ten-year plan for organization when I got started, figuring that, you know--because I had read somewhere it's good to plan way in advance, and so learning from that and reading a little bit about

that, I did prepare a ten-year plan, even though I wasn't sure I'd ever achieve that, we'd be in existence ten years from now. But using the advice of things that I'd learned from, I did it, and so I realize now it's six years in the ten-years plan. It was good to prepare that ten-year plan, because almost everything in the plan has come to pass.

Marquez

And so in recognizing that, I said, "I would like to work on a five-year sustainability-fundraising plan." And they were kind of queasy about that, but then when I just explained that, you know, some of the campaigns we work on, you know, almost nothing did we ever win in one or two years. These things we're winning with the port, it's now six years later. So then I kind of convinced them. They said, "Okay, we'll kind of go along with it. We'll take a look at it. We've never had one like that, but maybe it'd be good to see that. We've funded hundreds of two-three years throughout the United States, and okay, let's see. We'll give you a crack at it. You'd be the first group to do that."

Marquez

And I did want to change organizations and consultants. I really wasn't happy-- I mean I learned a lot from the first one, since we had never had one before I had nothing to compare it to. I did learn a lot, but I still wasn't satisfied. Even though they were an ethnic-minority consulting group, they had risen too high, I believe, in the big corporate world of things, and their thinking was now more at the corporate-fundraising level, versus more of the community-based level, and I believe they lost that. And then when I chose them I thought they would share some of those resources and contacts with us. They didn't share it. We never gained one of those financial resources from them, so we were kind of upset with that, and plus, we knew we had our five-year anniversary coming up, and we wanted to capitalize on that, and nowhere in their plan after all these meetings did they capitalize on that being the theme, so I definitely did not want to pick them.

Marquez

So I asked some of the groups, and specifically like with Angelo Logan, he had picked a different group, GIFT, and so I contacted them, saying, "I would like to take a look at your group, too." So I interviewed with them and explained to them what I wanted to do, and they says, "Well, let's see if we could find someone within our group and within our consultant network that might want to work with you." And then it turns out they says, "Well, hey, we have this young woman that works with us, but she happens to be in Los Angeles, because we're headquartered in Oakland, and she'd be more local." I said, "Okay, fine." And so they introduced us to Aurea Montes-Rodriguez, who came down and we started talking.

Marquez

I said, "Well, we would like to have a five-year plan." And she says, "Well, I would recommend, because we typically do a two to three-year plan." And I said, "I'm not interested in a two/three-year plan. I want a five-year plan. And then we're also looking at an endowment-type thing in the future." "Well, normally organizations that have been around fifteen, twenty years get into that." "No, but I want to start looking at that now." So it took a little while to convince her to want to do it, but then when I explained that we work on five-year plans, ten-year strategies, and stuff like that, she says, "Okay, you know, I'll give it a shot. I'll give it a chance, too, because I've never actually worked on a five-year myself. So okay, let's try it."

Marquez

And so we met a couple of times in advance to prepare, to give her an idea. I gave her like all the information about the organization, the history, our mission statement, our goals, objectives, top-ten accomplishments, our environmental-justice milestones, to give her a good, healthy background of the group, because she'd never worked with the port community before, and well, for that matter practically no one has. So then we'd have our board meetings. She would come down to meet with them. In my board meetings I don't just have board members. I invite some of our community members and staff people to attend some of these, so they get to see, since they work with me on a more closer level than the board members do.

Marquez

And so I'm happy to say that she finished our five-year plan, and it's really a great five-year plan. In fact, I just mailed a copy, the hard copy to the Hewlett Foundation for the review, and I would say right now Danielle Dean, who is our program manager, is probably reviewing it as we speak, because she probably got it yesterday or today, and so I'm really happy with that plan.

Marquez

Now, what's happening next is that part of that plan or that whole contract with them, GIFT every other year sponsors a two-day conference on grants and fundraising, and so included in that was for four of our members to attend that conference in July, so it's paid for. What's not included and paid for was the transportation and housing. So in this case what happened is, I get an e-mail last week from Liberty Hill Foundation saying that, "Hey, this is a great conference going on by the GIFT in Oakland, and we're willing to pay for two people from your organization to attend it, and we'll cover all expenses, registration, travel, and everything else."

Marquez

So I sent an e-mail to Gwen Gary, who's our contact on this, saying, "Gwen, hey, we would love to go, but here's the little scenario on that. I don't need money for the registration. We've got four people already covered. All we need

is transportation and lodging, but we need it for four people. Well, maybe that'll balance out, you know, between the money we would--since you pay for the registration." And so she's going to get back with me, and I might even have an e-mail there, since I didn't check yesterday afternoon and today, where they're getting back to us for the okay. She says, "I see no problem with it, so basically you plan." So who will be going will be Sofia Carrillo, my community organizer, Adriana, our student intern, and then I'll take Gabrielle Weeks, my board member, and myself. The four of us will be attending.

Marquez

Now, again, this is Adriana attending all these things, and I'm already telling everybody, you know, she's in training to replace me when I'm ready to retire.

Collings

I see.

Marquez

And so here's a young girl, she's about twenty-four, twenty-five, you know, and so already I'm giving her the thought that, hey, you know. And right now, yes, we don't have a fancy office yet, but give us another year. We will have a fancy office, and at least twice the budget, and based on our five-year plan we'll be three times the budget, you know.

Collings

So you're doing succession planning.

Marquez

Yes, so that's already like in process now. Then I see that, well, one big asset in the things that we've been able to do is capitalize on student interns and student projects, so especially the last two years we've done great, because students, especially local students and other students, are seeing the news all the time, and now with the growth in the environmental movement, every college and university teaches an environmental class, or at least in some major component of one of their anthropology or sociology classes, or one of the geography classes, so there's a big awareness of them wanting to do something, and because a lot of them live and come from communities with impacts, they have now specific purpose now to do a report or an internship related to something they may be able to take back home. And so that's been great, where students have now come to us.

Marquez

And then one professor from Occidental College, Bob [Robert] Gottlieb, Professor Gottlieb says, "Hey, Jesse. You know, one thing that could help out with this, too, is maybe you could put a list of projects that you could work on, but keep in mind that it would be a one-semester class, so think of terms like that." So I just kept on masterminding over a couple of weeks, and now I have like a list of forty things a student can do in one semester or less. Now, some

things are very simple, you know. Sometimes we just need someone to go online and research a topic, and then identify ten websites, and print out ten papers related to a very specific thing, so that might be something.

Marquez

Another thing that we will need someone to do, like we hired someone suited to do this database thing for us, or to do some data entry for us, or we might need specific research to be done. So in one case we tapped in. In fact, Andrea Rico gave us a heads up on this is that the USC engineering department, which is where the campus is located--Andrea's office is located with the medical center, Northeast L.A., which the college campus is actually here close to South Central Los Angeles, and in the engineering department they teach a class there on technical writing for engineering students, because these engineering students are going to be working in the technical field, so they need to write. What they do is that they allow them in this class to work on technical projects. Well, most of the time they work with government agencies, and studying like the Southern California [unclear] governments is working on this regional-transportation plan, so they would work on something like that, doing an internship like that.

Marquez

So she contacted the professor there and asked him, "Well, hey, would you work on community-based technical projects?" He says, "Well, yeah, we could. We normally don't, but yeah, that's okay." So she gave me the professor's contact phone number. I called him up and he says, "Well, yes, you know, but here's the requirements. You have to write up about a one-page, two-page maximum summary on what you would like the students to work on. Then I have to take it to our advisory committee here, and then they have to bless it and approve it, too. But then here's the hard one, Jesse. Getting past the committee is not so bad, but the students vote on whether or not they want to work on your project, so it's not just me telling them, 'Hey, kids, you've got to do this,' you know. You have to do a class presentation and sell them on it."

Marquez

So I have two projects. Now, sometimes I know in advance, even a year in advance, certain things are going to happen at the ports, or whatever's going to happen. In this case, we were talking about the TraPac container terminal, which is what I've been talking on in our previous conversations, and in their original proposal they wanted to build a new on-ramp/off-ramp, but they wanted to build it on the Wilmington community side, not on the port property. So what I was proposing, that the students take a look at this on-ramp/off-ramp, and if we lost the battle could they design one with a smaller footprint so it took up less property? Therefore we'd have more of our open-space park in that area.

The second thing is that I didn't believe the port didn't have any property on its side, so I told them, "Design the offramp to be on the port side of the property.

Marquez

And then the other project I had was, I'd also been researching different transportation technologies, so I had about six companies, like the different Maglev companies, electric-train companies, you know, gravitational companies. "Take a look at these companies and these technologies, and do sort of a comparison of the goods, the pros and the cons of them, and give me some type of analysis like that." So here I show up with some of my information, my little posters and fliers of stuff, selling it to the class, which is about almost thirty students in the class, and then the professor says, "Okay, well, thank you Mr. Marquez. In about a week or so we'll get back with you." So he sends me an e-mail, "Mr. Marquez, I'm proud to say that the students like your two projects, and they want to work on both of them."

Marquez

The way it basically turned out, about half the class are civil-engineering students, so they want to work on the bridge-building, related to them. But the other half of the class, some of them are biological engineers, chemical engineers, electrical engineers, you know. They want to work on the technology that's more related to what they're going to do, so it broke up into that. So each one of these groups, for a whole semester did research, and put together like a one-inch-thick binder of their research. Now, this is last year when it was finished, and TraPac, remember, originally wasn't supposed to be till this March or April, but they now moved it up three months so that December sixth was the public hearing. Well, I submitted their two documents as part of my public comment.

Marquez

Now, I also submitted another student project. Cal Poly Pomona, Cal State University of Polytechnic at Pomona, two students there had been working on a wetlands habitat-restoration project, which was over seventy pages, which was just an A-plus project, where they involved other professors and disciplines, and did extensive research on this, and it was just great, equal to a professional-consulting firm. I included their concept proposal as part of our public comments, and so we utilized quite a few students, and I've had great, outstanding results of that.

Marquez

We've actually even had international students. Believe it or not, I had a student from Sweden who was doing some Internet search in that country, and somehow came across my port community bill of rights, and then following up on that did some research on our Coalition name, and then saw some of our documents showing up in public comments that we've done for government

public hearings and port public hearings, sent me an e-mail saying that he was working on a project regarding ports and transportation, and wanted to interview me and send me some questions. So he sent me some questions and then he interviewed me, and I sent him back information and e-mailed other information. Then I told him, "By the way, when you get done if you could send me a copy of what you did."

Marquez

So he sends me, you know, a couple of months later I get this thing in the e-mail and it's from him. So I'm happy to take a look at it and I started reading it, and it just blew my mind, because what happened is that in other countries the universities are contracted by the government or as part of their program to do research and prepare reports and studies. So actually, the information, though, he was looking for is because his university had been contracted to do this study and to present it to the government agencies. It just blew my mind, because that had never entered my mind that, you know, countries will use the stuff. But I mean, it's under the direction of the professors and then other disciplines, but I mean, it was a top government study. It wasn't just a local study or a consulting firm. It was meant to be a first-grade study for the government of Sweden to study and incorporate. I realized it was more extensive, and he only had one little piece of that whole thing, but it was kind of interesting because I sent them a lot of stuff, and I was kind of curious, what of all this stuff was he going to use? Because he really wasn't--I mean, he told me what he was doing, but then it still seemed very vague what he was doing.

Marquez

And so when I read it, because one of the comments I had made, and it also comes up in some of our documents, is where his portion was, the public community impacts, and one of the statements in quotes that we always use in our public presentations and in our public comments and demands is that "the polluter pays principle." If the polluter pollutes the air, then he has to pay for the cleaning up or mitigating the impacts. And lo and behold, I'm reading it. He says that he supports the polluter-pays principle, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, and it's mentioned like three times in his document as part of the section that he did. And so it was good to see that, you know, that type of correspondence.

Collings

Right. This is kind of, the stuff was getting disseminated. Okay, so we're back on and we were going to discuss the public-health surveys a little bit more.

Marquez

One of the things that our organization is pioneering, even though many organizations have done public-health surveys, most of them have been typically like a one-page, and they're very generic, and we recognized that we needed to have more, I'll say scientific data, or more scientific-type questions.

So what I started to do was get research, or get copies of more professional, scientific, university-type public-health surveys, so I could have a better idea of how to prepare ours. So I had always wanted to do two types, one that would be port impacts, one would be oil-refinery impacts, both because we have residents living across the street, and in the case of refineries we have them living on the other side of the fence, and we knew we had major public-health problems, but being able to document all of those was a big problem.

Marquez

So I spent several months trying to put together one that would be petroleum-industry related, and that's when I realized and found out that, like many times we hear in the news, or read about different cancers and diseases. But what I also learned over the years was that the average person in the public never knows what causes it, and I find it strange when as I began to learn and do research on my own, and talking with other medical doctors that we began to associate with and collaborate with, is that many times the cause is known. Then it just kept on striking me as strange, well, then why is it still permitted? And what I didn't realize and was coming more into focus was, the political nature of things, that intentionally government agencies and elected officials as they were proposing laws, both state and federal, were highly influenced by the polluting industry.

Marquez

And then as I learned more about the petroleum industry, and then finding out that, yes, we have a regulatory agency, the South Coast Air Quality Management District, and yes, they issue a permit to the oil refineries, then I began to wonder, well, wait a minute. If they are issuing a permit to regulate the air pollution, then why is there so much air pollution, okay? [laughs] And I'm just amazed at, well, what's with that, to use the expression; how can that be?

Marquez

Then I continued in my research, and with the inquiring mind wants to know pursuit, and realized that our government regulatory agencies' independence have been compromised, that when they had to bring polluting industries under control, and had to create the permit process, and had to issue permits, what they did was a great injustice to the public. The public and the environment and the public health and public safety was not number one. They did not issue permits that guaranteed us 100 percent protection. They did not even guarantee it 90 percent, 70 percent, 60 percent. What they did is they issued permits that allowed them to pollute, and what I found out is that they told refineries, "We want you to take an inventory of every pollutant you put out, every toxic-chemical pollutant. Whatever it is, you discover it, you find it, you identify it and how many pounds, ounces, tons of it, we want to know exactly."

Marquez

And then even a few years ago in 2000, "Every year you will report your annual emissions inventory." And then I found out that they gave them a license, a permit to kill, to pollute, and that there was no law in the State of California or in any state in the United States that says, "Polluter, within five years, within ten, fifteen, twenty years, at any point in time, you will achieve zero or near zero pollution." That does not exist. And then I realized what had happened. They had been bought off by the industry, by the Chambers of Commerce, by the trade associations, and by the contributions made to these politicians, donated funds for running for election. That's what I found out what happened there. So, okay, you know, it's bad enough we're trying to fight everything else, but now we've got to fight these guys on a more technical level, and prove and expose them to the public, and that's why now the public, especially residents of polluted areas know they can't trust no government agency. None of them, not one single one can be trusted.

Collings

Well, how did the public make that connection? You said that you made it through your research.

Marquez

Well, through our public-awareness and education campaigns. As we pointed out when a survey was done back in 2000 and the earlier years, you know, almost no one was aware of the relationship between port pollution and public health, and then last year a company conducted for somebody running for political office a public survey, and found out that 85 percent of the public here in the harbor, which means both Long Beach and L.A. harbors, were aware of the relationship between the port pollution and their personal health. So public-health, public-education campaigns are always at the foremost of our campaigns, and that's why we're considered very community based, because we recognize that when it's a community, it's my community, and my children and my family and my neighbors are in that community, and that's why we do extensive community outreach and educating the public, and that's why the public now has no trust for government-regulatory agents, because we know they sold us out, because we wouldn't be sick, and I wouldn't be polluted if you were doing your job.

Marquez

And so I thought, okay, let's identify these health problems. What kind of health problems? And let's see, I'll start with the refineries, since we figured that might be a little bit easier to do, because the port might be multiple problems, and it'd be a bigger survey. So we came up with a two-page survey. We wanted to focus on oil refineries, especially since we had residents on the

other side of the fence. So we had to research, well, okay, we know you can get asthma and lung cancer just from the exhaust of stuff, but what else?

Marquez

Well, we turned out that one of the biggest problems was leukemia. Leukemia clusters were known to be around only certain industries. So I went to the Leukemia Association website and found out that leukemia is caused by benzene, and benzene is a chemical manufactured at the oil refineries, and it's released every day as one of their emissions, along with other chemicals. So I go, whoa, that is serious.

Marquez

So I created a survey called, it was Leukemia, Leukemia Symptoms survey, and then we kind of changed it to Leukemia and Cancer Symptoms Survey. There were forty overall public-health questions, but there were twenty-one specific leukemia-related questions. Now, yes, some of those are very generic, they could apply to any health disease. But in the context of leukemia, it's one of the twenty-one that shows up. So we targeted a specific area and started going door to door. In this case it the BP ARCO oil refinery. We wanted to go over here, but then there was another thing happening. UCLA was also interested in the survey, but they were interested in the BP ARCO oil-refinery area, and didn't quite know why, but there was a reason for it, so I said, well, okay, if UCLA is really interested, then we'll choose that one then. That was our second choice over our priority choice, so we decided to go with that, too, and started doing a door to door.

Marquez

As we were doing it we found out that there were other health problems caused by those same chemicals, besides benzene. Lymphoma was a cousin to leukemia. Myeloma was a cousin to both those, as well as anemia. Then as we went door to door, you know, we had a blank question, "Do you have any other cancer, and do you have any other kinds of problems you might want to do it?" Well, when we finished this first little area, naturally a lot of people don't want to participate, but I wanted to make sure we did the best that we could. So what I did is I created a flier, and we printed it on yellow paper so it would stand out from a regular white flier. It was in English on one side, Spanish on the other side, and we announced the survey was going to be done.

Marquez

So one week in advance we went door to door passing out the fliers, saying, "Hey, this health survey is going to be done in your neighborhood. This is why we're doing it, because it is a health survey." "What is a health survey?" Then we went more specific. "We're doing it because we suspect there's been an increase in health problems such as leukemia." Then we explained, "Okay,

what is leukemia?" And then we explained who was conducting it, us. What's going to happen with the data? And that was about it, and passed them out.

Collings

Now, did you have to explain who you were?

Marquez

Well, we did.

Collings

Or had people heard of you before?

Marquez

Well, that was another thing, too. This northeast end of Wilmington has not been traditionally one of our areas that we are well known in, because we mostly focus on the port, so the south end and East Side Wilmington, and West Side Wilmington have been more of the areas. So again I thought, too, okay, well, let's give this area a chance, because we really haven't done a lot of work there, so it was one of our weakest, the least-knowledgeable and involved area of us. I said, "Okay, let's go to that area, too. That way it'll build up our awareness and their knowledge of us, too."

Marquez

But in the last paragraph we explained that we are a nonprofit organization that exists in Wilmington, we have done public-health surveys before in the past, so we gave a little, brief paragraph about who we were. Then it had our name, mailing address, e-mail address, and so that was the yellow sheet that we passed out, and then here we come back following up with our survey.

Marquez

And it turned out, here's Adriana, a young girl, you know, doing this, and Sofia doing it for the first time. I mean, all of us were doing it for the first time, this in-depth, you know, and all of us walking door to door, and many of these families that had some of these serious, grave, life-threatening, killing diseases, already had their mother, their father, their brother, their sister, their aunt, their uncle who already had died of these diseases, or had the mother, the father, sister, brother, or child with the diseases right now as we spoke. And they're pouring their hearts out to us, explaining the tragedy of what their family was going through, their loss of their mother, you know. "My husband has lymphoma, and he's lost his job, he can't work." You know, "My thirteen-year-old daughter has leukemia," and listened to these tragic stories. I mean, the first day when we came back to the house, because our house is our office here, we're sitting there and we needed a drink, so I go back to the refrigerator, "You want a beer? You want to make a margarita? We need something," you know, because we just sat here in awe, because we wanted to cry with these families, you know.

Collings

Within this area, I mean, how much communication was there, do you think, among families in the neighborhood? Did people know that this was going on, but they had no idea what to do about it?

Marquez

They had no idea the leukemia was caused by benzene from the oil refinery, and this was one of the other things that's got us upset.

Collings

I mean, were there stories circulating in the community about why there's so much leukemia?

Marquez

Well, I'm going to mention that. That's why we were so upset with the medical field, the doctors, the nurses, because leukemia can only come from three things: exposure to radiation, and there's no uranium mines around here, there's no Hiroshima bombs that have been exploded, so that eliminated that source; and the other secondary source was pesticides, because pesticides have the chemical benzene and other chemicals in it. So farmworkers and farmworking communities, agricultural communities get leukemia. And then the third source was communities where an oil refinery was located, was the other third major source.

Marquez

And then as we were doing the survey, we went to the house with a family, this was a Guatemalan family where the husband had lymphoma. I'm talking to the wife, and she is explaining that her husband had gone with a neighbor down to Tijuana. Now, this is a Guatemalan family, not a Mexican family, but drove with the Mexican friend to Tijuana to buy medication. He has no health plan. He has no prescription plan, and prescriptions for his lymphoma are very expensive. So here he is going to Mexico, Tijuana, to buy the medication, because it's cheaper there. So the wife is explaining, the neighbor across the street has a child with leukemia or some problem like that. So eventually I'm able to--we go down there to interview the family and they says, "Oh, well, where did you go?" "Well, we went to the family right here." "Oh, well, their neighbor across the street from them, they have a daughter that has leukemia or lymphoma, or something like that." So already three neighbors know each other, and know they all have similar problems, but not a single one knows it's being caused by the oil refinery.

Collings

What did they think it was being caused by?

Marquez

They suspected it now, but since no doctors and no scientists, no one is saying, 'Yes, it's them,' specifically, they live with it. In fact, that third family when I went across the street, it was actually the grandmother, and she was babysitting

the smaller children, didn't want to talk with me. She starts off that, you know, "Well, no, I don't want to discuss it. Thank the lord--," she was very religious, a Christian type, "Thank the lord, because, you know, my granddaughter is being treated and she's in remission right now, and thank God for this, and it's a miracle. We're so happy, so no, we really don't want to participate. No, we don't think it's necessary now." But then I kept up explaining, "There's a reason for this. It's being caused by this chemical from this oil refinery. Your neighbor has it." "Oh yes, we know they have the same thing." "This is not an accident. God did not will your granddaughter, God did not will their daughter, God did not will the husband to get this disease."

Collings

Was that playing into it, in the neighborhood?

Marquez

Yes. You know, people when they have very serious illnesses and tragedies get very religious, when they've not been religious in the past, and they look towards God and prayer as a solution, as an answer or at least for comfort. And yes, I understand that, and I comprehend that, but then I know for a fact it's being caused by that industry, something they do not know, and it's something we're having to educate. Like I said, this community has not been part so much to the harbor, so they haven't had that much interaction between public-health problems, like talking to the residents at Conoco Philips, which is over on the other side of the fence. They know it's caused by that refinery, even though no doctor has ever told them that. They know that.

Collings

How do they know that?

Marquez

Because they blame them. There's been enough discussions of stuff now going back and forth, they suspect it and have no question or doubt in their mind, whereas these people haven't had that benefit yet. So as a result, we did interview them and that did happen. Now, what happened, that was just the first one. We now were able to get some monies donated to us to help us continue it, so we've now completed the third session in that area. We have now documented over 500, I think we're probably over 600 now, residents with that survey, so we now have the most extensive data on public-health problems close to a refinery.

Marquez

There was one more thing related to that. Now, we only have about 200 data entries, so we're waiting for the next crop of students, we'll get them to help with data entry of that. But then another thing happened. It turns out that a law firm had been contacted, and introduced to a family there in Carson, or at least a couple of them, and they were interested in pursuing a lawsuit. Then the

UCLA group told them, "By the way, there's this Wilmington Coalition down there doing some surveys. You might want to link up with those guys." So we were introduced to their group by a Dallas, Texas, group, who was talking with an L.A. attorney group, because they'd had some clients who were some of these Carson residents. So they have now teamed up with us to represent our organization, our members and these clients, and these families.

Marquez

We have now signed legal contracts with over 250 Wilmington-Caron residents, and we are now getting ready in the next couple of weeks to file a major class-action lawsuit against BP ARCO oil refinery. Now, we're not filing an environmental lawsuit. This is going to be a personal injury and personal damage, like when you get in a car accident and you break your arm, that's a personal injury. They total out your car, that's personal-property damage. Now, what we're doing is going to be a little bit unique and a little bit more significant. It's more similar to smokers. "You gave me leukemia, you gave us lymphoma, you gave us myeloma, you gave us anemia." That is the health problem; that is the personal injury.

Collings

Now, I know that one of the things that happened during the Stringfellow personal-injury lawsuit was that the entity that was being sued, the dump site, the lawyers for that side went after the plaintiffs very vigorously, going into their homes, investigating what kind of chemicals were in their homes, and really digging into their personal lives quite a bit. Would this community be able to withstand that kind of scrutiny?

Marquez

Okay. Many communities that have been involved in lawsuits did not have a long history of research in dealing with the environmental issue. It sort of came to the point where a couple of them says, "Yeah, let's get together and let's sue them. We're tired of this." Okay, so they didn't have a growth period to learn about it, whereas here in our particular case, we've been here six years. We've done extensive background. We've done extensive research with our universities, and so we have a lot of scientists. The other thing, too, is choosing and having the right law firm come along. The firm that we have specializes in personal injury, like a lot of them do specialize, but the unique thing about this group, these particular two firms that we're working with, is that they are known to litigate the case.

Marquez

Many personal injuries are ambulance chasers, and you get a good settlement and everyone goes around happy. This group has already told me and committed, and there we had a public meeting where everyone came to the public meeting, "We will spend a million dollars, and we're prepared to spend a

million dollars on this case." They have assigned six attorneys and a manager, and will be bringing in four or five, six expert witnesses, okay.

Marquez

The other thing is that they sent an affidavit, a questionnaire, to each of the residents. So everyone that signed the contract, each member and each member of their family will complete this, sort of like a health-questionnaire type thing. So we will have all that affidavit data already. Others that tried to do it and did get sued or challenged, you know, didn't prepare as extensive a question and affidavit so they would be able to do it, and so, you know, we have a high degree of confidence on this.

Collings

But would you expect that there might be members of the community that would just be suspicious of any kind of contact with lawyers or government entities, and would not want to participate for that reason?

Marquez

Now, we didn't get everybody. Like I said, we surveyed about I would say probably over 600 people. We have over 250 that signed with us, so we have about almost 30 percent. So the rest chose not to participate for whatever reasons.

Collings

Seventy percent chose not to participate?

Marquez

In the lawsuit, although we had over 600 in the survey, okay. Of the whole population I would say there was probably about a thousand in the target population. We had over 60 percent. Now it's less than 30 percent participating in the lawsuit, so there are reasons for it, too. Many are undocumented, so they fear any type of immigration repercussion, so that explains I would say a good 40, 50 percent right there off the cuff. Others just don't want to get involved in any legal government anything. We did have some whose families work. We have a family who has someone that died of leukemia, but the family member works at an oil refinery, so they would not get involved in the case, even though they know that, okay.

Marquez

And then even when we did our door-to-door survey, one of the last--[unclear] like I mentioned, we do like a yellow flier before that. Now, say someone was not home. We had a pink flier in English and Spanish on each side, "Sorry we missed you. We're going to be back three more times to try to capture you," and then we re-explained why it was important for them to participate, or you could also call and make an appointment. So we actually had people call us up and make an appointment, and in some cases, remember, a lot of the homes are

fenced in, so you can't get into the house, and so we would put them on the fence or in the mailbox, wherever we could.

Marquez

And in one case, that was the case we couldn't get anywhere near it, and they've a dog and the whole bit, and he happened to be talking to his neighbor one day, and the neighbor said, "Hey, by the way. Did you get interviewed?" He says, "No, I didn't get no flier." And he says, "Well, maybe they couldn't get to your house because the gate was locked in the front and they couldn't come in to do it." So they gave him, and then he called up. His mother had died of leukemia, and he's going through all kinds of other health problems. So those were things that we did.

Marquez

And then at the tail end, which is just two weeks ago, we said okay, in talking with the firm, too, "Let's do one last thing. Let's have a public meeting. We'll rent a room at the community center or at the hotel, and just pass out one more flier saying, 'Last chance. Show up, meet the environmental group, meet the attorneys, any questions you want to know.'" We had over forty-something people show up who did not do the survey, or chose not to participate in the lawsuit stuff, who now came to talk with the attorneys and to talk with us, and most of them decided to join the lawsuit. So that's why we're now over 250. At our last count we have about twenty more still working on the forms and stuff.

Marquez

Now, in some cases they didn't do the survey, so again, you know, we're having to go from the beginning. Now, doing the survey takes around fifteen, twenty minutes, and then a lot of them want to know more details, so we've got to explain it, so sometimes we spent an hour to an hour and a half at some of these people's homes. So that's the leukemia survey, and what's happened is that we have the survey, English and Spanish, the advance fliers, sorry we missed you, the final meeting, and the Access database. So now other communities, I can almost can the whole thing.

Marquez

We actually, as the result of some of our some of our presentations, another one, we have six other community organizations outside the L.A. area that want to do a leukemia survey in their area. So I told them by the end of this year, probably by the end of the summer we will have finished assessing how well this was, tweaking our form if we have to do a little bit better now, completing our database, tweaking it a little bit better, and we'll have it available for the public. No one will have to reinvent the wheel.

Marquez

Now, in addition to that survey we have one more that we developed, and it's actually more comprehensive. This one was intended because of the Port of

L.A. We knew we had Port of L.A. pollution, but we also had unique things from them, too, that was different even from the refinery. They had an off-port fumigation facility that was using methyl bromide, so we had learned from doing the leukemia health survey that there were many other health problems. When we completed the leukemia health survey we found out there was two other cancers that were number one and number two in our health survey, and they had nothing to do with that. Women, breast cancer came out in the top two. Women, cervical cancer came out in the top two, and then the leukemia and all those guys after that.

Marquez

So now we're looking at, whoa, here's other data that we really weren't looking for, but that's popping up because we have to generate questions, so when we made up the big port one it has 120 questions, over a hundred questions, versus the forty questionnaire, which gets into extreme detail, like it breaks down into respiratory things. "Do you have asthma, sinusitis, bronchitis, lung cancer?" you know, so we go very specific into that. You know, do you have leukemia, lymphoma, myeloma, anemia, and so we've gone very extensive detail into that one. That one takes a minimum thirty minutes to complete that one.

Marquez

Now, because we knew the TraPac Container Terminal was coming up in November, we got an extension for an extra thirty days, forty-five days, so we went out door to door from my house, which is the fifth block from the port, up to the first block. So we actually went four blocks, fence line to the port, and then we went ten blocks in each direction, and we were able to get almost 300 of those. And then we plan to continue doing an extensive one. So this gives us some preliminary data.

Marquez

Now, to give you one example, the port did its health-risk assessment study, and it came out that the lung-cancer risk was five times the national average. Okay? Well, in our sample it's 129 times the national average. Now, why would there be a discrepancy? Well, the discrepancy is because they're using a computer model by a government agency, the Air Resources Board, that was based on regional stuff. They never have done a public-health survey local to this project area. And conducting public-health surveys has been one of our demands at every single public-health hearing and meeting, where we've been demanding it. And then we make them look like fools. "Well, did you do a door-to-door public-health survey? How do you know that's accurate if you've never done a door-to-door health survey here?"

Marquez

Now, because we're not a scientific organization and we don't have scientists on staff, our survey and health data is not bulletproof, to use that expression. It's

very accurate, okay. I would say if you're going to go for accuracy, it is about 95 percent accurate, because basically we're asking the same damn questions as the scientific guys, okay. So we did submit some proposals and grant proposals before to do health surveys, and we got blown, rejected right out of the water, because we had no scientific people, we didn't have an extensive public-health-survey background, la, la, la, la. So I said, okay, we'll gear up for that. We may not be ready now, this year or next year, but we'll do our leukemia survey, we'll do our port fence line survey, and we'll develop some skills so that now when we write the grant we'll have UCLA and USC as our partners, okay.

Marquez

So this year we will have finished with our data, so that by next year or possibly by the end of this year, but I'll say more than likely next year, we'll be able to cement, submit our grant application with USC and UCLA being our scientific partners on it, and we will make that happen.

Marquez

Now, another thing that just occurred, too, is that as part of our TraPac settlement with the Port of L.A., one of the things that they agreed to is one of the studies, besides a wetlands study and on off-port nexus study, was a public-health study, so that money might come now from the Port of L.A. now, to do this public-health study with us. So there is a method to my madness when I say we do five-year campaigns and ten-year strategies, because sometimes I am naive at the beginning, like we all are, because we don't know what it takes to get some of these grants, and I'm sure at the National Environmental Health Institute in Washington, D.C., when they looked at my grant, you know, they couldn't stop laughing, you know, looking at it. But they realize that hey, you know, we know you guys are being screwed and everything's wrong with you, but you know.

Marquez

They did shoot it down, you know, but they have some nice comments in there, like, "You didn't have any scientific expertise onboard. You didn't have experience with long-term scientific projects. You didn't have experience managing large budgets. You didn't have a scientific partner," and so they pointed out all those little things so that now when I submit it we will have met all those criterias, okay. And then with the relationship that we have with UCLA and USC, they will be more than happy to jump in with us on this particular thing, especially knowing that we've done this type of research already.

Marquez

The nice thing about it is that since we've done some of it already and we'll continue to do some, that we'll be going back to some of the same people, who will be more than happy to cooperate, so we won't hit that same block wall that

we may have had with some of them, and it'll just further validate what we've been working on.

Collings

Yes. Excellent. Okay, so we're ready to wrap up.

Marquez

So where we are at today on May thirtieth, 2008, we've achieved--

Collings

A lot.

Marquez

--you know, 90 percent of the goals and objectives our organization started from, you know, as far back as in 2001 we really didn't know what we were doing at that time. We've become experts in many fields that we had no knowledge of in the past, and we've had great mentors come into the picture, with UCLA, USC, and Occidental College, their professors coming into the picture and working with us, and other organizations teaming up with us. In the past we were doing so many things on our own, whereas now we've learned to collaborate more, so that working with the Coalition for Clean Air, NRDC, CBE and others, you know, we've accomplished a lot more.

Marquez

We've inspired other things to develop, such as the Coalition for Clean and Safe Ports, which now has thirty-five members. We're part of that. Some of the most innovative companies in technology are evolving as a result of us, and are in contact with us. We've been blessed to have great community support and family support for the work that we do, and we've been blessed to have so many patient people out there who try to tolerate what we're doing, but by doing what we've done we have now started something in motion that even if I was to pass away at a young age, that it's already in motion.

Marquez

You know, I've learned by taking my classes, I've learned from the foundations, such as the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Liberty Hill Foundation. The California Endowment, the Wellness Foundation, the Rose Foundation, all those groups that have played some part in supporting us, that they've learned also that you just don't fund one time. You have to nurture these groups by providing these other technical-assistance grants, so they could leap from one stage to the next stage, and sometimes it's not easy for them to do it. But then now they're seeing the fruits of that, you know. When I show them my EJ milestones here, and you see how the first year there was only one thing, and that's when we started the organization. But you see the next year only one thing, and now I have a four-page thing with about fifty things that we've done, and that have been our campaigns, so that now all the mainstreet groups recognize that, hey, these are the things we need to support.

Marquez

And then now with me coming out with the off-port nexus and with the mitigation, you know, recommendations, every organization will use that as a boilerplate as well. We have some of the government agencies now working a little bit more with us. You know, even though we're suing we have numerous lawsuits. A week and a half ago the U.S. EPA lost to us. Federal court found the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency guilty of violating the Clean Air Act, which is the law they're supposed to be endorsing, and they found them guilty by not reassessing and updating that carbon-monoxide law.

Marquez

We have another one up against them. Yesterday we just filed a new one against them. We have three lawsuits against the AQMD regarding the priority reserve, and power plant facilities, and we're going to be filing another new one against them in the next couple of weeks. The Port of Long Beach, regarding that [Resource Conservation and Recovery Act] lawsuit, which is the hazardous material, they're ninety days expired. They didn't reach out and touch us to work out some type of compromise or deal, give us more time. They took the position that, screw you, you know, we'll see you in court. Well, they will lose to us in court, and so now we're just building up the case on that one, you know.

Marquez

I've been blessed that I've been inspired with the support of everyone, and with God's grace and our guardian angels up there, that have chosen to fly around and help protect me, because many people would have been killed doing the type of things that I do. In foreign countries, you know, I would have been dead a long time ago for what I do, and so I understand that, and so I don't mind having a bullseye when I have some of my guardian angels guarding me, because when I talk with people I tell them, "I'm one of your guardian angels you don't know about." And when I explain it they all say, "Thank you, and I'll say a prayer for you." And it's great to hear that, you know. And so I know there's upcoming chapters that I'll be able to speak about in the future, but I would like to actually thank the UCLA Oral History Program, because I had never heard of the program, and I see it as a great benefit, and that I will be recommending and give you a list of names and phone numbers and contacts, for other people that have similar circumstances to me, and then in other areas that are also specialized, too.

Collings

Okay, great. I look forward to that.[End of interview]

Date:

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