

A TEI Project

Interview of Ricardo Muñoz

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1. Transcript

1.1. Session One (November 22, 2011)

ESPINO

This is Virginia Espino, and today is November 22nd [2011]. I'm interviewing Ricardo Muñoz at his home in South Pasadena [California]. Thank you so much for agreeing to interview with me. I've started the video. The audio is on. It's working. We're going to start with what you can tell me about your family history, so going back to your parents' generation or your grandparents' generation, maybe some stories that were passed down to you over time.

MUÑOZ

Well, I have the benefit of, on my paternal side, that my grandfather wrote a history of what his recollections were of what he had learned, what he had been told of his forbearers, so it's all in a book. It's hard for me to recollect a lot of the detail of the book, but my grandfather speaks of his grandfather, who was—he was like a foreman on a ranch, and his father, my grandfather—let's see. My grandfather's father was named Quirino Muñoz, and his father, I think it may have been Victor [Muñoz]. I'm not sure if it was Victor, might have been, because I don't remember. I could go back to the book and look it up and look at a family history, the family tree. But

anyway, let's call him Victor. He was a foreman. He had three children, and Quirino was one of them [The eldest was Julio, followed by Alejandra and finally Quirino]. He was the youngest, I believe. Then their mother [Guadalupe Molinar] died when Quirino was pretty young, and the father, Victor, he eventually remarried because he wanted to have a wife who could take care of the kids. Turned out that she was like Cinderella's stepmother and was very mean to the children, especially to Quirino. Quirino's older sister tried to protect him.

But his father worked on a ranch and was a foreman and did fairly well, I guess, in that position, and they lived in—I believe they must have been in—what's the state of—let's see. Either San Luis Potosi or Coahuilla. [It was San Luis Potosi, in a village named El Salado.] Eventually as Quirino grew up, then he left home. He ran away when he was about thirteen or fourteen because he was very unhappy with the situation in the home with his stepmother. His sister had left and went into a convent, and so after a while, after she left, then he decided that he was going to leave as well, and so he did. Then there's a whole story about his life, and he got, like, on some kind of a caravan or wagon train or something, and they let him go along, and he ended up in Saltillo [in 1855], which is the capital of Coahuilla. He didn't really have any money or anything, but he eventually was taken in and helped by a baker who had a bakery [Panaderia de Pancho Flores], and the baker took a liking to him and then employed him and treated him like an apprentice and actually let him live, I think, in his home. The baker had a daughter who was quite a bit older than Quirino, and she liked Quirino and she taught him to read and taught him to write. Eventually he did fairly well. He was really a big help to his employer, and eventually the employer eventually made him a partner. So Quirino, he was doing well. He was very young and he had a business [which became his when Pancho Flores died]. Then he was attracted to a certain young lady, and her name was Macedonia, and he pursued her, eventually was able to marry her. [Macedonia's grandfather was Perfecto Perez and her grandmother's name is unknown. Her father was Fernando Perez and mother Jacinta Carrizales de Perez.] They had some children, but then he started getting kind of wild. He would gamble and drink and party with his friends, wasn't real serious about the family, and eventually I guess things went pretty

bad. I can't remember all that story, how it went, but eventually there came a time when he became ill, and he had, like, cancer. He was told by the doctors that there wasn't anything they could do for him, and during this time he befriended some people who were Protestants and they started having an influence on him and praying for him and all that.

Eventually he had an experience—at first he didn't really think—he wasn't a religious-thinking person in the first place, but eventually he got more interested in it, and then got more serious about what he was learning from the Protestant point of view. Then at one time—I guess the story—he prayed to god and he told him that if he would spare him and help him get well, that then he would dedicate himself as much as he could to doing the right thing and to being a member of the church, of the Protestant Church, and so he did get well. The doctors couldn't really understand how it happened that he got well, but he did. I don't know. When he was sick and all that time, I guess, I don't know, maybe he lost his business. I can't remember the whole story. His wife, Macedonia, her father had Sephardic blood in him. He was Sephardic. I don't know if he had had some other mix in there, maybe, but he was not very religious as a follower of the Jewish faith, but he didn't care about religion and didn't think much of religion, and his wife was very religious. She was a strong Catholic woman and they went to Mass all the time. She took all the children and all that. He didn't care, because he didn't care about religion one way or the other. But anyway, after the marriage of Macedonia with Quirino, I don't know if he got along too well with Quirino, but anyway, eventually Quirino and Macedonia, I guess maybe the parents, they had moved away from Saltillo and they were somewhere else. Then eventually, probably due to financial reasons, they went up to try to live with their relatives, so when they got there, they found out that they were no longer practicing Catholicism, they got booted out.

So Quirino and Macedonia, they struggled for a while after that. They went back to Saltillo, I think. I don't know. They had more children, and then my grandfather was eventually born. My grandfather goes into a lot of the stories, and then how they moved around different places where they lived. Eventually at some point I think Quirino's mother-in-law dies. I think she dies and then they eventually go back. I know. What happens was one of the sisters

goes to visit them in Saltillo, and she comes back and she actually changes from Catholicism to becomes a Protestant after being with them. Then she goes back, and then she kind of infects the other siblings, in a sense, with the religion. But eventually I think the story—I can't remember his name, but Macedonia's father, he actually becomes a Protestant too. But that was a lot of my grandfather's story, since my grandfather became a minister, a Methodist minister. I mean, he was telling this story with a point of view.

ESPINO

You think it was a little propaganda?

MUÑOZ

Well, I think it was. I mean, I think the story, I think what he related was what happened. I think it was factual, but he would color it with language at times. They did go through some persecution in different little towns that they lived in because of their religion.

ESPINO

Did you ever have an opportunity to have a firsthand conversation with him one to one, face to face about—

MUÑOZ

With my grandfather?

ESPINO

Yes.

MUÑOZ

Well, my grandfather, we spent time. We'd visit. I remember we did take a trip to Torreon on the train with my whole family, and my grandfather was with us, and we kind of had, like, a little space with him, and he was telling us things. But he always used to tell stories too.

ESPINO

Really? Do you have any recollection of any?

MUÑOZ

It's hard for me to remember any of those stories that well.

ESPINO

Would they be religious stories or children's stories or life stories?

MUÑOZ

Well, like my grandmother used to tell us a lot of children's stories, like about spirits and all of that, and other stories and jokes and

kinds of funny stories, comic stories. One thing that we used to do with them, they used to pray a lot. Like whenever we would go and visit, we'd come from California, we'd arrive at their home, we'd spend maybe fifteen, twenty minutes for prayer of thankfulness that we arrived safely and that everything—and, "Thank you, god," and all that, that we were there, all kinds of things like that. Then when we would leave, of course, there'd be another prayer to send us off with. They would talk a lot about the Bible, too, a lot of the Bible stories. They would make sure that we knew the stories of the Old Testament in particular, of all of the different prophets and different personalities in the Old Testament, so that we were well versed.

ESPINO

Did you ever get to see your grandfather in church?

MUÑOZ

Oh, yeah.

ESPINO

I mean, give a sermon and—

MUÑOZ

Oh, yeah.

ESPINO

Do you have any recollection how he struck you or what you thought?

MUÑOZ

Well, I was pretty young. They were in Spanish. My Spanish wasn't that developed, and so I didn't really give that much attention to them. I mean, I wouldn't even remember what kinds of themes he—he wrote a lot of books of poetry. My dad had them printed, a lot of them. There's about five or six books of his poetry. I read some of the poetry in later life, but I don't remember them. They're in Spanish.

ESPINO

As far as seeing it as something unusual or normal or extraordinary, do you recall having any kind of feelings about him being up there? I'm thinking about just looking at where Mexican Americans were and Mexicans were in the United States, their social position, their economic position.

MUÑOZ

Well, see, the church was Spanish. It was Mexican. It was a Methodist church, but it was a Methodist congregation, and they

were all Spanish-speaking. It wasn't in English or anything, so they were all like hermano this, hermano that. They have kind of a culture of how they relate to each other. One of the things with my grandfather, like in the real kind of rundown place where he lived, and there was outdoor toilets. There wasn't any indoor toilets, no sewer to the house. He had rabbits. He had a pig at one time. He had different—and this was in Phoenix. It was kind of like in the poor part of Phoenix, and I remember there was a canal that went right by the house on one side of the plot.

But he also had, like, this other kind of like a little—I don't know if it was a barn or some kind of a shack, it was pretty large, but in there he had his office where he would write. He had typewriters. He used to type everything. I guess he used to do his writings there, and he had all kinds of books. I mean, he had a big library of all kinds of books in the library and they were all in Spanish.

ESPINO

All of them were in Spanish.

MUÑOZ

I guess, or maybe there may have been some in English. I mean, I think he could read English. I think he could.

ESPINO

Did you ever hear him speak English?

MUÑOZ

Oh, very little.

ESPINO

Very little.

MUÑOZ

Very little.

ESPINO

How about your grandmother?

MUÑOZ

They would both speak very little English. The other thing, they always had the radio on. They had it on most of the time, and they'd have Mexican stations and they'd have a lot of Mexican music. They had a lot of, like, Norteña and all those old Alegres de Teran type of stuff, and then the news. My grandfather at one time, he was on the radio. On Sundays he had, like, a sermon or something. He would have some kind of religious program in

Spanish in Phoenix. But he also had been in California. I think at one time he had the church in San Fernando.

ESPINO

Maybe we can back up a little bit and you can tell me how—I don't think that we've talked yet about your grandfather and how he meets your grandmother, and then how they get to the United States.

MUÑOZ

Okay. Well, my grandfather, he went to a seminary. He wanted to go into the religious profession. He wanted to be a minister, so he was able to get into a seminary in San Luis Potosi, and at that time my grandmother, she went to a religious school, also, for women in San Luis Potosi, and that's where they met. My grandmother, she was from Morelia or some little town outside of Morelia, Michoacán, and she became an orphan. I think both her parents died when she was still pretty young and she went to live with an aunt and uncle. The uncle, he was doing fairly well, and he was able to put her in school and pay for the tuition or whatever, and they sent her to school, and that's where she met my grandfather.

ESPINO

They were both in the same religion?

MUÑOZ

I think so at that time. They were both in the same religion, I think, when they met. Then I guess they fell in love and got married. My dad was born in Nuevo Leon in a town called The Villaldama, and my grandfather was the minister in that town. I don't know how far it is from Monterey. And they had some relatives there, too, in Nuevo Leon. One of my grandfather's sisters, some of his sisters lived in Nuevo Leon, had gotten married and lived in Nuevo Leon, and they were Protestant, too, so I guess they would see them. Then they shifted around to different places. Eventually they were in Tlaxcala for a while too. Some of my aunts were born in Tlaxcala. But eventually I think there were times that they had some problems with the revolution and the different armies. So they left. They left during that time, I guess.

My dad was born in 1913. They must have left in about 1918 when they came to the United States. I don't know if it had to do with maybe the church wanted to assign him there or what. I really don't know whether there were some different kinds of details, because

as a minister, he was under some kind of organization of the church. So I don't even know what the hierarchy was. I know in the Methodist Church there isn't, like, much hierarchy. There is some. I mean, what I know about what there is today, they have, like, conferences that cover geographical territories, so it may have been something like that. Then they maybe had a different system for the Spanish-speaking congregations and that sort of thing. So, like, my grandfather, he was in a lot of different towns, some in Texas. I think they were in Alpine, Texas, and can't remember where else. Then they were in Arizona. They moved around and had different assignments in different cities or little towns in Arizona, I think in Tempe at one time and maybe in [unclear] Miami or somewhere around there, I don't know, because I know my dad, he talks about it because he went to school at some of these places, so it had to be related to where my grandfather was situated with the church.

ESPINO

That's a lot of moving around with such a big family.

MUÑOZ

Yeah. Yeah, well, I guess in those days that's—because I got raised with pretty equal exposure to both Catholic and Protestant, probably more to the Protestant because I spent more time in the church. The Catholic Church, you go to Mass and you go to different Masses and that's—I didn't go to Catholic school, so I didn't have that kind of religious education from the Catholic side. My mom used to give us lessons more on that. But in terms of, like, an academic approach to—the Catholic Church wasn't really too interested in doing that unless you were going to a religious order or something, and then you got a real training and you're taught theology and all these other subjects in depth, but in general, what I've seen in the Catholic faith, there's not that emphasis on the individual to develop a broad and profound knowledge of the religion. So anyway, I guess, like, right now we're just talking about my dad's side. On my mom's side, I have cousins who've written a couple of books, one from my grandmother's side and from my grandfather's side. My grandfather was Urias. My grandmother was Terrazas. So one of my cousins on the Terrazas side wrote and did a family history and did what she could to put an account of as far as back as they could, stories about the forbearers. So we have the Terrazas and then there's the Urias side. I guess on the Urias side the family goes

back to the first founders of Tucson. I think on the Terrazas side they came into Tucson probably the late nineteenth century. That's when I think they relocated into Tucson from Sonora, but the Terrazas were—I mean, in that family they'd probably go back to Chihuahua, because there was a big Terrazas land holding in Chihuahua. There was a big, big, like a little empire of their own. The other thing, I guess, like in my grandfather's side, like, my grandfather, he got a lot of information from his mother, who gave him a lot of history, and I guess my grandfather, he picked up a lot on this Sephardic connection of his grandfather, was Sephardic. His grandfather had, like, I think, a cousin or an uncle or something who was a rabbi somewhere in Texas. So my grandfather, he's tried to trace things back along the Sephardic line going back to how they came over and that at one time the forbearers, when the Inquisition came down on them, they had to go up in the mountains, live with the Indians, and they mixed with the Indians.

ESPINO

In Mexico.

MUÑOZ

In Mexico, yeah, and eventually when the Inquisition kind of was over with and all, then they came back down to where it was okay for them. So I guess my grandfather—to some extent, maybe that's part of it. There's the religious persecution. He had been subjected to some. There's stories in the book about different incidents, kinds of things that happened.

ESPINO

Wow. How would you describe him? What kind of personality did he have?

MUÑOZ

Oh, my grandfather was a very, very interesting kind of a person. I mean, he had read extremely. He was very well educated, a lot of both in the seminary, but then a lot of his own self-education. So, I mean, he was a reader. He was a writer. He was a student all the time. He related to people because they liked to hear him talk. They liked to hear, I mean, the poetry. He could make observations and then verbalize them or put them into a verbal context and point out the humanness of people. So I guess a lot of people enjoyed him and learning from him too.

ESPINO

How about your grandmother? How would you describe her?

MUÑOZ

She was very much the same, in a way. She was very dedicated to my grandfather, but she was very bright as well. She knew a lot of stories. She used to come and take care of us at times.

ESPINO

She would come and live with you?

MUÑOZ

Yeah, not for a long period, like maybe to help out at times. She'd be there for maybe a few weeks. She would tell us a story before we went to bed, so she would tell us stories. She would tell us just funny things, kind of like Brer Rabbit type stories and stuff like that, kind of Aesop's Fable type stories, and ghost stories and stuff. And she had a good nature. Of course, my grandmothers, they liked to cook a lot, so they always like to make us the tortillas and all that and the beans, and make sure that we ate well.

ESPINO

How about morality or ethics? Did they pass down anything that you could say came straight from them?

MUÑOZ

Well, my grandfather, I mean—well, definitely. I mean, you had to be versed in—and my grandmother too. My grandmother on my mom's side, she used to go to Mass every day. I mean, she was very tight in her religion. I mean, religion in their lives was very, very important. It was a big place in their lives on both my—both my grandmother was Catholic, my grandfather was Protestant, and the family's the way that they, I guess, valued things. Religion was a very high value, accepting the faith and all of that.

But my grandfather, he talked a lot of, like, his own parables. There would be parables, these stories with lessons to them. But, of course, he was very learned in the scriptures, so he could cite all these different scriptures and had a pretty profound understanding of a lot of the theology that's within them. My grandfather, I never spent a lot of time with him talking about theology or anything like that or really trying to think about it and maybe question different dogmas or whatever. I never really got the chance to. I don't know if he would have tolerated that or not. Maybe he would have. He probably would have. He'd probably give me things to think about.

ESPINO

How old were you when he died, do you remember?

MUÑOZ

I was, like, probably—I don't know if I was twenty-one, maybe, something like that, maybe twenty-two. I'm not sure. I can't remember exactly. I know I was in college. I'm not sure. Maybe I was already out of college. I'd have to look, because I can look it up and see when he died. So it was around that time.

ESPINO

He was already an adult when he moved to Tucson.

MUÑOZ

Pardon?

ESPINO

He was already an adult when he moved to Arizona, to Tempe and Tucson.

MUÑOZ

Oh, you mean my grandfather?

ESPINO

Your grandfather, yeah.

MUÑOZ

Yeah, well, they first went to Texas. When they entered the United States, they were in Texas. I don't know how long they remained in Texas before relocating to Arizona, and then they came to California for a while, and then they went back to Arizona.

ESPINO

That's a lot of moving around.

MUÑOZ

Yeah, but their kids had grown up, too, during that time too. Their kids had grown up.

ESPINO

Your dad, his education was primarily in what state?

MUÑOZ

Arizona. Now, when they went to Texas, what happened in Texas, the state didn't provide any education to Mexicans, so they were home-schooled. [interruption]

ESPINO

Okay, we're back, and you were going to tell me about how in Texas the government didn't provide for—

MUÑOZ

Right. Kids were home-schooled, and actually what happened with that, too, is that my grandparents, since they were educated and all that, they became the teachers and they actually brought in, I guess, other kids from the church, from their church, the Mexicans, and so they started teaching them too. So it wasn't just their own children; it was others, the children of others, so that they could get some basic skills, reading, writing, and some math, arithmetic. So, yeah, I guess that went on. I remember there was one story that in one of the towns the Protestants started getting harassed and threatened by some Catholic people. It would be maybe a certain group within the Catholic parish or something, that, "We're going to try to harass them." There's a story that the Ku Klux Klan came to the rescue of the Protestants because they were Protestant. Ku Klux Klan was anti-Catholic, so they came and then kind of let it be known that they better not mess with the Protestant Mexicans, because otherwise then they're going to have to mess with them too. So it's kind of a weird story. My cousin Robert, he's passed away, but he used to like to tell that story, that he had heard that story, how the Ku Klux Klan were the good guys at that time for them.

ESPINO

Right, on that issue. Wow. My goodness. Did you ever get a sense of how that affected your father or your grandfather, that kind of discrimination?

MUÑOZ

My dad was very liberal, and my grandfather, my grandfather was a Mason. He became the highest level of a Mason, but that was within the Mexican Masons—it wasn't within the Anglo thing—I don't know, 32nd degree or something. I never became a Mason. I don't even know hardly anything about their operation or anything. From history I know a little bit about them, and in Mexico, especially in Mexico and Mexican history, that a lot of the leaders of the revolution under Juarez and then in the 1910 revolution, a lot of the leaders, they had Mason ties and they were the liberal thinkers. They thought in terms of liberal political ideology. I mean, my father told me that my grandfather, he thought segregation was okay, my grandfather did. My father totally saw it as an evil, and it was the whole thing of civil rights. That was just kind of an impression I got from my dad. I never really talked to my grandfather. I never heard

him really talk about civil rights. I mean, most of the time I was pretty young. It wasn't even a topic that I was aware of, but, of course, they knew about discrimination. They knew about how they were treated.

ESPINO

Well, there's one thing—and I don't know if anything will come up for you, but there's one thing about being segregated, and then there's another thing about not having equal—I mean being segregated, but having a good job and your economic situation is good versus being segregated and not having the kind of economic resources as the other group, which might be white, or whatever other group it could be.

MUÑOZ

See, my grandfather, I don't think he ever became a U.S. citizen.

ESPINO

Never?

MUÑOZ

I don't think he did, so he never voted. I don't think he ever voted, as far as I know. I mean, I could be corrected, but I have no recollection of hearing him talk about the political issues or political personalities and having any kind of opinion about who should be elected into office on anything. He probably gave more attention to what was happening in Mexico as far as the politics in Mexico than in the United States, probably, I don't know, or at least maybe he gave more attention to it and read more about it and knew more about it. I don't know. I wish my dad was around. I would ask him what was my grandfather's take on American politics. So I don't know how knowledgeable he became on that.

ESPINO

Right, because he was already an adult when he left Mexico. He didn't go through the educational system here. He didn't learn about the U.S. Constitution.

MUÑOZ

Well, I think he probably read all of that. He probably knew American history. He probably informed himself quite a bit about American history. I'm sure he did.

ESPINO

Now that you mention that, if he was teaching, if they were home-schooling, they probably—

MUÑOZ

I don't think he was teaching in English, though. I don't think they were teaching in English. I doubt it.

ESPINO

That would be interesting to know. Do you think your parents were involved maybe not so much in the political arena, but they exercised their right to vote?

MUÑOZ

My parents definitely did. No, they considered it a very important duty to carry out, to vote. Oh, yeah, my father, one of his strong subjects was history, so when he was, I guess, in senior year or something—they used to have this competition in Arizona. They had this, like, academic—what do they call it, the academic—

ESPINO

Decathlon?

MUÑOZ

Yeah, it was something that proceeded that, but it was something of that nature. So they would give these exams. My dad got the Gold Medal in Arizona for history the year that he took it. They went down to Tucson. They went from Phoenix. He was a student at Phoenix Union High School, and so he got the medal. He got the medal for doing the best on the history exam.

ESPINO

Your father, did he grow up in a segregated community as far as going to an all-white school or an all-Latino school?

MUÑOZ

They moved from different towns. Like at Phoenix Union, Phoenix Union was integrated, and that was a big school even then. That was, like, maybe 3,000, 4,000 students. It was a big school. He was a good student. Yeah, my dad, he had a lot of talents, though, most of them his intellect, but he liked sports too. He was small, but he liked to play baseball. They used to play basketball. He used to like to play basketball. He was so short.

ESPINO

That's interesting.

MUÑOZ

But they were on teams and they had teams and they would play. They'd play against different—they had leagues and stuff like that.

ESPINO

Your parents met in Arizona?

MUÑOZ

They met as teachers. My dad was the first to get a job, I mean, up in Saint Johns. There weren't too many jobs, teaching jobs, that were meted out to Mexicans. Of course, there weren't too much Mexicans who went through and got a credential either, but even those who did, they weren't offered. This was the [Great] Depression, so it wasn't easy to come by. But apparently, my mom, in her memoirs, she writes about in Saint Johns, which was in Apache County, apparently the school board there, I think they got some Mexicans on it or something. Actually, a lot of the Mormons, they kind of had controlled a lot of the politics there. In fact, that's where what's-his-name was born. What's his name? There's those guys from Arizona that were in the Senate, the U.S. Senate. There's one of their sons from New Mexico and another one in Colorado right now, I think. Udall, the Udalls.

ESPINO

And they're Mormons.

MUÑOZ

Oh, yeah. Well, the Udalls, Stewart Udall and Morris Udall, I don't know, both of them were born in Saint Johns, and they were very liberal. These guys ended up being very liberal politicians. But anyway, so the school board, eventually they wanted to get some teachers that could speak Spanish as well as English, so I guess my dad got in there, and he eventually became a principal of a school right outside of Saint Johns. Let's see. I'm trying to think of the town. It'll come to me. [Concho, Arizona]

ESPINO

That's pretty quick, becoming a principal.

MUÑOZ

Well, he had a master's degree already.

ESPINO

He came to that program already with a master's degree?

MUÑOZ

Right. Then my mom, she graduated from the University of Arizona. She graduated with honors. She was, I don't know, like, cum laude, something like that. She'd go to the university's office, employment office, where they try to help the graduates. They didn't do anything for her. Saint Johns, they had said they were looking for—my mom

didn't learn about the job through the university employment service. It came another way—I can't remember exactly how she got word of it—and then they recruited her, and then she got a job, so then she went up there. Like my mom, her family—these were kind of like Victorian times. They were kind of sheltered, so when my mom went up there to work, my grandmother, she was not too comfortable with her going and doing that, but she couldn't find a job. I mean, she found these little part time jobs that weren't that weren't that good a jobs in Tucson.

ESPINO

Would you say that she was pretty desperate, and that's why she left?

MUÑOZ

Well, I don't think so. I think it was more her interest in getting into her profession. If she could have gotten it in Tucson, she would have taken it in Tucson, but she wanted to get into her profession. Then when they sent her there, her specialty, I guess, was secondary or something like that, but then the only thing they had was primary or something, so she wasn't really too ready for that.

ESPINO

It's a completely different curriculum.

MUÑOZ

So one of my aunts, my Aunt Lucinda, helped her quite a bit when she worked up her lessons plans and all that stuff, but my Aunt Lucinda also [became a teacher in St. Johns]—because my dad, his sisters, they all also graduated from college, his sisters did. My mom was the only one from her family who graduated and got a degree from the university.

ESPINO

Oh, and you're saying your Aunt Lucinda, which is your father's sister, not your mother's sister. I see.

MUÑOZ

Right. See, my dad's sisters were Lucinda, Rebecca, Josephine, and Elizabeth. It's interesting. I was thinking about that. Two of my aunts both married college graduates, two of them did and two of them didn't. My Aunt Rebecca married my Uncle Felix, and he had a degree from UCLA, and my Aunt Elizabeth married my Uncle Daniel [Grijalva], and he had a degree from Arizona State. Then my Aunt Lucinda, her husband [Toby], I don't think he went to college at all.

He was a mechanic. Then my other aunt, my Aunt Josephine, her husband [Daniel Rodriguez] went to, like, junior college. He came back from the Navy and I think he took some [college work], but he didn't complete it. He just went to work, but he ended up working for the probation department here in L.A. County and retired from that, but he never really got a professional—it was kind of like a semi-professional position. He worked in camps as a night man. They called him a night man. In the juvenile camps they would come in at night and just kind of be there through the nighttime in the dorms. You didn't really have to be a guard, but in a sense, you were just making sure that they kids didn't run off, you know, stayed in bed and got their sleep or whatever. So he used to do that. He did that. Getting back to—there's a lot to my parents' lives. I mean, some of it is in my mother's memoirs. My mother's memoirs covers her life pretty well up to the time that she meets my dad and they finally start getting involved with one another, and then it ends there.

My father, I've never seen anything that he wrote. He's done some short biographies, bios that he's done for different positions that he's sought, and so he has some autobiographical material that's very much in summary and with little detail. I've heard some stories from some of his friends who are still alive and people who knew him and how impressed they were that he was—I mean, he was really looked upon as kind of like a very, very bright person with a good personality. He was, like, a role model for a lot of other Chicanos or Mexicanos who came and saw that he could do it, and he inspired them, so there was a lot of that that I'd see, but they'd tell stories about him. There was one story that's related, and we have it on a tape of when my dad died when we had a service for him, and one of his friends talking about—like my dad, well, he told me about it. He had a lot of jobs when he was going through college and all that. He used to be a bill collector. He worked for, like, a furniture store and something, go and collect from the people who had fallen behind in their payments, and he'd be the one. But then when he used to deliver newspapers, he used to win, getting the most subscriptions, so I guess he was kind of a go-getter. But they say that he used to service in terms of delivering papers in the red-light district, so he always used to get a lot of tips there. It's kind of funny, that the preacher's son, he was—and that the employers,

they also put them in there because he was the preacher's son. They figured that it was safe to have him work that district. [laughs] It was funny.

ESPINO

Was this here in Los Angeles, or was that back in—

MUÑOZ

No, this was in Phoenix.

ESPINO

Arizona.

MUÑOZ

Yeah.

ESPINO

Do you know where the red-light district was at that time?

MUÑOZ

I have no idea.

ESPINO

I wonder.

MUÑOZ

I have no idea. I mean, I'm not familiar that much with Phoenix.

ESPINO

So when you would go back, you would just go straight to your grandparents' house?

MUÑOZ

Well, I had two aunts there, my Aunt Liza, or it was Elizabeth, and she had two sons. Two of her sons were born with muscular dystrophy, I guess it is, because her husband, he kind of had a mild form of it. It affected his hip and one of his feet. They had two sons. They eventually ended up in wheelchairs, but they walked while they were pretty young, up until about teenage years or something like that. Somewhere in their teenage years they switched over to a wheelchair. One of my cousins, my cousin Danny, he went to law school and passed the California bar. He went to ASU, and then he came over. At that time I was the Executive Director of the Los Angeles Center for Law and Justice, so I got him a job in a CETA [Comprehensive Employment and Training Act] job, because I had CETA jobs at that time. He stayed on for maybe a couple of months. He wasn't really interested in being a lawyer. He wanted to be a screenwriter. He had an apartment over in Hollywood, near Hollywood Boulevard near Vine and Hollywood back up there near

Franklin, in between Hollywood Boulevard and Franklin, I think it was, somewhere. He had an apartment. I used to go over and pick him up and bring him over, but he used to drive at one time. He could get in his wheelchair and move himself out and get into his car and get his wheelchair in by himself. It was really amazing.

ESPINO

Did he ever make it as a screenwriter?

MUÑOZ

No. No, that's a real tough one, a tough one.

ESPINO

Passing the bar in California apparently is really tough as well.

MUÑOZ

Well, that's pretty tough. Usually 40 percent usually don't make it, at least 40, sometimes 50 don't make it.

ESPINO

That's a lot. When your father was in college in Tucson, is that the time that he started the group Los Conquistadores?

MUÑOZ

He wasn't in Tucson. It was at Tempe. That was in the Phoenix area. That was at Arizona State University. I don't know if he was an undergrad at that time. For sure he was involved with it when he was in grad school, and I'm not really sure about all of the—when it actually started and who were the ones. I mean, I'm not familiar with that. That's probably in some records and archives somewhere, but I don't think I've ever really looked at that. I've seen photographs of my aunts. They had photographs of the group with my aunts in them. I may have seen my dad in some of those photographs, but my aunts for sure. So they got involved. This was right—and then before the war. It was the latter part of the thirties.

ESPINO

Then your father was in the Navy, so he joined the Navy?

MUÑOZ

He went into the Navy. He actually worked for the Navy Department as a civilian for probably over a year, maybe a year and a half. He worked in what they called censorship, which was they would monitor communications that would cross the border into Mexico or communications coming in from Mexico to try to—it's kind of like the anti-terrorist thing. So they were looking to see if there were any enemy operators. That's when I was born in Bisbee. He worked

in Douglas, which is maybe 10, 15 miles from Bisbee, somewhere around there, maybe 20 miles. I'm not sure. But Douglas is more or less right on the border. So he worked for the Navy there, and that's what he used to do, I guess. He listened to telephone conversations or telegraph or whatever.

ESPINO

In Spanish.

MUÑOZ

Well, they could be in English or Spanish. He actually had learned French. He was, I guess, pretty decent in French, but he also had German. He had studied German, too, so he had some language exposure. I mean, his great exposure—I mean, Spanish was—I mean, he was very—that was very solid. His English was solid, and then his French was probably better than his German. But, I mean, he could recognize things if it was in German. He might be able to even understand some of it.

ESPINO

That's where you were born.

MUÑOZ

I was born in Bisbee. He was working in Douglas, and it was a real tough go at that time. My mom had a lot of problems. In fact, I was born at home because they didn't have the funds to put me in a hospital, to be born in a hospital, but a lot of it had to do with the government getting the pay to the employee. It was a slow process, the processing of the payments, of the wages or the salary, so there were some problems they had there with that. They didn't get paid on time.

ESPINO

He was a government employee at that time.

MUÑOZ

Right, for the federal government. I mean, that was the U.S. Navy Department. So then eventually he decided that he wanted to go into the actual service, active service, so he volunteered and went into the active Navy. He didn't even go in at the bottom. He went in somewhere when they put him to work in communications.

ESPINO

He was already a college graduate with his master's.

MUÑOZ

At that time, because he was born in Mexico, he wasn't a natural citizen. He didn't qualify. Otherwise he could have been an officer.

ESPINO

Wow.

MUÑOZ

He would have been probably picked up as an officer if he had been born in the United States. I'm not sure. Yeah, he was already naturalized at that point when he went into the Navy.

ESPINO

But he didn't go overseas?

MUÑOZ

Oh, yeah.

ESPINO

He did go overseas?

MUÑOZ

Oh, yeah. He was in the South Pacific. He was in a lot of places.

ESPINO

That must have been difficult for your mom with the kids.

MUÑOZ

Oh, yeah. Once he went, then we went and lived with my grandmother in Tucson, with my maternal grandmother, so we were there the duration of the war. So that's where my memories of life as a toddler or whatever, whatever I was, that's where I do have some memories. I have some faint memories of, like, the house where my grandmother lived and a little bit of the floor plan, what it was.

ESPINO

How about running water in that house? Because you said your grandfather didn't have any.

MUÑOZ

No, see, my mother's family, they were middle-class until the Depression came. My grandfather Antonio Urias, he was a salesman. He was a traveling salesman. He had pretty long-lasting jobs with two different companies. One of them was Krupp [phonetic]. I remember that name. Can't remember the other, but I think one of them was located in El Paso, but they used to sell merchandise. He used to go down south into Mexico. He'd go probably Manzanillo, maybe San Blas, somewhere. I don't know if he went further down, but usually along the coast, and Mazatlan

was one of the places, [unclear], Los Mochis, places like that, and that's where he would sell, like, cloth and other kinds of dry goods. I don't know all the products he sold, but he would go and he'd be gone for maybe two months, a month and a half to two months, on these trips. So he'd go down there, and then he'd come back, and then he would spend maybe a couple of weeks at home before going out again. So he did that for years, but he had a pretty good salary and they acquired properties. They had some properties. They had some nice homes, relatively nice for Mexicans. No, they were nice homes, yeah, for Mexicans. My grandfather, he played the flute. The oldest child was Brigida, and she learned to play the piano. She was very good on the piano. Then my mom eventually was given the opportunity to have lessons on the piano. They were going to have my Aunt Celia—they gave her the opportunity, but she didn't want it, so then my mother let them know that—because she was younger, let them know that she was interested and would practice and learn, so she did.

I mean, they had somewhat of a relatively cultured life. My grandfather would bring sheet music. In fact, I have it, the sheet music, but the sheet music from Mexico, he would bring sheet music, and my aunt would play, and eventually then my mom would play that music. So they'd bring a lot of these old Mexican songs that were out at that time. My grandfather, he was a member of a group that was like a little—I don't know if it was an orchestra or a band or a mix of an orchestra and a band there in Tucson, and they would play. I mean, the family was very, very tight, the extended family was very tight, and then there was all of the comadres and all of the other and all of the society, the Mexican society, and it was more or less—I'd say they were kind of more in the middle-class. Like my dad's family, they were kind of in the middle-class in terms of intellectual and all of that, but as far as—

ESPINO

Economically.

MUÑOZ

—economically, they weren't. My grandmother, she used to make a lot of the clothes for my aunts and my uncles. I mean, she was a very industrious woman, very capable, very strong woman, and just knew how to run things, how to run a large family. She had—I'd say

there were ten, I think. Brigida died when she was, like, thirty-something, early thirties—

ESPINO

Oh, that's young.

MUÑOZ

—from breast cancer, and then one of my other uncles, my Uncle Gilbert, he died when he was around sixteen or seventeen from a ruptured appendix, and then he got peritonitis and died. He was a real popular kid, they said, because one of my cousins, she writes about him. It was a huge turnout for his services when he died. Like my cousin, she writes about all of the traditions, especially the mourning. Man, they would just lay the body out in your house overnight. Then next day or the day after they'd—there wasn't too much embalming, I don't think. Maybe they did a little, I don't know.

ESPINO

Had to bury you right away.

MUÑOZ

I think there was maybe some embalming. I'm not sure. Then the families would stay up all night and they would lay him to rest. It was pretty intense.

ESPINO

Yeah, that's the Catholic side.

MUÑOZ

I don't know if there were any descriptions from the Protestant side.

ESPINO

It would be interesting to compare how that changed, especially considering that they were Catholic before and they changed, they converted to Protestantism, so how some of those traditions stayed part of the culture. They were religious traditions originally, then they stayed part of the culture, although they converted to Protestantism. That might be one of them. But it sounds like your mom's family, she was able to go to school. It wasn't segregated, or there was a public education for Mexican kids in Arizona.

MUÑOZ

Right. There was. I mean, like, in my cousin's book from the Terrazas side, that's Beth—what's her last name? I can't think of it right offhand, but, yeah, she describes it—I mean, there were schools for the Negroes that were separate, I think. I mean, in

Tucson, in particular, it was founded by—they were there. It was already there when the Anglos started moving in. Eventually she describes in the book how the demographics started changing and how eventually the Spanish were greatly outnumbered by the Anglos, but for a long time it wasn't, it wasn't so. There was more balance. So it's changed over time.

Anyway, getting back to what I remember, is I remember, like, being in my grandmother's in Tucson at one of my grandmother's sisters, my Tia Lupita. She lived there. She used to take care of my sister and I a lot. She was a spinster. She never married. My Aunt Charlie, her name was really Guadalupe, but they called her Charlie, she was younger than my mom, so she was there. My Uncle Rudy, I mean, he was in the service at least part of the time. I don't even know where he was before that. I don't even know if he was married. I don't know if he got married during the war. I think he got married during the wartime. [interruption]

ESPINO

Okay, we're back.

MUÑOZ

Okay, so I lived with my grandmother. Of course, my grandmother gave us a lot of attention, my Tia Lupita, my Aunt Charlie, because my sister was older than I. She was almost a year older. I was born premature, I think maybe a month or a month and a half, but I was still—like I was bigger than—I caught up with my sisters in terms of physical size real fast, because she stayed real tiny. She's only, like, about four-ten.

ESPINO

Oh, that is petite. It looks from your photographs that both your mom and your dad were not tall people.

MUÑOZ

No, no, no, they're not.

ESPINO

Would you say most people in your family were not tall, or did you have some people who were very tall as well?

MUÑOZ

Well, I have some cousins that are, like, close to six feet on my mom's side. On my dad's side, yeah, I'm up there. I don't know if there's any who's taller. I'm pretty close to the same height. Maybe one of them's an inch taller. I don't know.

ESPINO

It also sounds like you had a lot of women, female influence, in your childhood, a lot of strong women.

MUÑOZ

I did during the war. On my mom's side, the family was very close, because my grandfather died in about 1932 or '33, so I had uncles that were still living. My Uncle Tony was the oldest after Brigida—she had died—so my Uncle Tony, and then there was another uncle, my Uncle Gonzalo. They called him Chalo. They lived in Tucson. Had another uncle, Ignacio, but he had relocated out of Tucson. I think at that time he was living in Chicago or somewhere. Then my Uncle Rudy was the youngest. He eventually went into the service. I don't know exactly when he entered, but he did eventually—they sent him to school to train to learn Japanese so that he would work on stuff related to translating or something. I don't know, he was a Mexican from Tucson, and they had him learning Japanese.

ESPINO

Apparently there's some similarities, from what I understand, between Japanese and Spanish.

MUÑOZ

Oh, the sounds. I mean, you look at the names. I had a friend, and he died. He was Superior Court judge. His name was Ed Kakita. [Espino laughs.] That usually draws a laugh.

ESPINO

Sorry.

MUÑOZ

But that's Spanish.

ESPINO

If he grew up with Latinos, poor thing. [laughs] Okay, so you were talking about the strong female influence during the war [unclear] there weren't a lot of your uncles.

MUÑOZ

So then, like, there was my Aunt Celia, and her husband worked for the railroad, so he didn't go off to war. Now, she was in Tucson, and then my Aunt Armida and her husband, my Uncle Ted, he went into the service. In fact, he worked with my dad as a censor, because my dad said that he would—I guess he recommended him. They got him in there working, and then he went into the service, but he went over in the Navy, but he went to the Mediterranean, so he

ended up in Italy and places like that. He learned a lot. He had a great time in some of those ports over there, met a lot of Italians and learned Italian cooking and stuff. Yeah, so there was that. Then my mom, of course, she was devoted to us. My dad was gone, so we got a lot of attention—and then my mom wasn't working. She didn't have a job, just taking care of us, and they had a car. I think it was a '38 or '39 Chevy. I remember one of the things I used to do, I used to like to go and play with the radio. They had one of those kind of console radios, you know the kind that's like with chest like this, and I used to love to go—I was a little kid, and I used to love to go and change the station and turn up the volume.

ESPINO

Do you remember anything else about that time as far as the climate, the feeling toward Germany, the feeling toward the Japanese, U.S. patriotism?

MUÑOZ

No. I was two, three, four years old. That wasn't something that I was really aware of. I mean, I was told my dad was in the war and all that. I didn't have any sense of what that meant. I remember when my dad came home and I wasn't really familiar with my father. I mean, I was, like, maybe one or one and a half when he left, and so when he came back—I guess he came back in '45—I would have been three. No, let's see. Maybe he came back in '46. I'm not sure. He came back right away [after Japan surrendered], though, because he didn't take any furloughs or leaves, so that gave him, like, first dibs on going home, and so that's what he did. He came home as soon as he could. So it was probably within a few weeks after the war ended, or maybe a month. I don't know how long it was that he came home, but I remember I was in bed and he woke me up and picked me up and woke me up. I mean, I can remember that it was an emotional moment for the rest—I mean, for me, I was just an observer, kind of, because I didn't have really an understanding of it all.

ESPINO

But you remember, though? You remember actually him picking you up?

MUÑOZ

I remember that. I remember that there was a big hullabaloo, "Your dad's home." [unclear]. So I remember that. I remember my mom

used to drive us around. We used to get ice creams. Then one of the things that I used to do, I used to get in the car and try to steer it and all that. Sometimes I would get in there and I would lock it, I would lock myself in the car and start honking the horn. So when my dad came back, I was still kind of doing that. So one time I was in the car with my sister and I started doing that, and then my dad got angry. He got me out of the car. I guess he had a key, the key. Or, I don't know, maybe my sister opened the door. So then he spanked me, and I hadn't really been spanked, so I was really upset.

ESPINO

I bet.

MUÑOZ

That upset me. That was one of the things that kind of stuck. Then I remember there used to be—after my dad came—no, I had a cousin, my cousin Armando. I remember that. He used to come and tease me when I was little, and he was the son of my Uncle Nacho. My Uncle Nacho and his wife had divorced, and Armando was kind of—I don't know, he was kind of like a black sheep in a way, I think. That's the way the family seemed to treat him. I remember then one time he had an accident on his bicycle and he broke an arm or something like that or a leg. I can't remember if it was an arm or a leg. Then everyone was real concerned about him. Then after my dad came, we moved and we went to what they call dwellings, and it was a little on the outskirts of Tucson, and we lived there for a while, and I remember I used to go out and play with my sister. There was, like, this ant hole out there. I guess it was red ants. Then one time they started biting me, so I remember that. Then my Tia Lupita, she used to come and babysit us, like, when my parents went out, and she was really nice. She used to just be so nice to us, tell us stories and all that. We'd have a good time. She was an elderly lady. I guess some of my older cousins, they would come and play with me, the male cousins. I had some male cousins.

ESPINO

So then when you left Tucson, you left all that family.

MUÑOZ

Right. We eventually moved up to Flagstaff. My dad had malaria. When he was in the South Pacific, he contracted it. You get it from the mosquito. So he couldn't tolerate the heat, it made him sick, so

we moved up to Flagstaff, where it's really cool and he got a job up there working for the Welfare Department. We stayed there maybe a year. I don't know how long it was. I kind of liked Flagstaff. It snowed there. I used to have a little sleigh, a little sled, and my sister and I—there was, like, a little rise from this—well, we lived in a couple of houses. I remember I broke a window in that house by—I don't know what I did. I was playing with something and I broke a window. It was a house that was right next to the Methodist church, so my parents rented it. It belonged to the church, I believe.

ESPINO

Did you go to church? Did you go to that Methodist church?

MUÑOZ

Yeah, I think so, but then I would go with my mom to Mass. We'd go to the Catholic church too. She'd take us, and then we'd go with my dad to church. Rosalio was born there. I remember when he was born. My dad took us up to the hospital, and they brought him out and showed him to us through the window, to my sister and I. I had an uncle that lived there, my Uncle Abel, and he lived right near the church too. He used to live behind that other house, and he used to have pigeons. I had a cousin, Teresa, and my Aunt Carmen, she was Catholic, so she brought all her kids up. She made them all be Catholic, so they were all Catholics, except for my uncle. He was my dad's youngest brother. I liked Flagstaff. It was pretty neat, and we had some friends and kids that lived not too far. We used to go play with them.

ESPINO

Were you old enough to go to school at that time?

MUÑOZ

No, I didn't start school. I must have been close to four then, around four, because I guess when we came to L.A., I started kindergarten right after we came, and I was four and a half then.

ESPINO

So soon after that, you moved to Los Angeles. Do you remember that experience, finding out, and then the actual move?

MUÑOZ

Yeah. My dad, he got accepted to USC [University of Southern California] to go get an MSW [Master's in Social Work], and so we got a trailer. I don't know if we bought the trailer or something. We rented the house, because my parents were buying that house. That

house also had an outhouse and it had a fire stove. It didn't have a gas stove. It used a wood-burning stove. Over in Phoenix, too, where my grandparents lived there was a wood-burning stove.

ESPINO

That's a lot of work.

MUÑOZ

There was running water, but there was no hot water. When we'd take a bath at my grandparents', there would be a big tina and they'd heat up the water and get in, take a bath in the tina.

[laughs] They had their—

ESPINO

Rustic.

MUÑOZ

—rabbits and their chickens. They used to go get their eggs.

ESPINO

Would you consider that rural? Because it sounds like they were right in the city.

MUÑOZ

Well, they weren't near the center of town. They were right in the outskirts. But in Flagstaff we had chickens also, and there used to be a gallo. I used to chase it, but then it used to turn on me, and then we got a little dog. We had a little dog there. When we left, we had to leave the dog. We missed the dog, my sister and I. It was a puppy, but he was a good puppy. Yeah, I liked Flagstaff. I mean, I enjoyed it there. Then I didn't mind L.A. when we moved to L.A. We moved to East L.A. and we moved over. It was East Fifth near Rowan. I went to Rowan Avenue School to kindergarten, used to walk over there. We had a neighbor and he took me under his wing. He was the youngest of all—he had a bunch of sisters, and I don't know if he had any older brothers, but he was the youngest, and he was about maybe four or five years older than I, so he kind of adopted me as his little brother. So he used to take me all over the place. He had a wagon. He'd pull me around. He used to have slingshots and stuff. His name was Arturo, and I really liked him a lot. We were good friends. His sister, one of his older sisters, used to take care of us, babysit us. My mom worked and my dad was going to college, and the babysitter was for Rosalio. He was little then, but then my sister and I, we were in school, so we were gone

part of the day. I was gone half the day. I guess she was there in first grade, because she skipped kindergarten.

ESPINO

Your sister.

MUÑOZ

Yeah. Well, she was about a year older than me, so she was about five and a half when she started school, but I guess I don't know if she could already started reading. I don't know. Maybe she had.

ESPINO

I think if she skipped, probably she was reading.

MUÑOZ

Yeah, well, reading, you learn that in the first grade. That's what you did then. You didn't really start it in kindergarten at that time.

ESPINO

So you do remember what it felt like to move from that kind of— sounds like it was almost a cocoon that you were living in in Arizona.

MUÑOZ

Well, like in Flagstaff we had my Uncle Abel. That was my only relative we had in town, and he had his daughter. I don't know if he had any sons yet. He may have. They were younger. His daughter was about my age. She was about my age, Teresa. Then let's see. What are their names? Alex was the youngest one, but he wasn't born yet. Freddie, that's who, Alfred. Yeah, he was the second, but he's younger too. He probably was born already.

ESPINO

So you think it didn't faze you, the move? The move wasn't something that—

MUÑOZ

I remember crossing the desert. We were pulling this old trailer, and I don't know if my dad made another trip to bring more stuff. I mean, I liked Flagstaff. I mean, I liked it because we had our dog and we had our own little property. I think when we came to L.A., we had gas, like we had a gas stove and we had hot water, because even in Flagstaff when we had our house, we didn't have a water heater. So I think there were some of these things that were—they were upgrades, and it was a small house that we lived in when we first moved in. Actually, the house, we rented it from my Uncle Felix's Aunt, [Her daughter Mercy lived in a large house at the front.

We had a small bungalow in the rear of the lot.] Yeah, they had a daughter named Angela. I remember her. I remember her now. She was younger. She was a little older than Ross, I think, and Rosalio.

ESPINO

So your dad was getting his master's in social work. Was he working at the same time, or was he just committed to school?

MUÑOZ

No, he was just going to school. He had a G.I. Bill, but my mom went to work, so she got a job and she worked for ADT, and she actually did really well. Eventually they wanted to promote her and they wanted her to move up to San Francisco. She was a stenographer. She worked for one of the managers or something, because my mom, she knew how to take shorthand. She was very good at shorthand.

ESPINO

Although she had her teaching credential, didn't she?

MUÑOZ

Right. She learned how to take shorthand when she—I think what happened, well, one, when she finished high school, there was no money to go to college. Her father had died, and so they let her take an extra year of high school just because she didn't have anything to do, no job. There wasn't any prospects for that. So she took an extra year of high school and she took, like, these business things, so she was a very good typist, extremely good typist and fast, and then shorthand.

ESPINO

That was really nice of them to do that for her.

MUÑOZ

Then actually there was these two teachers. They were sisters. They never got married. They were the Brazeltons. One of them, I think, was, like, one of the deans in the high school. They gave her money to go to college, and she worked for them or did stuff, but they helped pay her tuition for I don't know how many years they did that for. That's how she was able to go to college, part of the way that she was able to go to college. In our society there are the people that are very generous and very open, and it doesn't make any difference what their ethnicity or race is or anything, but they had kind of taken her under their wing.

ESPINO

That's what they say, that's all you need, just need one person, one teacher to show an interest in you.

MUÑOZ

Yeah, well, they showed a lot of interest, but my mom, she did very well in high school too. I mean, she was a very good student, serious student. Her music was very good, too, I mean, her piano playing. She played with the orchestra in the high school and in other things, in other kinds of groups. She was considered an asset, in a way. You know how musicians are if you please the audience. So that was an entrée for her to a lot of things. It helped people take notice of her and like her.

ESPINO

It's incredible how many skills she had, because when she came to Los Angeles, I mean, I'm sure she never imagined herself as a stenographer, because her passion was—

MUÑOZ

I think she actually did some kind of work like that on a part-time basis or something in Tucson. I think she may have done something like that, just getting some part-time thing.

ESPINO

Right, some cash for making ends meet. So then she was supporting the family, essentially, at that time.

MUÑOZ

Well, see, she was augmenting, definitely, bringing in a pretty decent salary, but when you got the G.I. Bill, that also gave you, like, a grant too. That gave you money to live. You couldn't live well, but there was some grant to it besides paying your tuition and books.

ESPINO

Well, the clothes in your pictures you were showing me earlier, your childhood pictures, they look pretty fancy. The shoes look expensive. The clothes look—

MUÑOZ

Well, my mother always wanted us to have very good shoes because she thought you needed to have good shoes so that your feet would grow up right, so they always looked for these brands that were built in a way so that it would support your feet so that you would grow up right, your feet would be right. So that was one of their things. We used to go to these—they called them protective

shoes and they were more expensive, and there's specialty stores. But my mother, she always liked to have everything just right as far as nice clothes, well pressed, especially if you're going to be in a picture. If you're going in a picture, then you're going to put on your best, but that's not what you went around in all the time. She used to patch our jeans. We'd put holes in the knees and all that. She used to put patches on them, patch them up, because we'd go through them. Then my brother, Rosalio, he was the one that would wear things fast and they'd get worn out, so she'd be on his case.

ESPINO

I suspect he had to wear your hand-me-downs.

MUÑOZ

He did, yeah, he'd wear some, but he was heavier. He was heavier around the waist than I was, especially when he was—there was, yeah, a period of time when he was—like he's kind of heavy now. But he went through these phases, but when he was—like from the time he was probably six or seven years old, then he started carrying more weight, and not until he was, like, sixteen, seventeen, he started slimming down and he got more into athletics, like in high school his first year, because he skipped a grade when he was, like, in the third or fourth grade. I can't remember. They skipped him because he was just too advanced for what they were doing, so he was kind of young for his grade. So then when we went to Mexico, he lost a year of high school, so he didn't graduate with the class that he started with. He graduated a year later, so then he graduated—he was almost eighteen when he graduated. His birthday was June 29, so he graduated in the middle of June, so he was still—he hadn't quite turned eighteen, but he would have graduated at sixteen if we wouldn't have gone to Mexico.

ESPINO

Right. That would be really young.

MUÑOZ

Yes. It was good that he—because then he got to be student-body president.

ESPINO

[laughs] That's funny. Yeah, well, he's told me a lot. I think that's going to be the last question. We're heading on an hour and forty-

five minutes. So next time we'll pick up with elementary school and your experiences. Once you came to L.A., you stayed here.

MUÑOZ

Right. Our family never relocated back to Arizona.

ESPINO

What's interesting to me is once you rooted here, you never moved around again like you did growing up. How many different houses did you move in from the time you were born? Several.

MUÑOZ

I don't even know. Well, probably in Bisbee I probably just went to Tucson to my grandmother's. Then we lived maybe one or two places in Tucson after my dad came back, then to Flagstaff, and then to Los Angeles. We lived in one place. We only lived there maybe a year, and then we moved to the projects. We moved to the Maravilla Projects. We stayed there probably a couple of years.

ESPINO

That's, like, seven places already, and you're probably only seven years old, so that's a lot of movement.

MUÑOZ

Then from the projects, then we bought a house, and we stayed there maybe five or six years, but then my parents finally got the home that we moved to in '56, and then they died in that house.

ESPINO

The one in Highland Park.

MUÑOZ

Right.

ESPINO

1956. I wonder if that was their dream house. Okay, well, I'll stop it here. [End of November 22, 2011 interview]

1.2. Session Two (December 1, 2011)

ESPINO

This is Virginia Espino. I'm interviewing Mr. Ricardo Muñoz at his home in South Pasadena [California], and I'd like to start today with your early childhood memories. Last time we finished off with your move to the Maravilla Projects, and you talked about your family history and your parents meeting and that kind of thing, so I'm

wondering what you can remember about your childhood and those experiences in the projects. Were they called the projects then?

MUÑOZ

Yes, they were called the projects. Well, the projects, I guess there were long bungalows where there were different units. These were all kind of attached, but they had walls between them. They were only one story. They were raised off above the level of the ground quite a bit, maybe about three or four steps up, and then you'd go into your unit. There were maybe six units per building. As I recall, I think the floors were, like, concrete. They were built very solid, the buildings. There were many units in the whole projects. It was a really large project, housing project.

ESPINO

Do you remember what the perception of those projects were? Like today, for example, people who live in the projects are generally the people who are of very low income, and there's some negative stereotypes. Did that exist back then too?

MUÑOZ

At my age that wasn't something that I would somewhat notice. I mean, I remember neighbors that we had. The percentage of Latino, Mexican in the projects was relatively high, but there was a diversity in the projects. There were some black families, not very many. I don't think there were very many Asian, but there were different Anglo families that were there.

I started first grade when we lived in the projects, and I would walk to school. I think my mom used to walk us to school when we first got there. My older sister, she was a grade ahead of me, but we went to Riggin Avenue [Elementary] school, and it was quite a distance from where we lived. It was a good distance to walk there, and I remember there used to be, like, a gully. You could go through this gully, and there was, like, a stream through the gully. Sometimes I would do that, especially I remember sometimes when it rained, I would be wearing some galoshes, and I would just go and walk through the water. I made a very good friendship with a fellow who was—I think he was, like, a year younger. He was, like, in a grade below me. His name was Ronnie Jenson, and he had an older brother—his name was Nils—and two sisters. The older one was Sandra, and then Donna. My sister became pretty good friends with Donna, and both Donna and Sandra would babysit us because

they were older. They were, like, maybe in high school or junior high. Ronnie was the little kid in their family. Their father was from Denmark, and during World War II, I guess he got—well, he was sailor, I guess, but he eventually, I think, became attached in some way to either the U.S. Navy or to the Merchant Marine or something and was involved in the war effort, and he came to the United States that way. Then the mother, her name was Edna, and she, I think, was from Lebanon. I think she was Lebanese, and they had married and they had these kids. We became pretty good friends and my parents became friends because they utilized the girls to babysit us.

They were very talented people. Like Nils, he was the oldest, he ended up getting a scholarship to USC, and I think he went to Garfield and he got the award for being the best math student at Garfield, and he eventually became a physicist and he worked on the first spacesuits later on in his career. Then Sandra, I think she went to UCLA, and she eventually married a black fellow, and I think he was a professor too. I think he was teaching. He may have been teaching at a state college or a junior college or something eventually. But Sandra, she eventually became a lawyer. And then Donna, she married real young, I think right out of high school, and never really got her college, but the parents, especially the mom, she wanted her kids all to go to college. Ronnie, he was a wild kind of a personality and he also was very intelligent, but he was kind of just fooling around a lot. But we played. We were good friends. I remember later on he was just kind of goofing off with his life. He became a lifeguard. He was a lifeguard down in Doheny and different places, and then he kind of had that kind of a life on the beach. He loved the beach. His brother Nils was one of the early surfers in California, where they used to use wood boards before surfing really progressed technologically. So they were kind of interesting people. His mom, eventually she became a librarian and she worked in the downtown central library.

ESPINO

So you're saying that you kept in touch with them after you—

MUÑOZ

We kept in touch.

ESPINO

—because these are years later that—you didn’t live in the projects all these years—

MUÑOZ

No, no.

ESPINO

—and I’m assuming neither did they.

MUÑOZ

Yeah, we left before they did. Then there was another family that lived in the unit, I think they were alongside of ours, and my mom became pretty good friends with the mom of the other kids. There was a boy there, his name was Sonny, and his father really was into boxing, so he was always trying to get Sonny to take up boxing. We were, like, seven, six, seven years old. I remember he wanted me to box with Sonny, and he had the boxing gloves, so we put on the boxing gloves. I was a little guy, but anyway, I was more aggressive. Sonny really wasn’t interested in the boxing. His father was pushing him into it. So I guess I was able to more or less dominate more in this contest that the father was getting us into. Some other memories that I have there, oh, there was, like, the store where we lived. We lived, I think, on Rosarita Walk on Rowena, off of Rowena, and there was a store there. I think it still may be still there. It was Tony’s Market, and we used to run across the street to get to the market, and there was, like, a handball court that was a little further down the block from there where these older men would be there. It was kind of interesting. They always intrigued me when I went by there.

ESPINO

I thought the handball courts were in the Maravilla Projects.

MUÑOZ

No, no, these were across the street.

ESPINO

The ones that they were trying to preserve today?

MUÑOZ

Oh, I don’t know what they’re trying to do over there. I’d have to go over there and look. But one time my sister, she was trying to go to the store and get something and she got hit by a car, and, I don’t know, it sent her twenty, thirty feet.

ESPINO

Wow.

MUÑOZ

But she didn't really get hurt, and I remember, yeah, they came and they ran to our house and told us that she had been hit by a car. We went down to the emergency, and it turned out that she really didn't get any fractures. She was awfully lucky, and all of these people in the projects, they were all real worried and concerned about her. So that was something that I remember pretty much there.

ESPINO

Did you feel like there was a sense of community?

MUÑOZ

There was. There was a sense of community. There was another family that my mom—a lady, she used to do ironing for us, and she used to take clothes over there to have them ironed—I can't remember their names. They were friends of the Jensions, and they had a son, too, who was around my age too. One of the other things that happened there was it snowed. The last time it really snowed in Los Angeles we were living there, and, of course, we had lived in Flagstaff. My sister and I, we were very familiar with snow, but everyone else, it was a spectacle. At that time everything on the other side of Rowena, I guess it is—I think that's the name of the street. There's that street that goes up behind the projects and goes on up to East L.A. College [Floral Drive], and you can go into the big parking lot there by the stadium. Anyway, across the street from that street, it was this big pastureland, huge pastureland, and there was cattle up there and it was all undeveloped. There was a big like a ranch or something, so every now and then I remember Ronnie's mom, Edna, she would take us for walks. We went walking up there. My dad, at that time he was trying to stay in shape, so he used to go, and there was the road that goes through there that goes north from the projects, I can't remember the name of the road. It would have been Mednik. But it kept on going. I don't know if it changed names or not, but my dad used to go, and sometimes I would go with him, and he would go kind of jogging up and down, up that road and back. One time Edna, she took Ronnie and I on a long walk, and we walked from the projects and we walked—
[interruption]

ESPINO

You were talking about the Maravilla Projects, and we can go back to the families that you met there you mentioned. This might be a little bit too far back, but that's okay. You mentioned one of your friends had—like the early days when there was no television and many families didn't have TVs, so you would go over to the Harolds' house. Let's start from there.

MUÑOZ

Yes, well, at that time we didn't have a television. My dad used to take us—sometimes we'd go at night on Fridays and Saturdays and we'd go down to either Atlantic—I think sometimes we were on Atlantic Boulevard, sometimes on Whittier Boulevard, and we'd go by furniture stores or stores where they sold televisions and had them in the window, and you could kind of just sit up there or stand out there and watch, because not too many people had televisions at that time. So the Harolds, they were, I guess you'd say, friendly enough or whatever too. We were little kids, and their son, Richard Harold, who was quite a bit older, I mean, he seemed to like me and I liked him, and he may have been maybe four years older, three or four years older. I don't know. I can't remember for sure. He had a younger sister [Melanie], and she may have been closer to my age. But his parents, they would allow some of the neighbor kids to come in and sit in their living room on the floor and watch programs, especially Hopalong Cassidy was the one that we really enjoyed watching.

So that was one of the families. I guess I saw them as an Anglo family because they were very light-skinned, and one of the things they did, the parents, they kind of were just relaxing and they'd have, like, a beer. They'd be drinking a beer, the mom and the dad, and they'd be smoking. See, in my family, my parents, they didn't do anything like that. They didn't smoke and they weren't serving beer very often, maybe only on special occasions, so that was different.

ESPINO

Did you notice at the time—and this is something that just came to me now. I didn't ask you before the recorder stopped, but were you aware of race back then? Were you aware that they weren't like you, other than the smoking and the drinking?

MUÑOZ

I think so. I noticed and observed that they were different, not that whether it had much meaning, what the meaning was, but I could observe just their physical characteristics were different. I could see a black person and I would see that they were different, or an Asian person. So, I mean, I noticed differences, but I didn't attach any real sense of—I don't think I was stereotyping or anything, because I wasn't aware of stereotypes. Later on, you pick that up and you learn that as you grow older and you get more exposed to the culture and the history, and then you know more about the meanings of a lot of the racism and that sort of thing that exists.

ESPINO

Sometimes it's our parents that pass down those ideas to us.

MUÑOZ

Definitely. I'm sure. My parents were very liberal, I would say. They were aware of the discrimination that had been their experience of being discriminated against. My dad, history was one of his strongest subjects and one of the subjects that he was most interested in, and he was well read and understood a lot of the history of slavery, the history of discrimination, just from an academic side and from his own reading and from his own life experience, I remember. He had friends that were from any racial group. I mean, he had a lot of friends, and my mom had friends too. She was more of a sheltered person when she grew up in her family, because that was more the tradition, but she did, she had friends, and she went to the high school and the university. I don't think she had that much friends that were black or had that much exposure living in Tucson. I think she's mentioned some that she knew, but I don't think she ever had any close ones. Now, my dad, one thing that was kind of interesting, when he was in Flagstaff, he worked with Wilson Riles, and Wilson Riles was working in Flagstaff at that time, and they were friends. Wilson Riles eventually became the Superintendent of Public Instruction in California, so that was kind of an interesting kind of a thing that happened, that they two both came to California and then had careers in California. My dad, even like with the Udalls, he knew them pretty well because they were born in Saint Johns, and that's where my mom and dad met and worked, and they met the Udalls. My dad, he knew Barry Goldwater's older brother. Some of my uncles, they knew Barry and they knew the Goldwaters in Phoenix and all that. So there were

people that they got to know, not real close friends, but they got to know them and seemed to have a good impression of them.

But getting back to Maravilla, when I went to school there, I had finished kindergarten at Rowen [Avenue Elementary School], and when we moved to Maravilla, then I started first grade at Riggin [Avenue Elementary School], and I remember one of the things that I learned in first grade was to tell time and how to look at the clock and tell what time it was, and my sister, she helped me a lot with that, because she helped me understand the five tables, because there's five minutes between each of the numbers. So that was something that was really kind of something, and I think I impressed the teacher that I had learned in the first grade how to tell time.

ESPINO

Were your classes diverse or were they primarily Mexicans?

MUÑOZ

You know, I really don't have much of a recollection of it or even of the friendships that I formed in the classrooms and who I hung out with. I don't really remember. Actually, my memory isn't that great on the—

ESPINO

Those early days.

MUÑOZ

Those early days. Well, the teachers that I had at Riggin were pretty good teachers, and I can't remember all of their names. Actually, I brought out and I looked through some of my—I was trying to look through—oh, gee, brought some other stuff that isn't part of it. But I had some old report cards that I had, so I was looking at—

ESPINO

What do they tell you, the report cards, when you look at them?

This is primary school, correct, that you're looking at?

MUÑOZ

Yeah. I think I may have one in here from Riggin, but most of them are from Avenue 21. Yeah, that's Avenue 21.

ESPINO

What kind of expectations do you think the teachers had of you? I mean, did you feel challenged or bored or—

MUÑOZ

Here's one from Riggin.

ESPINO

—mistreated?

MUÑOZ

Here's one from Riggin. Let's see. Who's the teacher? This is Mrs. Gray. I really liked her. She was the last teacher I had there. She gave me an A in language and an A in art in one semester. She gave me the same grades. She gave me a C in music, Bs in reading and handwriting, and a B in physical education, but an A in art and an A in language, and she marked me satisfactory as far as my—

ESPINO

Behavior?

MUÑOZ

Behavior, yeah, and I had perfect attendance too.

ESPINO

That's pretty impressive.

MUÑOZ

Oh, this is Rowen. Oh, my gosh. This is my kindergarten. I missed seven days in my second ten weeks. Must have been sick, or maybe we went somewhere. There's my kindergarten.

ESPINO

Yeah, this teacher was much more impressed with you.

MUÑOZ

So this is Riggin here. Let's see. Who's this? Miss Givens.

ESPINO

Did you have a favorite teacher from the elementary school?

MUÑOZ

Oh, maybe Miss Reed was another teacher. This is Miss Givens. Let's see, what grade was this? First grade, A-1. Then the second ten weeks I got an A in reading. That was the only thing they graded you on, and I got "outstanding" in everything, so that teacher liked me.

ESPINO

Yeah, this teacher was really impressed with you.

MUÑOZ

Now, that was the teacher where I got the highest grades.

ESPINO

Yes. Do you remember this teacher?

MUÑOZ

Yeah, I think so. Okay, now, this is Miss Reid. Miss Reid must have been the last one I went to when I was there at Riggins, and she graded me pretty well, but I think part of it, maybe I was doing better than most of the other kids. I think that was part of it.

ESPINO

You think you stood out?

MUÑOZ

I think so. I think they liked me. See, my mom, she always liked to dress us so that we were very clean and everything was just as perfect as can be. She was, like, a perfectionist type, so she liked that.

ESPINO

But you also have to have the resources to be able to do that.

MUÑOZ

Right. Well, I don't know how they managed. I mean, like, my mom, when she worked, she would bring in a salary. I can't remember exactly when she stopped. She stopped by for sure when Carlos was born. I don't think she went back to work after that. I'm not sure. Maybe she did. But it was a lot farther, harder to get to work, because where we lived—when we lived on East Fifth Avenue, like, she worked down—as I can recall, I think it was maybe the—let's see, Whittier Boulevard, there's the bridge that goes across, and I think it was on that bridge. You'd go across that bridge, and then you'd come down towards the center of town, but just right there in that section.

She worked for ADT, and that's where they had their office, somewhere right in there. As I can recall, it was near the bridge, it was near the L.A. River, but I think it was on the side of the river that's closer to downtown. So I guess when we lived on East Fifth Street, because that was near Rowen, she could take a bus, or I think there was a streetcar that used to go down that went through there. Then when we moved to Maravilla, was much further. It was a much further ride. My dad had a car, but he was going to USC at that time. It was after he finished his master's in social work and then started working for the county for the Bureau of Adoptions, that's when they eventually had the means to go out and buy a house, because then he had an income, and by that time, my mom wasn't working.

ESPINO

Was it hard for you leaving that community? Sounds like you had a lot of good friends there.

MUÑOZ

I had some good friends. I mean, when we moved out of the projects—and in fact, my dad would take us down there every now and then, because that lady—my mom, she still used to send ironing to this woman. I'm trying to think of their names, their last name. So I'd go down there and we'd spend time and we'd visit and they'd go and visit the Jensions and they'd visit the lady who they—and the lady who did the ironing, she was Anglo also. So we would go down there and then visit, and then I'd hang out with my friends there, but then eventually we lived in Lincoln Heights and I started going to Avenue 21, and eventually I made friends there. That was a real small school, Avenue 21.

ESPINO

It sounds like you had a real privileged upbringing.

MUÑOZ

Well, this is all relative, privileged with respect to those who are less privileged, but it was privileged, I would say, yeah.

ESPINO

I mean, your mom's paying for a babysitter. Well, when you think about people from the Mexican American community—that's what I'm referring to—most couldn't have afforded babysitter.

MUÑOZ

Well, that's because she had a pretty decent job, and she did very well on her job because she was very much trained. Like I think I told you before, after she finished high school, there was no money to go to college, so she was allowed to take an extra year after her graduation from high school and take courses, and she took, like, stenography and typing, all of these office skills that she really developed. So she was very good stenographer, and that's what they really liked about her in this job. I remember she made friends with a lady there that she worked with. I think her name was Elsie, and I think she was Jewish, but she became friends with her. They were friends for a long time. They kept in touch for many, many years, and they both worked in that office.

ESPINO

But also sending your ironing out to have someone else do it.

MUÑOZ

Yeah, well, they were able to afford that. Eventually, like, my mom—I mean, when we moved out of the projects, there were four children that she was raising, and my dad was very busy. The weekends is when he had some time and that he would help, but most of the other time he became very active in community groups and other types of things. Besides his job, he was in associations. He became very active, and when he got his MSW, too, he formed a lot of really good friendships with his classmates at USC, and a lot of them did really well, too, in their careers in social work and in their profession. Like one of them, he became one of the—I don't know if he actually became the head probation officer, but he was, like, the assistant. He was, like, the deputy, the chief deputy of probation to whoever was in charge. Eventually, when I got a job, he kind of helped me get a job when I got out of college with the Probation Department, in a sense, but I had already worked as a student worker. There were some other people that my dad—he formed a lot of friendships. There weren't any other Mexican Americans in any of those classes or anything like that, not really. There were very few that were into that level at that time.

ESPINO

Do you recall when you realized that he was concerned with the Mexican American community and education and social justice issues?

MUÑOZ

Yeah, like one of the things, too, even, like, in Flagstaff, he was the manager of, like, the local baseball team of Chicanos. It was basically Chicanos, and there were some Indians on the teams, but they used to go play a lot of Indian teams, and they used to go around. They'd go from Flagstaff to Holbrook, to Winslow, to all these northern Arizona towns, and they'd have their games on the weekends. He used to go hunting there and around Flagstaff, and fishing. We used to go down to Oak Creek Canyon. It was beautiful. I was just a little kid.

ESPINO

Do you have pictures from that time?

MUÑOZ

There may be some. There may be some. I don't know. I don't have them in my album, but maybe my brothers and sisters might have them. They might be in the archives.

ESPINO

It sounds like he lived his ideals through his work with associations, and you're talking about this baseball team, but did he come home and talk to you about the importance of education, or how did he—

MUÑOZ

He didn't really need to do that. I mean, what he did, he did a lot of reading to us. We used to read the Bible. When he was home at night, we would read the Bible. We went through the Bible I don't know how many times, from Genesis through Revelations or whatever, and then he used to read other books. He used to read a lot of children's stories and other stories, like Alice in Wonderland and Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer and stuff like that, and then he used to read all these other stories. I remember he used to read these Russian tales for children. They were really interesting tales. They were kind of like, I guess, you'd see these—what is that some of these authors, they've made this movies? Peter Pan and stuff like that.

ESPINO

Was it tales with a lesson?

MUÑOZ

Well, a lot of them had lessons to them. A lot of them had lessons to them. Those are a lot of the things that I remember there. We used to go to church. My dad, he always took us to church and Sunday school, and when we were in Maravilla, we went mostly to the Spanish-speaking church. It wasn't until we moved to Lincoln Heights that we started going to an English-speaking Methodist church, and my mom, we used to go to Mass. In fact, when we lived down there in Maravilla, my mom—we never got baptized until—she wanted one of my uncles and my aunt to do the baptizing, but my uncle was in the service. He was in Europe until the end of the war, and they never got around to it, but they finally did baptize—I got baptized at La Soledad right over there on Brooklyn. So my aunt and uncle, they came from Arizona and they were there and went and got me baptized. But that's where we used to go to. My mom, we used to walk over to La Soledad. That's where we'd go to Mass.

ESPINO

Did your mom talk to you about education? Did she have a way of illustrating to you the importance of it verbally or—

MUÑOZ

They didn't talk in those terms. They would more give us stuff to read. They would read to us and show us what you get out of reading for yourself, so we eventually got into reading. They bought books. They had the newspaper and magazines. Even, like, when we were in Lincoln Heights when I was even under twelve, and my brother Ross, we would get up in the morning, we'd beat my dad to the paper and we'd pull it out and start reading the whole newspaper, especially the sports. Yeah, I used to read the newspaper, a good portion of it, when I was, like, fourth grade or something like that, fifth grade. Then my parents, they bought a junior Encyclopedia Britannica Junior. My brother Ross, he read it from one end to the other.

ESPINO

They're huge.

MUÑOZ

No, these were little books. They're not the whole encyclopedia. This was a very abbreviated version for children, for kids, but it was Britannica Junior. That's what they called it.

ESPINO

But even still, that's a lot.

MUÑOZ

But it had a lot of information in there about a lot of different things.

ESPINO

It was the culture of your family, it sounds like.

MUÑOZ

Right, because my dad used to read. I mean, we'd see him reading the paper. We'd see him reading. We'd see him, the stuff that he did, my mom. They were interested. Later on they got different kinds of, like, Newsweek magazine or all these other magazines, and we would read them, about what's going on. They didn't really have to directly talk about it, "Oh, you want to go to college. You want to study real hard so you can go to college," and all that. They didn't do that.

ESPINO

A lot of the people that I interview, their parents didn't have an opportunity to go to college, so it was a big deal for them to talk about getting an education, "You don't want to do what I'm doing,"

because they were laborers. Sounds like you had a completely different experience from most Mexican Americans.

MUÑOZ

Oh, yeah.

ESPINO

Did you feel different from other Mexican American kids?

MUÑOZ

Well, there were times when I did. There times that I was struck with that, and then sometimes, like, my teachers, they would say, "Oh, your dad, he's this," or he's that, if they knew. Then my mom, she got in the PTAs [Parent-Teacher Association] all the time and was, like, a leader in the PTAs, because she was very capable. She was so educated. She had been a teacher herself. I never really wanted a lot of the other students to know how much my mother was involved in all that stuff. I wanted to be more anonymous in terms of that. I didn't want the other kids to think that I was getting any kind of special treatment or attention because of my mother's relationship in the PTA or whatever.

ESPINO

She knew the principals. She probably knew them on first-name basis, that kind of thing.

MUÑOZ

Oh, yeah. Then when we went to Avenue 21, she became very close friends with the principal there. They became really pretty good friends and they kept in contact even long after we were out of that school. Then I remember, like, my brother Carlos and my brother Ross—at Avenue 21 that's where we moved in Lincoln Heights. I was in the second or third grade. I think I was in the third grade, the second half of the third grade, and Ross was in the—I don't know if he was in kindergarten or the first grade, but eventually he had the first-grade teacher there, and she just loved Ross. He was the Santa Claus in the Christmas play and all that. She always had a pet, so Ross was her pet, and she would buy him stuff. Well, then when Carlos came, and Carlos, he got it even more from that teacher.

ESPINO

You mean devotion?

MUÑOZ

Yeah. [laughs] Her name was Miss Cushie, or Mrs. Cushie.

ESPINO

Did your parents find that odd?

MUÑOZ

They didn't mind it. I don't think they did. I was six years older than Carlos, almost six years older, and four years older than Rosalio, maybe three and a half, or something like that. No, I think they liked the fact that—I mean, both of them did very well. They progressed as far as their reading skills in her class, so I think they were more observant of their progress as far as their learning progress, because both of them were teachers, teaching experience, so they had a good sense of how to evaluate what the teacher was doing for the student.

ESPINO

Did the teachers ever pose to you the statement, "You're different from other Mexicans," or, "You're not like them," that kind of thing?

MUÑOZ

No, I don't remember that ever happening. My older sister, she was a year ahead of me, so my older sister, she was, like, a little ideal student. She was real nice, real sweet, and smart. So whenever they would get me, I already had her reputation. They said, "Oh, here comes her brother." They're going to give me the benefit of the doubt right away that I'm going to be a good kid. I mean, one of the teachers I had problems with.

ESPINO

Who was that?

MUÑOZ

She got married, but her name was first Miss Andrews, or maybe it was Miss Carrasco. I don't know which one came first. But at that time I was kind of like a smart-aleck. I guess I was kind of, like, in training for being a comic or something, just make jokes out of things or make quips.

ESPINO

What age was this?

MUÑOZ

This was, like, in about the fifth grade.

ESPINO

Still elementary school.

MUÑOZ

Yeah, maybe the fifth, yeah. I guess maybe they figured out I was too advanced. They moved me up when I was in the fifth grade. They moved me in with the sixth-graders. It was at least half a year, for sure, may have been a little more, so then I was in with this older group of kids and I wasn't with the kids from my grade.

ESPINO

And you were already young to begin with, because you started kindergarten at four years old.

MUÑOZ

Yeah, well, I was four and a half, yeah. But anyway, they moved me out because they thought maybe the older kids wouldn't put up with me doing that. Like I say, I'm too young for this. I'm going to even be younger there with these older kids. It's my sister's class.

ESPINO

So what was it like? Did they put you in your place?

MUÑOZ

Well, this teacher [Mrs. Woods] was very different from the other one [Miss Andrews]. This one, yeah, she had a different demeanor and all that. Psychologically I don't know why I kind of gave that other teacher [Miss Andrews] more—maybe I was getting attention from her, because she would say something and I'd raise my hand and say something funny about what she's saying or twisting things, so she got tired of it.

ESPINO

Okay, we'll stop here and pick up there when you move to the Avenue 21 school, which you're still not in Highland Park yet.

MUÑOZ

No.

ESPINO

So this is the time where you're in Lincoln Heights.

MUÑOZ

Right. [End of December 1, 2011 interview]

1.3. Session Three (December 16, 2011)

ESPINO

This is Virginia Espino, and today is December 16th. I'm interviewing Mr. Ricardo Muñoz at his home in South Pasadena.

Today I'd like to start with--last time we left off, we were about the time when you were moving to Highland Park, and if you could tell me what that was like for you, as far as leaving Lincoln Heights and making that shift. It was a different kind of neighborhood, if I remember correctly. Can you tell me what that period of your life was like?

MUÑOZ

Yes, at that time, I was attending Nightingale Junior High School and I had completed--it was in the summer that we moved and I had finished the eighth grade, so I had one more year at Nightingale and we moved to Highland Park. Now, of course, it was really quite a change. The neighborhood was much different. The physical situation was different because in Highland Park the home was on a hill. So we'd never lived on a hill before, and in Lincoln Heights our home was on pretty flat land. The other thing, too, there was a big difference in the age of the homes. The home in Highland Park was built in the 1930s, I believe, probably the mid thirties, and the home in Lincoln Heights was probably closer to the turn of the century or sometime maybe--probably before 1920. The home in Lincoln Heights was something like a Craftsman-type home. It was that kind of clapboard on the side of the exterior. The home in Highland Park was stucco and it was kind of a Mediterranean-style home. So it was a two-story, as well, and actually it had a sub-level too. So there were actually three levels in that home. So it was very different, just the place.

The yard was a lot different. It was on a hillside, so it was different. The street was a lot different. There wasn't too much space for two cars to pass each other on that street, compared to the street in Lincoln Heights. But there were some great advantages in terms of the location because our home was above the playground, the Highland Park playground, and it was, like, maybe a block away, walking down the hill. So particularly myself and my brother, my younger brothers, we really took advantage of having a playground and we spent a lot of time there, but in addition, at the bottom on that whole--I think it was a block. It was kind of an odd-shaped block. At the other end was the library, the Highland Park Library. So we had two very valuable--you might call them amenities that we could take advantage of and then we weren't very far. We could walk down. But in Lincoln Heights we lived very close to the

commercial center of Lincoln Heights. In Highland Park we were a little further away, but not that far, and we could just walk down to Figueroa and walk down, and there used to be a grocery store. It was medium-sized kind of--it wasn't a chain, but it was--I think at one time it was Sy Perkins and then it became Dick's Market, and then across the street from there was Ben Alexander Ford and there was a post office not too far away, just a little further down. The address that we lived at was 6164 Mount Angelus Drive, and in Lincoln Heights our address was 143 South Avenue Twenty-Three.

ESPINO

Were you with your parents when they were house shopping? Did you know they were looking for a home in Highland Park?

MUÑOZ

Well, they actually went and they were looking in different areas. They took us to a home that they were considering purchasing that was closer to Echo Park. It was not really that far up, but it was up, like, Sunset, maybe. I can't remember the names of the streets up there, but it was probably not too far from where that street off of Sunset that goes up to Dodger Stadium, the large one. It was pretty close in that area. That's what I recall. We were concerned, I guess to some degree, my sister and myself, as to what high school we would go to, because we attended Nightingale, and the students at Nightingale, they split up. There was a big split of where the students went after finishing Nightingale. There was a large portion that would go to Lincoln, a large portion went to Belmont, a large portion that went to Franklin, and then there was another portion that went to Marshall, and very few probably went to Eagle Rock. So we were concerned about where we lived and where we might be going to high school in terms of the friends that we had at Nightingale. So when we moved up to Highland Park, there was a change of schools, but I didn't change. I had a year left and I was able to continue at Nightingale and complete my final year at Nightingale with all of the friends that I had there, and I really was not interested in making a change.

ESPINO

Did you make that clear to your parents?

MUÑOZ

I think so. You know, I don't know how much it became an issue. My father worked for the school district and he actually worked for

pupil services and attendance. So I don't know if he had to do anything or whether they got any formal kind of arrangement, but anyway, that's what happened. I don't really know if they had to take any steps to get me the permission to go there or not.

ESPINO

Were you aware of the ethnic makeup of the different neighborhoods, Eagle Rock, Highland Park?

MUÑOZ

Well, I was definitely, once we made the move. I had some notion. I mean, I was more like where my friends who I'd made—when I went to Franklin, there was a group of us from Nightingale that went to Franklin. We were a very small percentage of the class that started at Franklin in the tenth grade, but there were a number of us, so we were all pretty bonded as friends, all of us that made that transition to Franklin. But I mean we really liked it. The home was a lot newer. It was a lot nicer home than what we had been living in, in Lincoln Heights, so that was a big plus.

ESPINO

Did it seem like you were rich?

MUÑOZ

Pardon?

ESPINO

Did you feel rich at that point?

MUÑOZ

Never felt rich.

ESPINO

No?

MUÑOZ

We never felt—my parents were very frugal. They had grown up in the Depression, and I guess they made the investment to buy the home and move out of Lincoln Heights. That had come about because there was another family whose home was purchased when the freeway was coming through, and they looked around, I guess, in the neighborhood and found my parents willing to sell because they wanted to stay in the neighborhood there. So that's the reason that the opportunity came up to sell the property.

I don't know, I guess my parents maybe they came out pretty well. I don't know if they did. I really don't know. I don't know any of that detail of the financing of the home or what have you. I think

that the home, when they bought it, it was like \$16,000 that they paid for it and, I don't know, maybe they sold the other ones for 8,000. I'm not sure what they sold it for, but I mean they still owed on the other house because they were—my dad, he probably used the GI Bill on the first house because he had been in the war.

ESPINO

Well, how did your friends look at you, as far as the economic—because it seems like that was a big deal to move into a big—how many bedrooms was it again, your new house?

MUÑOZ

Okay. Let's see. There was one, two, three. There was, like, a couple of makeshift bedrooms. There was one that had been a garage and then there was another one that had been, like, a sun porch, something like that, that had been converted to a room, so if you counted those, there were five. So there was one that was downstairs in the subterranean area. Yeah, it was much larger, but basically, like, we moved up there—like, the friends that I had had lived in Lincoln Heights. They were basically not—they weren't close by to come and visit. I mean, all the friends that we had, we didn't really get much visits from my friends, and then it was only a small amount that—I mean, if we would have stayed in Lincoln Heights, we probably would have gone to Lincoln High School, so, like, all the kids that went to Lincoln, I mean, living where we lived in Highland Park, it was a long way to come, so there wasn't too much visiting.

I had one friend [Monty Grant] who, when I went to Nightingale, what I used to do, I used to ride a bicycle to Nightingale and I had a friend who lived about a block and a half from the school, so I would just come down and park my bike and leave it there because I was afraid if I left it at the school, it would be stolen or stripped or whatever. There was always that risk. So there was one friend. And then I had another friend [John Heredia] and I used to walk home with him because he lived going up towards Highland Park. He was, like, my best friend at that time. We became, like, best friends because I would go over to his house and hang out at his house before I'd go on home. So after school I would do that. We would do homework together, some of the homework we'd do, or else we would—he lived near Sycamore Grove Park. Sometimes we'd go over there and play. He occasionally would come over and visit me

up in Highland Park, and, yeah, he was somewhat in awe of the place. Yeah, he was, but his family was not—they weren't very well off. They had a bunch of kids, too, I guess, during that time. I think it was during that time his mother had the last child, and he had an older sister [Connie Heredia] who was my older sister's—they were friends and they were classmates in the class ahead of us. And then I used to hang around my—I'd get my brothers, we'd go down and play with them down there sometimes on weekends and during the summer, but they weren't too well off. His dad was a construction worker, and he would go away on projects and he'd be away for a week or more and different periods of time because I guess the company was working on stuff all over, out of town. But then I made friends. I mean, there were other friends. The friends from Nightingale, the ones that went to Franklin, we kind of hung out for a while.

I went into the ROTC. That was one of the things at Franklin. When we were at Nightingale—at Lincoln I think ROTC was, like, required and we all believed or most of us believed that we had to take ROTC, so we took ROTC in the tenth grade, and then I guess some of them learned that you didn't have to take it, so they moved out of ROTC. Some of them stayed. My dad wanted me to stay in it, and eventually I wanted to get out and go out for sports, but he wanted me to stay in it. He thought I could do real well in ROTC and then go to college and get an ROTC scholarship, but eventually it never panned out and I got very—well, when I was younger, I loved—I studied war—that was one of my interests—and history, World War II and the military. I used to like war movies and I really was interested in it, but when I went into ROTC, I guess it was not very intellectually stimulating. It was really pretty much of a drag, the kinds of things that we did—

ESPINO

Do you have any examples?

MUÑOZ

Pardon?

ESPINO

Any examples of what it was that made it a drag?

MUÑOZ

Well, you did a lot of marching. You spent a lot of time—there was classroom time. Like, you'd learn the M1 rifle and you'd memorize a

lot of stuff about the M1 and you'd learn how to take it apart and assemble it, and there was some things that you'd learn. I can't even remember the stuff, but you didn't really learn, like—I would have been more interested, more like in an officer's type of being exposed to that, how to devise plans, how to be out in the field and deal with, like—I used to like—when I was a kid, we used to play war and all that, so you'd—it was that kind of thing.

Actually, we had a thing. We went to a—they had, like, a fieldtrip. It was where we'd go and spend, I don't know, a couple of nights at Fort MacArthur. I did that a couple of times, and you'd go out and then we'd have, like, a mock—we did have, like, a mock—what do they call them?

ESPINO

Battle?

MUÑOZ

Yeah, it was maneuvers. I guess they call them maneuvers or something, and at night. I mean it was kind of a [fiasco]—but a lot of it seemed like a joke to me.

ESPINO

What do you think the objective—I mean, as a high school student, did you try and figure out what the point of ROTC was?

MUÑOZ

Well, it was an introduction to a noncommissioned kind of experience, if you were a noncommissioned personnel. That's what it was, and you learned about the ranks and about this, and you kind of learned somewhat of the structure of, like, a platoon, and then a company and then a battalion.

ESPINO

Stuff you probably already knew. [laughs]

MUÑOZ

Well, but then you would actually organize and you'd have all the personnel to make that up, and there was a lot of marching. We'd march, and, like, we marched in the Christmas parade in Highland Park and that sort of thing. Then you could try to go out for drill team and do fancy stuff with the manual of arms.

ESPINO

Did it make you want to join the military after high school?

MUÑOZ

No. No, not really, but after a year and a half of ROTC, my dad finally said, yeah, I could take phys ed, and so I went out—I mean I took a physical education class and then they had different events that we'd try. I remember we did the half-mile one time, and I ran in it and I was, like, so far ahead of everyone else. So then they told me, "You better go out for track," or go out for cross-country or something.

ESPINO

It sounds like Nightingale, well, from speaking with your brother about this period—

MUÑOZ

He went to Burbank.

ESPINO

Yeah, but it sounds like Nightingale was more ethnically diverse than Franklin High School.

MUÑOZ

Oh, yeah. Yeah, see, like right here I have—yeah, Franklin was very white and there were some Mexicans. There were quite a few Italians, but, like, I have my yearbook from Nightingale. This is it. Yeah, it was a very diverse school because there were blacks that would come from William Mead Projects, primarily, and then Chinatown fed Nightingale, so there were a lot of Chinese Americans, and then you'd get some Japanese Americans from Little Tokyo, and then there were a lot of Hispanics or Chicanos, and then there were Anglos from Mount Washington that would come down. So it was a very—to me, it was a great experience to have that experience, because I made friends with—we all became friends.

ESPINO

Was there any group that was sort of the "out" group, the ostracized group, the group that people—

MUÑOZ

Well, when I went to Nightingale, there were gangs. I mean, there were gangs that actually had a pretty good hold on—that were in the school. There were the guys who were in gangs and there weren't too many girls in gangs. I don't really remember girls, but there were gangs. There was the avenues, Clover, Alpine, Dog Town, Temple. Those were the main gangs that were there. And during, like, lunchtime or nutrition, they would congregate. Each gang had their own little space where they would have benches and

they would sit as groups. They would have their own little quarters, in a sense.

ESPINO

Was it more like a club, or did they have fights and—

MUÑOZ

No, I witnessed a good number of gang fights and the different kinds of fights. Yeah, there were some gang fights that I saw, yeah. They'd be going at each other with tire irons or stuff, knives or something, but I don't think they really stabbed—they'd have chains. They'd have boards.

ESPINO

How did you come to witness some of these fights?

MUÑOZ

Oh, they would take place, or else sometimes there would be a guy from one gang and another guy from another gang and they'd get into something, and then after school they'd say, "Well, we're going to go out and have it out." So then a whole crowd would go out. I remember, yeah, and then the two guys, they'd have some guys from their own gang there also watching it. So if the guys—once the guy started to lose, if one of them was really—because I remember one time, this one guy, he started whipping [unclear], but the guy who was losing, his group, they had a lot more guys there, so they jumped in to help him, and so then some of the others from the other gang jumped in and then all of them, and so then the larger gang outnumbered the others maybe two to three to one. They just were beating them up. But there were fights. I remember quite a few fights at Nightingale when I went there.

One of the things, too, that would happen, this would happen basically to Anglos when they'd come to the school, because there wasn't really any Anglo gang. The only gangs that were there that really congregated like that, they were Chicano gangs. And, like, from William Mead, there were the blacks and they didn't really sit around like in a gang or anything, but if one of their guys was getting it, then the other ones would help him. The guys from Dog Town, that's where the blacks were mostly from and they were from the projects, but they were a mix too. They had Chicanos in their group, too, very few whites, but they would always take the bus home, and the guys from Chinatown, they would take the bus home and the guys from Alpine. So it was other gangs that would—they

would walk home. They would have these fights occasionally, and there weren't that many, but sometimes you'd get kids transferring in and, like I say, some Anglo kids. Maybe they came from the Midwest or they come from the East, and they come to California, and they come in and they were maybe pretty athletic kids and they were used to their—they were in a new place. They didn't know the dos and don'ts, and they would come in and they would act like they were pretty bad, like they were pretty tough. Well, anytime that anyone came in acting like that, and one of the guys from the gangs, they'd act up around them, then they would have a fight. They would just start picking on them, and then these people, they didn't have anybody because they were new. They didn't even know anybody, hardly, so, man, they would get—if they started winning the fight, man, and then they would get jumped and they would get beaten up pretty bad. I guess it was their way of telling them, "Don't come around here acting like you're tough and bad because you're going to have to prove it then and you're going to have to take on—." Yeah, so that was kind of something that would go on.

ESPINO

What was it like growing up in that kind of atmosphere as a young man? It might be different for a female, but for a male in that kind of culture, how did you negotiate your way through all that?

MUÑOZ

Well, the gangs, they more or less kept to themselves, for the most part, and basically, you knew these guys. I mean, they were in your class. You may have been friends with them. They were from a gang that you might have in one of your class. You might have guys from three or four different gangs and they're kind of like friends there, too, in a sense, because they were in class together. I would be friends with all of them, so it wasn't—and so, like, when I went to Franklin, there weren't any gangs because it was basically an Anglo school. There were a few guys, but there was really no gang presence, nothing like at Nightingale. At Nightingale, it was like an institution. Each gang, they had their little geographical space and all that, and they would sit and have their lunch together and all that and do their thing. Like at Nightingale, too, another thing, I don't know how much I talked about Nightingale. I don't think I talked that much about Nightingale. There were different things that went on. Yeah, there's a lot of stuff I didn't even tell you about

Nightingale. We used to play handball. There were handball courts or handball kind of things that you'd play handball, so we used to play a game called Suicide. Anyone could get into the thing and hit the ball, but if you hit the ball and you missed and you didn't get it, you didn't hit the board, then you had to run the gauntlet and get to the board and touch it, and then you're okay. But while are running to touch the board, while getting there, everyone could hit you, kick you, so that was kind of like a sport people used to play. I mean, you weren't supposed to play it. You'd get in trouble if you were playing it.

ESPINO

You chose to play it, though.

MUÑOZ

Oh, yeah.

ESPINO

You weren't forced into playing this game.

MUÑOZ

No, no, it was fun. I mean, I'll show you. Like, I have a picture here, this one here. Yeah, this reminds me—now let's see. Where is it? Where is that picture? I have [unclear] picture there from [unclear]. Oh, here it is.

ESPINO

Who took these pictures? Your mom?

MUÑOZ

I think I had the camera. I think I took it one time.

ESPINO

When you were in junior high school, you were taking photographs?

MUÑOZ

Well, I think that my mom lent it to me, or I don't know, but she wasn't there. This was just getting ready to throw the ball and start the—

ESPINO

It's like a tennis ball.

MUÑOZ

Yeah, it was a tennis ball. We used tennis balls.

ESPINO

So would these kids be considered gang kids or not gang kids?

MUÑOZ

No, these weren't. I mean, this is probably Carlos, and this is L.J. Johnson. L.J., man, he was a bad dude. They were both of them from Dog Town. I mean, they lived in Dog Town, but L.J., man, I saw him get in some fights, man. That guy could fight. I mean he was really fast with his fists and his kicking. Oh, man.

ESPINO

How did you stay out of fights?

MUÑOZ

I was real small.

ESPINO

But you would think that people would want to bully you or pick on you.

MUÑOZ

No.

ESPINO

No?

MUÑOZ

Not really. No, I never had a fight there at Nightingale. There were some people that maybe kind of pushed me a little bit at times, but we never—I had a lot of friends. See, like, I had friends in all the gangs, so they would kind of look after me. Like, even Leroy Baca, he was there, but he was not in a gang, but he came in. And when he was, I think, in the ninth grade, maybe—I don't know if he was there in the eighth grade. But there was student government there, was really, really good. They had a Teen club, and they had some teachers that were outstanding teachers who had different programs for the kids, especially the Teen Club. That was really popular. I didn't really attend it much myself.

ESPINO

What did you get involved in?

MUÑOZ

I did after-school sports, and I was in orchestra for a year and a half and then I dropped out. I remember when I dropped out, the teacher was really trying to convince me, persuade me to stay because there had been a lot of turnover. A lot of the really good players, they had graduated and gone on, and I was, like, already one of the old-timers. There had been some changes in teachers, so, yeah. In a way, now I think back, I wish maybe I would have stayed, but I wanted to play. I wanted to be—because we used to

practice. Sometimes we'd practice at lunchtime and stuff, and I wanted to take other electives and that sort of thing. But, yeah, and then after-school sports, I made a lot of friends too. But I always liked playing, physical playing.

ESPINO

How did you feel about the teachers and their treatment of the students, the Latino students?

MUÑOZ

Well, there was probably—I think there may have been—I don't know if there was more than one. I think there was only one [Latino teacher] that I can remember right now. I can maybe look through here and see if I could—there was Mr. Arellanes and I think he was the only Latino teacher—yeah, there he is—in the school. Let's see. We had a couple of black teachers. They were both very good teachers, Mr. Brown, Mr. McQuarry. But most of the teachers were all right. Some of them were—I mean at that time, corporal punishment was utilized quite a bit, which meant that you'd get swats.

ESPINO

Were you ever swatted?

MUÑOZ

I got swatted once. I guess I was—I don't know. There was this teacher. He was kind of a bully teacher, and I was doing some tricks on the outdoor [gymnastics equipment]—they were like the chinning bar and stuff like that, the gymnastic-type things, rings and stuff. I think I did a dead-man's drop or something like that, and you weren't supposed to do it.

ESPINO

The apparatus.

MUÑOZ

Yeah, different stuff.

ESPINO

What is a dead-man's drop?

MUÑOZ

I think, like, you hang on a horizontal bar by your legs, and then you let yourself flip around and then you're supposed to try to land on your feet. So I don't know why the dead-man's drop was prohibited—but he just wanted to hit somebody. That's the way I felt about it.

ESPINO

So what happened? Can you walk through—

MUÑOZ

Oh, he just took—you bend over and they hit you with a paddle.

ESPINO

Right there in front of everybody?

MUÑOZ

No, not on this occasion, [unclear], but there were many occasions where it was done in front of the class. With a lot of the teachers, they administered them right there.

ESPINO

Was it mostly with boys, to male students?

MUÑOZ

No, no females. I never saw a female receive a swat—females were very well behaved, in the most part. When I was at Nightingale, I don't really remember seeing any of the girls get swats—there were a few girl fights. There were some girl fights, but in terms of acting out and stuff like that where you could get in trouble—but I saw some—there was things that would—oh, I remember one time I had this friend, Stanley Jaramillo, and he was a real tough guy. I mean, he used to act real tough and all that, and one time we were—like, in gym class practicing social dance, and so we had social dance this one day and the regular teacher was out and there was a sub teacher there. What you do is the girls would be in an inner circle and the boys would be in an outer circle. The circles would rotate, and then you'd change partners, each, after each song ends.

There'd be a lot of shifting of partners. So anyway, in this one occasion, Stanley, he didn't want to dance with this one girl. They shifted, and then he said, "I'm not dancing with her."

So the teacher came up to him and says, "You need to dance. We're all doing the same thing. You need to comply and do this." And he said, "No, I'm not going to do it. No, I'm not dancing with her."

"Well, you go on down to the boys' vice principal. You go on down there." And Stanley just cold-cocked that guy right there. He just cold-cocked that teacher.

ESPINO

I don't know what that means.

MUÑOZ

That means the guy wasn't really expecting it, but Stanley just hit him right in the jaw with a blow, kind of just knocked him way back.

ESPINO

A twelve-year-old? Eleven?

MUÑOZ

No, he was maybe thirteen.

ESPINO

Hit the teacher? Wow.

MUÑOZ

Yeah. He got in trouble.

ESPINO

I'm sure.

MUÑOZ

There was stuff that went on at Nightingale. Yeah, many years later I ran into Stanley when I was a lawyer and he had a case. He had some kind of case, and I was working, I think, at the Center for Law and Justice and he came in. He was telling me about—he had gotten married very soon. He got married real young. He had, like, about six kids already and he was working real hard, and he was going to school and he was studying to be an accountant. He found that he had a talent for it, so he was just going to pursue that and try to become an accountant and make a better life for his family.

ESPINO

Did you feel safe at that school?

MUÑOZ

Yeah, basically. No, I did. See, a lot of it, with me, I just had a lot of friends. My friends looked out for me. I looked out for them. Oh, one of the other things I used to do there when I went to Nightingale, this was when I used to walk there. I'd go by this bakery that was on the way. It was over near Five Points. It was real close to my house. And they had day-old bread, so I would buy some pastry and take it to school. So then, eventually, a lot of my friends and people, they said, "Where'd you get that? Let me have a bite. Let me have some." So then eventually I got the idea, well, I'm going to take some for my friends and all that, but I'm going to sell it to them. So I would go and I'd buy the day-old stuff, which was at half-price. Then I would go over there and I could sell it for a premium, more than the regular price is. There was such a demand for it because it was very good pastry, extremely good, so I used to

make money. And I had, like, all this clientele. I'd get to school and, "Did you bring some of this? Did you bring some of that?"

ESPINO

That's pretty funny. [laughter]

MUÑOZ

Yeah. I was real popular.

ESPINO

I'm sure. I'm sure, and also because you had money and because you had the pastry. Did anybody else know about that or was that something you just did on the sly? Did your family know? Did the teachers know?

MUÑOZ

No. No, I don't think so.

ESPINO

And what did you do with all that extra cash that you were making?

MUÑOZ

I'd just have it.

ESPINO

I'm wondering if you thought about saving for something big or—

MUÑOZ

I didn't really make it a big, big thing. I can look back now and say, gee, I could have really exploited that, but I never really did too much with that. The other things, when I was living in Lincoln Heights I had paper routes. Eventually, when I left, when we moved, I had a paper route and I had to give it up. I used to deliver The Mirror in the afternoon, and that was good. I had customers and I'd just come home and then go and deliver the paper, and I'd get tips, so I always made some money. I used to get jobs doing yards and stuff a little bit. I did a little bit of that. There was a fire station that was right at the end of the block and I used to go in there sometimes. They had a handball court, and sometimes my brother or one of my friends, we'd go in there. They'd go off to a fire and they were off, and then we'd hear the thing and then we'd go in and play handball for a while till they came back.

ESPINO

It sounds like you made your way throughout the neighborhood.

MUÑOZ

Then I had another paper route, which was the local paper, which was once a week on Thursdays. That was in the morning, so I'd get

up in the morning. Then I had a big area that we covered and, yeah, that was kind of interesting. Sometimes I'd get my sister or I'd even get Rosalio to go and help me, go and deliver the papers, get it done faster.

ESPINO

Were these some jobs that your parents encouraged you to take or did you have your own initiative?

MUÑOZ

No, they didn't have anything to do with me getting them or how I got them. I think one of my friends—different friends are the ones that gave me the jobs. For one reason or another, an opportunity came up, and they had a route and they said there was an opening for another route nearby. They said, "Ricardo—." They went and took over and got me into it. And then another one, I had a friend who had the paper route to The Mirror, which I'd go around on a bicycle and deliver the paper every day. I don't think there was Sunday, but every other day, and so that was one of the things. I'd get some money.

ESPINO

How influential were your parents in your education and just the odd jobs that you did in the neighborhood? Were they on you about your homework?

MUÑOZ

My parents never really got very active as far as my homework. I mean, at times if I had a problem that I wanted to consult with them, then I would approach them. My dad, during the week he worked. He usually worked. He was on a lot of community and other professional boards and organizations, and then he taught and then he was working on his Ph.D., so he had night classes. So he would leave in the morning maybe by seven, seven-thirty, and he would get home maybe eight or nine sometimes. Sometimes he would get home earlier. Now, one of the things my parents—they used to read to us and then they used to read the Bible, too, so that was one of the things that we did almost every day. They also had the practice of eating together and praying at mealtime, so whenever we had a meal together, there would be a prayer of some kind, some kind of devotional kind of thing.

ESPINO

Would it be your mother or your father?

MUÑOZ

Both of them, because my father wasn't there all the time. I mean, he wouldn't come home till late. He'd go straight from work over to—if he was taking classes, he would be going to the school, and once he was done and got his Ph.D., then he started teaching and he'd have night classes. He used to teach graduate courses primarily.

ESPINO

Do you remember being home a lot alone with your mom, the kids and your mom?

MUÑOZ

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, definitely, and then there was a period of time that my Uncle Ignacio—we called him Nacho—he lived with us. I can't remember exactly how long that—but that was in Lincoln Heights. He was an alcoholic, but he worked. He worked for Lockheed for most of the time, I guess, that he lived with us. He worked at Lockheed, but he used to drink a lot. We'd go and look in his drawer. He'd have a bunch of bottles of wine, like Santa Fe wine or Roma wine or all these good old brands of wine. He used to drink a lot of that—what do they call it—fortified wines or whatever. Then, oh, the other thing, when I was younger, even when I was younger in elementary school, one of the things I used to do, I used to go to the Goodwill and I used to go with a couple of friends. We'd go down there and we'd sneak in. They had, like, these big warehouses and processing places where they'd bring in all this stuff that they'd bring in the trucks, and unload it. They had areas where they had a lot of books and literature and stuff like that, so we used to go sneak in and find stuff that we liked and just get it and come out of there, take off with it, so a lot of magazines and stuff like that. I used to be a lot of interest in war, so there used to be different, like, magazines that were about aviation and stuff like that, so I would get stuff like that. Popular Mechanics, I used to get the Popular Mechanics. I'd find them. But I had a lot of, like, Life magazines and stuff. But my parents used to subscribe to Life and Look.

ESPINO

Oh, really?

MUÑOZ

They used to get those. They used to get magazines and we used to read them.

ESPINO

Did they read The Mexican Voice and those kinds of things, as well?

MUÑOZ

Not really. My dad used to get Siempre. He used to buy Siempre. I don't know if you're familiar with Siempre. Siempre was a magazine. My dad would do the shopping on Saturday, and eventually I would accompany him and we'd go to the Grand Central Market. We'd both be carrying shopping bags full of stuff. We'd get our produce and a lot of the meat there. That's what we would basically get, produce and meat, and so I'd go with him Saturday mornings. That was kind of like a ritual to go there. We had the TV. We used to watch—my dad, he used to shine our shoes sometimes and we'd watch boxing on Saturday night, Saturday night fights. Or was it Friday night? I think it was Saturday night fights. They used to have the Gillette Fights and all that, so we used to sit with him and watch that. We used to watch a lot of television, used to like to watch televisions, different stuff that was on. Then at one time I had, like, a club that I made of friends in the neighborhood, because at the Goodwill, the other thing we used to do is we used to go in, and they had a store there and all that and you could go get stuff. We used to get all these helmets, GI helmets and GI stuff. We had all kinds of backpacks and all kinds of war things. Like I told you, I was all interested in war. And then we used to have our games that we'd play, war, and we also—that was another thing that we did. We used to play. Across the street, there was this area office for the school district. They didn't have school there. They had a parking lot there. It was all fenced, but we used to go and jump the fence at night when they were gone and we would play in there. We'd either play football, sometimes we'd play softball.

I had a friend. He was one that used to come and visit me over in—and he was retarded. He was a retarded friend. He was mentally retarded and his name was Richard Loya. He used to come and wake me up on Saturday mornings. About six in the morning, he'd come over to my house and rap on the window, not in Highland Park, but in—

ESPINO

In Lincoln Heights.

MUÑOZ

—Lincoln Heights. And he was a real moviegoer. He loved movies and so he'd come and tell me what's playing at the different theaters. He'd get up in the morning. He'd walk down to the different local theaters. There used to be the Starland in Lincoln Heights between Workman and Daly on Broadway, and he used to go down there, and then he'd go over to the Arroyo, which was way over, like catty-corner from Nightingale, over on Figueroa and Cypress. He'd go over there and look, and then he'd check what the new—because they put up the new announcements, because they would announce the next two or three weeks' worth of films that were coming. He'd let me know what was coming.

ESPINO

Sounds like a very charming childhood, except for the gang violence and the corporal punishment. [laughs]

MUÑOZ

Yeah. Well, like a lot of my friends, they got swatted. It was bad.

ESPINO

Well, I wonder if you ever thought that this was a deterrent, that the swatting did make you feel like you wanted to behave, follow the rules, do your homework, that kind of thing.

MUÑOZ

Yeah, you didn't want to catch the swat.

ESPINO

You didn't want [unclear].

MUÑOZ

No, of course not.

ESPINO

Well, my son is fifteen and he would probably stand up for what he thought was right and get swatted versus not.

MUÑOZ

Well, it wasn't so much standing up for what you thought was right. You'd be goofing around or doing stuff that you're not supposed to be doing. But Nightingale was—there were some pretty—there was a variation, like you asked about teachers. There were some teachers who were not very competent, but most of the teachers were really pretty good teachers. There was this one teacher that I had, she was an English teacher and she got sick. She got cancer

and missed most of the year. What the hell was her name? But anyway, she was, like, a perfectionist. She was, like, in her sixties. She'd been a teacher I don't know for how many years and she had only given one A in her entire career to a student, the Chinese girl from Chinatown. In order to get an A in her class, you had to have an A on everything, every spelling test. You couldn't miss one word the whole semester, and in your essays or whatever, you couldn't make mistakes. It had to be perfect. So once you missed one, you're down to a B already. I never had a teacher like that. She was a good teacher, though.

ESPINO

You learned from her?

MUÑOZ

Yeah, but she missed a lot. She eventually died. But that was one thing that I remembered about her.

ESPINO

How about the whole notion of tracking and the notion that—when you look at some of the documentaries about the Chicano Movement and the Chicano identification and Chicana identification, people talk about the mistreatment in the schools based on race and ethnicity. Did you feel that as early as junior high school at all?

MUÑOZ

Well, in junior high, it doesn't really fall into place. I mean, everyone—they don't really have that many—you don't select a curriculum. The curriculum is already set for you. The student doesn't—I mean, you have electives, but the electives are, like, do I want to take orchestra or do I want to take an art class or do I want to take shop. I mean, you could take some more advanced—or you could take chorus or you could take typing. That was an elective, if you wanted to take typing. So there were those kinds of—but the core curriculum, everyone was supposed to take English. There may have been higher—there may have been placement of students with more ability and grouping them in certain—I don't think they did that too much. I don't think that it was that easy to manage it that way, but they may have had some classes where they grouped maybe more gifted students. I can't really tell that they did that. I think it was just how they made up—because I don't think you made up and chose your teachers or anything. I think it was kind of given to you. I mean, algebra was an elective.

ESPINO

You didn't feel like there were any advanced classes versus—

MUÑOZ

But, see, I think there may have been encouragement, like, to take algebra, because they did start probably telling you if you're going to be college prep in high school, you should take algebra in the ninth grade. So, yeah, I don't remember. But in high school, definitely you went in—a lot of it had to do with encouragement. I don't think—like, when I went to high school, I wanted to take the college prep courses, so that's what I let them know and then I got assigned into those classes.

ESPINO

In some cases, some of the people that I've interviewed, they say it didn't matter what you wanted. They looked at you and said, "Well, Mexicans don't take those classes."

MUÑOZ

To me, I think, like, see, because I went to Franklin, and Franklin was mostly Anglo, maybe 15 percent Hispanic when I went there, and they didn't really necessarily do it that way. I don't know if we met with counselors when we first picked our courses or what. I think we must have picked them when we were still at Nightingale, right at the end, so that they'd have it beforehand, what we were going to take, but I don't really have a good recollection of actually having that done. I did notice that there were friends who didn't end up in the academic classes and they would come from Nightingale. Let's see. I can't really remember who they are. Yeah, well, some of them didn't and I'm not really sure what went on there. I think if they had had an interest and they had been—a lot of it, I think, may have been just what was coming out of their homes and how much their parents were involved and wanted—like, if I would have probably gone home and told my dad I wanted to take industrial arts as my curriculum, he probably would have told me, "No, I want you to try this." He probably would have, but I already was geared on going—I was going to go to college and that was something that I—it wasn't like I was coached to do that, at least not directly.

ESPINO

How about the influence of your older sister? Was she already in college courses? She was ahead of you, right?

MUÑOZ

Right. She was a year ahead. No, she was going to go to college too. I mean, we had good grades that we had done well in junior high, so there was no reason not to continue that. But, like, my friend, when I was in my last year that I used to go to his house, he ended up not—he wanted to be academic, but then he kind of—he didn't do well in geometry or something, and he couldn't get it or something, and he just kind of decided he better just not pursue that, so he never did go to college. But there was my other friend, Sam Paz, he was just kind of like—in junior high and high school he was just kind of a goof-off. He was just goofy, goofing around and all that, and he got in trouble. He got kicked out back and forth from different schools. He went to Wilson, he went to Lincoln, and he never took the academic classes. I don't think he took them when he was in—I don't know if they counseled him out of it or not, but eventually he went into the service. He came back, then he went to college, then he went to law school and became a—he was, like, president of the ACLU in Southern California's—on the national ACLU board. He was nominated for a federal judgeship, so, I mean, he's a pretty accomplished lawyer. But he went the same—Nightingale, but he came to Nightingale probably in the eighth grade and went to Franklin, but he went to different schools besides Franklin. In fact, it's funny because I noticed in the Lincoln—in their yearbook for the year that we graduated, they have him listed as a graduate and then they have him in the Franklin group.

ESPINO

That's funny.

MUÑOZ

So he graduated from both high schools.

ESPINO

Well, how about the idea or the experience of being one of the few Mexican American kids? Did that have any impact on your experience at Franklin?

MUÑOZ

It did.

ESPINO

Can you talk to me about how?

MUÑOZ

Well, I mean I missed a lot of—because at Nightingale there was that separation because everyone went in different ways, but I had

friends from—like, I had my black friends, my Chinese friends, my Chicano friends, my Anglo friends, so I missed them. Nightingale was great. I mean, I had a great—it was fun. I mean, I had a great time, experience. Franklin was different because you could feel the social—it was more like the social thing, and I wasn't really too much of a social—my parents, they put their money in certain things, but they didn't have money to give us, like much spending money or stuff too much. We used to get an allowance or something. And then I was really small in size, so I didn't really get into the social scene. I didn't go to the dances. I didn't figure I had the money. I didn't want to spend the money on going to dances, but there was a lot of kids and really thoroughly were into that and enjoying it.

Then the whole Anglo thing. I didn't feel maybe as comfortable. I did make some very—some of my closest friends that I have now from Franklin are Anglo. They're the ones—and then I went to UCLA. I mean, I went through the academic classes. I was, like, one of the very few Chicanos in the academic classes, so I didn't really have any Chicanos really to hang out with. There were very few—there weren't that many Chicanos in the school in the first place, but in the classes, in the academic classes, there were practically none, so in that sense it was very different.

ESPINO

Do you recall that as being something that impacted you negatively, or not at all?

MUÑOZ

Well, I'm sure it had its impact. I didn't worry about it. I didn't sit around, "Oh, I don't have any Chicanos here."

ESPINO

You didn't say that to yourself?

MUÑOZ

I may have had the thought, "I wish I had some Chicanos here." I don't remember. Especially, like, in the math classes and the science classes, yeah, I don't think there were any.

ESPINO

How about having stereotypes thrown your way or comments about Mexicans, that kind of thing? What was the general feeling at that time about Mexicans? When you look at the newspaper from that

period, you see a lot of the low education, the bilingualism, how that was negative, poverty, all of those statistics.

MUÑOZ

Okay, now, see, there were some differences. Like, see, at Franklin there was no blacks. I think during the time I went there, there was one black, or maybe two, out of all—I was there three years and there may have been just one at one time and then another one at another time, and that was all I—I missed blacks. That was one thing that I missed. I missed blacks more than I missed Chicanos because there were some Chicanos there. There weren't very many Chinese. I missed Chinese because I—there were a few Chinese and there were some Japanese. I had a good friend, one of my—I had some friends that were Japanese. There weren't very many Japanese at Franklin. There was practically no Jewish. I had one friend who was Jewish, so it was—then you could look at it from the—there were the Catholics that were there, so the Catholics—because I knew a lot of them because at the playground, I used to play with a lot of—playground [unclear] right there, there were a lot of Catholics that were in my classes over there and they were more universal. I think probably among maybe some of the other denominations there may have been more, but a lot of it depended, also, where these people came from, in terms of had their families come to California from the South or from the East or from the Midwest, or where were they from, but I never really—I don't think anyone ever made fun of me of being Mexican. I don't recall. They may not have been interested or they may have wanted—maybe some of them avoided me, but I wasn't paying attention. But, like, in the academic classes, yeah, there was more acceptance, I would say, because a lot of these kids, they were very bright kids. They were the brighter kids if you were in the academic—they may not have been—maybe a lot of the kids in the other classes were very bright, too, and I think so. I believe that now, after seeing how they dealt with their lives, and they were bright people, too, that never went—I mean, there were, particularly the girls. There were a lot of girls very bright. I mean, there was more problems for them, or just as much, because they didn't go to college and there were some—they could have had really good careers in the professions had they pursued them, but they got married early or they this and that, and

they never developed a career. So a lot of it, it had to do with a lot of the value system at the time.

ESPINO

How about your own perception of yourself as a—how did you identify? Do you remember if someone would ask you where you're from, not in the gang sense of, like, where you from, where's your neighborhood, but about your ethnic identity, what are you, or that kind of question?

MUÑOZ

No, I knew I was Mexican. Oh, definitely. Oh, yeah, definitely. I knew it from my parents and from my grandparents and from my aunts and uncles and all of that. Oh, yeah, they knew who they were. No, there was no confusion, I don't think.

ESPINO

So Mexican would be the way you identify yourself, not Mexican American, not Chicano?

MUÑOZ

Well, I probably changed over time and I probably used Mexican American a lot. "What are you?" "Oh, I'm a Mexican American." Yeah, before the term "Chicano" started coming out, yeah, that's probably what I—or we used to use the term, and my dad used to use it, "I'm an American of Mexican descent," that kind of an approach.

ESPINO

Did he follow, or at least in your household did you follow local politics, or maybe not necessarily local, but national politics, like the presidential election, those kind of things?

MUÑOZ

Oh, yeah. Oh, no, no, we used to watch the conventions, the speeches, yeah, and then, like, when they started having the debates with Kennedy and Nixon. No, like my uncle, my Uncle Felix, he was a real solid Democrat and my dad too. I mean, they were very familiar with the political ideologies of the time and what was the thinking and what the political philosophies were. So, no, they were solid in what they viewed as where to be and how to view things because, yeah, both of them, they read the paper. They were very totally informed on what was going on in this country politically.

ESPINO

How about what was going on in Mexico?

MUÑOZ

To some extent. My Uncle Felix, he probably didn't—I don't think—like, he didn't necessarily want his kids to get—well, maybe not learn Spanish. He wasn't really for them to learn Spanish or that. His Spanish wasn't that great. At least I don't remember him using Spanish that much. Of course, like, my parents, my dad and my Aunt Rebecca, I mean, they grew up, I mean, with Spanish. Their parents spoke Spanish in the home. That's all they really ever spoke in terms of in the home and outside most of the time. And then on my mom's side, that's the way it was too. My grandmother, she didn't really speak English. I mean she could speak English. She knew and understood, but she preferred to speak Spanish. Spanish is the tongue she preferred to use.

ESPINO

What about in the home, growing up? Was it primarily Spanish?

MUÑOZ

No, actually at home we used more English.

ESPINO

With your parents as well?

MUÑOZ

Right. It was when, like, we'd go see our grandparents or if we went and visited friends, or, like, friends who preferred Spanish, I mean of my parents' friends, then we would hear the Spanish. I think, like, I lost quite a bit of my familiarity with Spanish until I went to school and started taking Spanish, and then we started going to Mexico, and then whenever I'd go see my grandparents, then I would use Spanish with them. But my Spanish hadn't been developing like my English, and it wasn't until, actually, when I got out of law school and started practicing law in the barrio. A lot of the time I was in the barrio, and most of my clients, or maybe a large percent, I'd say probably the majority of them spoke Spanish, a lot of them. Yeah, maybe, maybe not all, but a good percentage, maybe at least a third were Spanish-speaking.

ESPINO

Well, before we get into that part of your life, did your parents speak Spanish to each other or did they speak English to each other?

MUÑOZ

They spoke English primarily.

ESPINO

That's really interesting. And then do you recall how your father came to the idea of taking a year in Mexico and taking you and Rosalio with him?

MUÑOZ

Well, he took the whole family.

ESPINO

The whole family went?

MUÑOZ

Right. No, he had been dreaming of that for a long time. He wanted to do that.

ESPINO

Do you remember why, what was the motivation?

MUÑOZ

Well, one, I mean, he could get a sabbatical and it would be kind of like subsidized. He went down there and did a lot of investigation, research into the educational programs in Mexico, in the different parts of Mexico. All over Mexico he visited. He went and met with educational leaders in Mexico and spoke to them and collected a lot of literature and stuff on the theories and practices of education in Mexico, so he did that. But then we were down there and we were getting to see so many parts of Mexico, yeah, getting that experience of visiting, getting to know—and we spent a good period of time with relatives in Torreon, and I spent more time there because I went down there and spent more time before they went down there.

ESPINO

I recall now that your whole family did go, but wasn't there times where you would go off, just you and Rosalio and your father would go off on your own to different towns?

MUÑOZ

Okay, I went with my dad. I went with my dad more than with Rosalio. He usually didn't go with us, so I did go with my dad on some trips where it was just he and I. We went to—let's see. I think we went to Durango and then we went to Zacatecas, and then we went to Aguas Calientes and Guanajuato. Yeah, those were the places that I think I went with my dad.

ESPINO

What was the purpose of those trips?

MUÑOZ

Well, he was going and visiting different people in the education thing, but a lot of it was just to see those places.

ESPINO

So did you feel like a tourist or did you feel like you were working with your father?

MUÑOZ

No, I wasn't working with him. Because a lot of time he'd go to these meetings, I would just hang out on my own. We'd be in a hotel or something. I'd go out and I'd just go walking around or go do stuff because I didn't accompany him with those visits that he made.

ESPINO

Did you get to use your Spanish at that time?

MUÑOZ

Oh, sure.

ESPINO

You must have developed a—

MUÑOZ

Yeah, see, actually—let's see. There was one time that right after I graduated from high school, within about a few days I went down to Mexico with my youngest sister, and everyone else stayed here because we were going to go down there and there was going to be a group of us getting together, one of my other aunts and her family, one of my dad's sisters. They went, too, and we all met in Torreon, but I went to Torreon before, maybe about a month, maybe more than a month, six weeks before they went and I took my little sister, so it kind of lightened the load on my mom. She didn't have my little sister there, because my little sister used to really, really kind of manipulate her and control her in a lot of ways and use up a lot of her time. But anyway, we went down there and I hung out with my cousins down there and my dad's first cousin there and that's who I stayed with, with my sister. [interruption]

MUÑOZ

All right, so we were talking about Mexico and I was going to start telling you about—I mean, we're going all over the place, but—

ESPINO

Well, this is appropriate because it's when you were in high school.

MUÑOZ

Right. This was right after high school.

ESPINO

Right after high school.

MUÑOZ

Yeah, and so I went down there and then I had, like, two cousins. They were a little younger than I. They were two brothers, and one of them, his name's Enrique. His father's name was Enrique Muñoz and he was Enrique Muñoz, and then his younger brother, Quiriño Muñoz. So I stayed with them in their home, and my sister as well. Their dad, at that time he may have already been—yeah, I think he was the treasurer of the City of Turreon. He was in the PRI [Partido Revolucionario Institucional]. He was a member of the PRI. He was one of the officers in the PRI in Turreon. But he had a business. He was an accountant, and so since he was working for the city, he left a lot of the work of his business for his sons to carry out, a lot of the kind of—what do they call them—gofer-type stuff and working with the clients. Both of them were studying accounting in college. So then I just started spending my days, basically, with Enrique, and we had a bunch of other relatives there in Turreon, other cousins and stuff. His grandfather was still living, who was my grandfather's brother, so I became—going and seeing this whole scene in Mexico and the life in Turreon at that time, it fascinated me. It was very different from what my life was here in the United States. Of course, like, my Uncle Enrique, I call him uncle because he was, like, my dad's first cousin. That's the way we—I guess Latinos, Mexicanos, that's the way we view them. They're like uncles. He was a man who made him—he really had a lot of talent and made himself what he became. He had a tremendous personality. I mean, he had a lot of charisma, was built with charisma, but very bright. But he was also very sharp and very shrewd in terms of—what I've heard, he ran the city very well in terms of the finances of the city, and they were able to accomplish a lot of infrastructure. They also were able to run their schools pretty well and have them relatively well funded during that period. So he was really on top of his game, kind of a person who's on top of his game.

But anyway, he had made a lot of connections. Like, they had a membership in, like, a—it's kind of like a country-club-type thing,

not really a country—it's, like, a place where they had a lot of athletic stuff. They had a big swimming pool and different things, gymnasium, where you could work out and stuff like that, and they had little teams and stuff like that. We used to go there and get exercise, and we used to play soccer and we used to—but I used to run around with them. They used to go around and see the clients and go and pick up a lot of reports that would come in. They would bring it into the office. So the two brothers, they had a lot of relations with their clients, in terms of bringing in the information for the bookkeeping, for keeping all the books and for doing all of the kinds of tax reporting that they had to do and that sort of thing. And then there was the social life there too. There were, like, different events that we'd go to, bullfights or dances or parties and stuff like that.

ESPINO

How did they treat you, coming from the United States? There's some kind of tension sometimes with those from Mexico and those Mexican Americans from the U.S.

MUÑOZ

No, no. Then I got to know a lot of my cousin's friends, because he had a lot of friends. We used to run around. Over there at that time you could—like, even we were underage. You could go and get beer and stuff like that.

ESPINO

Well, how about the idea, the whole concept of pocho? And also you said your Spanish wasn't very good.

MUÑOZ

Oh, my Spanish. I mean, they kind of like appreciated my effort to communicate, but it wasn't that bad, but it wasn't that good. I mean, I was building— [interruption]

ESPINO

I didn't have it recording, so we're going to step back a little bit to the point where I asked you about just the way that they viewed you and the fact that your Spanish skills weren't native, a native speaker. You were telling me about how it was more about your shared interests, and then you could tell me about the plaza again and repeat that story.

MUÑOZ

Okay. Yeah, I had taken Spanish in high school for, I guess, maybe—I don't know if I took two years of it, probably two years, but I wasn't that strong. Vocabulary-wise, that was more where I'm strong. A lot of the grammar, I get the tenses wrong. I don't use the subjunctive right, don't get it right, and the articles I don't get right a lot of the time, but the main words and the verbs and all that, I know them.

ESPINO

Well, the other thing is, because you don't get these things right, that wasn't an issue as far as them poking fun at you or calling you pocho or gringo or anything like that?

MUÑOZ

No, there may have been some of the characters, they may have liked to do that, but most of them, I guess, like, maybe they weren't that intellectual, that they were going to try to play intellectual games or something like that. The people I hung out—well, I hung out with my cousins, of course, and they were just glad that I was there, and they would be getting information and asking information from me about a lot of things in the U.S. and about life there and about our relatives there and about my life and that sort of thing, and I was learning about their lives right there with them. And, like, my cousin, my cousin Enrique, he is a person who was very interested in everything and in gaining knowledge in so many things. We had a very similar kind of set of interests, and his friends, they were fun. It was doing interesting things. They used to like to go on adventures and stuff like that. Like, he had some friends, they would hitchhike all over Mexico. They used to go—I can't remember what they called it. There's a term. Yeah, they hitchhiked or they hitched trains, and they'd go all over, so they had all kinds of stories about things that they did.

ESPINO

How about the plaza that you were describing?

MUÑOZ

Oh, yeah. That was one of the things that was a really charming thing about Torreon was the tradition there, and it was in the summer and it's warm there. But in the evenings, a lot of people, the young people, they'd go down to the plaza, and older people, and they'd just congregate there and they'd walk around. I'd seen this in other cities in Mexico, usually the medium-sized cities, and

they would go down there to check each other out, to see who's there and see—and they may be trying to find a boyfriend or a girlfriend or whatever.

And there would be, like, girls, they'd be walking in one direction arm-in-arm, maybe about three or four of them, they're all real close friends, and then there would be guys that would be walking in the other direction and they'd greet each other if they knew each other and that sort of thing. There would be older people there too. There'd be a lot of cruising up these main drags. They'd go into this area up into the central plaza of the city, and at that time, the economy in Torreon was pretty vibrant, and so there was a good economy and people were doing relatively well. Torreon is also kind of a city that was very interesting. One, it's a newer city. The turn of the century was when it really started getting built, and the streets are much wider. It's not a colonial city. The city was relatively well planned and laid out and subdivided, and so that was one of the things about Torreon.

ESPINO

Was it hard for you to leave? Did you want to go back to the United States, do you remember, when it was time for you to return?

MUÑOZ

Well, see, on this trip, what happened was, like I say, I was there around six weeks with my little sister. My little sister, she did have some problems, emotional problems when she was there. She got very homesick and all of that.

ESPINO

How old was she?

MUÑOZ

Let's see. Well, I was seventeen. She must have been about seven.

ESPINO

That's small.

MUÑOZ

Yeah, she must have been around seven. My sister was very precocious. She was a very precocious child. She had two cousins. One of our cousins from Torreon, Penny, she was younger than Quiriño. She was born in about 1947, probably 1947. She had gone to—like, she had come to the United States and spent a year with us studying English and learning English. She went to the local

junior high. I guess she's older than Carlos. Yeah, she's about 1947 and so she would have been about five years younger than I. So she was with us, so when my sister went, Penny was with her. They had roomed together for that whole year in the same bedroom, so she and Penny were really pretty close. And then Penny had another sister, Titina, who was there, who was younger than Penny. So the two sisters, they kind of—[unclear], she spent time with them during the days, and I'd go off with Enrique and Quiriño and spend time at their dad's office, and then we'd go and do little things that we had to do for the business.

A lot of times we'd go down to the state building or to the federal building or to the city building. The city building was where we'd see his dad, but we'd go down to these others to pay taxes and turn in reports for the clients and stuff like that. We'd do that. There were these other things that we'd do. They have these kind of like party-type events that were like—my Uncle Enrique was a member of the Lions Club and they'd have, like, a big kind of a party or something at one of these kind of like a little country-club-type place, and there'd be dances and stuff. Man, it was like a little society there. They had their own newspaper in Torreon, where they had a lot of the reporting of things that were going on in the society and all that. There was a lot of society stuff there that I wasn't really—in L.A., we weren't into any of that, so it was very different.

But then eventually my parents came with my other brothers and sisters and we took a tour of Mexico at that time. This was just going to be—we spent maybe three weeks, or I don't know how long, and another aunt, my Aunt Josephine, and her husband and their three kids also came, and then my Uncle Enrique and his family. So we had, like, a caravan, and then we went from Torreon, we went to Monterrey and in that area, and we had other relatives outside of Monterrey in a place called Allende, and we spent, I don't know, a few days there just visiting with relatives there. There was a whole bunch of relatives there. Then from there we went to Ciudad Victoria and we had some more relatives there, and then we went down to, I guess, San Luis Potosi, and then from there we went to Dolores Hidalgo and then to Guanajuato, and then from there to Mexico City. Then we came around and we went to Guadalajara. I remember my Uncle Danny. He was my Aunt Josephine's husband. His car broke down in Tequila. We were

passing near Tequila and he had, like, an axle break on his car. We all stuck around there for a little while. They found some mechanics nearby and he went out and found a replacement part and put it in out there on the highway.

ESPINO

What's your fondest memory of that time? It was a year that you were there or—

MUÑOZ

No, this isn't when we spent the year. This was in 1960. When we spent the year there, that would have been 1963.

ESPINO

Oh, so this was even before you went.

MUÑOZ

Yeah.

ESPINO

Okay. I was confused. I thought this was sometime near—

MUÑOZ

Yeah, this is an earlier trip.

ESPINO

This is more of a vacation in the summer.

MUÑOZ

Right, right. This was a summer trip.

ESPINO

Was this your first trip to Mexico with the whole family?

MUÑOZ

No, we had gone one time before where we just went to Torreon and we stayed there a little while. We went to Torreon, and I'm not sure when it was. My grandfather went with us, and we went to El Paso and we took a train from El Paso to Torreon. It was kind of fun.

ESPINO

Did you ever take any vacations within the United States besides seeing family in Arizona?

MUÑOZ

Well, we used to go to Arizona twice a year at least. We would go to Tucson and Phoenix because my mom's from Tucson and her family's there, and then Phoenix, my dad had—he had his parents there and he had a couple of sisters that lived there. And then we

also went sometimes—I think at one time we went to Flagstaff because he had a brother that lived there, my dad.

ESPINO

But it sounds like you're vacationing through Mexico was a little different than how you would travel in the United States.

MUÑOZ

Right. We didn't really do a lot of traveling in the United States where we'd go to visit—we didn't really go—I don't even know if we ever went up to San Francisco. I can't remember. Maybe we did. We may have gone up to San Francisco. I'm not sure when that was because—yeah, I'm sure we did, but I can't remember exactly when that was.

ESPINO

Did you take pictures on your trip in Mexico? Do you have photographs from those vacations?

MUÑOZ

I actually have a video that has pictures of some of those trips.

ESPINO

Nice. [End of December 16, 2011 interview]

1.4. Session Four (December 21, 2011)

ESPINO

This is Virginia Espino, and today is December 21st. I'm interviewing Mr. Ricardo Muñoz at his home in South Pasadena. Last time I got a little confused with the chronology of your Mexican vacation and trips, so just to clarify, if you could, remind me how many times you traveled to Mexico when you were living with your family, and what was the year that you took that year off, your whole family moved to Mexico for that year?

MUÑOZ

All right. Well, the first trip probably was 1958 and that's the trip that we took—we drove to El Paso and we took a train from El Paso to Torreon, and we left our car in El Paso. So it was my parents and my siblings that made the trip, and I think my grandfather may have gone with us. I think he did. Then the next trip was in 1960 and that was where we made a tour of Mexico. I was in Torreon for probably six weeks before my parents arrived, somewhere close to

six weeks. Then they arrived, and then my Aunt Josephine and her husband, my Uncle Danny Rodriguez, they came also, and then my Uncle Enrique and his family. So there were, like, three cars that we had, like a little caravan, and then we went to Nuevo Leon and we went to Allende in the Monterrey area and we went to Ciudad Victoria. Then we went down to San Luis Potosi and then we went to Guanajuato and then to Mexico City and then to Guadalajara. Then I think we went up to Mazatlán and then back up then—gee, yeah, back up to Nogales and Tucson, and then we went to Tucson, probably went to Phoenix also on our way home.

No, actually, on that trip, now, when I came—no, let's see. Okay. That was the 1960 trip. Yeah, that was the 1960 trip that we did that, we took that route, and then when we went on the sabbatical, I had finished my sophomore year at UCLA, so that would have been '61, '62. It would have been in '62 that we left on that trip, and we took two cars. Or did we? Or did we just take—I'm trying to remember. No, maybe we just took one car. We had this one station wagon. Yeah, I guess that's what we were in, the station wagon. I don't think we—yeah, it's hard for me to remember that now, whether we took two cars or not. [We took one car.]

ESPINO

That was a long time ago.

MUÑOZ

Yeah.

ESPINO

Well, then, so you were already in UCLA when you took that trip.

MUÑOZ

Right. I had finished about my first two years.

ESPINO

So let's go back a little bit and talk about what that—you told me that you had applied to UC Berkeley and UCLA and—

MUÑOZ

Well, I didn't apply to UCLA, really.

ESPINO

You never applied to UCLA?

MUÑOZ

Oh, maybe I did, but Berkeley was my first choice.

ESPINO

Yes, Berkeley was your first choice.

MUÑOZ

Right, that may have been how it was.

ESPINO

And do you recall, like, your first classes at UCLA, what that experience was like?

MUÑOZ

It was challenging, I mean, because I took on stuff that—I didn't think things very well. I wasn't very street smart about going—even though my sister was a year ahead of me, so I think I took—I know I took German and I took chemistry, and have to think, I don't know if I took anthropology or psychology, one of those two, and then I had ROTC because ROTC was required at that time at UCLA.

ESPINO

For men and women?

MUÑOZ

Just for men. Let's see. Was there anything else that I took? Can't remember. Oh, I think I took Subject A because I didn't—I don't know. I think I kind of did Subject A on the margin, but then they told me they wanted me to take it, so I had to take Subject A. It was very hard. I mean it was very challenging, a change.

ESPINO

Well, German, even if you're bilingual, German is a difficult language to learn.

MUÑOZ

Right. So I was all enthused because I wanted to learn German, but I really wasn't prepared for it and I think my language skills were not that strong, particularly knowing even the grammar and English that well. I wasn't that strong in English grammar, so with the German grammar, it was very—eventually, my second semester, I took German and I failed it, so it was not a good choice. I mean, I could have—later on I took Spanish and I got As and Bs in Spanish. I could have done that because I had a leg up. So these were kind of like the things that I did that turned out to be making life a lot more difficult for me than I could have had. I could have had it a lot different, and I was an undecided major at that point too.

ESPINO

Didn't you initially think about architecture?

MUÑOZ

Well, the only School of Architecture was at Berkeley, so that's why I wanted to go to Berkeley, but I didn't get in. So I mean, they told me I could take the regular, kind of the regular classes and then transfer over to Berkeley later on into the School of Architecture, so just start taking your prerequisites and all of those things. But once they told me that, I just said, "Eh, I'm not going to bother with that. I'm going to do something else."

ESPINO

Do you feel like you had any advising or any counseling at UCLA when you got there?

MUÑOZ

I think I did. I think kind of, but it wasn't really—I don't think it was the kind—I don't know how much I was going to pay attention to a counselor so much. I don't know. I think I was probably of the mind that I'd figure and just do the things I wanted to do, but I don't know whether they—I had had aptitude tests. We had them in high school, vocational aptitude tests. I didn't really pay much attention to that either. I don't even remember what it recommended as the fields that I should really go into. I don't even know, like, what I really was thinking in that—after I wasn't admitted to Berkeley, I kind of just lost kind of track and I declared undecided major, so I was going to try and figure it out. Eventually, after a year I ended up going into business because then I decided I wanted to go into accounting, and part of that was a result of my Uncle Enrique in Mexico was an accountant and I saw that he liked it, he did well in it, he was providing well for his family, and all that. I thought maybe I'd do that. So actually, after my first year, then I went on probation because of what had happened in my German class.

ESPINO

Did they talk to you or did they send a letter, or how does it work when you're on probation?

MUÑOZ

Well, they told me. They called me in and told me that I had to pull it up or I would be out. At that time at UCLA, when I started it, it was at a time where they graded on the curve and it was a very—that was, basically, the faculty, that's what they were supportive of, and the whole system. They would tell you when you started at UCLA right in your orientation and all that, they'd say, "Look to your left, look to your right. One of you is not going to be here for the

second year or the third year,” because that was the process. The process was the weeding out, weeding out through the curve system.

ESPINO

It sounds like boot camp.

MUÑOZ

Well, I don't know if it's necessarily boot camp, but you had to be a serious student. You had to make sure that you survived academically. And like I say, I wasn't street-wise, and the things that I did, I could have cushioned and taken courses that would have guaranteed that I would have had a really solid GPA, but I didn't do that. I don't know. I was just naive. A lot of it was naiveté on my part. I didn't really have anyone mentoring me or—all right, I had maybe made a few friends of some older students, but there was like—there was one student. He helped me, but he didn't really advise me on my predicament. He was a year ahead of me, but he was from the same high school and he had been the student-body president at Franklin. He was a friend of my sister's because they were in the same class. His name was Larry Litton. I ended up living in a dorm and he was in the same dorm, so he used to help me. I'd go and talk to him and he'd help me with some of the things that I was doing, and he may have given me advice.

Then I went out for track in my second semester, and that took up a lot of time and that probably contributed to my not doing so well academically because, yeah, I didn't really—and then I didn't do well in track anyway. I didn't really like the system, and the coach wasn't—I wanted to run middle distance in the half-mile, but the coach, he was, like, a shot putter. Discus and shot put, that was his expertise, so it was kind of—and I made friends there on the track team, but, yeah, I never even got as good as I was in high school. I never even gotten that good of conditioning, and the way that they trained you at UCLA was a lot different than my training when I was in high school, which maybe none of it was that good. But anyway, it's probably good that I got out of that eventually because I couldn't handle both of them, I mean the academic and the athletics. I see a lot of these athletes and they do have tutors for them, a lot of the ones that are on scholarship, to help them, because it's not easy to—all of the physical fatigue that you get

from the working out, especially the sports that require a lot of conditioning. Yeah, I don't know.

ESPINO

And UCLA is very competitive.

MUÑOZ

Right. Right. It was.

ESPINO

They expect to win medals and championships.

MUÑOZ

Right. But that was a good experience. I mean, I enjoyed the camaraderie and all that of being in athletics. And then I guess I can't—I'd have to go look and see what courses I took. I did better, I think, the second year and I pulled myself out of the hole, and then I started getting more of an idea—I never really—I think I went into the School of Business that year and had accounting. Eventually, accounting was not the field for me either because I eventually flunked cost accounting. But to me, that was just telling me you're trying to do something and it's not really what you should be attempting. You should be in some other field.

ESPINO

When you look at your father's success and your mother's success in education, did you feel like you weren't meeting up to their expectations or that they might be disappointed that you're on probation, that kind of thing?

MUÑOZ

Well, I never discussed it. They never really talked to me about it, so we never talked about that. I never really informed them. I don't know if they knew about it or not. They didn't necessarily care so much. They just wanted me to do what I wanted to do, in a sense. Yeah, I didn't share that with them. I mean, I was scared to death, in a way, when I saw that I was on probation and I got those grades, and I said, "Oh, my god, that's—." But in a sense, I knew that I wasn't doing well on those courses.

ESPINO

Well, how did you feel when they told you you might lose your scholarship? Would your parents have been able to pay for your tuition?

MUÑOZ

Oh, I didn't have a scholarship as an undergrad. I didn't have a scholarship as an undergrad.

ESPINO

Your parents were paying your—

MUÑOZ

They paid—yeah, the tuition, when I started, I think was \$72 a semester.

ESPINO

Wow.

MUÑOZ

Maybe 76. No, it was not that expensive. What was more expensive was they sacrificed so that we could live on campus. That was the more expensive thing for them, but the tuition was—it was different in those days, so yeah, it wasn't a big—I mean, at that time, \$76, that was like an equivalent today of maybe \$300 or \$400, probably, in terms of buying power, but still a very, very modest amount.

Yeah, so eventually, I mean, I went through as an undergrad not really into a field that probably was more natural for me. I mean, in business there were some courses that I was okay at. I think I only got one A in all the time I was in the business school and it was an economics class that we had, an upper-division economics class. I got a lot of Bs, though. But accounting, that was what my—I guess I learned I'm not very good at detail, all of that detail, and then I'm subject to making a lot of just calculation errors. I don't add it right. I don't know why. Maybe I have something like dyslexia for adding, something like that. [laughs] I mean, I figured after, when they started having calculators, if I would have had a calculator I probably would have done fairly decently, because a lot of my mistakes were just in just doing the computing by hand.

ESPINO

So you understood the process of the [unclear].

MUÑOZ

Well, in terms of understanding the system and the theory, I think I had a very good grasp of why you have these equations and how they make sense, and now you have a system—like cost accounting's a very interesting subject because you try to account for all your costs and the hidden costs that aren't so apparent, so it's more of a fascinating subject to me. It has a lot to do with economics, too, because, like, if you have, like, even this little

camera, all of the different parts, how do you break down all of the cost of every item and the labor that goes into it? So how do you determine what its actual cost was? In terms of when you sell it at a certain price, what is going to be your net revenue?

So anyway, but eventually, like, my undergrad experience was—there were courses that I took. There were some I got As in. I got As in Spanish, I got As in some history classes, and so it turns out I think my grade-point average outside of the School of Business was higher than within my major field, so when I got through with it and all that, I realized that.

ESPINO

How about any professors or any inspirational experiences you had as an undergrad at UCLA?

MUÑOZ

In general, there wasn't much of that because I didn't go and seek them out. The one that I had the most, that I think that I remember the best, was the economics teacher I had in upper-division business school. He was really a very good teacher and he used the Socratic method of teaching. So, yeah, he would present problems and then he would ask the students in the class to figure it out. They could collaborate and you could do however to try to find what the solution was or what the answer was. These were economics and these had to do, like, with policy. It was a microeconomics class, though, and it had to do with the demand and supply and the shifting of the curves, and the elasticity and all kinds of different concepts in economics. So you would take an example of, like, say they increase the tax on gasoline at the pump. What do you expect to occur? What's going to be the results of the—what's going to be the outcome, what's going to happen, and things like that, and the market and you're looking at the market, and looking at if you're one who's in that business, how is it going to impact you. So it was a very interesting course.

ESPINO

It was also an interesting time. Were you aware of some of the cultural and social things that were happening in the country? Was that part of your college experience?

MUÑOZ

Well, like, after the trip to Mexico I became very interested in anything that was—I took a course in the social and intellectual

history of Mexico and I took a Latin American history course. The other courses that I liked, one I really liked was the history of art, Western art, from the Renaissance to the present. There were some great teachers that I came across that really inspired me to want to know more about a lot of subjects.

ESPINO

And you're referring to the trip to Mexico that you took after your sophomore year?

MUÑOZ

Right.

ESPINO

That was the year that you lived there.

MUÑOZ

Right, and even when we were there before, I mean, those trips, they really opened up interest in me in a lot of cultural things, Mexican culture, music, art in particular, movies, some literature.

ESPINO

Did you read in Spanish while you lived in Mexico?

MUÑOZ

My reading in Spanish at that time wasn't that strong, still isn't that strong. I don't really like—I mean I can read it some, but I'm lazy to get the dictionary, to follow a lot of it.

ESPINO

How about the murals, for example? Did your family go to the Zocalo?

MUÑOZ

Oh, yeah, definitely. We went to Teotihuacan. We went to the museums. We went out to the university and saw the buildings, yeah, but also the Bellas Artes, the federal buildings and all that, where they have all the Diego Riveras that are in there, and then at the castle Chapultepec. [interruption]

ESPINO

Okay. We're back. You were telling me about the national cultural experience of living in Mexico.

MUÑOZ

Yeah, and the other thing, the history of Mexico, too, that was another thing that I got very interested in, and the differences that I observed between the United States and Mexico.

ESPINO

For example?

MUÑOZ

I mean, just the way of life, the attitudes. I mean, the difference in the economies was pretty dramatic. We went to [unclear].

[interruption]

ESPINO

Okay. We're back again.

MUÑOZ

Okay, let's see.

ESPINO

History.

MUÑOZ

Yeah, the history. The history of Mexico was something that I became very interested in. I mean, when you see particularly the murals and you see a lot of them are narratives on the history—

ESPINO

That's right.

MUÑOZ

—so you get interested and you want to know more. I mean, since you're being of Mexican origins, or my parents and all that, then there's the pride that you start to feel, too, that you see the stereotypes that you're exposed to in the United States. Then when you go to Mexico and you see a lot of the pyramids and all the other stuff that's there, and there's nothing like that here in the United States, there wasn't that kind of development in the United States that we have still, except, I mean, you can go to some of these places in Arizona in the hills where they had those, like, dwellings and stuff. But the architectural achievements that the ancient cultures in Mexico had, that's very impressive, and so there was a lot. There was a lot of impact on that. I think I developed more of a social conscience. The other thing that really happened while I was, I guess, probably in my last year and a half or so, I can't remember exactly, I got a job working for the county as a student worker first, and then when I became a senior, I became a student professional worker and I got a job with the Probation Department working with a unit of probation officers that worked in the community and the street with gangs. They had developed a whole program of how they worked with gangs, and they targeted gangs, I guess, that were the most maybe active and violent and that sort of thing. They

had a program that they had developed and evolved, where a gang worker would go and they would attach themselves to the gang and they'd start working with the members of the gang. A lot of these members would be on probation, so they would have that entrée into going and meeting. But they seemed to try to work with the gangs and kind of mold them more into, like, a club and to a more middle-class—taking on some more middle-class kinds of attitudes, in terms of, like, they would have a president, they would have officers, they would have meetings, they would have activities, they would maybe do some community kind of service of some kind. The probation officer would also work a lot with the parents of some of the kids that were on probation to maybe help them in their parenting issues.

Then they had, like, a federation of these clubs, and so they would have programs, athletic programs, so that they would have maybe a softball team from one gang play a softball team from another gang, and they'd have, like, dances, and they'd have where different gangs, they would all come to this activity. They'd have maybe some—almost like a conference, and they'd have the kids come and they'd have a program of trying to get them to put aside some of their gang culture norms. So it was kind of interesting. But they had, like, this council of all representatives from different gangs that would meet and then they would plan these activities. They would include a lot of gangs, maybe about ten gangs.

ESPINO

That seems impossible today. How was it achieved? Was it a welcome change to the culture that they had adopted or was there resistance to that kind of mainstream organization?

MUÑOZ

Well, there were different communities that were involved that were being served within the county, and there were different gangs. I worked with probably maybe four or five because I'd sometimes go out and help the probation officers and some of them worked with different gangs. Like, the one that I worked with probably the most was a fellow named Dave Torres and he worked with the El Hoyo Soto gang and with the Third gang, Tercera. We used to go out there and see the kids maybe twice a week, something like that, and they'd have, like, little meetings. Now, these groups, they

weren't very large. There weren't too many members that were that active. Maybe a lot of them may have been in custody somewhere. We used to go to Jackson High School. That's one of the places that we would go because that's where we would meet with guys from El Hoyo. Sometimes we'd go to one of the members' houses and then, like, White Fence was up there. There would be other gangs that would be hanging around Jackson. Jackson was a social adjustment school, where they had a bunch of kids that were kicked out from the regular schools because of behavioral issues primarily, and there was a lot of gang kids that were in Jackson that were from all different gangs.

ESPINO

It doesn't exist anymore, correct?

MUÑOZ

I don't know.

ESPINO

I've never heard of Jackson. Where is it or was it?

MUÑOZ

It's over not too far from Whittier Boulevard in Boyle Heights, not too far from where Salesian is. It's up that way. And then the other gang, Tercera, they were at Hollenbeck Park. They would hang out around there. Then sometimes I'd work with this other guy. Let's see. What was his name? Al Franklin. He worked with the Happy Valley Gang, so we'd go up there to Happy Valley and just kind of hang out there in the evenings. Guys would be hanging out on the different streets or whatever up in Happy Valley. You're familiar with Happy Valley if you're from Lincoln Heights.

ESPINO

Yes.

MUÑOZ

And then there was the one who—Jim Schwab, he worked with Clover at that time. We had some black probation officers who worked with the Slawsons, and I can't remember, down in Jordan Downs. And then there's some of the other areas, I can't remember, around Florence and around there.

ESPINO

Coming from a family, a pretty middle-class family, religious, spiritual family, how would you describe these gang members, their personality, their attitudes, their [unclear]?

MUÑOZ

Like I told you about last time, at Nightingale there was gangs there. I mean, there was a whole prevalence of gangs there. I mean, they weren't any different. They were just kids. The kids that tended to get into gangs, there was either some kind of dysfunction in their homes, primarily. There was poverty for a lot of them, but a lot of them, they were in single-family homes. They only had their mom. Their mothers were usually working or on welfare, and they didn't have the security that the kids who had both parents and had more support in their homes. So that's a lot of kids. But there were other gangs that were—I'd say it was more of a neighborhood thing, where you had a neighborhood that was relatively cohesive or relatively concentrated, so everyone kind of knew each other. Like the Clover gang, at one time that's the way they were. Basically, they were from Clover Street and there used to be a tenement there. There used to be a lot of houses that most of them worked for the railroad, their parents, and that's how they got in there, or their fathers worked for the railroad, and so there was a neighborhood there. Happy Valley is another one. It's like a cloistered little valley, so everyone knows each other in Happy Valley and so the kids, they all identify as Happy Valley.

Let's see, Alpine or around Chinatown, that was another gang, Dog Town. There was William Mead Projects. So a lot of gangs. A lot of it has to do with the neighborhood and the kids just being together and growing up together, and then being somewhat sheltered, in a sense, and not that aware of or familiar with other parts of the community. So, like, the gang kids, a lot of them, like I say, a lot of them, there was like a socioeconomic situation and a family situation that tended—or you'd see kids get more into the gang, into the gang culture. Then the gang culture and the Chicano gangs, they call them, and there's a traditional culture there and there's a whole subculture there. I guess in the black gangs they probably were too. Never really had much doings with Asian gangs and very little to do with—there weren't very many Anglo gangs that were involved in any of this stuff. And there wasn't really—I mean, in L.A. County at that time, not aware that there were really any, like, Anglo gangs.

ESPINO

Were there poor sections of Anglos at that time?

MUÑOZ

I don't think so. I think most of the people who were poor, as far as Anglos, they didn't have, like, their own little neighborhood where they resided in. They didn't have, like, a pocket where it was just them or mostly them. Like I told you back in the past, like when we lived in the projects, there was more—and that was because of the scarcity of housing—there was more mix. There were Anglos living in the projects, probably more so, and they were mixed mostly with Latinos or Mexicans, and there were some blacks. That was Maravilla back in the late forties, early fifties.

See, there had been—well, Los Angeles is a very somewhat segregated area. The real estate issues of the white communities staying white, there's always been that. There still is today to a large extent. There isn't that much mixed—I mean, there was just an article in the L.A. Times about—what is it—Lancaster or—yeah, Lancaster is very mixed. In the county of Los Angeles, it has the most mix on a block, on the average block, the racial makeup by block. They have a pretty good mix, but here in the L.A. area, I mean, you take, like, South L.A., there's always been migrations. Boyle Heights used to be—there used to be a lot of Jewish people living there, and Russians and Japanese, and most of them moved out and it's practically mostly all Latino, Mexican now. So there's always been this kind of shifting that's gone on.

ESPINO

But I guess what I'm asking is, there's the movie West Side Story, the play, West Side Story, based on white gangs versus Latino gangs.

MUÑOZ

Yes.

ESPINO

I'm just curious if that ever existed. I mean, in your experience working with gangs at that time—we're talking about the sixties—it doesn't seem like there were—there weren't white gangs in Los Angeles.

MUÑOZ

No. No, I don't think there—I don't even know—I never really heard of one.

ESPINO

Yes.

MUÑOZ

I mean there may have been some wannabes. That's what they call them, wannabes.

ESPINO

Who get into the Latino gangs or the Mexican gangs.

MUÑOZ

But, see, one thing about the Mexican gangs or the Mexican American kids or whatever, Chicanos, these are traditional gangs. So that particular gang and that particular name of that gang, or that neighborhood, it's gone on for fifty years or more and it's in its little enclave, and they identify and they keep that and there's a tradition of—and even the [unclear] and all that. In fact, I mean, like, the guys from Clover, because I worked with them and then I grew up there. When was it? Saturday night, I went to a gathering of guys from Clover and they're, like, in their seventies.

ESPINO

And they still identify as members of the Clover gang?

MUÑOZ

Well, they identify coming from the Clover Street neighborhood because that's where they grew up. These guys are still friends. They were friends, some of them—like, I have pictures of some of them because they went to Nightingale and they were at Nightingale when I was there. Most of them are older than me. Yeah, I'm younger than them. Then eventually I worked with the Clover gang in Lincoln Heights later on after I graduated from UCLA, and so I met a whole different generation, a couple of other cliques—they call them cliques—a different generation. So, yeah, these people, they bonded together. I mean, there's bonds that are there in the gang members. They bond together and it's a pretty strong personal attachment that they have with their friends. They've gone through a lot and they grew up together, and they have that common history.

ESPINO

So was it successful, the program that you worked for? Do you feel like you accomplished something positive?

MUÑOZ

Oh, you mean working with—

ESPINO

When you were—I guess you were a sophomore. No, you were a junior or you were a senior?

MUÑOZ

A junior and senior, both junior and senior year. I think it did. I think there were positive things that came from that, yes. I think a lot of kids got help. Some of them straightened out a bit. Later on they straightened out, straightened out even more. I remember, like, one of the kids, he was kind of like the leader of the Hoyo Soto, the one that we kind of worked with, and he eventually became a probation officer himself.

ESPINO

Did you work with the school system? Did you work with the high schools?

MUÑOZ

See, at that stage, I was just like an aide to these—the probation officer would, on occasion, maybe go to a school and try to work on an issue that may have come up for one of the kids involving the school. There may have been that. I don't know how often that happened. One of the things—well, what eventually happened with that unit, it was eventually kind of taken from the Probation Department and it ended, and this happened when I was, like, in my senior year. It was a budget thing within the county, and the Probation Department dropped that unit. It ended up, after the Watts Riots, because what happened in the Watts Riots, a lot of the workers, they knew these kids down in South L.A., so they went down there in the riots trying to keep them off the streets, keep them out of harm's way, and, man, it was crazy. I went down there for a ride down there with him, and there were tanks down there. There were all kinds of National Guard all over there. They went around. There were police cars driving all over the place with four police in the car and shotguns outside sticking out of each of the windows, and it was like a war zone down there. They had other things with—a lot of military stuff. The National Guard were on the street corners and it was a war zone.

But anyway, so after that, they moved this unit. They called it Group Guidance, and they moved it into the Human Relations Commission, so all of these probation officers then became consultants in the Human Relations—and they were, like, people who already had built up ties in the communities with different

agencies in the communities, as well as the youth and a lot of the parents. So they started getting more involved in community organizations, and that's what the focus—instead of just working with gangs, they started working with all kinds of community groups in these different communities. So there was this shift and so that there was, like, about, I don't know, maybe twelve of them, I don't know, fifteen that were previously probation officers became Human Relations consultants. But some of them were still helping with certain gangs even after that change. They kept on doing that sort of thing.

ESPINO

The Human Relations Commission, they did a lot of important work around that period.

MUÑOZ

Right, John Bugs, at that time, he was the head of it and then he left, and this guy Herb Carter took over. Yeah, it was very active and there was a lot of support from, I guess, some of the influential people in Los Angeles County, who—there were different organizations. I think Rabbi Wolfe was one of the main—I think he may have been president of the board or of the commission, and they had a lot of people who had political connections and all that who were also very interested in seeing that there would be good harmony within all of the communities in the county.

ESPINO

And this was after the Watts—some people call it rebellion, some people call it riots. This is after that period that—

MUÑOZ

Right. Now, that happened—yeah, yeah. Like, I graduated from UCLA in February '66. That's when I finished.

ESPINO

With your bachelor's?

MUÑOZ

Right.

ESPINO

Oh, because you took that year off.

MUÑOZ

Right. It took me an extra semester to finish up, and the School of Business, it also required 128 units, so there was about 8 more

units that you'd do to get—because I have a B.S. instead of a B.A., whatever that's supposed to mean.

ESPINO

Was your job with the gangs because of your interest in helping, or was it because it was a job and you needed to earn a living or earn some supplemental income while you were in school?

MUÑOZ

Well, see, I just applied for—when I applied, it was, like, a civil service thing, and you take some kind of exam or something and you get hired. I don't know exactly. I can't remember or I don't even know if I knew, but the opening came up with this particular—I guess maybe it was that I knew Spanish, too, and maybe they were looking for someone, like, with my background, because at that time there were very few Chicanos that were coming out of—getting a college education, and so that may have had something to do with it, that they offered me that position or whatever. But it may have been that they screened for someone to—like, it turns out I had a person who became a friend of mine, he actually went to law school with me, Antonio Rodriguez, and he also was a student worker and he worked with the same unit, and we ended up going to law school together later on.

ESPINO

Was that part of the War on Poverty program, do you think, these funds that came through this program?

MUÑOZ

I think this was before. This was before.

ESPINO

It was before '64?

MUÑOZ

Well, I probably maybe had got my first job in '64 when I started. It may have been in '64 when I first started working.

ESPINO

There were a lot of jobs that opened up, like Teen Post and—

MUÑOZ

Right. Well, no, the job as a student worker, I don't know if there was any federal funding behind it. I doubt it. I think it was something that the county was doing on its own.

ESPINO

Through universities or through—because you said student worker. They were looking for—

MUÑOZ

Well, that's what they called it, but it was a position. It was a county position.

ESPINO

It wasn't a UCLA position.

MUÑOZ

Oh, no. No, it wasn't related to the school

ESPINO

Okay.

MUÑOZ

Yeah, it wasn't related to the school. I mean, there was no paperwork involving the school.

ESPINO

Right. Oh, I see.

MUÑOZ

This was, like, an outside job. I'm not sure if I found the job through the Student Employment Service or not. I don't remember. I don't even remember that part of it. I don't know how I got turned on to the job. It may have been probably, like—maybe I was looking for a summer job, and at UCLA, maybe I saw it on a bulletin board or something and applied.

ESPINO

How did you feel about the going back and forth, these communities, these very working-class communities, and then going back to UCLA, predominantly a white middle-class, upper-class social and cultural environment? Is that something that impacted you at the time?

MUÑOZ

Yeah, well, like, to me, I considered UCLA something like Disneyland because at that time it was very well kept, all of the landscape, everything there, it was like Disneyland. Like, one of the things I used to do with kids, too, because sometimes I'd work with the kids, and I actually, at the very end, when I was last working with the county as a student worker, student professional worker, I got assigned to work with a fellow out in the San Fernando Valley, in San Fernando, and Sun Valley. That's where we were working out there. And I did a little project where I worked with some

elementary school kids, that I went to a school there in San Fernando and I wanted to try to work with some kids to try to do a preventative thing, and I asked them to—that I would be providing some services to kids that they thought were maybe heading in the direction, the ones who were having problems and they thought might be prone to get into gangs.

So I had, like, a group of maybe about seven or eight kids, and so what I did is I had field trips for these kids and I would take them, like, to UCLA. I took them to the county museums and stuff and different places of interest just to get them out of the isolated barrio where they were all the time and see that there's another world out there, try to inspire them to really concentrate and have a goal of doing well in school. So that was kind of what I was doing with that little group and I did it for maybe three or four months. I didn't do it for very long because then, eventually, I graduated and then I was out of that, I no longer kept that job. But that was one of the things. And I don't know, I did some writing up reports on the things that we did. And then I visited with the parents, too, of the kids, and some of them, I could see that they had some issues to deal with in their home situations, so there was that.

ESPINO

Did you ever look at inequality? Was that something on your mind at the time?

MUÑOZ

Oh, yeah. Oh, definitely.

ESPINO

And it was during the period of the civil rights activism.

MUÑOZ

Oh, no, no, no. I mean all of this, after I graduated from UCLA, I did get a job with the Probation Department and it was a probation counselor position, which was the entry-level position for a college graduate. At that time that's what they called it. I was assigned to work in a camp, a junior camp with kids who were, like, from—I don't know. They were, like, from twelve to fourteen years of age or something like that. Yeah, maybe twelve to fourteen. [interruption]

ESPINO

Okay. We're back and you were going to talk about the work as a probation—

MUÑOZ

Right, I started working in a camp, and it was a job where you'd go in and you'd stay there twenty-four—it was, like, twenty-four, three, and then you were off the rest of the week, so it was three days on, four days off. Turned out I really didn't like that job. I just didn't like being—I felt like I was incarcerated. I wasn't used to that. I couldn't get used to it. I didn't get used to it.

ESPINO

You couldn't leave when you wanted to.

MUÑOZ

Right. No, I mean, you were there, and then what started happening was, like, even two nights before I had to go back, I was having trouble sleeping, in anticipation that I was going to go back there and spend those three days. You'd stay there and I'd get a time to sleep. They had a night man who would come in, but there was a crew that was up there, I mean, of probation officers. I was, like, the bottom one and I was learning the ropes. A lot of it was just custodial of the kids. They had school during part of the day, and during that part of the day sometimes I would do counseling with kids that were assigned to my caseload, and I'd be reviewing what they're doing and trying to meet with them, talk with them, and maybe talk to their parents on the phone and just trying to get them going in the right direction. But it was quite an experience, I mean, because you'd see what was going on with these kids. And then at times I was supervising a whole dormitory where they're—all the kids and the kids would be—they were at an age—at that age, they're—I used to call them, like, little squirrels. They were running around all the time, so you had to try to keep them in line and that sort of thing.

But I didn't like that job, and while I was there I got offered a job to work for USC, for a sociologist there who was doing a study and he was going to start this study of gang action. It was a gang action research study of the Clover gang, the kids that were from Clover, and he was going to test the hypotheses involving the cohesiveness of the group and its delinquency record, the thought being that—or the hypotheses being that if you could reduce the cohesiveness of the group, that the delinquency would also drop. So that was what we were going to try to measure and try to have programs that would reduce the cohesiveness. And so I resigned from the job with the county, which I guess I was there maybe three or four months

when this other opportunity came up. This one was what was more I was—already gotten used to working in the street and working out in the field and not behind a wall or whatever, so I gladly went and took that job and stayed on that job for about two years. Yes, I think it was about two years.

ESPINO

What was it like for those kids? What was your experience with them as far as how did they relate to the whole system of being incarcerated?

MUÑOZ

Well, I mean, they adjusted. I mean I think, in general, their basics were being met. Each kid was their own individual case and they had all kinds of kids there. To me, I guess you could compare it somewhat to the stereotypes of the movies where you have the prison kind of situation. There were some kids there that were kind of like bullies and there were the kids who were physically very mature and very big and relatively strong, and then there were other kids who were, like, just little puny little kids, and the maturity of the kids varied. Some of the kids were more mature. Some of them were brighter than others. Some of them were more acting out, more behavioral issues. It was a total mix of kids. There was regimentation, and then there were the Chicanos in there and there were the kids who had already had some ties to the Chicano gang culture. So there were things that would go on there among—and then there were the blacks, who had some gang exposure already, and then there were the whites. The Chicanos, the ones that were the gang-bred somewhat, boy, they were like a cohesive little group themselves. They would be communicating amongst themselves and they would—they had different things. They would put a movida and they'd put a [unclear]. They'd be doing these different kinds of things that were gang kind of things to force behavior and so that the group would be cohesive and so that everyone would be on the same page, as far as the group goes. Then there was, like, leaders of this little group, so they tried to enforce a certain kind of behavior. Like, the ones who were the leaders of the Chicanos, they would try to enforce their behavior on the other Chicanos and they'd kind of agree among themselves, and then if one of them didn't fall in line, then they would do things to them in a sense. So there were things like that, and they had their

schooling that they were supposed to be working on. But I wasn't there that long. Then there was some race talk. We would ban it. That was a no-no and all that, but you would see that. You would see it in the kids. So there were some social problems and the grouping that went on within that context.

ESPINO

So at that time, what was punishable? What kind of crimes did they commit to put them in that kind of situation?

MUÑOZ

Well, I guess some of them were in there for, like, joyriding and stealing, violence, different violence things. I didn't read their—I mean, I know a lot of kids who were from the street who got in trouble and some of them may have been there. I don't think there were many for drugs. I mean, like, one of the kids that I was counseling, he was in there—oh, a lot of them were in there for runaways. Some of them were there for runaways, and really they shouldn't have been mixing some of these—or maybe—I'm not sure. I don't think they were supposed to mix the runaways with ones that committed crimes and the more serious crimes. One of the kids that I was in there for, he apparently was in there because of a sexual thing that—he actually, I think, was the victim, and I mean, there was some—the adult woman who was having relations with him. I think that was what he was in for. I can't remember. It kind of sticks in my mind. And some of them, like, the parents just had a lot of problems with them.

ESPINO

Parents couldn't deal with them.

MUÑOZ

Yeah, a lot of them, they had problems that the parents couldn't deal with them. Maybe some of them even attacked their parents or something.

ESPINO

So you decided not to pursue that as a career. What made you decide to go on to law school?

MUÑOZ

Well, okay, what happened, when I took this job at USC, my job was to be out in the field and collect the data. So I'd go out there Monday through Friday. I think I started usually at 3:00 or maybe 2:30 to 10:30 or something, and I'd just be cruising around and see

who I came across in a day in the neighborhood. Then at the end of the day, I would make a record of everyone that I saw and who was hanging around with who, and so we did, like, a matrix of—and over time you would see who, like, was the center and who was, like, the nucleus and who were the little satellites around.

So then part of the thing that we did was we tried to get, like, say one of the kids was the one who everyone was connecting through in the network, and we'd try to get that central one. We'd maybe get him a job, so we remove him from there, so then he was, like, maybe the one with charisma and drawing all these other kids to him, and then he'd be gone. We'd get him out, so those were kinds of some of the strategies that were employed. Some of the kids, we sent them to Job Corps. We got them into Job Corps. We got them jobs, got them into schools, got them relocated somewhere else maybe within their family. Maybe they'd go live somewhere, maybe out of state or—

ESPINO

With an aunt or a relative?

MUÑOZ

Yeah. There were different things that we worked with the family and all that, but some things that they decided that they would want to do. But it would remove them from the thick of things.

ESPINO

So did you find that more successful than—

MUÑOZ

Well, I mean, that was attempted. We had a job developer that was part of the program and he went around finding jobs and working with the kids, getting them placed in the job, going doing follow-up. Then the gang worker, or he was the consultant, and that was Schwab, Jim Schwab, he worked a lot with the parents. We had parents' meetings. We had a parents' group. We had a lot of activities for the kids, meetings and dances and athletic things, games, taking them to other events, sporting events, so there were things along that line that we did.

We worked with the schools, too, we did, and then there was a Boys Club in Lincoln Heights. It used to be the Los Angeles Times Boys Club and then it became the Los Angeles Boys and Girls Club.

ESPINO

How about Camp Hess Kramer? Did you work with people who were running that?

MUÑOZ

When I was with the Human Relations Commission I did because it was one of their projects, the Student Leadership Conference. So a lot of the consultants, they went up there and they helped out and worked up there. So I went up there just as help with the logistics and stuff like that.

ESPINO

And this was after you were already in law school?

MUÑOZ

No, that was before. That was when I worked for the Human Relations Commission.

ESPINO

As a counselor?

MUÑOZ

No, that's when I was a student worker. That's before I graduated from UCLA.

ESPINO

Oh, so when you were a student worker, you were working with gangs.

MUÑOZ

I did. I did. I continued to do that, to some degree. Like, at that time, too, that's when I worked with those kids in San Fernando, but the Human Relations Commission had other things besides the gang thing. They had their own kinds of programs. Hess Kramer was one of their programs, so I went and got assigned to spend some time working there, as well as being out in the field working with gang workers.

ESPINO

Do you remember some of those students that were participants in the Hess Kramer?

MUÑOZ

Oh, yeah.

ESPINO

Can you talk to me about—that's very well known now. It's, like, Ray Reones, and who else was—oh, Rosalio said he went to the camp as well.

MUÑOZ

Yeah. The one I remember a lot is David Sanchez, and even then he was very vocal. Sal Castro was there. He was one of the counselors. He was one of the ones who would make presentations, talk about issues for the kids to think about, community issues, social issues, and political issues. I remember Susan Racho. She was there. Who else? She was very vocal too. I remember her speaking there.

ESPINO

Do you remember about what? I know it was a long time ago, but what were they vocal about?

MUÑOZ

I think they talked about—I think David talked about things at the school and the issues in the schools and problems that—and a lot of it led to some of the thinking and reasons for the walkouts that happened after that, because I was at the Hess Kramer before the walkouts. I think the walkouts were in '68, so I was probably there in '65 or '66; '65, probably.

ESPINO

That's three years before.

MUÑOZ

Right.

ESPINO

And so they were already, at that time, criticizing the school system—

MUÑOZ

Oh, yeah.

ESPINO

—and the educational system.

MUÑOZ

Oh, yeah.

ESPINO

But were they calling themselves Chicano?

MUÑOZ

I don't think they were using that term. I don't think they were. No, they weren't using that term at that time. A lot of it, they wanted teachers. They wanted to have more Mexican teachers, Mexican American teachers. The track system was something that they talked about to some degree. But yeah, it's hard for me to remember the points that they brought up.

ESPINO

But each person that I speak with gives a little bit more and different perspective, so it's all helpful. When you put all these interviews together, it's going to be a nice understanding, because Hess Kramer still—there's not a lot of documentation on paper, documentation from those meetings or the lists of the students. Maybe the county might have it. I don't know who kept records from that, so these interviews are really important.

MUÑOZ

No, well, I think, myself—I mean, my view of Hess Kramer is that it played a major motivating factor and educating factor for kids to get them—and these were kids that were identified to go there because of their leadership. They had some leadership talent, so it definitely was something that exposed them to things that got them thinking and got them questioning. I mean, Sal Castro, that's where he was at back then. Yeah, he was questioning the system, questioning what was being done and how it was operating in terms of the Chicano community or the Mexican American community, what progress could it expect from the way the system was operating. So that was something that was brought up, and a lot of Sal Castro's, too, was talking about things to have pride in about the history and knowing your history and knowing that there have been a lot of achievements in Mexico, even in pre-Columbian Mexico and all of that. So that was one of the things that was going on.

ESPINO

Did it have an impact on you personally?

MUÑOZ

Oh, sure. Well, see, like, I'd already been to Mexico and all that, so I mean I saw it was very on point, that all of this was very on point of things that needed to be done. I mean, when I was UCLA as an undergrad, there were so few Chicanos or Mexicans. I mean, I met very few while I was there. One of the things, like, when I did go to UCLA—and, yeah, that's another point. There was a group from my high school that went. I had some friends that went and we all got—I mean, it was such a large campus and school, that I don't even think—like, there was maybe ten of us that went from Franklin. I don't think I ever had class with one of my classmates from high school. I don't even know if I ever had a class with any of them during the time I was there. It was such a big place and different people were taking different courses, so yeah. Let's see. And then

there were more that transferred into UCLA from my high school class. They didn't start at UCLA. They went to City College and then they transferred in, but we never really—there was one fellow, Mike Serisawa. I used to get a ride home with him every now and then because his father would come and pick him up and then give me a ride too. Sometimes my dad would come and we'd give other people a ride. There was another fellow, Lester Ostrov, and we used to give him a ride. But yeah, I had these other friends that I'd run into. I'd hardly run into them at school because it was so big, but, yeah, there were a good number of my classmates from high school. Like I talked to you about, I was more, like, in the nerd group. Those are the people that I hung out with in high school because those are the classes that I was in. I was in the college prep classes, and those were the kinds of people that were in those classes. And like I say, I never really had the feeling that people thought in terms of, like, those people. They didn't necessarily never really talked like they were race-conscious or anything like that. Of course, like, at Franklin there were no blacks in the whole school, practically none, but there were a lot of Mexicans and there were Asians, but very few, very few Asians. So we were all kind of—I mean, there were some groups that carpooled for a while, and one of my good friends, Larry Simpson, he used to drive a group. One of them had to drop out, Paul Buzanski, because eventually he couldn't afford it. He couldn't afford to keep on going. I think he went a couple of years or maybe a little more and then had to drop out, because I talked to him later. But yeah, we had some—like Lester Ostrov, he became the editor of the Daily Bruin when he was there and he was pretty well connected, I guess, with doing that. He had been a writer. He was, like, one of the big writers in Franklin. There was another fellow who went to USC and he became the editor of the Daily Trojan, so when those two guys were seniors in their respective schools, they were both editors of the college newspapers.

ESPINO

That's pretty impressive from Franklin High School.

MUÑOZ

Yeah.

ESPINO

But at that time, it was a different community, for sure—

MUÑOZ

It was different, oh sure, yeah.

ESPINO

—than today.

MUÑOZ

Yeah, it was different, but there's still a lot of talent there. I mean, it's just a matter of—

ESPINO

Well, I'm speaking of the kind of education that kids would get, and it was more middle class, so the parents probably were more educated than the parents are today.

MUÑOZ

Probably.

ESPINO

But definitely there's a lot of talent, I'm sure. So you said that you found people weren't race-conscious. Were you conscious of your race?

MUÑOZ

Well, I mean, like I said, I'd been to Mexico and all that, and actually, when I finished high school, I mean, I had only been there once, so I really hadn't got the good exposure. I was somewhat race-conscious, primarily because of the difference between Nightingale and Franklin, because like I say, I think I mentioned it before, I missed the fact that—I mean, I had a lot of black friends at Nightingale. I had a lot of Chinese, Japanese friends, and then there were a lot more Mexicans, so I missed having the mix. That's what I missed. I missed having the diversity.

ESPINO

It sounds like you were able to integrate pretty well into the white community of Franklin and UCLA. But what about dating? Did that make it complicated, the fact that most of the women you were—

MUÑOZ

Like, in high school I really didn't date because, I don't know, maybe part of it had to do with I was Mexican and I wasn't too comfortable. But then the other thing, I was very small and I was young for my class, and then I didn't really have, like—I figured I didn't have a car. I didn't have a lot of the stuff that usually goes along with doing that, and I probably didn't have that much interest. I was more into sports. I was into athletics. I liked that. I

mean, there were girls. I liked them. They were friends. There had been a girl that I liked in junior high and she came to Franklin and only went there about a week or two. Then her mother decided to send her to Catholic school, so then—yeah, I never really got too interested to do that. When I was at UCLA, yeah, it was very different because there were very few Mexicans, and I don't know, maybe I was more drawn to Mexicans. Yeah, I dated some Anglos. But, yeah, I never really got serious at that stage, and then money-wise I didn't have expendable funds to pursue those things so much, so I didn't really do that too much. It wasn't until after—once I graduated and then I started working, then I started going—I used to like to go out to nightclubs and go out to things, and then I started dating. I dated different girls after that when I was able to buy a car and had my own car and have expendable funds to enjoy life on my own, because my parents, they really didn't have—they put a lot of their money into giving us what they gave us in terms of education, because they had to send my brothers and all of that, so they didn't really have extra money to just give me money to go out and have a good time, that sort of thing.

ESPINO

Well, that's interesting because part of it was that you just weren't interested in dating women out of your ethnic group, but it seems like in college it might have been easier because you didn't have to deal with the parents like you do in high school.

MUÑOZ

Well, like, I had my friends, you know. Some of them were Chicanos and they started trying to date some of the Anglo girls, but they got chased off. [laughs]

ESPINO

Oh, really? In high school or in college?

MUÑOZ

No, in high school.

ESPINO

How do you mean?

MUÑOZ

Well, like, some of them, they'd want to take a girl to the prom or something, and then the father finds out that they're Mexican and they tell them, no, they don't want them to go out with them. Stuff like that.

ESPINO

That must have been painful, though. I mean, you laugh now, but it must have been—

MUÑOZ

I mean, it wasn't for me because I wasn't doing it. [laughs] They were disappointed. Actually, some of the Chicanos, I mean, they were dating Anglos. They did, but I didn't. Let's see. My friends and my Chicano friends, they weren't really doing much either because they didn't have money either.

ESPINO

Oh, as far as dating?

MUÑOZ

Yeah, they didn't have cars. They didn't have money.

ESPINO

That's interesting. Going back to that time, because you wouldn't think that that would be important to dates because generally—I mean, if my son would want to date somebody, it would probably be me giving him money to go out. [laughs] That's really interesting. This will be the last question. Going back to the idea of when you got interested in law, I asked you that earlier and we kind of went off to a different subject, but I'd like to know when that began.

MUÑOZ

Well, it was kind of like when I got the job working with the gangs, I got solicited, in a sense, for that job because they called me up and told me they were looking for someone to do that, be the one to help on that research and be the field research assistant or whatever. That was really an interesting experience, too, because the professor, Malcolm Klein, he was a professor at USC, he's a big expert on gang studies and studying gangs and all that. He's written quite a few books on it. He was Jewish and he was from back east. I can't remember which—I don't know if he's from Pennsylvania or somewhere. I can't remember where, originally. He was very kind of objective. He tried to be really objective, but he was kind of strange in a way, that he didn't really have that good of a feel for the culture and he wasn't that familiar with the culture. He didn't know Spanish. He's learned a lot over the years. But it was an experience working with him and under him, and he was the one—he helped me in ways of learning. Then during the time that I was working

with him, then I took classes at USC in sociology and I got into grad school in sociology, so I started grad school in sociology, but then it turned out I decided I—somewhat it was just kind of a natural thing. I was losing interest. Part of it, I kind of got more of an idea of what a career as a sociologist with a master's or a Ph.D. would be, and so it was at that time I got involved with a group called the Mexican American Action Committee, and it was a group of Chicanos who were all college graduates and they were trying to do something to improve the community, particularly with education, a bunch of young guys trying to figure out and work together on different things.

I can't even remember what concrete things we did. One of the things was scholarships. That was one of the things we wanted to do, but we wanted to work with youth and encourage them to go to—and pursue higher education. But, like, some of the members of the group were—let's see. Richard Alatorre was one of the members and Jaime Corral, Diego Vigil, Richard Montes. Both Jaime and Richard became Superior Court judges, and Diego Vigil, he's a professor in—he's written a lot of books on gangs, too, anthropology, sociology. Let's see. Who else was there? Ochoa. What's his name? Ralph Ochoa. Ralph Ochoa, he's the one that got me interested in going to law school because he told me they were recruiting Chicanos to go to law school. At that time I was into sociology. I was getting started the graduate program and I started kind of seeing that it wasn't something that I wanted to do in the long run, so when the law school thing came up, then I said, "Well, I'll switch over to law." A lot of that, too, I mean, I had seen how law could work for the community, how law could be used to accomplish things, and a lot of the legal problems that the gang kids had, and all of the other things that were going on, the whole thing with the schools, the walkouts and all of that. So it was around that time. It was all of this stuff going on.

So I decided that I would apply to the law school, take the law school test, and then see if I get into law school, but it wasn't something that I had been thinking about. It was more like Ralph brought it up to me, because Ralph, he was a first-year student at UCLA, or maybe he was second year. I can't remember. So he's the one that got me interested and told me that then there would be a grant that I could get, so I pursued that and then I got in. There

were other things that happened, like when I—I did fairly well on the law school test. I guess when I entered I was near the median for the class as far as my law school test went. At that time, the scores didn't have to be that high, but I was somewhere near about the median for my entering class. Of course, we had quite a few of the minorities coming in at that time, so I probably had one of the higher scores among the minorities that went in. But then, like law, that was more a subject that I was more—vocationally, my aptitude was much greater for that than some of these other fields. So I mean, with me, I mean, I look back on how things just kind of—it's like a stream or something, just takes this turn and then it goes this way, and for whatever reason, some of it was not thought out in advance. It just came up and I made a choice and I pursued a certain thing, and then it turned out good. Sometimes they turned out bad.

ESPINO

Like that German class. [laughter]

MUÑOZ

The German and the accounting.

ESPINO

But it also seems like it was just the period when you had these grants available and they were recruiting.

MUÑOZ

Well, the thing with law, I mean, that was providence. That was providence there. I mean, if I was going to law school today, it's, like, \$40,000 a year. And then the way things went with me, I was very fortunate that the timing of what came up for me and what I was able to latch into, it worked. But then the other thing, too, is that, I mean, definitely, when I went into law school, definitely my aim was to do something with my career that was going to strengthen or empower our community, so a lot of it was about empowerment and that was the whole thing. The Chicano Movement was just starting and, I mean, we were right in it, because even before that, when I was at 'SC, because I didn't get into grad school right away because I hadn't taken any sociology, I took a sociology course in summer school after I graduated from UCLA. I graduated in the winter, and then that summer I went and I took a course in sociology and I got, like, an A. I got a very high score. I think I had maybe the highest score in the class, and it was

just the first survey course, but I got really turned on to it. Then I took sociology at 'SC on a part-time basis to get the courses needed to get into grad school and then I got into grad school. I took the GRE. I did pretty well on that and got into grad school. But, yeah, it turned out that law was really what I wanted to do. And this whole thing in sociology, also you start thinking about the whole systems and the way our species operates and the way that all of our civilization has come to what it is, so the kind of impacts you can have as an individual became important to me.

So then in law school, then we had the Chicano—that was the other thing. There were all these Chicanos in law school compared to what I had experienced, so, I mean, we became a very cohesive group in the law school and we just kind of hung out amongst ourselves, primarily, most of us. Then most of us did—like in my class, most of them did go into things that we somewhat relate to, the community and going back and empowering the community in one way or another, and staying with Chicano kind of Movement groups and other things, and later on in life trying to keep that empowering going on. So that's what I chose to do, and I went into Legal Services after law school. That's what I wanted my career to be. I didn't want to work for a corporation. When I graduated from UCLA and I had a B.S. in finance, I did go and I did a few interviews with some of the recruiters that came. This was 1966, and I think I just got the sense, you know, here's a little Mexican kid out of UCLA's School of Business and they didn't know what they'd want to do with me. They don't know how I'd fit into the corporate mold. I could just sense that. I could just see. And I didn't have strong grades or anything either, but they showed practically no interest at all. [laughs] It was a formality, the interviews. So I got that sense, that feeling from that, that the corporate world wasn't going to be something where I could feel well received or comfortable or anything like that, and I wasn't about to try to make it happen with them. So I think that was part of it too. Like, I saw that I had—and then the things came up, the poverty programs and all of that, which I was able to get jobs in Legal Services and go back and work in the community, and I would have as my clients—we'd be dealing with legal matters involving the corporate—maybe suing people for maybe some of their commercial contracts or whatever, they

couldn't make their car payments or landlord-tenant deals or all these things involving economic issues.

And then I ended up getting more into administrative law, where it was more involving government benefits and privileges, representing people from the barrio, and those kinds of issues for their welfare benefits or unemployment benefits or Social Security benefits or driver's licenses or different kinds of things involving government programs and entitlements.

ESPINO

Day-to-day survival kinds of things, it sounds like.

MUÑOZ

Right. And that was one of the things that I got satisfaction from dealing with, because the people were so unprepared to handle their own cases. They just didn't even know where to start. They wouldn't know how to do it, and so a lot of it was—there's a lot of help that could be bestowed on people in the community. And when I was in law school, I also got into an urban planning kind of a little side trip to—they had a special program that I got into, and then it gave me some work study, and with that work study I helped establish a legal clinic run by law students. We had it in East L.A., and I was involved with that for a year and a half. Eventually, when I graduated, then they stopped doing it in East L.A., but then they moved it over to Venice eventually, because it was an easier drive to go out there and help people with a lot of different kinds of matters, legal matters that law students could help people with. So those are things that kind of went on. I guess in my last year I was the president of the Chicano Law Students Association at UCLA.

ESPINO

Did you help found that?

MUÑOZ

Ralph Ochoa, he was a third-year student when I was a first-year student, and there were three other Chicanos who were second-year students when I was a first-year student and those were David Ochoa, Lupe Martinez, and Tomas Sanchez. So those four, they were already—they were the only Chicanos there. They were so glad when—there was this big group of new Chicanos that came in, and Antonio Rodriguez was in my class as a first-year, so he was someone I already knew. We had a program before that was sponsored to get us ready, an orientation for law school for a bunch

of Chicanos and blacks. It was through the CLEO [Council on Legal Education Opportunities] program, and so we had, like, maybe—I don't know if we spent three weeks or four weeks at UCLA just getting acquainted with what law school is all about. It was a program, so we were there. We were in a dorm.

ESPINO

Did you find that helpful?

MUÑOZ

Yeah, to me it was fun. No, it was kind of helpful. It was helpful. You get an idea of what the lectures are and then how to take notes, do your briefing cases and all that, and different learning aids that you could use, and then getting an exposure to the style of teaching in the law school and writing, doing some of the writing, writing the answers—questions that could come up, the law school questions and how to get an idea of—I don't know how much we did of that. It's hard for me—but what happened there was this is where there were all these minority students that came in into that program. I can't remember, but not all of them went to UCLA. Some went to Loyola and some went to USC, but it was like this whole group just forming. Some of the characters that were there, they ended up not really following through and then going to law school. They dropped out. They found out it wasn't for them, and some of them did it right away or they stayed a few weeks, and they just didn't like what it was. They weren't ready for it or maybe it wasn't for them. There was a few that were—they didn't come in till the following year. But anyway, I got to know the different characters and they became very good friends of mine in law school. So law school, in terms of the Chicano thing, it was—and that's when all the Chicano Movement was starting, because I started in '68, in September or I guess maybe it was late August or September. I can't remember the exact date.

ESPINO

Yeah, that was the critical year for a lot of different reasons, 1968.

MUÑOZ

Right.

ESPINO

Well, let's leave it here. I want to go back the next time we interview to that experience at UCLA and talk about just the kind

of—because it’s changed so much now. The critical—what is it—critical race law?

MUÑOZ

Right.

ESPINO

So the kinds of classes that you took, the professors that you took. Was it helpful? Because some people say that even though they were able to— [End of December 21, 2011 interview]

1.5. Session Five (January 6, 2012)

ESPINO

This is Virginia Espino, and today is January 6th. I’m interviewing Ricardo Muñoz at his home in South Pasadena.

Today we’re going to start with your experience at UCLA Law School. Last time we finished off you’d started there, and I wanted to ask you about the curriculum and if you found any of the issues that you were dealing with in the curriculum, in the coursework that you did, relevant to the Chicano issues or the Mexican American issues of the time.

MUÑOZ

Initially, in my first year, there wasn’t anything that was that specific about Chicanos or Mexican Americans. There was a course that we took, it was a research and writing course, the name of it was “Law, Lawyers, and Social Change,” and it was more about the black civil rights matters, so the subject matter or the materials had to do with the black experience. We went over, like, Plessy vs. Ferguson and we went over Brown vs. Board of Education. We went over a lot of—these were things that were part of the subject matter, but then we would either do research and writing about these things, and the professors who were teaching those courses were very much into the—they were liberal-minded professors concerned with the civil rights matters that this country has had to deal with. So that was one. When I was in my last year—well, no, there was another course that I took that was kind of an interesting course. Professor Karst was the professor and this one had to do with Mexico. It kind of had to do with the ejido system and the laws pertaining to the ejido system in Mexico. It was really out there. It

was something. Where would you think you'd be studying how the ejido system and the Constitution of Mexico after the revolution and how these—it had to do with property and it had to do with capitalism. It had to do with the history of, in Mexico, trying to give back land to the people. Particularly a lot of it went to, like, tribes, or they were groups that had indigenous, still some indigenous traditions. So it was a very interesting course.

Then there was another course that I took. This was in my last year, and Cruz Reynoso was—actually, it was kind of like an elective. I think we did a paper is what we did in that course. I don't remember all that what we covered so much in that course. And then there was another course that I took on immigration, and Ronald Bonaparte was the—he was, like, an expert in immigration law, but he came in to teach that course. So there were different things that—then, of course, in the law school, we did establish the Casa Legal Program, where that was something that we did as Chicano law students. In the years when it was operating and I was involved with it, it was the Chicano law students who were manning and going in and providing services in the community. So there were these kinds of things that I'm sure they—none of that existed before the affirmative action programs had gotten into the law school. I'm sure—I'm pretty positive they never would have had any of those courses or they wouldn't have had the Casa Legal because they didn't have anything like that going at the time.

ESPINO

Well, you don't recall the course you took with Cruz Reynoso, or do you recall—

MUÑOZ

I can't remember all of the subjects that we studied. We probably studied education and some of the education cases, but I don't really remember. It's been over forty years.

ESPINO

Was he your first Mexican American professor?

MUÑOZ

He was. This was like a seminar course and he was my first. I can't think that there was any—there weren't any. I mean, even, like, I can go through all of the schools from grammar school, all of the different—I went to three different grammar schools. Of course, I wouldn't know it when I was kindergarten. I wouldn't know if there

were any, but of course, I don't remember that there were any when I was in kindergarten. Then I moved to another school and I was there until about the third grade. I don't remember that there were, and I wouldn't know if I would have had a consciousness of it, but definitely when I went to Avenue 21 I do have a recognition and recollection and I knew, basically, who all the teachers were in the school. It was a very small school. There were no Mexican American or black or any minority teachers in that school. In junior high there was one, Mr. Arellanes. He was the only Spanish-surnamed teacher that taught when I was there. There were some black teachers. There was Mr. Brown, Mr. McQuarry. I don't know if there were any others. Maybe I'd have to look through some of my yearbooks. When I went to high school, there was Mrs. Koch. By marriage she was Mexican American and she taught Spanish. Then there was Mr. Aguirre. He also taught Spanish. I never had him as a teacher. Mr. Aguirre was the sponsor for the Chess Club in the school. We had a pretty good chess team, too, at Franklin. So there, yeah, there were very few, and at Franklin I don't think there were any others that I was aware of. I'd have to go back. Maybe I could look through yearbooks and I might be able to spot someone that I can't think of. So during that period there wasn't much role models or anything like that from your ethnic group to have, to see. In college I had a Spanish teacher, Mr. Voigt, and I think he may have—I don't know if he was from South America. He was a very good Spanish teacher. Then I had a Spanish conversation teacher who was a Chicano, and I guess he was, like, a T.A., and I remember him. I know when I went to UCLA or later on when I was in law school, there was David Sanchez, who was a math teacher. There were some Spanish-surnamed teachers and maybe Mexican American teachers there, but probably very few. UCLA was so large, you know, you wouldn't know all of the different faculty members in the whole school. But I guess Mr. Voigt and then this other teacher that I had for a conversation course, they were the only ones that I can recall offhand who had a Hispanic background.

ESPINO

Well, what impact did that have on you, having Professor Reynoso teach a class, if any?

MUÑOZ

Well, see, like Cruz, he was in CRLA at that time. He was heading up CRLA. I had worked for CRLA after my first year as a law student. I was a summer intern or law clerk and I worked for CRLA that summer. I worked up in Santa Rosa. That was quite an experience and it was—I really didn't get too much—very little was given to me to do in terms of legal work when I had that experience, but it was a very interesting experience because the director of the office where I worked—what was his name? He was the directing attorney there, Bell, Robert Bell. He was engaged as a rebel against the hierarchy of CRLA and he was trying to just do his own thing. He was kind of a crazy guy in a way. He was a brilliant lawyer. He did some brilliant work as a lawyer, but he was carrying on this kind of a feud with the powers-that-be from CRLA.

ESPINO

I don't know what CRLA stands for.

MUÑOZ

It stands for California Rural Legal Assistance. It was a legal program that provided legal services to poverty clients throughout the state of California in different rural locations. They engaged in a lot of impact litigation. I did get involved with some stuff to try to—well, I think we may have had one of our clients who was part of a class-action suit. One of the other things that I engaged in when I was there was I went out and tried to get evidence against some of the growers for hiring undocumented and how they treated the undocumented, and I went out there posing as a coyote, that I could bring in laborers for them for their harvest, I think, and then I wrote up declarations of my encounters with these growers. That was, like, fieldwork. I mean, that wasn't really where I was in the office doing legal memorandums or doing anything working on cases, so it was really kind of a strange thing. And this guy Bob Bell—the staff was kind of split. Some of them were in favor of—they were backing the central office and then others were backing Bob, and there was this whole turmoil going on in the office. Then, on the other hand, they thought that I was a spy coming in from the central office to get information on Bob and on whatever was going on there.

ESPINO

What was the major issue? Was it that serious?

MUÑOZ

It's hard for me to remember what the conflict was. I mean, he wanted to have more autonomy, in terms of deciding what [legal issues] to focus on, in terms of the office—but I really don't even remember. It was, like, a power struggle, kind of, in a way, that he was engaged in.

ESPINO

And this was an organization that was funded by the federal government under the War on Poverty of 1964?

MUÑOZ

I believe that that's where a lot of the funding came from, but, yeah, that was kind of a very different kind of an experience for me. A lot of the attorneys, they just didn't know what they should be doing there. There was a vacuum of leadership because—and then I remember one thing. Like, Bob Bell, he took me up. We went up and visited a hippie colony up there. This was up in Sonoma County and at that time that was kind of the hippie era. Apparently they wanted him to help them with some legal issues that they wanted to be helped with, in terms of being able to stay in their site where they were camping, or they had their little thing going, and the county was moving on them, and there were different issues that were going on, maybe like with sanitation issues and stuff like that. But, yeah, it was kind of a bizarre experience for me that summer and I didn't really get into an office where there would be someone—like I'd be actually clerking for a lawyer who was working on some cases and they gave me assignments to help them do research or prepare memos or do things like that. I didn't get a chance to really do that that summer.

ESPINO

You didn't learn anything in the realm of legal skills and knowledge?

MUÑOZ

I may have done just a little bit, but there was practically none of that.

ESPINO

That's unfortunate.

MUÑOZ

It was going to a lot of meetings. I went to a lot of meetings. There were different meeting groups. I ran around with some of the—they had two community representatives who worked out in the fields or they dealt with a lot of the people who had issues, but a lot of it

was—some of the issues were, like, their dealings with the growers and the migrant workers, the undocumented migrant workers, and so they were trying to bring—CRLA [California Rural Legal Assistance] worked in a class-action context. They used class-action cases in a lot of ways. There was a case that I remember I went down to. We went down to San Jose and the federal court there, and I think it had to do with pesticides and how they were affecting milk and stuff like that, that sort of thing.

ESPINO

Did you feel like it was poor management, or what would you say was the biggest weakness of the organization?

MUÑOZ

Well, in that case, I mean, the central office was trying to clamp down and to bring the Santa Rosa office into line, and so it was an administrative problem that they were working on, and Robert Bell was kind of like a very kind of a strange character.

ESPINO

You also mentioned that Cruz Reynoso was—

MUÑOZ

Cruz Reynoso, I'm not sure if he was heading it at that time or if he was one of the ones who was high up in the—because Jim Lorenz, I'm not sure if he was still running it. Jim Lorenz was one of the ones who was running it at one time and Cruz did succeed Jim Lorenz.

ESPINO

Well, back to my question. What was it like to have him teach the class? Did it have any impact on you, as far as being someone coming from the community? Is that something that you thought about at that time?

MUÑOZ

Well, for me, it was more a question what was being taught, what I was going to learn. Like I say, I don't remember it all that well because I didn't take back a lot. I remember he'd fly in to teach the class. Then he'd fly back. I don't know if he would spend the night in L.A. But there were a lot of other things in that class, too, that Cruz—he did talk about a lot of his experiences and a lot about the issues that were facing Chicanos. A lot of it was a survey of a lot of the issues that we were dealing with and that he saw that were the important issues that needed to be addressed, and we did probably

some looking at what the law was, the current law at that time on some of these issues, so, like, voting rights and immigration. We probably covered a lot of the same issues that are still with us today. Yeah, a lot of the education issues and affirmative action. I don't know, maybe affirmative action. At that time, affirmative action wasn't really being attacked. At that time it was being supported.

ESPINO

It was just beginning. What about that well-known case that people—many people don't know about the Westminster versus Mendez—

MUÑOZ

I'm pretty sure that was one of the cases that we covered in the course.

ESPINO

When did you decide which direction you wanted to take your degree, your law degree, as far as what would be your emphasis?

MUÑOZ

Hmm. When I was in law school, I mean, the courses that I really thought about and I got involved, one was urban planning, and I did get into a special kind of an extra course in urban planning law. I took urban planning and I took some courses in the urban planning school, but these were special courses for minorities in urban planning and they were seminar-type courses, and it was all tied into La Casa Legal because I was getting student work through this urban planning to go out and work in Casa Legal, so that was part of it. The other thing was that administrative law became an interest because through Casa Legal that was the kind of work I could do and actually go out and represent people at administrative hearings, where you didn't need to actually be a lawyer and you could actually be representing parties. So I did some welfare cases and I did unemployment insurance cases and disability insurance cases while I was still in law school, so I started getting a taste of that, and then it was part of administrative law, so I took the administrative law course in law school. Then eventually, after I did get out of law school and then I went and became a Reginald Heber Smith Community Fellow and I got assigned to working in Legal Aid with the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles. It was the Western Center on Law and Poverty that I was assigned to, but then they

delegated me to the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles to actually where I'd be actually doing work. I would go back to Western Center and consult with a [Jerry Levine]—I had, like, a mentor there that I would go back and I would tell him about the cases I was working on. He [Jerry Levine] would help me with ideas on direction on what to do and what to research and how to work those cases up, so that was one of the things.

But I was doing a lot of administrative law, too, and then they wanted me to work, when I was a community—they called them reggies. They wanted me also to work with community groups, and I did and I worked with the Welfare Rights Organization. I used to attend their meetings and work with them on a lot of their strategies and a lot of the things that they were doing in terms of dealing with the Welfare Department and the head of the Welfare Department and the issues that had come up there.

ESPINO

What were the issues, do you remember, that came up around welfare?

MUÑOZ

I can't remember. There were different laws that would get passed and they would impose kind of regulations, or that the Welfare Department would take on a certain policy of doing things and then there would be confronting the Welfare Department on these points. Like, Alicia Escalante, she was, like, the head of the welfare rights, and there was—let's see. I think it was Pat—let's see. What was her name? Well, there was Irene Villalobos. She was one of the other—and then there was another person who was also very—the top leaders of the welfare rights, and they used to go and they would picket them and they would organize a lot of confrontational things, or else they would go in and they would demand to see the director, and they would go over different kinds of things that were coming down.

ESPINO

Do you remember that they came to you, or how did you meet Alicia?

MUÑOZ

Well, I mean, I got involved and then I used to go to their meetings. They would ask me for advice. They'd ask me to go and look up stuff and to deal—some of it was political. A lot of it was on

a political level with issues, but then there was the technical thing too. And at that time, too, there were a lot of organizations among the poverty lawyers, the poverty law lawyers that also were working on all these things at that time to try to deal with different laws that were there, attacking laws that seemed to be really harsh on the poor. So, yeah, I can't remember. There were a lot of cases that did come up to challenge certain laws and certain regulations, but for me to—I can't really remember a lot of the detail of that now.

ESPINO

Well, the issue of welfare rights within the Chicano community was somewhat controversial because there were people who didn't support that idea of even welfare. Like, for example, Lupe Anguiano was more interested in work training and job training versus focusing on the welfare. Did you have a position about welfare in general or welfare as far as the way Alicia saw it, something that should bring a stable economic situation for a family, especially single moms?

MUÑOZ

Well, I'm not that familiar with Anguiano and what was being proposed by Anguiano. I think welfare rights—there were things that the department engaged in where they thought that, one, there was arbitrariness in the way things were applied. There was, also, like, maybe invasion of privacy kinds of issues. There were actually giving them actual explanations of their rights and then allowing them to appeal. I mean, what I got involved more, where it was a hands-on thing was in appeals and appeal hearings of persons on welfare who were being denied or were having their benefits taken, and then challenging the department's action in either denying or taking away their benefits. Like, one of the things was they used to have, like, investigators go out and do stuff and all that, and whether you could rely on the credibility of the investigators and then some of the techniques and the tactics that they used.

ESPINO

Can you describe any of them?

MUÑOZ

I don't remember all the detail on all of that stuff that went on, but—

ESPINO

Well, when you look at your attraction to law and your experience in law school, did you have a political ideology or were you interested in the law and upholding the rights of whatever, citizens, or where did your desire come from?

MUNOZ

I think probably I was more in line—well, one, I mean, I was a supporter of the New Deal concepts of kind of a somewhat of a socialistic—where the government would have social programs to meet certain needs of parts of the population. I mean, through the Depression, all of the programs that were established as a result of what went down in the Depression, the poverty issues that were there. So we established Social Security, unemployment insurance, different programs that were established. So I think that the system was operating, doing the right thing in terms of the people at large in our country. I mean, there were always the issues of discrimination and the whole race issues, which was apart from that. Those were issues of their own, but then just looking across, in general, my thinking is that the country should have that, the government should be engaged in these kinds of programs, and so I don't know how much ideology—there wasn't a lot of ideology on my part. It was more just a way of thinking about how the needs of different people—and then the other thing is how potentials and opportunities can be matched, because as I saw it, of our population, there were a lot of people who didn't get opportunities who had a great potential to do great things, but they never got the opportunities either to get an education that they would need to really develop their potential.

It's been my view that government should engage in trying to make sure that there's opportunities across the board and that people's potential can be developed and attained as much as possible, but then in terms of law, I think that our legal system—I think that, in general, the Constitution is a pretty decent approach. The Constitution, as it has evolved even up to now, is a pretty good approach. It's a good structure for our government in terms of the rights of the individual and then the government relationship to the individual. The Bill of Rights is a crucial part of that, of all the rights that are in the Bill of Rights and then all of the rights that came out of the Civil War of doing away with slavery and that. So I think that, in general, we have a good system. An important thing is for

individuals to be able to use the system, to have a means of going into the legal system and making their case, having a case there. So I mean, like, at one time there were no public defenders because it hadn't been established through the Supreme Court that people should have a right to, in a criminal case, if they don't have the money to be—that the government provide for a defense attorney on their behalf. So that's one example. That should be provided by the government. The people have that right because liberty's at stake for the individual.

ESPINO

Do you remember the first time you won something or you won a case or won a—I'm not familiar with the terminology—or won a legal petition or something in favor of your client?

MUÑOZ

Yeah, I mean, there were a lot of administrative law cases that I won. I can't remember the first one that I won.

ESPINO

But anything that stands out.

MUÑOZ

Even when I was in law school, when I was at Casa Legal, won a good number of cases on behalf of clients, because the clients, a lot of them, they were so ill-prepared to present a case for themselves and how to go about it and what to do. That's where they gained a lot of—I mean, they got things, so that they had a chance, because otherwise, they really didn't have much of a chance because they didn't know how to be prepared and what to present on their own behalf. No, there were some cases. I did some appellate work in unemployment that I eventually took to the appellate court and won at the appellate level, which I was real happy when I won those cases. So I guess those were—I enjoyed appellate work and there were cases I didn't win, but there were the ones that I won, but usually you don't win very many when you go up to the Court of Appeal. You don't really win too many there, but I was still learning. I think if I would have stayed in that, specializing in that, then I would have gained more skill in preparing and presenting appellate cases. But I enjoyed appellate work. I enjoyed the other work, too, I mean just going in and presenting cases on behalf of clients.

ESPINO

What was the courtroom situation like, when you're thinking about the time period and the lack of diversity at that time? I imagine with judges and everybody else involved, other lawyers, do you remember what you felt like, as far as being a Mexican American from Lincoln Heights and Highland Park?

MUÑOZ

Well, I mean you do get cues of—you can notice some of the judges weren't going to—I mean, my impression was that they weren't sympathetic or anything. I don't know if—not even sympathetic. They didn't really want to listen and there were others that were. I mean, even today there are judges that, and there probably always will be, there's going to be judges who, based on their biases or whatever, they're going to have a bias and some of them are going to have prejudices, and they're going to think in terms of stereotypes and that sort of thing and that's inevitable. That's just part of how humans are made up, to some degree. I think there's some that really try to be as open-minded and impartial as they can, but I think there are some limits for anyone, because you're a product of your own experience and your own background, and so you're going to be able to understand some things better than others, and in terms of the different communities and our diverse society, you're going to have more familiarity. The more familiarity you have with more of the people that make up the diverse society, the better you're going to be able to understand, and read in and understand. A lot of it is just the testimony that people present, what makes sense.

ESPINO

You mentioned earlier that there were a lot of lawyers working as poverty lawyers, but was that something new of that period of the late sixties, early seventies, the whole idea of the poverty—did you call yourselves poverty lawyers?

MUÑOZ

Oh, yeah. No, all of that came about through the Great Society, through Johnson's—I don't know if Kennedy had then, before he was assassinated, whether there was work being done to put this thing—I think Pierre Salinger had a lot to do with some of the groundwork to launch this War on Poverty, the Great Society, and all of that, because all of the programs, the domestic programs that came to be for the poor, for dealing with the poor. This is where the

funding for all of these programs came. So Legal Services during that early phase was going strong and there were quite a few very, very talented people who were not minorities. They were very liberal-thinking Anglos who got into it and they had their view of the society and things that were unfair in the society, and they went into these programs and they were very effective. That's why, like, CRLA [California Rural Legal Assistance] was one of the most effective programs in those terms because they produced what they called impact litigation, so that they would take cases in the class-action impact litigation. That's what they would aim at, to try to make dramatic changes in policies and in laws and the way laws were being carried out. So there was a lot that went on. CRLA did a lot in the use of insecticides and all that stuff, and different kinds of treatment of farm laborers. Man, there was a lot that they accomplished.

ESPINO

What was the culture like at UCLA as far as the community of poverty lawyers that you talked about? Did you just socialize, or work on issues within the Mexican American students, the Chicano students, or did you talk with African American and Asian American and other—because there's a lot of poor white folks, as well, so I'm wondering—

MUÑOZ

No, well, see, there were, like, groups. There was the National Lawyers Guild, and that was, like, the more radical activist white liberal lawyer group, and they were pretty active. When I was in law school and we had Chicanos there, I had enough time to give to that particular group. The black law students—there were the Native Americans we did and then there were Asians too. The Asians were not included in the affirmative action support, so they weren't supported by affirmative action at that time.

ESPINO

Was there any resentment that you found from them?

MUÑOZ

I didn't. I mean, I didn't find any resentment from them. I don't know to what extent when I was there what they knew what the deal was, what the others were getting. I don't know if they do or not, but there was this whole third-world thing that we felt a kinship to, to the other minorities. Of course, we had get-togethers with

them, or we would individually establish ties with different blacks in our—and then we had the ones that went through the CLEO program. There was a mix there. So we got to know each other and there was some bonding that went on amongst us, so, yeah. And then later on in the career, we worked on things together, particularly some of the—well, the desegregation case, and we worked on Crawford together. There were a lot of Chicanos who got involved in that case, along with the black lawyers and then the bar associations. During that period up until the seventies, maybe even beyond, there were the ties that were established among the Minority Bar Association and I became active in it. At one time, I was the president of the Minority Bar Association for the County of L.A. and we used to get together and have meetings. We worked on a lot of affirmative action type of issues, but we worked on different issues that we had in common. There were, like, the Asian Americans. There were the Japanese, the Chinese, the Korean, Filipino. They had their own groups and they would get together with us and the blacks.

ESPINO

Anybody who went on to be well known within that diverse group of students?

MUÑOZ

Yeah, well, okay. Let's see. The ones that I went to school with—well, one of them, like Joe Duff, he was the president of the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] here in L.A. for quite a while. I don't remember all the ones that—there were a lot who ended up being judges. That was one of the thrusts, too, of the organization was to get more minorities on the bench, so that was one of the main outcomes that was being sought.

ESPINO

And how successful were you in achieving that?

MUÑOZ

Well, it went fairly well. Like Jerry Brown, that was when we were—Jerry Brown made a lot of appointments, and I guess Reagan, he made some, but the whole thing shifted. There was a shift of the kinds of people and the kind of backgrounds that they had. Like when Jerry Brown was in, he appointed a lot of people who had Legal Aid or Legal Services backgrounds to the bench, quite a few. Once Reagan got in, you didn't see those kinds of appointments. It

would be people who were district attorneys, who were prosecutors, criminal prosecutors. They were the ones that were going to get appointed. There were some minorities who had gone into that and some of them got appointed, and then Deukmejian and then Pete Wilson. So there were these periods of time where you were getting a different kind of a background for the appointments to the bench.

ESPINO

So from your cohort, were you before Antonia Hernandez and Charles Nabarette?

MUÑOZ

Right. Well, Charles Nabarette was in law school with me. He was my classmate. Antonia, she started law school the year after I graduated, or in the same year that I graduated, but I graduated in June and she started in September. So she was, like, three years behind.

ESPINO

I'm trying to understand the personality of the individuals who chose this path versus teaching, versus medicine, versus some of the other disciplines that people at that time got involved in. So how would you describe the young Mexican Americans or Chicanos that were getting—what were some of their passions, at least your classmates?

MUÑOZ

Well, okay, I mean, there were ten of us who graduated from law school in my class of Chicanos. We're all different. Antonio Rodriguez, he was in my class and he is very ideological. He did a lot of—at least he made efforts in that. I guess he did enough reading and seemed to me that he tried to be guided, to some extent, by some political thought and his view of society and his view of our government and that sort of thing, and what he wanted to do. I mean, he was very committed. He went into private practice and I don't know if he worked for MALDEF [Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund]. I don't even remember exactly—he eventually worked for the Center for Law and Justice and then he actually succeeded me when I left as director. He succeeded me as the director, and he did, like, I mean, from what I understand, and I wasn't really following it, but he tried to devote a lot of resources to immigration matters, which really wasn't what the center mission was necessarily, because there was another program funded

through the—which was One Stop Immigration. But anyway, I don't really know all that went on there, but he had his ideas of how to work in the community, work in a grassroots level, do a lot of community organizing. That was very much his interest, but he did a lot of criminal work. He tried civil rights stuff.

Charles Nabarette, he was in private practice and he eventually worked at the Center for Law and Justice. He had worked for MALDEF, also, and he eventually became an administrative law judge for unemployment insurance appeals court and he's still working there, so we ended up doing much the same thing. He practiced workers' comp law for a while. Let's see. Another one I can think of is Cornelio Hernandez and he was also another one who did a lot of ideological thinking, and he ended up concentrating in criminal law and he's a specialist in criminal law. I think that's the bulk of the kind of practice that he's had in his career. Then there's Ron [Ronald R.] Gastelum, and Ron, he took the urban planning seminar that I was in and he went into kind of that field. He eventually went to work for BKK [Corporation], which was a waste disposal, solid waste, or whatever, company and did a lot of environmental type of work. Eventually then he went to work and he was, I guess, the CEO of the Metropolitan Water District. I talked to him just recently because I hadn't talked to him in a long time, and now he's retired, but he's actually just got a few companies that he kind of works with, that he's involved with, and some of it's water—I don't know—it has to do with water.

Then there's Frederick Aguirre and he went into private practice. He was in Orange County. He was very active in Democratic politics and he's a Superior Court judge in Orange County now, but he was very active in the community also. I mean, both Ron and, I'd say maybe Rick, Frederick—they call him Rick. He's been more in the grassroots kind of thing a little bit more, but he's also got bar-association-type involvement. And there was Loretta Sifuentes and she went to work eventually for Universal Studios. I think she worked at Western Center and then she eventually went to work for Universal. Then she got into intellectual property and that's what she's been—mostly, like, copyright, that sort of thing. She's kind of been like just a solo practitioner doing her own thing. I don't think she takes on a lot of work. I don't know. Her husband was a good friend also. He was a professor at Cal State Northridge in Chicano

Studies, Roberto Sifuentes. I don't know if you ever knew of him. He was in real bad health for quite a few years before he died, so she had to devote a lot of time to looking after him. Then there was another fellow. Let's see. What's his name? Ed Rivera, and he was kind of different. He didn't really hang out too much with the Chicanos. He was kind of just like a maverick kind of a character, and I don't know, he went off on some kind of strange kind of trip. Well, he's been disbarred, but he ended up being disbarred because of this thing that he got into of attacking the income tax. So he did, I guess, his own study, and he came up with his own conclusion that the income tax is unconstitutional and that people shouldn't pay any income tax or pay any mind to it, that it's unconstitutional and they don't need to pay it. I don't know. He did a lot of anti-tax promotion. I don't know. I can't remember all of the details surrounding his disbarment.

ESPINO

Well, there's that sensational, or maybe that's the wrong word, but that very well-known writer and lawyer from that period, Oscar Zeta Acosta. Did you have any interactions with him?

MUÑOZ

I had very few encounters with him. I was a law student when he was going strong, and he got involved in some of these cases where he represented—let's see. I don't know. Was it the Biltmore Seven or something? I can't remember which. I think that was the case—

ESPINO

Or the L.A. Thirteen?

MUÑOZ

Oh, no. The L.A. Thirteen, that was a—maybe he did both of them. I don't know if he did—

ESPINO

[unclear]?

MUÑOZ

No, Los Tres. I don't think he did Los Tres. Antonio was involved in Los Tres, but Oscar, he was just—I mean, he was just too odd for me. That was my take on him was that he was just off the wall for me. He didn't attract my interest much. Yeah, he just seemed to be too far out.

ESPINO

Do you think that his strategy was successful, or do you think that people had the same reaction that you had, most people had the same reaction that you had to his—

MUÑOZ

I'm not really aware—I wasn't really paying attention to who reacted to him or who didn't or what. There were some of the law students that maybe they got involved and tried to help him or work with him and learn from him. I'm not really sure who did, though. I mean, I've read his books because, to me, he's a great writer, as far as I'm concerned. I love his writings. I mean, he just had his view. He expresses his view on things and it's still pretty crazy, but, yeah, he writes about Richard Cruz. He writes about the inquest on Ruben Salazar's death and he was involved with that. And then maybe it was the walkouts. Was it the walkouts or the Biltmore Seven? I don't know.

He writes about this other case where he brought up and challenged the way the grand jury is selected and he did a jury challenge on the way the grand jury was selected. I think that was a really—it was very interesting. It was a very good legal approach. I mean, he built a good case. I mean, the statistics were there to show that there were hardly ever any Spanish names to sit on the grand jury, and he used that and he used it pretty effectively in the case that he represented. He was kind of a crazy guy, and, of course, if you read his stuff, all the drugs that he was consuming.

ESPINO

One thing I wanted to ask you and that is we didn't talk about when you started to use the term "Chicano." Do you remember when that happened, or if it was a conscious shift?

MUÑOZ

No, I mean, once the term started getting used, to me, I identified right away with it. I thought it was really a good term to use to—I can't remember when it first started being used, but, like, I was the president—when I was in law school, we were the Chicano Law Students Association at UCLA. That was the name of our group, and, like, two classes ahead of me there was only one Chicano. That was Ralph Ochoa. Then the class after him, which was the class immediately ahead of me, there were three Chicanos and they were Tom Sanchez and David Ochoa and Lupe Martinez. Then our class, we came in with over twenty when we started, so we formed our

own little association, but at that time, UMAS had already been in existence.

I was in UMAS before law school. When I was attending USC, we formed a chapter of UMAS there, and Rick Aguirre, who went to law school with me, he was at 'SC. He went to USC undergrad, so he was in the group. I remember Jesus Melendez was in the group and he eventually went to law school at USC. And let's see. Oh, there was Dominique Rubalcava. He was in the group and he ended up at UCLA Law School a class behind me, and there was another fellow, Richard Zapanta, who's a doctor. He's a really well-known Chicano doctor in the community. We were UMAS at that time and, of course, that's when the term started. Then, of course, there were other things that were going on at that time. La Raza newspaper started coming out and all of that, and there were all these other kinds of community-type things. It was all part of this whole cultural change or cultural revolution of the sixties because there were other things that were going on. There was, like, the Peace Movement. There was the Free Speech Movement that was up in Berkeley that was before. There was the hippie—the love-ins and all of the stuff, all of the new music, the psychedelic, all that, and Bob Dylan. There was all these cultural things that were going on that weren't necessarily—they were in the whole mix. Of course, those of us who went to the university, we got exposed to a lot of this other stuff too. But when the affirmative action and all of that started, and then you started seeing kids recruited to come to the university from the barrio, and then you started seeing a critical mass growing on campus—I mean, from the time that I left as an undergrad when I came back to law school—I left in '66, came back in '68—there was a big change. There was a big change in how many raza were on campus and there were programs. There was EOP. There was all this other stuff going on, so there were a lot of things that had changed.

So this whole thing of the Chicano, it came about because it was a term that we could identify—it was not a term that was put on us. It was a term coming from within that the young people particularly got turned onto, "Yeah, I'm a Chicano, yeah."

ESPINO

Do you have memories of it being derogatory, or was that something that you heard already in your family as neutral terminology?

MUÑOZ

Well, in my family, I don't think we necessarily used it before it became the term of choice. I would say I'd heard the term out in the barrio, "That Chicano." You talk about someone, "Oh, you mean—oh, that guy, yeah, yeah. That Chicano you're talking about over there?" It would be something like that. It would just be in identifying him as being a Chicanada or something, and so it wasn't necessarily used so much—it was more of a within-the-group kind of term. I think that's the way it was kind of used, but I don't think it was necessarily used—I mean, I didn't really have the feeling of it being derogatory. It was just a term and it was one that was—instead of Mexicano, it kind of distinguishes it from—you could say, "Hay esta el Mexicano." You wouldn't say that. You'll say, "a Chicano," because maybe the guy's a pocho and he doesn't really know Spanish too much, but he's from the barrio. He knows half Spanish or whatever.

ESPINO

Do you remember your parents' reaction to that term, how they felt about it?

MUÑOZ

I don't think they gave it much—it wasn't something they were critiquing or anything. They weren't that strict in their—proper that you have to use proper terms or something. I don't even know what they thought.

ESPINO

But they didn't criticize you or they didn't challenge—

MUÑOZ

I never heard them say, "How come they use this word "Chicano"? We're not Chicanos. We're Mexicans." I never heard them say anything like that, "What's a Chicano? I'm not a Chicano." I never heard them say anything like that.

ESPINO

What about among your peers? Was it something that people debated, for example, when you decided to name your organization or your group the Chicano Lawyers?

MUÑOZ

Well, for a long time there was this thing, define a Chicano. What's a Chicano? That went on for years and years. Or how can you identify a Chicano from whatever, anything else? That's gone on a long time, what does it mean to be Chicano and all of that. I see it more as a barrio term of just more or less denoting someone else who's from the barrio. There may be some gabachos in the barrio who are acculturated as Chicanos, but people who didn't know them, they would just call them a gabacho, but unless they really knew them. Then they said, "Oh, he's really a Chicano," but he's a Chicano because he has the culture. He knows maybe the barrio. He knows the [Spanish word]. He knows a lot of stuff. He has the culture in him. So there's maybe a cultural thing, subcultural thing to it.

Let's see. There's the term Chicano falso. You know what a Chicano falso is. Chicano falso is someone who acts like they're—it's someone who uses—it's kind of like an opportunist who claims they're a Chicano when there's something to gain by it, but then they won't act like a Chicano when they're outside of the Chicano milieu. So they'll be called a Chicano falso.

ESPINO

Well, that's an interesting [unclear].

MUÑOZ

That's like an Uncle Tom, in a sense.

ESPINO

Or Tio Taco.

MUÑOZ

Tio Taco.

ESPINO

That brings up an interesting point, because I wonder when you have these Chicanos going into law school at UCLA, a prestigious program, were they forced to get into civil rights because it was politically correct or did some of them really deep down want to go into corporate law, but—

MUÑOZ

In the outset, when, like—and I'll say during the three years that I was in law school, the faculty or the dean, they enlisted our expertise in the selection process.

So the Chicano law students, we had, like, a recruitment committee or something, and they would interview all of the applicants that

were Chicano, particularly the ones that wanted to get into the minority program, because there was grants to be had if they were in. So they wanted—I guess the faculty or whatever, they didn't pretend to be experts on being able to tell whether someone has a commitment to the barrio or not, so they would leave it up to the law students to give recommendations to this committee. So we used to have these panels and they would bring in the applicants and they would interview them, and then they would give them a rating of whether they thought they were really good material or not good material. And that's what this panel was supposedly basing their judgment on, will this guy be a Chicano falso or will he be a true Chicano. Of course the faculty, their main interest was academic, that they were going to make it through, that they were going to be great students and that they would have a great career, and they would, in the end, make the university look good because they produced a very good outcome of a great lawyer or whatever. But the students, we weren't thinking of that. We were thinking this guy, does he look like he's dedicated to going back to the community and serving the community, the barrio, and doing something there and being of use there. Definitely, the way things went, there were a lot of people they weren't very good at judging. Some of them they rejected were really much more worthy than others that they accepted in terms of meeting the criteria that you want to meet, that they would be people who would have a dedication to the community.

ESPINO

And this money was earmarked for that?

MUÑOZ

I mean, there was money to give grants to students. I think the law school could do what—they operated somewhat any way they wanted. I don't think from up above they told them, "Find these kinds of students." See, a lot of it had to do with the faculty, and on our faculty at UCLA, I mean, there were some right-wingers on the faculty. Even when we were in law school, there was a couple of them. There was one in particular that was—actually, there were two of them that wanted to see the minorities fail and would be maybe—I mean, you might think that they were going to be extra tough on them if they could be and try to make them fail. They

didn't want them to succeed. I mean, that's the feeling you get from these particular characters.

ESPINO

Looking back, did you think that was fair to weed out the students based on their politics?

MUÑOZ

Well, I mean, I wouldn't necessarily characterize it as politics. I would characterize it as what their ambitions were. I mean, the way that I think that the Chicanos who—like, I was part of the Chicano Law Students Association. The whole Chicano Movement, everything was geared at we need to help our people, our community rise up. We need to build— [interruption]

ESPINO

Okay. We're back. You were going to tell me something very interesting about what the purpose of the Chicano Movement was, what the purpose of, for example, the Chicano Law Student Association, the underlying drive of the movement.

MUÑOZ

Well, I guess there was a feeling that our community had been kept down through discrimination and limited opportunities, and here was this whole program of opportunities that got dropped into our laps and what to do with it. Now, you could say as the law students on that panel interviewing the candidates for law school, what are we looking for? Are we looking for some more corporate lawyers to go and represent the major corporations? Is that what's lacking in our community? Is that where we should be sending our talent? No. I mean, we have a lot of needs. We need to empower ourselves. How are we going to empower ourselves with this opportunity? So the idea was let's try and find people who will go through law school and then go back and, in some way, serve the needs of the community more directly, and so that was what the idea was. A lot of it was, too, maybe for leaders, develop leaders. Myself, I think that that was behind some of the thinking of the powers-that-be that created the programs for opportunities. They were looking at trying to build leaders in the minority communities, give them the opportunities to obtain skills that would help them be greater leaders having more impact. So I think there definitely was that kind of a motivation at the higher level, at the president's level, the Congress, whatever. That's what they were—they were going to

make these programs to see if they could get that kind of an outcome. In the faculty at UCLA, there were quite a few faculty people, liberals, who wanted to see the program do that and they weren't so much interested necessarily—they knew, because of the deprivation of opportunities and of the way that our system and our demography was, that there weren't candidates that would meet the traditional caliber of criteria that applied to students at large, so they knew that they were going to be bringing in—they had the programs, CLEO [Council on Legal Education Opportunity] program, to try to prepare and to give a little head start to the minority students coming in. And they wanted to have other programs, even maybe within the law school, to kind of help those if they were having a rough time. I don't think we really did have that. We didn't really have, like, tutoring. At least I don't remember that. Amongst ourselves maybe we did some of that, we helped each other out.

ESPINO

The study groups and that kind of thing?

MUÑOZ

Right, and there were some that, some of the members, they did have non-Chicano who they studied with, that helped them. But anyway, so getting back, I think that that was one of the things that, "We got here. We're going to try to make sure that we're going to get people who have their heart in the right place and their mind in the right place, and they're going to be productive for the community after they get out of law school. They're not just going to go and just not give back." So that was what the aim was and, like I say, I think they did okay. I think there were choices where they rejected some people that they shouldn't have and then they took in people that they should have rejected, but that's the case of hiring in any kind of thing that I've seen, that it's hard to know where someone's going to end up after you give them that opportunity.

ESPINO

How successful were the students, as far as completing law school and then going on to pass the bar?

MUÑOZ

There was one student in our class, the Chicanos, of the ten, who has never passed the bar out of the ten. The rest of them, they eventually passed. Some of them took it multiple times, all but one.

And the one who didn't pass, yeah, he was, like, an unusual person. I mean, he was the president of the Student Bar Association, so he was, like, student-body president of the law school. He had a lot of political skills, but I guess he had other issues that detracted—I think he had the ability to do it, but he couldn't focus and he never really got the focus that he needed to have to pass the bar. He just maybe wasn't that serious about it. I don't know how serious he was because, I'll tell you, after the first time we took the bar—we took it all the first time.

ESPINO

All together?

MUÑOZ

Yeah, we took it at the same time. I think we were maybe even all in the same place, and after the first—it was a two-and-half-day thing. After the first day, he went out and got drunk and he never came back, so that tells you how focused he was. He wasn't focused enough.

ESPINO

But they say the California Bar is one of the most difficult to pass.

MUÑOZ

Well, it is. It is, yeah.

ESPINO

I mean, it's not uncommon for a lot of bright students from UCLA not to pass. Or is it uncommon?

MUÑOZ

Well, it's not uncommon. It's not uncommon, no. I don't know what the—every year there's a different percentage. They tell you the percentage from all the law schools.

ESPINO

Well, I think we'll stop it here, and next time I'd like to talk about the Chicano Movement. It's still around the same period that we're talking about, your experience in law school, but I want to know what role you played and if you went to the march that day, what that day was like. So we can talk about that the next time, so I'll stop it here. [End of January 6, 2012 interview]

1.6. Session Six (January 20, 2012)

ESPINO

This is Virginia Espino, and today is January 20th. I'm interviewing Ricardo Muñoz at his home in South Pasadena.

Last time when we finished, I wanted to talk about, this time, the Chicano Moratorium. I mentioned that in our last interview and that's where I'd like to pick up, because it's the time when you're at UCLA, you're in law school, and the Chicano Movement is really taking hold. Can you talk to me about your first involvement with the moratorium?

MUÑOZ

Okay. I don't know. It's hard to say when the involvement began. Actually, I was not that directly involved. My brother was the one. He was one of the leaders, one of the coordinators or what have you of the moratorium. I was in law school, so I was pretty busy with the studies, and then I had my own—I was working part-time, as well, through a work study that I had while in law school and that's what I was doing at Casa Legal. So that would have been—let's see. I graduated from law school in '71, so actually the moratorium took place in '70, so I would have been in my second year of law school in 1970. I started in '68 to '69, and then from '69 to June of '70, and I started this Casa Legal in, like, January of 1970. That's when we started it. So that really was taking up a lot of my time. I didn't have the time to really be involved in the moratorium because I, at that time also, then, at the end of the school year in June of 1970, I finished my second year of law school.

Then that summer I went to Mexico, and there was a group that was organized of a bunch of Chicanos. College students went down there to attend the university, take classes at the university. I just happened to go along because I had a girlfriend who was going down there and then I had a lot of friends that were on that trip. There was, like, two busloads, or maybe it was—I think it was two busloads, but I didn't go in the buses when they went down. I went down a little later and I met up with them. At that time, we stayed in an old hotel in the Tlatelolco area, where there had been a battle in the '68 Olympics. There were, like, high-rise apartment buildings and all that. A lot of them, they were burnt down. They were burnt out. They weren't even in use anymore. They were pretty modern buildings, but there was a building that we stayed in that was still—it hadn't really been damaged. So that's where all these students

stayed, and so that was in that summer where they were really doing the final putting together of the moratorium. There had been the moratorium earlier in the year and the one in March, I don't even think I went to that one. I can't remember. Maybe I did, but when I got back, I got back to L.A. from Mexico probably in the early part of August, and then it was really—I remember my parents were gone. They had gone on a trip back east, and my brother, Rosalio, he was there and he would have meetings in the home. They were doing a lot of the final details that they were getting together, so there were people there. I wasn't so much involved. I was getting back into—getting ready to go back to law school for my third year.

ESPINO

Can you tell me about those meetings, even if you weren't organizing them or really participating? Can you describe what you saw when you came back and saw Rosalio had a bunch of people in your parents' home?

MUÑOZ

Well, they were going over a lot of logistical things, a lot of that and the programming for the event, but it was coordinating a lot of the logistical things that they were going to do and how it was supposed to flow the actual day, and there was just a lot of excitement. I mean, Corky Gonzalez was coming and there was just a lot going on.

ESPINO

Was there a lot of people in this meeting that you're talking about?

MUÑOZ

I would say there may have been maybe fifteen people, maybe, somewhere in the neighborhood of about fifteen people.

ESPINO

Do you think your parents knew he was having these meetings at their—

MUÑOZ

No, they didn't know.

ESPINO

[laughs] That's funny.

MUÑOZ

But they did get back, see, and my parents, they attended the moratorium, as well, and my older sister, she came down from

Oregon. She was living up there and she came down with, I think, two of her sons, at least one of them. I don't know if the other one was born yet. I can't even remember, but I know that one of them, because they went to the moratorium and we were in Laguna Park when all hell broke loose, and I helped get them out and get them back to the car to get them back home. Then I went back and just kind of drove around trying to see, and eventually there was—and the next day in Legal Aid there was lawyers and law students that were working on the people that were in jail and trying to arrange to get them out, either through bail or through other means, getting out on their own recognizance, that sort of thing. So that's what went on there and it was still pretty—I mean, there were still a lot of, I guess—I don't if it would be called trauma, or whatever, that was going on there. I mean, Whittier Boulevard was really pretty—there had been quite a few fires there and places broken into and—
ESPINO

Well, can you tell me about that day? Maybe start from the beginning, how you started your day, and just walk me through whatever you can remember of that march, what you were doing.
MUÑOZ

Well, I mean, really, it's not something where I remember any details of what I did. I remember being there. I mean, I went to where the march began and then marched all the way down Atlantic, and I guess it was on Third Street or Fourth Street, and then down Atlantic, and then down Whittier Boulevard, and then to Laguna Park. I don't even remember where I parked. I'm not sure. I don't even know if I went and got my car or what, to move it closer to Laguna Park, or what I did, all the stuff that was going on. I guess a lot of the stuff, too, I mean, I've seen the films of there, so it kind of reminds me of it, but—

ESPINO

Who did you march with? Did you march by yourself or with a group?

MUÑOZ

I don't really necessarily remember exactly who I was in company with. I was mostly just marching with whoever, because the law students, we were kind of like—I don't know if we were serving as monitors in that one, because there was the following moratorium

that we did. I think we did more monitoring, but I'm not sure. I can't even remember if we were actually doing monitoring.

ESPINO

So then you're marching, and then what happens?

MUÑOZ

Well, I got to the park, and then at the park I ran into friends and there were—I actually ran into some of the gang, kids that I had worked in with gangs and they were down there—

ESPINO

What was the scene like?

MUÑOZ

—and then there were other law students that were there. Well, it was very festive. I mean when we got there, the program started and there was singing. They really hadn't gotten so much into the speeches, but there were a lot of people. They were just families and they were all sitting around. I remember in the back of the park, that's where I ran into guys that I knew who I had worked with for some of the gangs, and so they were back there.

ESPINO

So did you find the mood—were people angry? Were people excited? Were people—

MUÑOZ

Well, I mean, it was almost like a picnic, really. I mean, when people got there, they were waiting to see the program. There was singing. There was some performing of music and there was dancers and folklorico-type things, so there was kind of like light entertainment that was going on, and then they started doing some of the announcements and the speakers. I think my brother eventually came up and started to start talking, but then when all hell broke loose, then that's when the police, the sheriffs, and the LAPD, they started moving into the park and they were all in—with their billy clubs and all that. So then people, they just got up, and then I told my parents and my sister, "We better get out of here." They knew where they had parked, so we went over and got in the car and got out and went home, and then we were watching the news and all that when we got home.

ESPINO

When you say all hell broke loose, can you describe that scene for me?

MUÑOZ

Well, I didn't see it—I don't think I saw it right away. I think people started coming, running, started coming to where I was, because I wasn't in that part of the park where the police force initially entered onto the park. I was more in the central part of the park. I was closer to where the stage was and where they were going to be having the program, but then people started running and they said, "Hey!" I don't remember all that was said, but they were—and then you could see the police coming and they were trying to clear the park. I mean, that was my first thing was to get my folks and my sister and my nephew out of there.

ESPINO

Did you think about Rosalio, where he was?

MUÑOZ

I don't really know. I don't have a very vivid memory of looking for him. We may have even—I don't know if we even exchanged some words before I left with my folks. I don't remember. I don't remember if we had contact or what.

ESPINO

So what was the feeling that you had when you left? Did you feel like the police were out of control?

MUÑOZ

I was upset.

ESPINO

Or did you feel like you would just get stuck in the middle?

MUÑOZ

I was upset. I didn't know why they had come onto the—and why they were doing what they were doing. I didn't see that there was any reason for them to be there doing what they were doing at that point, because I didn't know. I didn't know. All I know is what I saw, and then all the other people that were—they were running or they were trying to get out.

And then I remember when we found out about Ruben, boy, that was a blow. That was a real blow. How could this happen to him? It was unbelievable, unbelievable that he would have been a victim and he would have been killed, that he was killed. It was just terrible, and then there was just a lot of anger then that kind of came up, too, at what is being wrought here.

ESPINO

For yourself or for the community?

MUÑOZ

For myself and the community. Yeah, definitely.

ESPINO

Did you know Ruben before—

MUÑOZ

I had never really made—I knew him because I used to read his articles. He'd be on TV, I guess, maybe a little. It was mostly his articles that I read, that I was very impressed. I mean, when I'd see that he wrote an article, I would look forward to it to read what his commentary was. So, yeah, he was a very significant person. But the Chicano Movement, it was already starting to happen, and I had been involved in the Student Movement and all of that, so it was something. I remember the publicity that came out and the stories that were written about what had happened in the general media, the L. A. Times, and they were—they were trying to make it—they were trying to put their own take on what had happened. And I don't know. I remember there was one article that they had where they had some of the supposed people who were—I don't know if they were looked upon as leaders or they were people from the community, too, that they had gotten who were condemning what had happened and they were kind of trying to blame my brother. But some of these people were pretty—like one of them was Moe Aguirre, I remember, and Moe Aguirre, he had been a leader of the Pintos. But it seemed real opportunistic, what these people were coming out with and some of the—they were trying to put blame on the community for what had happened—

ESPINO

On Rosalio?

MUÑOZ

There was another fellow, Armando Lawrence, I remember. He was a fellow who I knew. He had worked with the Model Cities Program, and they had, like, a group of people who they—they wrote an article in the Times and they had their picture, and they were somewhat condemning that the Moratorium Committee was at fault and that sort of thing.

ESPINO

How did you feel about those reactions?

MUÑOZ

Well, I looked at a lot of these people as kind of like sellouts. That's the way that I viewed them.

ESPINO

Well, if you look at what happened during the school walkouts and the violence that ensued, and if you look at the relationship of the police with the Mexican American, Chicano community, it's never been friendly in most communities of color. It appears that there were some people who thought it was a huge risk to have a march like that, that there could be violence and it could be dangerous. Did you ever hear that comment coming from anybody, that Rosalio was taking a huge risk by organizing this thing with the community?

MUÑOZ

Well, I don't recall that. I'm sure that some people may have been raising that kind of an issue because they had had the moratorium before and the earlier moratoriums, and there had been—they had gotten into—the police came in. And so this one, I mean, Rosalio and them, they worked very hard at trying to have the monitors and others there to try to make sure that the behavior of the crowd would be peaceful.

ESPINO

Did you any suspicion that it would end up the way it did before it happened?

MUÑOZ

I didn't really think about that, and it's hard to say what I was thinking then, because, I mean, I was aware of the police, how police dealt with a lot of—particularly because I worked with gangs and how they dealt with the gang element. There were, like, games that would go on, but then sometimes there would be violence on the part of the police of being violent with some of the gang members. I mean, there was a lot of police brutality. I mean, I was involved in working with the law students. We did it, and there was programs. There was a program—a good friend of mine, he ended up running it. His name was Art Garcia, and it was a program where it was, like, the community would—you could go there and you could register complaints against police violence, police brutality, and then they would do investigating on their own and they present—it was partially through the ACLU that had helped fund this program. Let's see. I don't even know if I can remember the name of it, but I used to go down there and help them, too, with just kind

of the paperwork and stuff like that, and meetings and organizing, that sort of thing.

I remember they used to have these cards that they printed up and it had your rights, like it had your Miranda rights and all these other rights, and we used to pass them out to the kids so that they would know what their rights were whenever they were being dealt with by police, the police started trying to deal with them or mess with them or whatever. So one of the things that we were doing in that particular program was to try to collect information and build up documentation and see if there were particular officers that were engaging in a lot of malpractice. That was the name of it, the Police Malpractice Center or something like that. So there was always that. I mean, in the community there was enough reasons to think that there could be problems, but I think that the Moratorium Committee worked very hard at trying to have this and have people there as monitors to try to keep it from breaking down into some kind of an uprising or something like that. It was supposed to be a peaceful protest and that was what it was. Of course, we also knew, too, that there were elements that would try to create violence or create problems, that would use that kind of a violent confrontation, try to create a violent confrontation. But I mean, from what all of the documents, the video documentation, it more or less kind of shows that the police—how it started and all that and why they came in. But really, I mean, there's the belief that it was a pretext, that there was that problem at the liquor store and then—why the police would send so many troops in if they were going after maybe two or three people that were in a liquor store that were taking liquor without paying for it, why they would—but of course, this happened, like, five years after the Watts Riots, so the whole idea that there could be riots, well, that was pretty recent history still.

ESPINO

That's true.

MUÑOZ

And there had been, after the Watts Riots, there had been a lot of review of police practices, and there were also all these other—the leadership of the police department and how it operated, and that it still wanted to be kind of like asserting their power or whatever.

ESPINO

Did you know that there were infiltrators at that time?

MUÑOZ

I wasn't that much involved in the moratorium.

ESPINO

But it wasn't common knowledge is I guess what I'm asking. For example, well, because Rosalio's your brother and a lot of your friends are Chicanos at UCLA, was it something that people were talking about, infiltrators into the movement?

MUÑOZ

Right now I don't really have a lot of recollection how much that was discussed, if at all.

ESPINO

How about your relationship with some of the Brown Beret members? Did you know David Sanchez?

MUÑOZ

I knew David.

ESPINO

Did you have any contact with him around that time?

MUÑOZ

I mean, I would see him at events. I knew him from Hess Kramer when he went there because at that time I was working with the Human Relations Commission and I was up there at the camp and all that, and he was very vocal. He had his charismatic effect. I remember that he got—that's where, I think, with him, a lot of it started that he became an activist and wanted to play that kind of a role.

ESPINO

A lot of what got started?

MUÑOZ

Well, he got started in these community issues and then dealing with community issues.

ESPINO

Oh, at Hess Kramer.

MUÑOZ

Well, that's where he—like, I think he was student body president at Garfield, and then at Hess Kramer I think he got inspired to get involved and want to do something about conditions that needed improvement in the community, as he viewed them, and he got going.

ESPINO

Well, what did you think of Rosalio's activism, as his brother, as somebody who watched him grow up? And he was student-body president in UCLA and not really in the Chicano Movement, from what he says.

MUÑOZ

Well, okay. Like my brother, once he graduated, he did apply for law school and he was admitted to UCLA Law School, so it was kind of a disappointment to me that he didn't continue on and go to law school. What he did, I mean, right after graduation he got a job and he was working in kind of like an affirmative action program for Claremont, for the Claremont Colleges. A friend of his—let's see. It must have been Ron Lopez was out there and Ron Lopez helped him to get a job there, and I guess he used to go out and do recruiting, and I don't know what other stuff he did to get Chicanos into the Claremont school. He was going to be working on some of the programs for minority students there. He was enjoying that. I don't know. He bought a car and he was into that, and then, I don't know, maybe it was the draft thing that came up and then that's when he then started taking a stand on the draft himself. So there was that and then this kind of led to him going into the moratorium, kind of, to really protest it. Eventually he had his case for noncompliance with the draft law, which was kind of a very dramatic, interesting case. So I don't know how much he talked to you about that, but that was quite a case and the different turns that happened in that case and how the final outcome was that the case was thrown out against him. It was thrown out because of the government's kind of not following the law and the way that they tried to manipulate his case.

ESPINO

Did you follow the case at the time or is this looking back?

MUÑOZ

I didn't really get that into the case. I mean, I had friends in law school that helped work on the case because they worked with—Michael Tigar was his attorney, or one of his attorneys, and Joe—what's his name—Ortega was his other attorney, but Michael Tigar's the one who really was the one who put the case together, and he was a professor at UCLA, so he had students helping him work on that case.

ESPINO

How important do you think the case was in the legal world?

MUÑOZ

Well, I don't think it really—it wasn't one that had any widespread impact. It did for the judge who heard it and who finally ended up with the case, and the way that he started viewing what was going on because he found out about how the whole case had been somewhat manipulated, and even at the draft board. There's a book. I have the book by Michael Tigar, and part of this book, it's about his work as an attorney, so he does cover that particular case. He also did a case for Cesar Chavez's son, a draft case, which is also a very interesting case.

ESPINO

Were you of the age where you needed to sign up for the draft yourself?

MUÑOZ

Well, I was called to—what happened, I had my physical, and at the end of my physical, I was informed that my vision was of such a nature that they weren't going to accept me into the armed forces unless they got very desperate, because I have very poor vision. I have a pretty bad astigmatism. And so I remember when I came to the end of the—that's where you take your physical—at the end of the process and they told me that they were going to make me a 1Y, boy, it was like a liberation. It was like being released from an obligation that you're not necessarily that enthused about getting into, because I had friends who were in the service and they had written to me and told me what their experience had been.

ESPINO

Do you have any examples that you can recall?

MUÑOZ

Well, yeah. Well, my best friend, he went in and he was writing to me about what it was, the boot camp and then going over there and then being in [Viet] Nam and all that. Now, he was lucky, too, because he wasn't in a combat unit, but it was bad enough and he worked, like, in a repair place and he did, like, welding and bodywork and other kinds of work on equipment that would be damaged, and they'd have to fix it, big heavy equipment, so he worked on that. I think he did sheet-metal-type work, too, so yeah, he was more of a tradesman kind of position that they put him in.

ESPINO

Well, how did you feel about Rosalio's position?

MUÑOZ

I worried about what was going to happen to him and what the outcome would be. I was concerned about what they were going to do to him, but it turned out that the case got tossed out. The judge, what he found out about how they had kind of tried to set him up and that sort of thing, and then how they didn't even follow their own required regulations, I mean, there were things that were strange in there. I mean, just the way that the draft, the way they handled his—because he declared that he was a conscientious objector, and how they handled that.

And then later on, how they handled his induction, because they postponed his induction when he went in, and he had a big demonstration down at the draft. I was down there. And then they told him they were postponing the draft so that everyone could go home. They were postponing his induction. So the judge and the attorney, they said, "Why? Under what basis? Why do they do that?" Well, they found out that they would use that process to help out people with influence when their sons would not show up for their induction and all that, and they would postpone it. So they used that kind of thing to benefit certain people whose kids were not showing up. The parents would, if they had influence with the government, with the president, or whatever, or his people, Nixon, then they would find a way to deal with that situation without having their kids going to prison over it.

ESPINO

So that was your biggest fear, that Rosalio would go to prison?

MUÑOZ

That was what I was concerned about, that he was going to have to pay that way for taking the stand that he took.

ESPINO

Did you ever try to talk him out of it?

MUÑOZ

No. No, that was his decision. He didn't ask me and I didn't volunteer to tell him anything. He knows what he's doing.

ESPINO

How about your parents?

MUÑOZ

See, like Muhammad Ali, he went through the same thing, and I think, yeah, Muhammad went through it before. My parents, I don't really know—I don't think they—they were worried about him, too, but I don't think they tried to convince him to take a different course. I don't think they did. To my knowledge, they didn't.

ESPINO

Was it something that affected your parents' generation more deeply? Because people write about that generation as being very patriotic and being very much in favor of enlistment and fighting the U.S. wars.

MUÑOZ

See, like my dad, I mean, yeah, he was in the service and he volunteered and he went, and it was World War II and there was strong justification. I mean, there was strong justification for fighting the imperialists, Japan, and then Hitler, who wanted to conquer the world, and Mussolini. There was total justification, the whole thinking that if the United States didn't get in and help with the Allies to try to defend from these countries that were set out to conquer and, I guess, enslave—I don't know what they wanted to do. I mean, Russia, Russia's the one that paid the most in losses over the war against the Germans, but it was a world war. That was the biggest world war ever. So, yeah, I don't know if my dad was for or against the war. I don't know if he really had a strong position on the Vietnam conflict. I don't know. My father, he was very supportive of the Democrats and what they decided to do, so LBJ [Lyndon B. Johnson]—I don't know. LBJ was the one who was staying. He was in charge. I guess maybe he made errors, and he definitely, I guess, felt that he did because that's why he didn't run for a second term.

ESPINO

Well, then, let's talk about the aftermath of the August 29th—because like you mentioned before, there were several other marches that happened before that one, but seems like things were different in the community. A lot of things changed. Some people were more angry, some people were afraid, some people were galvanized, and other people, it sort of made them think twice about attending another march. What was your experience?

MUÑOZ

Well, yeah, there was a march later on, too, see, and it also broke down into police involvement. Eventually the war did start winding down and, I mean, there was a whole thing going on. The culture in the U.S. at that time, it was the sixties generation and then into the early seventies, and so there was still a lot of very youthful leadership that was going on. The hippie movement was still somewhat going. There was, yeah, the counterculture and all of that, so there were a lot of things that were taking place. I mean, Bobby Kennedy had been killed and Martin Luther King. There was a lot of turmoil from that. I think in the Chicano Movement, I think that affirmative action was still going relatively strong, and after LBJ left, they started reducing the funding of opportunities programs, but there was this drive that I think that awakened in the Chicano community, and those who had already gotten in and gotten out of school and maybe already gotten either undergraduate or graduate degrees, a lot of them were looking to try to go back and be of benefit to the community. So I think that was going on. There was a lot of that going on. The whole Chicano Art Movement really was taking off and so there was a lot of things that were going on that were very positive.

In terms of these mass demonstrations, maybe there was a falling-off of using that method, perhaps, because of partially the way that the police had dealt with it and the power structure, and there was more infiltration, I think, going on after. I mean, well, there probably was infiltration already. I mean, I have looked at some of the stuff in the Ruben Salazar and those files, and all of the sheriff's files. Yeah, there was a lot of infiltration already going on and there was a lot of intelligence gathering that went on, on the part of the police, the FBI, and what have you, to try to have intelligence information about the Chicano Movement and what it was doing and who were the leaders and what were they up to, and then infiltrating and maybe trying to redirect them in certain ways through their own little infiltrating people. So there probably was that, and I mean, some of these people infiltrated and maybe even got into positions where they were influencing the direction of the Chicano Movement. Maybe some of them were people who were really, like, double agents or whatever, or agents of the power structure. I know that with a lot of the people that I went to school and went to grad school and all that, they went out and they got

jobs and they got jobs in the government, they got jobs in the private sector, some of them, and some of them that were lawyers, they went in and established their own private practices as solo practitioners, but in all the other professions as well, so I really see that there was progress made. There was that period, and up until they started really dissembling or deconstructing affirmative action and programs to bring minorities—of course, I guess what they say is that the private schools, they're the ones that have set aside funds to have minority students come in and so that they can have some diversity, too, because I remember when they had passed laws—I mean, there were some years back where, like, the UC system had very few minorities in the system and, I mean, like, especially for the blacks. I remember, I don't know how many years ago, but there were only, like, ninety-five blacks admitted or that actually enrolled in UCLA in the undergrad program. I couldn't believe that. It was as bad or worse than it was before affirmative action and these were just because, well, the conservatives had taken over and they were doing away with that. They held the governor. They were running a lot of things. I don't know if they held the legislature in the state. I don't know how well that answers your question.

ESPINO

Well, it kind of moves into the next question, which is just looking back at that period, what do you think were some of the accomplishments of the Chicano Movement?

MUÑOZ

Oh, well, I mean, to me, the accomplishments were the numbers of people that gained higher education, quite a bit. I think that there was a lot of, I mean, even in politics up to now, I mean now there's a lot more representation of the Chicano community politically. I mean, you look in the culture, there's a lot more art, a lot more literature that's been produced. There's been some in the media. The media hasn't been that strong, I don't think, and then entertainment, the movies. And music, I think there's been some, but still there's still room for more. We've had these periods where there's been a lot of migration and there's been a lot of immigration coming in from Latin America and Mexico, so there's been a lot of that and it kind of makes it more illusory of what's actually happening because I think you need to break down generationally

the Latinos or the Hispanics or the Chicanos or whatever, and how many generations have they been here and where are they, how well have they progressed. So there's quite a—let's see. What do you call it? A spectrum of the Latinos, Chicanos, or whatever, in the country, based on how long they've been here, how much time they've had to assimilate, how assimilated they are.

I mean, a lot of the idea is to maintain a lot of our cultural identity and our cultural awareness because a lot of it's very beneficial to us. I mean, it makes our lives better and maybe it has a lot of beautiful aspects to it in terms of the culture. There are things that maybe could be done away with, too, because not all aspects of the culture are that desirable, as far as I'm concerned, different attitudes. Some of them, they could be better.

ESPINO

How about looking at problems with the Chicano Movement? You saw some of its weaknesses. Like, for example, Chicana feminists, some of them would say that the sexism in some of the organizations was one weakness. In any of your groups or organizations, did you find things that you thought could hurt the movement versus helping it?

MUÑOZ

Well, the sexism, I mean there are those who—say, like, within the males, there are those who are pretty sexist, maybe, in their mentality, and I guess that's the way they evolved or that's the way they are, for whatever—I mean, that's the way they developed, as sexist.

ESPINO

Do you have any examples? Did you witness anything that you can support that statement with?

MUÑOZ

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. I mean, like, one organization that I was familiar with was the Mexican American Bar Association. So the Mexican American Bar Association, I guess the first woman president, I think it was Esther Valadez and she was really a very capable—I mean, I don't know. She had a charming way of being and so I don't think there was so much from some of the members, the male members. I don't think they were too sexist with her, but later on there was sentiments expressed by different members because then eventually there were a good number of women that

became the president. There was, like, this Monica [Jimenez]—I can't remember her last name. Yeah, there was, like, maybe—I don't know how many they've had. They probably had at least ten women presidents over the years by now, I'm sure, and some of them were really pretty good. They did very well, but then there would be some attitudes of some members saying, "Oh, we're having too many women. We have to have a man. How come we're having so many—?"

I remember, also with MALDEF [Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund], I heard that when they—I guess—what was her name? Vilma Martinez, she took over and she was there for a while, but then I guess when she left, then there was a move and Antonia, I think, succeeded her. But I heard there were criticisms of saying, "Oh, we can't have another woman. We should have a man. A man should be the head of MALDEF." But Antonia, she was able to get the position. And this is at the professional level, see, so I'd say probably when you get down to more the blue-collar level and all that, there's maybe—I mean, there are the guys who want to be, like, machos, or that sort of thing, and that's their attitude.

I don't know how we compare with other cultures, within our society in general, as far as sexism. I mean, if you compare us with Italian Americans or Irish Americans or Chinese Americans or Japanese Americans or Koreans or Europeans, or even if you go to other continents, like Africa, I don't know how we compare with—or with Arabs and Middle Easterners and all of that, in terms of what the culture's like in terms of sexism. But, yeah, I mean, it's there, I mean to some degree, yes. There was, like, a Latina Lawyers Association that was established and it was kind of—I guess there was a group of women lawyers who thought that MALDEF was maybe too sexist and so they established their own group.

ESPINO

That's interesting. Well, just getting back to the idea of the Chicano period and the movement, I was going to ask you something and it's regarding—oh, it completely slipped my mind. I'm sure it will come back to me. But I'd like to talk about your first involvement with the Model Cities and how that came about, because you were pretty young and fresh out of law school when you became the director.

MUÑOZ

Well, I became the director—I guess it must have been about '77.

ESPINO

Oh, until '77?

MUÑOZ

Right.

ESPINO

So then when the Madrigal case first was filed, you weren't the director at that time?

MUÑOZ

No. No, I wasn't. I was probably a senior attorney at that time.

ESPINO

You were working there.

MUÑOZ

I believe so, yes.

ESPINO

Oh, okay. Well, let's start with that and how that came about.

MUÑOZ

How I got to Model Cities?

ESPINO

Yes.

MUÑOZ

Well, after I got out of law school, I became a Reginald Heber Smith community lawyer. I worked through Western Center and they placed me with Legal Aid Foundation, and I was getting, kind of like, double—I had mentoring from Western Center and I was getting more direct supervision from Legal Aid Foundation. I was there for two years in that Reginald Heber Smith position and then became a regular staff attorney for Legal Aid. At one time I was on the board for Model Cities and so I got to know—and, of course, I had friends that were working there too. I had some friends that were—well, some of the law students that I'd gone to law school with that got jobs there and so eventually they actually had a much better pay schedule than Legal Aid, so that was one of the reasons why. They also had a lot more freedom. I mean, they didn't have restrictions on types of cases that you could take, compared to Legal Aid, because they also did criminal law. Model Cities did criminal law and there was no criminal law in—but I wasn't really that much interested in doing criminal law. But they could also do class-action cases and they just had a lot more freedom, as far as the type of

legal cases you could get into, so that was another thing that attracted me to it. I guess they wanted me [unclear]. That must have been part of it, too, and so I just made a move from basically doing the same kind of work and I went to—I think there was also—I probably saw there was more opportunity for advancement at Model Cities than I figured there was with Legal Aid Foundation, so I made that move.

When I first got there, I was just a staff attorney, but I was just in that position not that long. Then I became a senior attorney and I headed up the administrative law unit, and that was one of my main interests, in terms of law, was to do administrative law, and so that's where I ended up. So I got a promotion there and then eventually, I don't know when I finally got the promotion to executive director when it was vacated and there was an opening.

ESPINO

What were some of the important cases that you worked on? I don't mean important like in the legal world, but important to you and important to what you were interested in.

MUÑOZ

Well, I did administrative law and one of the areas that really caught my interest was taking them up on appeal, because administrative law is an area where it deals with the executive branch, and in order to have review by the judicial branch, you have to exhaust your remedies within the administrative branch or the executive branch. So, like, there were some cases, there were some welfare cases, but actually the ones that I got where I did the most was in unemployment insurance. So there were two cases. I mean, I don't remember how many appeals I did into the judicial branch of unemployment cases, but there were cases where I took them up and I went to the Court of Appeal. There were two cases that I did win at the Court of Appeal. This is not an easy thing to accomplish, because in unemployment you go before an administrative law judge to begin with and there'll be a decision there. Then you have to appeal to the Appeals Board and then there'll be a decision there. And then from there you go to the Superior Court of the county and that's in the judicial branch. And then from there you can go to the Court of Appeal, and then above the Court of Appeal is the Supreme Court of the state. And then if you went further, you could go up to the U.S. Supreme Court, depending on whether they decide to hear

your case, or even at the State Supreme Court they decide what cases they're going to hear or consider, but the Court of Appeal is one where you have a right to go to the Court of Appeal. So there were a couple of cases that I did win at the Court of Appeal. To me, that really excited me a lot that I won those cases and that meant that they reversed the administrative law judge, they reversed the Appeals Board, and then they reversed the Superior Court judge and decided in my client's favor. So those are things that kind of inspired me to do those kinds of cases. I did work on some class-action cases when I was at the Center, and one of them was the Crawford case. There was a whole bunch of attorneys that worked on that case and there was a lead attorney who was with the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union]. Actually, the lead attorney, the one who—no, he was in private practice, but he was working through the ACLU. We were all working with the ACLU on this case, primarily. I don't know if there was any—I don't think the NAACP was in it. I think it was just the ACLU, primarily, and that was the desegregation case for Los Angeles and it was a very big case. It was a very interesting case. I guess I did a deposition or two and that was my actual involvement in it. But there were a lot of young attorneys and we were all learning, and so we would go to the court, to the hearings, and hear the arguments. It was really quite an experience. I can't even remember the name of the lead attorney. Man, he was good.

And then there was another case that I got involved with. Let's see. What was the name of it? There was a Title VII case. Oh, there was another case, the Arellanes case, which is kind of a school case, too, but it was more a separate but equal type of case. Brown vs. Board of Education did away with separate but equal, but Arellanes was kind of a case that was saying that we have schools that are separate because of the way that the neighborhoods are and the neighborhood school rule and all of that, but the schools in the barrios and in the ghettos have such inferior, compared to the other schools, resources and funding, I mean resources that they're not really—and then one of the things, too, that we were after, yeah, was that. It was just trying to even out the resources that the different actual schools were getting comparing the barrio schools with the ones in the more affluent neighborhoods. There was another case, the Aguilar case, which was one that Charles

[Nabarrete] and I, we worked on, and it was a federal case. It was a class action involving—it was against the school district involving the teachers' assignments and discriminatory assignments of teachers. The way that it worked was that—I mean, the way the system worked was that all the new teachers would be placed in either the barrio or the ghetto schools, and they had a transfer policy, and so the way—you'd start there. That was, like, where you'd—and then if you'd try to get a transfer, and the people that were getting transfers, you weren't really finding too many minorities getting the transfers and so they would stay in those schools.

The way that the transfers worked, I guess the principal was the one that would pick who they would take, so they would get maybe a list of people applying to their school to transfer in and then they would choose whoever they wanted. They would interview them and then take the one they wanted, but if that system worked well and the principals in the affluent schools could get their pick and they could actually do a good job of picking the best one, then they would be able to always pull out the best ones, and the ones that weren't the best ones would stay in the ghetto and barrio schools. So that was one of the problems that we were addressing, but there were some Chicano teachers, too, and there were minority teachers that were coming in. There weren't that many because they were finally getting through and getting their credentials and all that, and then they wanted to teach in barrio schools, a lot of them. They wanted to be in the community and they couldn't always get what they wanted. In that case, there were some cases that came down while we were in the progress of that case. There was a Supreme Court case that came down that kind of put us out, that we weren't going to be able to be successful. I can't remember exactly now what all the legal points were in that case, but it was somewhere, I think, in the Midwest where that case came out of and it went to the Supreme Court. I think it had to do with Title VII, yeah.

ESPINO

Well, I think we're going to stop here for now because I want to talk about just what you remember regarding the Madrigal case. And then if there's anything that you remember, I mean, working with Charles, working with Antonia, what that was like, maybe no specific details, but just to get a sense of the community—

MUÑOZ

Okay. [End of January 20, 2012 interview]

1.7. Session Seven (January 27, 2012)

ESPINO

This is Virginia Espino, and today is January 27th. I'm interviewing Ricardo Muñoz at his home in South Pasadena.

Thank you so much for agreeing to interview with me. This is going to be our last interview, so I wanted to wrap up some of the ideas that we talked about earlier, and maybe try to dig a little bit deeper into the whole Chicano Movement period and try to get a sense of the people that you were involved with and the kinds of social things that you did together, because from the pictures that you've shown me, it sounded like there was a real community of activists. So maybe we could talk a little bit about what you did outside of the, for example, law school, or what you did outside of the Legal Aid office. In addition to the work that you did in poverty law, what kinds of community did you create? So we can start with that, and if you can tell me, for example, what a typical day would be like at Model Cities, or maybe we can start with Legal Aid. What would a typical day look like when you would go into the office?

MUÑOZ

Well, I mean, there could be appointments that would be already scheduled in advance. There could be—with persons who were accepted as clients and there could be new people coming in, and they'd be interviewed about the issue that they're coming in seeking assistance with. There could be court cases. There might be hearings, either administrative hearings or court hearings, to attend. There could be research. I could maybe run down to the law library or use the library within the office to work on pleadings on different aspects of the cases, if they were cases in court or administrative cases. There could be preparation for hearings or court matters. There could be writing that would be done. There could be meetings with community groups.

ESPINO

Maybe you can, for example, describe what kind of community group, like an example of a community group that you would work with and what those meetings would look like.

MUÑOZ

Well, we used to have a clients' counsel meeting. We used to have clients' counsels, particularly at Legal Aid, and we had a representative. I worked in Lincoln Heights at the Lincoln Heights Office of Appeals. Not Lincoln Heights, the Legal Aid Foundation office. Eddie Ruiz was our community representative and we would bring together—we would have meetings maybe for community groups and present information about different areas of law that affect people, like, say, landlord-tenant law. We might give a lecture on that, a presentation, maybe some on consumer laws, consumer contract laws, something along that line or on different welfare or Social Security, different topics. We would have meetings and we would have people from the community that could come, and there would be meetings. At that time there was the Model Cities Program that was in operation, and I got on different boards of community involvement on some of the programs that were going on. One of the ones that I got on the board was the Model Cities Center for Law and Justice. I was a member on the board before I actually got a job there and, actually, when I was at the Model Cities Center for Law and Justice later on, I got on the board of the Legal Aid Foundation, eventually was the president of the board of the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles, and I had other positions, like treasurer or whatever—I can't remember—when I was on their board.

I was on some state board—well, I was on one that was for—it was—let's see. It was regarding legal services, a Legal Services Committee, and it involved a lot of lawyers who worked with Legal Services programs and worked within the state bar on different matters that would come up in the state bar, legislation, things that we would work together on. When I was at the Lincoln Heights office, that's when I was on the welfare rights—I was, like, a resource person for them, for that particular group, and that group was not just in Lincoln Heights. I'd say it was kind of like almost a countywide group, but mostly concentrating in the Central L.A. area more so, but there were people on it from different parts of the county because welfare is a county program. Then I got involved

eventually with the county bar. I got involved in a lot of bar activities, the county bar, the Mexican American bar, the minority bar, the state bar, and then the American Bar Association. At one time, I was on a special committee on housing and urban development of the ABA, and that was a very interesting committee and went all over the country. We'd have meetings in different parts of the country and ABA would pay my way to these meetings. We'd be in D.C. or we went to Florida, New Orleans, Maine. We went to Kennebunkport. There was one of the meetings there. We went to a place—that committee was kind of interesting.

ESPINO

What was the objective of that?

MUÑOZ

Well, there used to be publication that we did a lot. There were some major projects that we did in putting out books on housing, regarding housing issues, and one of the people that we had on the committee was G. Mennen Williams. I don't know if you're familiar with G. Mennen Williams. He was at one time governor of Michigan. [interruption]

ESPINO

So we can step back then and you can reiterate what you were saying about the different lawyers that were working in this urban—

MUÑOZ

Housing and urban development.

ESPINO

—yes, committee. Committee, yeah, you can start back with that.

MUÑOZ

Well, this was a group of lawyers from all over the country. It was kind of an interesting thing that they had money. This particular special committee had gotten funded fairly well, and so we met in a lot of different interesting places, but there were interesting people on the committee. A large part of the time that I was on there, we were producing a book on housing law, and that project was completed. At one time I did a study of alternative dispute resolution within housing courts and I visited courts in Los Angeles, St. Louis, Philadelphia, and New York, where there were different models of how the courts were operating and providing that alternative form of resolving—and these were basically landlord-tenant matters.

ESPINO

What does that mean, alternative dispute resolution?

MUÑOZ

Well, alternative dispute resolution, it's a different approach to resolving a dispute. In a landlord-tenant case, generally the landlord wants to evict the tenant and there's a process of doing it, or there may be some other kinds of issues. Maybe the tenant has problems with the landlord not meeting their obligations as landlords under whatever the state law is in the jurisdiction. So there could be different kinds of cases that come into the housing courts, because a lot of the courts did have specialized housing courts. It wouldn't just go into a court where a judge was doing criminal cases as well as housing cases. Most of the courts, there's some specialization and there was specialization in housing courts.

But anyway, the alternative dispute resolution is a different way of dealing with it. What would happen in these courts, there would be a case that would get filed in the regular court and then there would be a judge or some kind of magistrate who would then offer to the parties a different way of dealing with this case where you're not going to go in and have a trial, where you may not even need an attorney. You may be able to go in without an attorney, either the landlord or the tenant. They could maybe go with attorneys, but then you would go into—it would be kind of like going into a process where you discuss what the problem is and then how to solve it and how to find some resolution and not go through a trial. One of the reasons that people would use this method is that they could have more of an input into what the outcome is. If you go into a trial and then the judge is going to decide, for one, one's going to be a winner, one's going to be a loser, but in alternative dispute resolution, there's kind of maybe some mediation. Someone will meet with the parties and they'll go over their points and then try to come out with a compromise. So it's a different way of dealing with the issues in dispute.

ESPINO

Was it something that was just starting to take place when you were working on it—

MUÑOZ

Right.

ESPINO

—or had it been something that was in the legal system?

MUÑOZ

Well, at that time alternate dispute resolution was kind of a new fad that had come out. It wasn't necessarily a fad. It was just a new process, a new approach, and courts were looking for ways of economizing so that you don't necessarily have a judge spending their time working out these cases. So you would have these other specialists, who were trained, and they weren't judges, they weren't sitting as judges. Generally, if they couldn't resolve it, eventually then the case may actually go back and then the judge would have to hear it and decide it. But it was a way of taking cases off of the calendars of judges and putting them before people who were trained to help parties resolve their own problems amicably. They would sign off. There might even be a judge in some of those cases that they would go and present to the judge for the judge's approval and enter an order of some kind where both the parties are agreed to the order. So in these different courts that I visited, there were different approaches.

ESPINO

How successful were these—were you able to witness the actual—is it similar to arbitration?

MUÑOZ

Well, see, arbitration, there's a winner and a loser, but you have an arbitrator instead of a judge to decide it, so it's not an agreed-upon outcome, necessarily. The arbitrator might split the child, but not necessarily. And then, like, there's the binding arbitration. I mean, there it's going to be a winner and a loser, total, so it's different, and the arbitrating process is one that has come about—I'd say, largely there are certain interests. They want to save on their costs of litigation and they don't want it to go through the courts, and they don't want a jury trial, in particular. They want to avoid a jury trial, and so they're written into contracts and the way that disputes are going to be dealt with is going to be through arbitration.

Of course, it unburdens the court of having to hear all these cases, too, that would otherwise be in the courts, so there's different cost benefits to the whole thing, and depending on the parties that are involved, maybe generally it's—I'd say corporate America, they're the ones that put the arbitration provisions into contracts to require arbitration and it's a take-it-or-leave-it thing. You can't necessarily

go in a hospital and sign the admission and then say, "Well, I don't want arbitration. I want to be able to take my case into court." They're going to say, "Well, go to another hospital," or, "Go find a hospital that will go along with that." But there's arbitration in a lot of credit-card things. I think some of them, they have arbitration. There's different industries that utilize that as a means of resolving disputes.

ESPINO

Well, how successful were the dispute resolutions that you were able to witness?

MUÑOZ

Well, I didn't necessarily go in and watch so much. I went and talked to the administrators and talked to them about how they were as far as—I didn't sit in and witness the proceedings because basically they're not really public proceedings either. They don't have to be done in public, where the alternative dispute resolution process takes place, where you're actually the parties getting together with a mediator or a person to handle the process. Yeah, that's not in public, so you don't necessarily go in and observe them, but it was more going over how they worked it and how they worked it in terms of the judges and the court, and how they siphoned parties from the regular court to take that measure. Some courts, they wanted to kind of force people, almost, to use that process first to see if it could be done that way.

ESPINO

How did people feel about it? Did you interview individuals who went through the process?

MUÑOZ

I didn't. That wasn't what I was necessarily doing. It wasn't that in depth of a study. This was more of a study looking more at the structure and at the system that was operating, in terms of these types of cases.

ESPINO

Do you think that in that kind of resolution, that all individuals had equal power, versus what you were saying about arbitration where there's still someone who's just the deciding—

MUÑOZ

I think alternative dispute resolution is really a good way of handling a lot of matters, a lot of disputes. It really is, because I

think the parties, afterwards, they know that they've compromised, but they accept what they've compromised, and it's kind of—a lot of these matters would come up. I mean, when a landlord-tenant situation, usually the landlord—and they have a relationship and they get mad at each other, and sometimes it has to end, but a lot of times it's something that's remediable and people can work out—there's some things that they can resolve and get along with and continue that relationship, and the tenant can stay and the landlord will be satisfied with the tenant staying.

ESPINO

Earlier, when I realized that the recorder was not on, I asked you about how important the kind of law that you did, how important is that kind of law for the working-class community, because generally when you hear about lawsuits in history books, they're always the big ones, the big civil suits. You don't really hear about the small welfare cases or administrative law cases that you dealt with.

MUÑOZ

Well, let's see. I mean, as I mentioned, I used to do, when I was an administrative law judge, unemployment insurance cases primarily. We did disability, state disability insurance. That was in the mix. That was maybe 10 percent of the cases. And we did other kinds of cases that were tax cases on employers, where the employers had a dispute over the taxes that they were required to pay under the law for the employment-related taxes, which would be unemployment insurance taxes. They were required also to collect or deduct for disability insurance and that sort of thing. But I would do, like, around a thousand cases a year, so each case, the parties, they had something at stake in it and so it got resolved. When I became a presiding judge, I was more dealing with system and process a lot more and I had more of a role in adjusting those things so that we could try to be more efficient and do a better job and meet the needs of the time. I mean, in that field, unemployment, depending how the economy is, that really influences how many people are unemployed and come into the system and then have cases in the system. So just dealing with the workload that we would get was one of the challenges, so that people wouldn't have to wait that long to have their case heard and resolved, especially if they're not receiving benefits in the interim, get a resolution of whether they're going to get them or not, to know if they're going to get them.

There's a lot of aspects in the whole legal process. There are cases that involve deciding what the law should be, and these are the cases that have gone up on appeal. There's the appellate level. There's the trial level on these cases and how the law is going to be interpreted and be applied, and so those are very important cases. That's a very important aspect. I think I talked about it the last time, that I enjoyed doing appellate work because you can have cases that are going to have an impact and change the way things are done or the way things are handled. But then there's the other side, too, the whole delivery of judicial resolution, or administrative law cases, and trying to make the system work better so that it better meets the needs of the society. So there's a lot of different challenges in the whole—how our society operates, how our legal system operates, how it helps to maintain order, and where our expectations can be realized according to what the law says so that the law is fair and correct, in a sense.

ESPINO

You came up against big institutions then, or the state. You were, basically, coming up against the government.

MUÑOZ

Well, in the cases where I was dealing with impact, those were mostly education cases, where I really was a participant in terms of the class-action-type cases. One was a desegregation case, which was civil rights involved, and then there were others. They were basically civil rights, too, discrimination, employment discrimination, Title VII case. There was another case that I got involved in was a school-closing case and that was really kind of political kind of an issue type—it was kind of whether that decision really is one to be decided in courts or whether it should be decided by a different branch, not by the judicial branch, but by the executive branch or legislative branch.

ESPINO

What I mean is that when you were dealing with welfare cases and unemployment, you're not up against a major corporation; you're up against the government. Did you find that the laws were in favor of the government versus the individual person?

MUÑOZ

Well, okay. Like in unemployment, one of the parties is the employer, so the employer could be the government, the employer

could be any private company. It could be a nonprofit. I mean, there's a lot of—I mean, it could be a nonprofit that paid unemployment. Some nonprofits are exempt from paying unemployment benefits, and they're not covered by the system and the employees are not covered.

ESPINO

I see. Well, yeah, I thought you would deal with unemployment as far as what the government pays out in unemployment.

MUÑOZ

Well, see, one of the things with unemployment, there's a tax on employers. That's the way that the scheme is set up. I mean, if you look at it from an economics standpoint, it's really the employee's working, and the employer, part of their obligation is to pay into this fund so in case the person gets unemployed, if they get laid off, that they can draw unemployment benefits. But the law has been set up and the way that the law—it's not just layoff situations where a person becomes entitled to unemployment benefits. If they're fired, then there's an issue whether it's misconduct or not that determines whether they get benefits. And if they quit a job, then it's an issue of whether the person has good cause for quitting, and then if they do have good cause, then they can draw benefits. So this is what the judges would be deciding. The employers, they are impacted by these decisions because it can affect how much they pay in taxes. So, yeah, definitely. The government doesn't fund it. I mean, it doesn't come from the general tax fund, so the general taxpayer, they're not paying for it. It's coming through a tax on employers and on their payrolls. So that's how that works.

Now, welfare is a different thing, and that was another large area that I worked in, and so welfare benefits, definitely. That's coming from the general fund, from the state or the federal government or whatever, whoever's subsidizing the welfare benefits. But it's us, it's the taxpayers, really, in general, that are funding that through the general taxes. I never did workers' compensation. Workers' compensation is another administrative law area, a major one, and that's one that the employers have to—they're responsible for funding, and they pay for insurance to cover their employees.

ESPINO

Would you consider these bread-and-butter-type issues, as far as—

MUÑOZ

These are economic issues. These are economic issues for those who are involved, who are affected, because when you're unemployed, the people that are unemployed today, whether they're going to receive benefits or not—now, there was the extensions that have gone on recently because of the dire economic problems that our country has been in and so there have been extensions, and this has been somewhat funded by the federal government. They pay it, but actually it's like a loan to the states. The states are expected to eventually pay it back to the federal government and then the states get it because they tax the employers.

But the employers, they're in business. They have the employees working. The employers are working to produce whatever goods and services that the employers are selling, and so really it's everyone. Everyone's involved in the whole thing. If you look at it from an extreme macro view, then we're all in it. We're all paying for it in a way. Someone's got to pay for it and it comes from everyone.

ESPINO

So when you were with Model Cities Center for Law and Justice, you were working primarily on administrative law, is that true?

MUÑOZ

Yeah, that's what I moved into. I did civil law for less than a year and then I moved into administrative law and became the senior attorney handling the administrative law matters.

ESPINO

And how did people come to you? How did people hear about you?

MUÑOZ

Well, there was a lot of publicity in the community and the communities that were being serviced, because there was geographical boundaries with the Model Cities area and it was only available to people who were residents of the Model Cities areas that could come in and receive services. Otherwise, we would send them to Legal Aid. If they lived out of our territory, we would refer them to the Legal Aid office that corresponds to them. So, yeah, but there was publicity. People learned. There was a lot of word of mouth that people got and people would come in. They would be interviewed initially, basically just to find out whether they qualified and the type of cases. There were certain cases that we didn't do,

that we would refer out, that were what they call fee-generating cases, because lawyers on the outside would take those cases and they would take them on a contingency. Like workers' comp cases we didn't do. Immigration cases we didn't do. There was another program in Model Cities that did immigration, but workers' comp was one that—we didn't do probate or anything like that. So there were areas of law that we covered and other areas of law that we didn't cover.

ESPINO

What was it like there to work in that office? What was the feeling of the time?

MUÑOZ

Well, in that particular office, eventually what happened, there were a lot of young Chicano Latinos who got hired as attorneys, and that's when affirmative action had started, and then there were these graduates who came out of law school, passed the bar, and then were ready to practice. The Chicano Movement was on, so a lot of them, they wanted to work for the community, in a sense. So that's what— [interruption]

MUÑOZ

So initially, like at Model Cities, there were attorneys, there were older attorneys. There was a mix in terms of ethnicity, and they weren't from the generation of the newly Chicano Movement products.

ESPINO

Oh, really?

MUÑOZ

So there were these other attorneys who were there. Eventually, most of them left. Yeah, they left, and then the vacant spots were filled by young basically Chicano attorneys.

ESPINO

Was there a conflict with the younger generation and the older generation?

MUÑOZ

There was somewhat of a—not necessarily a conflict. Most of these others, the ones that were there before they left just on their own, I don't know, they had different reasons for leaving the program. I'm not really sure of all the individuals, their individual reasons. There was one who remained and stayed on as long as I was there. In

fact, she left after I left and there was people who resented her, some of the Chicanos, the young Turk Chicanos. But she was in charge of family law, so most of the attorneys who came in, they weren't that interested in family law, doing the dissolution cases. Mostly a lot of divorce and dissolutions, that's what they are. So they were just as well that someone was there to do those because they didn't want to do that work.

ESPINO

Why not?

MUÑOZ

They were interested in more what they thought more glamorous-type work, maybe criminal law or other types of cases, civil law, civil rights law. A lot of them were really interested in civil rights, and there weren't too many ones that were that much interested in administrative law, but there were some that enjoyed that branch. So eventually it became all attorneys kind of all from the same generation with the same kind of experience of having gone through affirmative action programs and having an identity with the community and wanted to see improvements and progress, and all of the issues that the community was facing had been brought out. So there was a lot of camaraderie. One thing we used to do, we used to play basketball. Maybe once or twice a week at lunchtime, we'd take a lunch break and we'd go down to different facilities, different playgrounds or different—yeah, Boys Club. We went to a Boys Club and we would have games and play in lunchtime and all that.

ESPINO

In your suits?

MUÑOZ

No, not in our suits. We would go down there and we'd have to change into—take our gym clothes, and they had showers there and all that.

ESPINO

Oh, wow.

MUÑOZ

So that was one of the activities that the group did. There would be parties and that sort of thing, but everyone was young then, and at least that was when I was relatively young, so it was a very social time. I mean, there were other Chicanos who did go into private

practice or worked for MALDEF or worked for other—Legal Services, and then there was the Mexican American—when I first started there, there was a Mexican American Lawyers Club and it was older fellows who weren't products of the movement or anything like that. So eventually the younger generation moved into the Mexican American Bar and kind of changed it as well, in terms of getting more involved in community issues, being more dedicated to trying to deal with community problems.

ESPINO

Previously what were they involved in? So the Mexican American Legal Club was different than the Mexican American Bar Association?

MUÑOZ

Well, they eventually changed the name and incorporated and it was different. It used to be the Mexican American Lawyers Club. That group was formed amongst—and there weren't too many. Even at that stage, there were very few Mexican Americans who had gone to law school who were even practicing law. There were few in the county, and so eventually I'd say with the GI Bill, there had been some who had been in World War II and they had gone to college, and then they went to law school and then they went into law, and there were a few of them who had very good leadership qualities and they pulled together other people.

But it was kind of a social club. They would invite maybe someone to come and speak about some area of law at their meeting, and it would be mostly getting together and palling around, and they would have different parties. They'd have a Christmas party and they'd have different kinds of events, social events with the wives. The wives really didn't attend these meetings, but there would be other social events that would include the wives of these attorneys. The Mexican American Lawyers Club was very influential in getting the Model Cities Center for Law and Justice established.

ESPINO

Oh, really? I didn't know that.

MUÑOZ

Right. It was like a committee from that organization and it was Robert Perez, he was one of the members, he's the one that really kind of designed it and wrote the proposal, but he had the backing of these lawyers in the community. And so anyway, eventually when

all the younger Chicanos started getting into it and they asked us to get involved, you'd meet them. You'd meet some of these Mexican lawyers in court or somewhere, and they would invite you to come to the things. I kind of resisted and I didn't really want to be part of their—I said, "They're pretty lame. I don't think they're doing much." We were already doing other things. We had, like, La Raza Lawyers Association and stuff like that, and so we were trying to do big things.

ESPINO

Like what kinds of things would you do with La Raza?

MUÑOZ

Well, I mean, like some of the stuff—like Richard Cruz, he was part of it, and it was the ones who were in Legal Services, the Chicanos that were in Legal Services, and there were some that worked at One Stop Immigration. So we used to go out drinking or having dinner or having lunch together or something, and we had gone to law school together and we had been part of the Chicano Law Students or the La Raza Law Students, so it was just kind of like these connections we already had.

We were kind of very interested in minority programs and that there would be a continuing of more Chicanos going to law school, keeping the law schools open to Chicanos so that they would be producing more lawyers for the community. There was all of that. The affirmative action was a big issue to push. Richard Cruz, he had a little law firm. They were trying to make a barrio law firm of these Chicanos. It was Rudy Diaz and Richard Cruz and Percy Duran and there was someone else. I can't remember. They had different ones, and there were a bunch of other Chicano attorneys who'd go in and help them with some of the stuff that they were doing, make appearances for them and just help them with some of their work. So there was a lot of friendships and bonding that was involved, and there were the ones who wanted to be more politically active and there were other people who weren't lawyers, also, that we knew in college that were in other professions. But there was a lot of this desire to move the community forward.

ESPINO

Did you talk about issues on your social time? Did you talk about your legal cases?

MUÑOZ

Oh, there was always talk about—well, there was talk about cases. There was talk about issues, the police brutality, the moratorium that went on, everything. We got involved to help when there were all those arrests and there were all these trials of activists and stuff that was going on, so lawyers played a role in a lot of those things that were going on, and in organizing, working with community organizations.

I mean, I used to attend meetings of the EICC [Educational Issues Coordinating Committee], which is the Educational—it was the one that kind of followed the walkouts and it was the community organization that—the EICC, Coordinating Educational something, Coordinating Committee or something.

ESPINO

Institute, right? I don't remember, but I have it [unclear].

MUÑOZ

Vahac Mardirosian was the head of it for a good while, and then there was, like, task forces, the community task forces that were established that had all kinds of people working in a lot of the social programs in the community, the whole Model Cities Program. There were a lot of small little service kinds of agencies that got established, and there were health programs, housing programs, and all kinds of things that went on. So a lot of us got involved and tried to help in different ways, giving support to different things that were going on in the community.

ESPINO

What can you tell me about the Madrigal, the sterilization case?

What do you remember about that?

MUÑOZ

Well, I didn't really get drawn into it very much myself. See, like, Charles Nabarette—and let's see. Charles Nabarette, Georgina Rizk, and Antonia Hernandez, they were the ones that were more—they were deeply involved in that. They were all friends of mine. I mean, they were working at the Center of Law and Justice, as well, on that case. I was doing my cases, they were doing their cases, and that was the case that they worked on, and so I didn't become familiar with details involving that case. I mean, I've heard that—and most of it that I know is what I've heard.

ESPINO

Well, what about being part of the decision making, whether or not to take that case, or mentoring? Or did they discuss it with the group? Was it a case where everybody was interested in just hearing about it versus actually participating on the case? I guess I'm looking for any of that kind of—

MUÑOZ

Yeah, they talked about it to some degree. I mean, it wasn't like—I mean, I don't remember that there were any meetings where they made presentations of what was going on and all of that, and reports of the progress of the case. They may have been dealing with a director to some extent and reporting to him. I'm not really sure whether or how much outside help they got as far as mentoring. I don't know who or where they may have gotten help, as far as—I mean, one of the things I understand is that they ran into some legal problems and they ended up with some statute-of-limitations problems, and that kind of hurt them, hurt the case quite a bit. But, see, I don't even know any of the details about that, and if things like that had been mentioned to me, it's not something that got imprinted in my mind, that I would remember.

ESPINO

It wasn't a big deal for the law firm at that time?

MUÑOZ

There was a lot of publicity. There was a lot of publicity about the case and it was—I mean, people being sterilized, it was a very dramatic issue and it was going on at the county hospital, and the way that women, I guess, these women that had this happen to them, how they got drawn into having it—I don't know to what extent they consented. There were all these issues, but I never really got that deeply involved with it or to really know a lot of the specifics and details. So I knew about it more from an overall kind of—what you'd read in the newspaper type perspective.

ESPINO

Well, at the time you were working in the same facility as the lawyers in this case. Did you have an opinion about what had happened, about the sterilization? Because the story goes that until Antonia came along, that's when the case became a case, that's when the issue became a legal case, that it was hard for Charles Nabarette at MALDEF [Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund] to actually make a case, but then when he came

over to Model Cities, then there was more support. Do you remember that climate of "Should this be a case we take on? Is it something we need to address?" Did you have an opinion either way about the issue?

MUÑOZ

See, I don't remember having any discussions with any of these parties—

ESPINO

Really? Okay.

MUÑOZ

—about the decision making on pursuing the case and how to pursue it. I don't even know how Georgina—Georgina got drawn into it because Georgina was a very close friend of Antonia, and I don't even know how Charles got—but I guess if he was at MALDEF, probably the whole issue may have come up over there pretty strongly, too, and may have been viewed as a very important thing to be dealing with. But it was a very dramatic—factually, I mean the whole thing that was going on, to me, I guess it wasn't something that surprised me that there would be this—I mean, the racism that existed at that time, the way that I viewed it, this fell in line with a lot of other stuff that was really bad. I mean, the whole issue of, like—I mean, a lot of the efforts were being made—there was a lot of resources dedicated to just dealing with the police problems. There was issues of the welfare. There were issues, the education issues. Anywhere, everywhere you turned, just about, there were issues for people to work at.

ESPINO

Did you follow the case? I mean, I know you mentioned that you were working on your own cases, but do you remember when the judgment came down?

MUÑOZ

Not really. I don't really have a fixed recollection about it. I mean, I'm just trying to think back of what Charles—because Charles was a very close friend of mine. We went through law school together. We sat practically next to each other in our first year of law school because they did it by alphabetical order. Charles was in my wedding. I went to his wedding. I baptized his son. I mean I was godfather of his son. I mean, we've shared a lot of time and friendship, so I know that he—now, Charles is a guy who gets

upset, so I'm sure he must have gotten into a very bad mood over what went down on that case. But I don't know what—I didn't go to any of the hearings, to any of the court proceedings on that. I don't even think I read—I never read the pleadings in the case. Yeah, I had my own stuff that I was dealing with and, I mean, that wasn't something that would—the lawyers at Model Cities, they all had their own work. They didn't really have time to be—unless I got involved and I would have been one of the co-counsels, then I would have had to be involved.

ESPINO

I see. So then tell me about some things that you mentioned last time. So we're going to move into a different topic now, but we were talking about the Chicano Movement and identity. You said that there were certain things about the Mexican American community that you thought needed improvement or that weren't very positive, but you didn't really explain what you meant by that.

MUÑOZ

Oh, yeah, yeah. We were talking about cultural things. Well, okay, I mean, there's plenty of them that are—you can drag them right out, I mean especially for women. That's where the major complaints come, that the traditional role of the woman, you shouldn't be going to college. My wife, I mean, I was lucky that her parents let her go to college. I wouldn't have met her. And it was somewhat of a struggle. They had to be persuaded and then she had to go to a Catholic school where there would be nuns looking after her, those kinds of things. The machismo is something that I think I talked about that the last time, about having that kind of an attitude of dominating or authoritarian.

But I think that there may be some overblowing of that because, I mean, I have a lot of friends and, I mean, some of them—I mean, I can look at friends who, some of them are very dedicated to their family. They are just very good people, and there are others who maybe they are tempted by a lot of things. They talk about the—one of the problems that they bring out about Chicanos, and I don't know if it's [unclear], that we try to hold—we don't want anyone to get too far above us. We drag them down. It's like the crabs in the pail. One of them is going to get out and then the other ones pull them down or whatever. I don't know how true that is, but there is some of that. I mean, there is class differences, too, I'd say. In

Mexico and in Latin America you have the upper class, the elite, and how they treat and how they consider the rest, and so class is a big issue. I think most of the people that have come to the United States are not from the elite class. Most of them are here from the lower class, the working class, and the people, they come here looking for opportunity to better themselves and to work, so I think that there's a lot of that. I mean, but so there are some things that—some of it are attitudes that I think we could progress better with some attitudes that maybe hold us back.

ESPINO

Oh, I see. Okay. That's really interesting. So essentially what you're saying is it's how Chicanos treat each other, and not just men and women, but just overall in trying to achieve upward mobility.

MUÑOZ

See, this is one of the things that I found in the Chicano Movement, though, that you create these bonds and the bonds are—a lot of it is there's a lot of hope and there's a lot for your friends. You go and you help your friends and you support them and you try to get them—like, I mean, even our political leaders. I mean, like Antonio Villaraigosa. He's mayor. He was Speaker of the Assembly. He was a city councilman, but now, I don't know, there's a lot of thoughts about him that he has abandoned his people, to some degree, and there are a lot of his people who used to be close to him. He seems to be, I mean, not looking to them so much anymore. So I don't know. I don't know. That's an individual thing there, and it's probably people who know him, but I do have friends who were his friends, who were very close to him and all that, and they don't feel a warmth towards him that much anymore. So there's that. I don't know. In terms of the [unclear]—take, like, Gil Cedillo is very different. I mean, I see him as very different. I mean, of course he's held positions where he's had a very strong support system. He could take pretty radical stands on things and push things, but he was successful with the DREAM Act and then the license issues. But his commitment, he hasn't gone out to try to—I mean, he did try to run for Congress and he felt very let down by his community in not backing him when he wanted to go to Congress. I guess Judy Chu's there instead of him, I mean, and she was seen as a very good person, too, by, I guess, the people that supported her. But, I mean, who knows? It's politics.

ESPINO

Right, right. Do you know Gil Cedillo? Did you know him before?

MUÑOZ

I've known him more superficially. More recently I've been more close to him, yeah. I mean, he's one of the ones that I hold in very, very high regard as a politician and as one who really has worked at trying to achieve impacts, important impacts, not just symbolic, but they're symbolic and important. I mean, another one I really like, too, is Ed Reyes. I think he's very solid.

ESPINO

These men are not necessarily of the Chicano Movement that you're from.

MUÑOZ

They're younger.

ESPINO

Yeah. So how would you describe that generation? Do you see a difference? Because they're the ones who benefited a little bit more from the implementation of programs that the Chicano Movement tried to establish.

MUÑOZ

They caught on. They're very attuned to making things better for their community and they're very hard workers and I guess they have talents too. I mean, I would never want to be a politician, I don't think. That lifestyle, I would hate being in it. I mean, I wouldn't want to be pushing myself. I mean, for them, I don't know how hard they have to push themselves, but for me to do the kinds of things that they do, I'd really have to be pushing myself really hard and I wouldn't be happy with myself to be getting up and going to all these meetings and trying to be presenting yourself all the time.

ESPINO

Well, what was it like for you to become a judge, then? Because that sounds like a lot of pressure. It wasn't a political arena, but definitely—

MUÑOZ

To me, it's more structured. I mean, each case, you go through a process and the process is bringing out the facts, getting the facts out, and then making evaluations of credibility and then applying the law.

ESPINO

How much of it is subjective? Because if your credibility—

MUÑOZ

Yeah, that's very subjective. I mean, there's objectiveness. There's some objective aspects, I think, that are involved, I mean. But I mean, like the cases, I mean there are plenty of cases where your evaluation is that both parties are very far off from the truth. You're not hearing the truth from either one. They're both exaggerating or making up stories that aren't really what happened or what went down, so then you have to decide, "Well, how am I going to decide this? I don't believe what A is saying and I don't believe what B is saying." So how do you resolve the facts? I think I got down to the point where I tried to evaluate the people somewhat psychologically of what makes sense to me, of what they would be doing in the situation or whether it's likely that what's being said about them is true, and what is it likely that what they're telling me, the thing, is that really believable, or else what can I see from them in just maybe body language or whatever, tones of voice, or how they look around and how they react to the other party. There are different cues that you might—or what makes sense in the total picture of what the story is of what really happened.

ESPINO

How did you become a judge?

MUÑOZ

The position of administrative law judge was a civil service position, so you apply for that position and then if you're eventually selected, then you become a judge. Then there was the process of taking exams, written exams, and then if you came out well enough on that, then you'd be interviewed and you might go through a couple of interviews. They would also look at work product that you may have produced and you'd submit stuff that you had done.

ESPINO

How much did you want to be a judge?

MUÑOZ

I did. I was an administrative law judge. I got a lot of encouragement from judges who I appeared before. They would tell me, "Oh, you should apply. Yeah, you should apply. We would want you to be a judge," that sort of thing. So there were judges who would make comments like that after a while. I had appeared before

them, some of them, a number of times, and I could tell that—and they would tell me, “We’re going to be looking for judges. We’re going to have a posted announcement. Why don’t you apply?”

ESPINO

Those were the heydays of jobs and opportunities, I would imagine.

MUÑOZ

Well, it’s still—there’s still—and then, I mean, even after I became a judge, I started recruiting. I would do the same thing. I would see people that I thought would do well in the role of a judge and I would encourage them. There were people that I helped to prepare for the exams, for the written exam and the interviews. I’d tell them what I thought maybe might help them to do well.

ESPINO

Interesting, interesting. Well, I think we’re going to wrap up now, and I’d like to ask you if there’s anything you want to talk about that we haven’t covered, anything that’s on your mind that you’d like to say for the oral history.

MUÑOZ

Yeah, well, I mean, there’s a lot of stuff, really. I mean, my family life, my siblings, my friends—I’ve had a lot of friends—and then a lot of the thinking that I’ve done, my involvements in other kinds of—I mean, once I retired, I got into cultural things. That’s what really—and then I’ve done a lot of reading. I didn’t read that much when I was working because I used to read a lot for just the job, and so I read a lot of Chicano stuff and a lot of Chicano history, a lot of Chicano literature and about Chicanos, but I’ve read about other things as well. Then I got involved in art, I mean in the arts program. I became a board member of the Avenue 50 Studio and I was on that board for about five years before I decided it was time to leave that and spend time with—my wife retired, and I wanted to spend more time with her and do traveling and do other things and not have that responsibility, but I’ve been involved still. I still help them quite a bit in ways that I can that don’t require me to put in as much time, and I loved the collecting, to know the artist community and that. I’ve gotten exposed to writers and more into some of the theater and the poetry, so there’s so much going on that it’s hard to choose a lot of times what you want to do on a particular day. And now that I’m older, I realize that there may not be that much more time left, so I don’t know if I should be trying to evaluate how I’m

spending my time or not, or just go with the impulses or not. But the other thing, too, I mean, I think a lot about our world and where the world's going and where—I figure I'm going to be leaving it not that long, but compared to what it was when I was twenty years old, I wasn't thinking about anything like this, but the issues that the human race has.

One of the things, I guess just recently the thing that I think about a lot is one of the things that that FDR mentioned in one of his famous points that he raised, and that was during the Depression and he said, "The main thing we have to fear is fear itself." To me, that's a very, very, very revelatory statement because I think that, as humans, that's one of the emotions that we really have to learn how to deal with and handle. I mean, fear—I mean, our first fears, when we're a little child and all that, is the absence of our parents, like when you go to school for the first time, and they drop you off and you're going to be there by yourself.

When you're really a child and a toddler and all that, you don't have to fear too much because everything's done for you. Your parents, I mean if they're doing a good job, they're taking care of you. You don't have to think about fear, and then you start realizing that when they go away, they're not there and you have fear. But fear is something that controls us a lot and we have to think about that. We have to try to deal with things without having fear influence us that much, and move forward and try to do the things that we think are good.

ESPINO

Well, after the moratorium and the horrible death of Ruben Salazar, were you afraid to be involved in community activism or organizations? The groups that you were with weren't really militant, but, nonetheless, was that something that you thought about?

MUÑOZ

I didn't so much really have that much of a sense of fear. I mean, nothing—I mean, I didn't get hit or anything. I was careful in not exposing myself to much, maybe, but I really wasn't going to not go and do things, things that I wanted to keep on doing. At that time, I was going to start my last year of law school, so I guess I felt quite a bit of confidence that I was going to be finishing law school, that I was going to be able to do things. I mean, I had learned what

lawyers could do, to some degree. I had the real positive feeling about that, and I was involved in Casa Legal, doing things, and I knew there was a lot of things to do. I knew what police were like and what you could expect, to some extent. I mean, I had worked with gangs before that and I had seen police tactics used on the kids that I worked with, that they would get picked on and different things and that sort of thing. I also saw that there were a lot of good people that were trying to make things better for everyone, and affirmative action had come out and that's why I was in law school, too, and that was giving me and a lot of others, minorities, a boost to make something of ourselves. So I saw there was negative and there was positive, but, yeah, I didn't think I got scared of—

ESPINO

Shell-shocked?

MUÑOZ

Yeah. But those are some of the thoughts that I have just presently. Like, I think of different things and things get into my mind and I think about them. I have my kids, and, yeah, I wonder about what conditions will be like for them. We never know. The world and the universe, and there's so many things that can happen that you never imagine.

ESPINO

Right, and a lot of the people that I interview say they always operated on the idea that they would leave the world better than they found it. That was what drove them. They wanted to do some good so that they can improve, but then forty years later, fifty years later, they feel like did it really matter. And how do you see that, I mean comparing the activism of the sixties and seventies and all the accomplishments and what you were able to achieve through activism, and today's generation of college students?

MUÑOZ

Well, one of the things that's out in the media now and what's being discussed and the politicians, is they're saying, "We've reached our zenith, and now the succeeding generations are going to have less than what we had." I don't necessarily—I think that there are certain trends, there are certain paths that we've taken that can lead to that, and I think that we need to make some adjustments and get back on a trajectory that's going to raise the standards of living, that's going to raise the quality of life, that's going to

diminish or reduce the fears that people have, that's going to lead to advancement in every way that we can as a species. So I think we have the talents and the abilities to make a lot of great things happen for us and for our species. I mean, I was watching one of the C-SPAN guys because I see these thinkers and writers on there—oh, no, this was in the newspaper. It was this guy who's the physicist in England. What's his name? I can't think of his name, but he's saying we really need to start working at populating another planet. We need to move our species. We can't have all our eggs in one basket. We need to develop the means to transport ourselves and inhabit another planet somewhere so that our species can have the best chance of continuing.

ESPINO

Wow. That's dramatic.

MUÑOZ

Hawking? Is that his name, Hawking?

ESPINO

I don't know.

MUÑOZ

And I agree with him. I agree with him that that's what we need to think about and strive for.

ESPINO

Wow. Well, I think that's a great place to stop. [laughter] We can't go farther than another planet in this talk.

MUÑOZ

Well, we could go to multiple planets—

ESPINO

That's true.

MUÑOZ

—so we can spread out.

ESPINO

Okay. I'm going to stop it here. Thank you so much. [End of January 27, 2012 interview]

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