A TEI Project

Interview of Félix Gutiérrez

Table of contents

1. Transcript

1.1. SESSION ONE (October 4, 2010)

ESPINO

This is Virginia Espino and today is October 4, 2010. I'm interviewing Mr. Félix Gutiérrez in his office on the campus of University of Southern California [USC] in Los Angeles.

Okay, Mr. Gutiérrez, we're going to start with your earliest—I guess what you've been told or you know about your family history, maybe about your grandparents or even your great-grandparents.

GUTIÉRREZ

Okay. Well, the earliest family histories that I've been aware of, although I think my sister Mercedes Gail has gone back even farther than that, goes back to the 1500s in Monterey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico, my mother's [Rebecca Muñoz Gutiérrez] side, which was one of the northern colonies from Spain. It was apparently the only or one of the few colonies where they did not require that the people going there be old Christians. They were afraid because of the Inquisition and because it was seen as a Christianizing effort, that the Jews, trying to get away from the Inquisition, would sign up to go to Mexico or Cuba and the New World. For that particular—it's called the [Luis] Carvajal, who was the leader of it, they didn't require that. So there were some people who were Jewish who went on this colonizing effort, apparently including Carvajal himself.

So our family—this is my mother's side—have been Protestants, which was unusual in Mexico. My mother and her family, as she grew up and as she told us, traced them back to that colony. When the Inquisition came to Mexico, the Jews who were part of the colony then fled the colonizing effort and went to live with the Indians, and some of the early ancestors who have been identified by name were living with the Indians.

So my mother was always proud that we had a Jewish background. She didn't describe a lot about it, but my sister, who's now converted to Judaism, or she says re-converted back to Judaism and lives in Israel part of the year, says a lot of things we did as children that she grew up with, which we thought was part of being Protestant, were related more to the Jewish tradition.

So that's the earliest recollection that I have documented. It's northern Mexico. It's my grandfather's [Esau Perez Muñoz] side of the family. He grew up in Mexico and went to a Protestant seminary in the 1800s—this would be

under Porfirio Díaz in that era, the late 1800s—went to seminary and became a Methodist minister and married. Esau P. Muñoz was his name, and his wife, Febronia [Florian Muñoz], was also Protestant. She was from Michoacan, Morelia, and they met there at one of the church schools, married and had their children.

My mother was the third of the children. She was born in Torreón, Coahuila, in 1916, during the revolution. My grandfather, who was ministering at churches and such during the revolution, was outreach or outpost—I'm not sure what the exact designation was—was for the Red Cross when they would send supplies to help people in the revolution, so he traveled around Monterey and those northern states and cities in that area.

In the late, I guess, 1917, early 1918, the Methodist Church started in the U.S., which other Protestant churches had been doing as well, what they called the Home Missions Movement. They were sending missionaries to China and Latin America, Africa, to get people to convert to Christianity, but there's also people coming from these countries, or from these continents to the United States. So they saw their domestic mission as including what they called home missions, and they went to Mexico in that period and sent a Mr. Reynolds, I think was the name of the pastor, to find out if there were Mexican ministers who wanted to come to the United States and establish Protestant churches in the growing Mexican communities, which because of the revolution there was quite an influx coming up.

So I don't know the reason, but my grandfather elected to take that and brought his family up. My mother was only two years old, but you have vivid memories. She had memories of hearing revolutionary battles and fighting. You know, there'd be shooting and all the people would be in their houses, and they didn't know—and the battle would end and they didn't know who won, they didn't know which side, the Villistas or the Federales or whatever. Then the people would bang on the door. They'd pound on the door and would say, "¿Quién Vive?" And if you said Villa and it was the Federales that had won, they'd come and take you, and then the other way. So you kind of had to kind of peek out to see what was going.

Her last, very last memories of Mexico coming north was on the train going up into El Paso and seeing, passing—on the telephone poles or electric lights they were hanging people. There were bodies hanging, because if they won a battle, they would take prisoners and they would hang them from the things. She remembered when they were going north they would see that. So she left.

They arrived in El Paso on Armistice Day 1918, November 11, 1918. So when she crossed the border, everybody was celebrating because the war was over. World War I was over. She thought they were celebrating because they had come from Mexico to join the U.S. Mr. Reynolds met them at the border, took care of the processing with the immigration and all that, and my grandfather was assigned to churches in the valley of Texas, Marfa, Sanderson, Alpine, along the Rio Grande Valley and he established churches there. He was a circuit rider, and they lived there until the early 1920s.

Then the church transferred him to Arizona and then he spent most of his career ministering to Spanish-speaking Methodist churches in Arizona and in California. He came to San Fernando for two terms, Flagstaff, Tempe, Sonora, those kind of mining-town areas and such. So my mother grew up with a very strong Protestant tradition, very strong church.

Unusual for the period, even for today, there were seven children in the family: Rosalio, Lucinda, Rebecca, Elizabeth, Josephine, Solomon, Abel. They all went to college. It's hard for me to think about it even now, because it's during the [Great] Depression, for some, and they would go. You know, "You're here. Take advantage of the opportunities that you have. As much as we miss Mexico and love Mexico—," my grandfather even took them back to Mexico in the early 1930s just to see relatives and friends, "—this is where your future is."

My mother, her two sisters Lucinda and Elizabeth, and her older brother, Rosalio Muñoz, were all founders of Los

Conquistadores in 1937 at Arizona State, which, as far as I can tell, was the first campus-based Mexican American student organization for activism. They had cultural organizations, but this was to get kids, recruit kids, bring them to college, have events on campus, talk about studies, what do you do with your careers and such. So she was an activist, very much, and so was her brother and sisters, all of them. They all went on. Her two younger brothers went to college after the war, but they all went through.

So education, family, and church were part of the foundations that we had growing up. I had a very unusual upbringing in that regard. We lived in East L.A. till I was thirteen; Lincoln Heights. First in the Belvedere section on Fifth Street between Ditman and Rowan, and then later we moved to Ontario and San Bernardino for two years, came back and then El Sereno, Lincoln Heights.

But my cousins all had parents who had gone to college. So I was talking to a couple of my cousins, and we couldn't think of anybody we were going to school with when we were in Lincoln Heights, Anglo, Asian, black, or white, anybody, Mexican, who had parents who'd gone to college. But for us, you know, a group of Chicanos who grew up with each other, we all knew we were going to go to college somehow. How we were going to do it was maybe a question, but that we would was—

ESPINO

Your grandfather, was he educated?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, my mother's father was a minister, yes, because he went to seminary. He trained first as a printer and then he went to seminary—I forget the name of it—in Mexico, so he was educated to become a minister.

On my dad's [Félix Gutiérrez] side, we lived on the—I'm not sure where the Spanish roots are, but the Mexican roots are on the west coast of Mexico, where there was a lot of north-south travel between California. Going back at least to the 1700s, the first ancestor that's been identified was a horse breeder, a horse trader who would breed horses and would go up and down trading horses and such, and came to California—I'm not sure of the city in Mexico, but came to California in the 1770s. It's always the family history was that he came to the original site of the San Gabriel Mission, which is by the Whittier Narrows Dam is now. That side of the family, they always call the San Gabriel Mission "the new mission." It was made in 1790. The original site was flooded because of the Rio Hondo and the Rio San Gabriel. So he came but he didn't stay, because he'd come up to trade horses, go back, north and south.

At some point the story is that he went on a trip south to Chile, Valparaíso, to trade horses and didn't come back. They don't know what happened. The ship crashed or he got a new life or whatever. He had left his two sons under the care of the priest at the town in Mexico where they had been living, and when he didn't come back, the priest sent them north with a man who wanted to come to California, named El Chino, and they came up, which I thought was a nice family tale, but then I read the history of California colonization, and in addition to the settlements, one way they did it through retired military officers who would get land grants and orphans. That was part of the colonization period.

So they helped him and they came with him to California, and one who came north didn't like it, went to Louisiana, and I don't know the year. This would be the early 1800s. And another one stayed here in California. Then he stayed back and forth and he went to Mexico.

My great-grandfather Felix Gutiérrez was born in Cucurpe, Sonora, who would have probably been the son of this one in the early 1830s, and then came to California either just before or around the time of the Gold Rush, settled in the San Gabriel Valley and went during the Gold Rush in [18]47 before the Yanquis came, or '48 before the '49ers

came, and did very well in the gold fields, according to family legend.

Then when the Yanquis came, I never understood why he didn't stay, but you realize now with the violence against the Mexicans in California, because the Chilenos, the Mexicans came and they knew gold panning. They knew the techniques. They were forced out of the gold fields. So he went to San Francisco and lived there for a while, and then he came back to the San Gabriel Valley and became a blacksmith.

Then his son was my grandfather Francisco Gutiérrez, who was a cement contractor in Monrovia, deputy sheriff. Like Lee Baca. I told him my grandfather was a deputy sheriff. He said, "Oh, yeah, what station?" It was like in the 1890s something. [laughs] But he was out in Monrovia, Arcadia, in that area, and then he started a cement contracting firm.

My dad Felix J. Gutiérrez grew up in Monrovia, went to college, Pasadena Junior College [PJC], and then UCLA after that. He and my mother met when they were both student activists in the 1930s. He had started a magazine that was out of the Mexican Youth Conference [The Mexican Voice], so part of a YMCA effort. Bert Corona was part of it as well as some other leaders of that generation, and they wanted to have a publication beyond the conference, which met once a year. So he started a newsletter, basically, mimeographed, called *The Mexican Voice* in 1938 and put it out while he was at PJC and then continued while he was at UCLA in the forties.

My mother was engaged in similar activities in Arizona, and so they heard about the publication, so she would write articles about the Conquistadores club activities for this, and he put them in. They got married. They fell in love, they got married, and journalism happens with love, too.

ESPINO

So your mother was writing from Arizona.

GUTIÉRREZ

Arizona. She was writing from Tempe what the Conquistadores and what other groups were doing, plus essays. It was more than a newsletter. Here's this generation, for the most part, most of them weren't like my dad that they were born here or their parents were born here, but they were the immigration of the revolution, the parents who came up during the Mexican revolution, so their parents were very Mexicano, and the kids, students, I mean the young people, you know, we know that life, but what are we going to do here. There were not open doors for them. They could aspire to education. They were filtered out of the schools in many cases, so the few who went to college or thought about going to college started what they called—the magazine was called an educational inspirational magazine. So it addressed the issues they were confronting. It promoted education. It recognized people who were getting ahead and going to college, getting a job, getting into a profession, but it was maintaining a Mexican or Mexican American identity.

There was big controversy whether they should even use the term "Mexican American," because some said, "Well, Mexicans are Americans. Why do we have to prove we are?"

And others said, "Well, if you're part Mexican, how could you be part American?" It was the melting pot type of thing. So it was a lot of essays about, you know, "What do we do with our education? Where will it take us?"

My dad remembered he used to take the streetcar from Monrovia to PJC, and he said the kids he grew up with, some of them would just be kind of making fun of him and saying, "Well, you think you're going to get a job because you have an education. You think they're going to hire you, you're going to get a better opportunity, but you'll be back here picking with us next year, because you're still a Mexican," basically. You know, "It's not going to help you."

On the other hand, I talked to his cousin Isadore Guardado a few years ago, in the early nineties, who used to pick. I guess he continued picking all through. There were a lot of orange groves and all that in the San Gabriel Valley then. He said when they went picking, they didn't charge my dad to chip in for gas, because they said, "You're going to need this for college."

So it really makes me cry, because I think about this. He's struggling to get ahead. Some people are saying, "You'll never do it. You can get the class work, but it's not going to amount to anything." And then in his family there's support, and others, and that newspaper plays that role. It's telling people who are in that same boat, whether they're in Santa Barbara or Oxnard or Orange County or whatever, "There are people like you fighting this same struggle, questioning the society that they're seeking to enter, not wanting to leave behind who they are, what they are, in order to become who they're going to be." It was a tough kind of battle. But they called it *The Mexican Voice*, so, you know, if they were trying to become all Anglo, which some people say it was all assimilation, they wouldn't have called the newspaper *The Mexican Voice*.

ESPINO

Was it in Spanish or in English?

GUTIÉRREZ

It was mainly in English. My mother wrote some articles in Spanish and a few others did, but it was probably 90 percent English, probably even more. They'd run the All Mexican team, like All American team for football. They had the All Mexican team, and my dad would go through and find Mexican names of people who were playing football and different things. They'd have track meets, and they'd have contests and such. It was geared to youth activities but also youth issues.

They had women's—because it came out of the YMCA, which was a men's, male thing. They started up a girls' conference and women, Dora Ybañez and some others would write about issues confronting women, young Mexican women. They were distinct from it.

The whole collection is at UCLA. My dad went to UCLA, was a proud Bruin, so sometime in the 1940s when the newspaper was running down, they would change titles to some other—*Mexican American Forward* and *Youth Forward* were the succeeding titles. He gave the complete run of *The Mexican Voice* to UCLA.

ESPINO

When did it stop running?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, in its later titles it runs till about 1950. It's not always called The Mexican Voice, because, you know, World War II happens in the middle of it all, so they lose a whole generation. He had one column where he wrote, "Here's what happened to our staff. So-and-so is stationed here and so-and-so is doing this." So during the war, as far as I could tell, it just came out once a year as a slick magazine with beautiful color, I mean two-color covers. It was very well done, linoleum prints. UCLA students—Juan Azcevedo was an art graduate, did a lot of the covers. My dad did some of the covers.

ESPINO

So before we move forward, I don't know if you know anything about what your mom experienced, what her family experienced in Arizona with the dominant society as they were trying to penetrate these institutions that were pretty much closed for most Mexicans at that time.

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, she had two experiences. For my mother, Arizona, compared to South Texas, was more of a promised land. Her older brother and her sister—she was the third in the family—when they went to go to school—I have a picture right there—in Texas, South Texas, they just said, “The Negroes go to the Negro school, the whites go to the white school, the Mexicans don’t go to school.”

This was the beginning of what they call the Escuelita Movement, where people had to start their own schools. So my grandfather started a Mexican school, or a school in the Mexican church, and it was taught—I have a picture of my mother’s kindergarten class, and it’s taught by Anglo. It’s not anti-Anglo or anything. You know, there were Anglo church women probably from the white church who would come down and help with it and they would do it. But you couldn’t get an education. You were cut out. The logic, or illogic, was that you needed to know English to go to school, so you couldn’t come to school unless you could speak English. Well, if you just came from Mexico, everybody speaks Spanish, and where are you going to learn English? In school. But they shut you out.

My uncle, her older brother Rosalio [Muñoz], who ended up getting his Ph.D. at USC, didn’t go to school till he was ten years old, and that was when they moved to Arizona. So when they moved to Arizona, they did have schools for Mexicans. They had Mexican schools. Some of the mining towns, Sonora and Ray, were segregated mining camps, one town is Anglos, one town is Mexican. They had Mexican schools in some—Tempe had a Mexican school. The Webster School in Mesa, which is where my mother taught, was a Mexican school. Arizona State actually had a curriculum in training teachers for the Mexican schools. There was a lawsuit in the 1920s, because they were using student teachers in that, and the Mexican families said, “This isn’t separate but equal. The white kids have credentialed teachers and we have student teachers.” [recorder turned off]

ESPINO

Okay, we’re back.

GUTIÉRREZ

She went to public school when they moved to Arizona. The schools were either segregated, in terms of separate schools, or one of my aunts or younger sister, who did oral history for the Arizona State University Archives, said the classes were segregated by seating, where the Mexicans would sit on one side and the Anglos would sit on the other side, and that was her education.

I think—I think, I don’t know for a fact—see, my grandfather, because he was a minister, they would change them. Like every two or three years they would rotate them around. She said she found better opportunities in Phoenix and the larger cities. The smaller towns, it was more rigid. She finished her B.A. and got her credential, was getting her credential at Arizona State and was studying for a master’s, and her thesis was to compare the performance of Mexican students in segregated schools and at integrated schools. She was doing a mining town for one of the proposals, a mining town, a farming town, and a city, and apparently, from what she told me, her proposal was accepted. So she got the data on the city and on the farming town, and then the mining town was—because the mines controlled it. They wouldn’t let her go into the schools and so she didn’t get her master’s because they didn’t want the data known.

When they went to the Los Conquistadores—she didn’t go, but my uncle did and the guys—they would ride freight trains during the break into these small towns.

ESPINO

Can you explain what that is? Because I’ve never heard of—

GUTIÉRREZ

It's like a mining town. So you'd hop a freight—

ESPINO

Los Conquistadores?

GUTIÉRREZ

Los Conquistadores was the name of the club. It was the UMAS/MECHA of that period. So they would want to recruit kids from their—you know, like they'd want to go back to their hometown and get students to go to college, to think about it. So, like my uncle, they'd just hop a freight and they'd go off and get off in Bisbee or wherever, Globe or Superior or whatever town, and then they'd go to the school and ask for the records to see the students who had college potential, and then they would talk to those students about going.

My mother said that when they did that—apparently they had cooperation of the schools, because they want kids to go to college—that then the mining companies would call the students in and tell them if they went to work for the mining company, that they would give them an office job, that they wouldn't have to go into the mines like their parents did, because they wanted to keep—because they were kids who could write and do math and things like that, so they would try to keep them, keep them there.

As far as I can tell—my parents never threw anything away, so I've got a lot of the documentation—they had good cooperation from the college people once they got there. Grady Gammage who was the president of the school, Irma Wilson, who was the Spanish professor, was the sponsor of the group. They'd have events on campus. They'd have big conferences. I think that's how my dad and mom—the California group would come over and they'd have a big conference, and then the Arizona group would go over. This is all in the 1930s. The California group met at the San Pedro YMCA. So there was an interchange.

Then *The Mexican Voice*, there was letters to my dad from Denver, Arizona. At one point they went to El Paso to talk to the student leaders there and such, so it was a widespread movement.

ESPINO

Los Conquistadores?

GUTIÉRREZ

Los Conquistadores was the name of the club in Arizona. Apparently—I've seen it referenced, but I don't know anything about it—there was a group called Los Conquistadores at New Mexico State in the same era, at Las Cruces, but I'll have to get down there, look at the yearbook, whatever.

ESPINO

Was your father involved in a similar type of organization, that had a name?

GUTIÉRREZ

Yes. The group here was called the Mexican Youth Conference, originally. It came out of the YMCA summer camps. What they did is, there were YMCAs in local communities, and the YMCA in those days was segregated. They had a black YMCA and such. It was more a Protestant organization, too. My dad was raised Catholic. At some point, he fell away from the church in Monrovia. So it was built around sports. He ran track and played basketball in high school.

So what they would do is they had segregated camps. I still have the flyer at home. The elementary boys' camp would be a certain week, and then the junior high or whatever would be a certain week, and then the high school boys would be a certain week, and the end of the summer was Mexican boys' camp for the YMCAs in Southern California. What they would do, the different Ys in Fullerton, Monrovia, Pasadena, L.A., Santa Paula, whatever, they would send kids from that YMCA to the Mexican boys' camp, and these tended to be kids who were sports-oriented, college interested at least, and looking in that direction.

So they formed a coalition, because a lot of them felt like they were oddities in their hometown. They were going to a Protestant thing, the Y, though they weren't all Protestants. They were thinking about going to college. They saw a life beyond picking and those kinds of employment, and there weren't a lot of people like them in their hometown, so they would talk with each other. They wanted to have more than just a camp experience, so they met afterwards outside of the camp, under the auspices of the YMCA, and then formed the newspaper as a way of spreading the word.

Later they left the YMCA as a parent organization and named themselves the Mexican American Movement, the MAM, which wasn't formally incorporated until 1943, but it was a movement probably since the early forties.

ESPINO

Was that when your parents married, or around that time?

GUTIÉRREZ

They married in '42. My mother taught in Mesa at the Mexican school, the Webster School in Mesa, Arizona. My dad took longer. He was younger. He's two years younger than her, so he was going to UCLA.

Then after the Zoot Suit Riots, part of the Zoot Suit Riots, issues addressed in the Zoot Suit Riots was Mexican youth were segregated out of going to parks and swimming and stuff. You couldn't use public facilities. In San Bernardino there was a big case in 1943 where they said Mexicans couldn't actually go to the park. They took it to court. You know, it's a public park. You couldn't go in the swimming pools. That's pretty well documented and such.

So after the Zoot Suit Riots, the social welfare youth organization said, "Well, the reason these kids were a riot, because of pachucos, is because, you know, where can they go for recreation? So they gravitate toward the gang." So they expanded their youth efforts among Mexican Americans. We were living on Fifth Street between Ditman and Rowan, and the East L.A. Y[MCA], which was on Whittier Boulevard, opened up positions to hire Mexicans, basically.

So they hired my dad as a youth worker. He'd go to UCLA in the morning and then he'd come home and he'd take a nap, then he'd go to work. I was a little kid. I remember him going to work about three o'clock, because kids, when they got out of school, he'd work in the evening. So it took him longer to get through college.

At one point he was working four jobs. The *Christian Science Monitor* did a profile of my dad in 1945 and about this movement he was a part of, and said he had four jobs while attending UCLA. They lived—before I was born, they lived out in Beverly Glen, which was a rustic area in 1942, in the hills. It's all ritzy now, I think, by UCLA. They lived on Federal Avenue for a while. They lived near my aunt in Echo Park on Duane Street, but the first home I remember was the one in Belvedere.

ESPINO

Can you tell me a little bit about how they worked together, or if they did, on the Mexican boys or in the new—what

was it—the Mexican American Movement? Would you describe them as partners in that? You said she was an activist before they married.

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, I really can't tell the story, because I was too young. I can remember them going to meetings a lot. You know, I'd stay with my aunt. My sister and I would stay with my aunt, because my aunt Tía Chuy lived in the front house, and her daughter Mercedes, and then we lived in the back house. So their back yard was our front yard. So if they had to go do things, I'd just stay with the family.

My mother was an elementary school teacher. She started teaching in Arizona. When they got married, she came to California, taught at Brooklyn Avenue School in East L.A., as well as a bunch of other places. So I remember her more being at home, my dad going to UCLA in the morning, and then I'd wake up, he'd be gone. Then he'd come home sometime in the early afternoon and then he'd be home a little bit. Then he'd go out to work at the Y.

We'd go to meetings sometimes, but I was just two or three years old, so I don't know to what extent—I know my dad stayed active in the larger movement throughout. He's putting out the publication. My mother, I don't know to what extent she was, beyond what she was doing at the school. She started out as a substitute teacher even though she'd had a full-time job. It was hard to get a teaching job. During the war, there was a shortage. Should have been easy. But she said one time they called her that there was an opening. You'd start out as a substitute. They called her that there was a substitute opening in San Fernando, Maclay I think, one of the schools out there. So they didn't have a car. My dad used to take the streetcar to UCLA. So she got on the streetcar in East L.A., went all the way into downtown, take the P car, I guess, and then took the Red Line out to San Fernando. Goes there, it's dripping rain. She runs up the stairs. The school's still there. She ran up the stairs of the school, knocks on the door. It was all closed because it was raining, and somebody opens the door and the lady says, "Who are you?"

She says, "I'm the teacher."

It was the principal that opened it, and she said, "Well, you're a Mexican."

She says, "Yes."

"Well, who sent you?"

She said, "The city school district sent me, the headquarters. I'm here to substitute."

So the lady just said, "But you're a Mexican."

And my mother said, "Yeah, well, I was sent here by the city schools to substitute-teach today."

And she just said, "You're a Mexican." That was it. Doors close, go back to East L.A. So she didn't complain a lot, but I know she had some issues to fight with.

We lived in the community. She taught. All this stuff they're talking about in the sixties, with walkout, we were living then, and so were our cousins who lived in San Fernando, and the other ones who lived in Lincoln Heights. We lived in the community, our parents worked in the community, my parents both taught East L.A. schools, we lived in

Lincoln Heights when I was older. You know, we were there all around. But it was unusual, I guess would be the way to say it. I never had a Mexican teacher anytime in my life till I had already finished my master's and was taking some graduate classes, and that's a lot of years of school.

ESPINO

Were there any lessons that they passed down to you from that experience, anything that you remember?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, it was all lessons. It was, you owe responsibility to yourself to do the best you can with whatever you have to do it with, achievement in the sense of striving, ambition. Don't let anybody hold you back. In this article that the Christian Science Monitor wrote about my dad in '45, he talked about growing up in Monrovia, which was segregated and such, and it just said he took an "I'll show them" attitude. "I'll show them what I can do. I'm not going to let somebody put me in my place." And I think we got that. You're not always successful. You try things that don't work out. You go for things. You over-reach sometimes, or even you under-reach, but you still don't get it. But it was that you had to define for yourself what you wanted to be, in terms of getting ahead.

The motto of the Mexican American Movement with *The Mexican Voice* publication was "Progress through education," and I think that says a lot; basically, we're not going to inherit somebody else's this or that or whatever. We don't have connections. You know, through education and what we have—because, again, *Mexican Voice*, while building on our heritage, we can progress through education. That you owe responsibilities to others beyond your personal ambitions, not just your immediate group, not all racial; it's other principles that you may believe in.

Church was very important, continues to be, and the importance of family, family connections, which are never strong enough. I might say that. You always feel guilty, you should see your cousins more often or such, but that there was some strength in family. It's not like a family business, but that because somebody's your cousin, you know that there's a connection there, that you have something bringing you together.

I guess larger, although they didn't talk about it—see, my dad died when I was twelve. He had cancer. He died at age thirty-seven of really undiagnosed colon cancer. He was going to the doctors for two years before he died, two and a half years. So I have the memories of a twelve-year-old boy.

My mother—after he died, we were living in Lincoln Heights and going to barrio schools. She was teaching at Ann Street School, and she moved us to South Pasadena, which was like five miles and five hundred miles away at the same time, when I was thirteen. It was a white community. We weren't excluded, but you were basically accepted with the recognition that you were different, I guess would be the nicest way to say it, among kids. Among adults, I never heard anybody expressed any problems, but it was kind of, again, that wasn't your place. The safe place would have been to stay in Lincoln Heights. We know people. We know the family, knew my dad. My mother, it was known, you know, go on ahead. She wanted us to go to a place where there were better schools, which there were.

ESPINO

You mentioned earlier that there had been some critiques of your parents' generation as being in organizations that were, quote, unquote, "assimilationist." But was there anything that she passed on to you that really spoke to being Mexican?

GUTIÉRREZ

Oh, yes.

ESPINO

What would those be?

GUTIÉRREZ

She was very proud that she was born in Mexico. She really was proud. Even among—I don't mention names, but among family, "Well, he was born in the United States. He doesn't know what it's like to be a Mexican." She was, as with my aunts and uncles, they were perfectly bilingual in Spanish and English, without accents in either way.

I remember as a very young kid, very young, three, four, she wanted me to learn Spanish, and to me it was kind of the generation, you know, your grandparents' language, your aunts' and uncles' language, and I resisted it. We were living right there in Belvedere, in East L.A., but, "I don't know why I've got to learn Spanish. I'm American. I live here."

Then it was the time with the pachucos, with the caló, so I was picking up language, not bad language, but slang, like shoes were calcos, things like that. And I just thought it was Spanish. I didn't know. Because it sounded like Spanish to me, so I'd use a term and then she'd correct me that it wasn't the right word. "Use zapatos." So she really wanted to reinforce that.

I still remember taking her to movies that she'd hear of, some Mexican movie, not a lot, but occasionally, like in college, "Can you take me to this theater so I can watch this movie?" Things like that. She taught in East L.A. Her entire career was spent in Mexican schools from the 1930s until she retired in 1972. She was active. It was really a Mexican American generation. She was accepted. We lived in South Pasadena, so it was basically all white.

I remember when she died, we had these people talking about her and her role with Mexican this and that. She translated. She got her psychometrist credential and translated the IQ tests from English to Spanish so the kids—they used to test them in English right when they got in from Mexico, and, of course, they'd come out mentally retarded and then put them in these classes so they could get more state funding for the school and a smaller class size. So some people talked to that, and I remember one lady from the church said, "We didn't know anything about this Mexican stuff. She was just Becky to us." So she could move very comfortably in more than one world.

I used to take her for a visit, home visits, when I was going to Cal State L.A. [California State University, Los Angeles], and she's like, "I've got to go down to visit some families." So I'd just take her and drive to this house for an hour and another house for a half hour and such. So she never lost that connection, and it was more than food and music. She listened to Radio KALI and the radio and stuff in Spanish, but it was more than a cultural connection.

ESPINO

How about your family's perception of themselves versus, like, you mentioned the pachucos or some of the other, you know, maybe the working-class people who didn't go to college, who were the gardeners. How did you view yourself compared to them, or how did your family?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, there was a connection with the working—I mean, the working-class, there was no distinction there except pride and what they were doing and what you were doing. The pachucos, she had few good things to say about pachucos. I remember when the play Zoot Suit came out in '78 and I took her to see it, and then I saw her, I don't know, a week later, I forget. I said, "Do you remember that?" Because we were living in East L.A. when it was all actually—she says, "Yes. Yeah, I remember the kids dressing like that," and on and on. She said, "That was just very sad. They weren't happy. They were trying to express themselves in a way." She wasn't against them, but they were just trying to express themselves in a way that wouldn't be accepted. It wasn't being accepted by the Mexicano Mexicanos, and it wasn't being accepted by the Anglo.

When I graduated from Cal State L.A. in 1965 with my B.A., she went to the ceremony with my sister, and she told me afterwards—and I didn't know where she was going to take the story; this is where it gets to your point—she said she went to the bathroom I guess before, because the graduates were lined up and you sat, and there was this girl, basically chola type with the hairdo and everything, waiting, waiting to use the bathroom. So I thought, okay, so where's my mom going to take this? And she said she felt so proud that that girl had somebody who went to college. It really meant something to her to say here's somebody who was probably never going to go to college, who has somebody in their family or a friend who went to college. So there was an identity there.

We were never too proud to work. I worked in gardening, factory, whatever you could get, you know, all through, starting in junior high. It was never—I mean, in a way I knew I'm working in the factory now because I'm in college and in two years I'll be doing something else, but it wasn't looking down on people in that regard. I think what they would have looked down was people who didn't try, who didn't put out.

I remember my dad, where I grew up—I went to school in Happy Valley. We lived in Lincoln Heights. My mother taught in Glen Alta, which is around the corner behind Lincoln High School, and there was a guy that my dad had grown up with who lived in the neighborhood. So my dad, they'd just see each other and they'd talk and stuff. He was just a friend of my dad's. But I remember once the son or daughter of that man was in my mother's class, and my mother had the cards of her students. So I looked through and it had his name, and it said occupation, and it said "laborer." I looked at that, you know, because to me he was just like my dad, but my dad was a schoolteacher and he was a laborer, but they both grew up in Monrovia and so they were still friends, and as far as you could tell hearing them talk, there wasn't any "up the line from you."

They tended to—I think part of it, and I don't know, I can't really speak for them—I think part of it was being Protestant put us into more contact with Anglos, possibly. We were the first Mexican family in the Asbury Methodist Church, as far as I can tell, in the Asbury Methodist Church in Lincoln Heights, which isn't there anymore because it was made out of brick and not earthquake-safe. My cousins joined later and then there were other Mexican families that were there at the time. There were some biracial families there. We went and did church activities where there was a lot of interaction with Anglos. We grew up in a Spanish-speaking church. I was baptized at La Placita by Olvera Street, the Methodist Church there.

ESPINO

Did she speak to you in Spanish when you were growing up? What was the language of your house?

GUTIÉRREZ

Yes, but I was resistant to it. That's all I can say, in these true confessions here. I took Spanish in high school so I could converse and understand my grandparents. I didn't see any, at the time, utility for it beyond that. It was a connection to your past. And again, this is rock and roll versus *Trio Los Panchos* or something, you know, that era. There was not this middle ground was very narrow. Occasionally you'd have a Rene and Rene or something. There'd be some group that you'd hear about that was Chicano, Richie Valens with "La Bamba" and such, but there wasn't a big space there.

So part of you was this and part of you was that, but the part of me that was Mexican was pretty small, and the part of me that was Anglo was very large, in my own perception. In terms of some of the kids I grew up with in South Pasadena, it was the other way around, and others it was neutral. It was never a plus to be Mexican. The best you could hope for was that they wouldn't count it as a negative, that they wouldn't hold it against you, but that they'd just take you as to who you were.

ESPINO

How did you feel leaving East Los Angeles then?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, it was more overpowered by the loss of your father, I think, my dad. My mother, she'd always work. She was teaching, so it wasn't like some women who had no source of income. But she was left with three children under the age of—you know, pre-teenagers, in 1955 and was going to raise us, and she did.

She wanted to go to South Pasadena, which had been my parents' dream. My dad had grown up in Monrovia. He liked the idea of a small town as opposed to L.A., where you knew people and such, where you had some sense of your place in the community. They had bought some property in South Pasadena, but we never—up in the hills, which is still there, opposite Mount Washington. Then the guy they bought it from traded them another house where somebody wasn't making the payments. There was a two-bedroom house there and if you fix it up, then you could live there. But my dad was fighting cancer, so they rented the house out. They weren't going to be able to fix it up. So when we moved, we moved to another place that my mother bought.

You know, I had never experienced direct racism. I mean, there were racial titles you would put on different groups, but in Lincoln Heights it was mostly Mexican, but there were a lot of Anglos. There were blacks, there were Asians, mainly Japanese Americans, some Chinese because kids would come from Chinatown. I mean, if you took on somebody, there'd be other people on their group you'd have to deal with. We called white kids Paddies, but it wasn't a putdown; that's just what they were.

But when I got to South Pasadena, it was all white. So we just moved there. I was just glad to have a house where I'd have my own bedroom, a big yard, and things like that. We were accepted, but then I found, as I got on, that there was kind of a label that some kids would put on you that you just had to deal with. What was the option? I mean, you were Mexican, so you couldn't say, "I'm not." Some kids would really just make fun of you. It was a source of humor. It gave you an identity. Sometimes you'd laugh with it. Other times you'd try to get back at them. You were outnumbered in any case.

ESPINO

In Mexican and other ethnic groups, the skin color is a big issue, and it could be in your favor or it could go against you. I don't know your sisters. Was there ever a time where you and your siblings felt like you wanted to just fit in and pass in South Pasadena?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, I don't think passing was an option for me. You'd have to ask my sisters as to whether they thought it was for them. I used to go—there was a barbershop in South Pasadena on Mission, Chuck's Barber Shop, and it was the prototype of the old barbershop, where the guys all wore white and this and that. When you walked in, there was like five or six barbers, mirrors on both sides of the wall, and there was a black guy who shined shoes when you came in if you were getting a shine and that.

So I used to sit there and I'd take off my glasses and get my hair cut, and, you know, I can't see without my glasses. So, basically, the whole room is white except for the black guy in the corner and me. And that's the way I felt in South Pasadena, okay? It wasn't negative. It wasn't, "Oh, poor me." It was kind of like everybody around here is the same as each other, and somehow I stand out.

I had a great barber. I liked him a lot. They called him Daddy. He was from Oklahoma. To show you how out of touch I was, he'd say, "I really like cutting your hair. Your hair is really—I like your hair. Every time you come in, I look forward to cutting your hair."

"Oh, good, good, Daddy."

He says, "Yeah. It's not greasy or anything like that." And I just thought he was—you know, because in those days with Brylcreem and people were putting all kinds of stuff on there. Well, hell, it wasn't till I was out of college, like, yes, he thought I was a greaser, you know. He thought a Mexican guy comes in, his hair's going to be full of, I guess, car oil or something. I didn't realize that he was putting a stereotype on me. Other people were much more open on that and would make fun of you and would call you names.

There was another kid in the class who was heavier-set. He filled a little more of the stereotype, and they used to call him "taco treat." They called me "the beaner" and stuff. I was "the bean." And they'd just make comments here and there. It was an undercurrent.

When I graduated from high school, I thought back—and I had close friends; I wasn't an outcast in any sense—I try to think back to how many kids did I know who were close to me who had never said anything racial, and I could think of about five, five kids, including one who was from the South. I mean, you would have thought he'd been the first guy, but he was—Alan Kinser. He had never made any racial overtone in any way.

ESPINO

How did you survive in that environment?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, I never found my place in South Pasadena. I'll just put it that way. I didn't like the town. I mean, I liked being there, but the school system was very hierarchical. There was kids that seemed like they would be anointed from the day they were in kindergarten or whatever. You always kind of knew who the class president was going to be with this and that. You know, like there's preset. At least that's the way it looked. I came in at eighth grade, so there may have been some sorting out. The good athletes, it was really the all-American boy—this is the 1950s, so the kids who got good grades were good athletes, socially active and such, and I didn't fit any of those criteria. It's like tall, dark, and handsome. I said, "Well, at least I got dark. I got one out of three." [laughs] I was a little skinny kid with glasses who liked working on the school paper. That was it. I was in Boy Scouts because I liked camping. I never went up the ranks to become an Eagle Scout. I was in long enough to be if I had done it. We were active in church. The church youth activities were very active, so you had a circle of friends who you did things with, who were close friends and such.

ESPINO

Did your closest friends come from the church or from the school?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, there was a church connection with the closest friends, but some of them, their parents didn't go to church. We had a very popular Sunday School teacher that kids would go to just hear this guy talk, Boyd McCullough. Usually kids' parents are dragging their kids to Sunday School when they're in high school, and kids would just go to hear this guy. So, basically, we kind of grew up that way. Then we had youth activity. Sunday night, we'd have some social thing or speaker or something like that. They had a full-time youth minister, Mr. Wayne Miller. So there was always something going on there, and it wasn't all religion. You know, go to movies or swimming party and things like that. New Year's Eve, they'd have a party for them, the church would have it, so it was kind of a full-range experience.

We used to say—I guess I'll say it now—it didn't matter what we did on Friday night or Saturday night as long as our parents saw us in church on Sunday morning. [laughs] I mean, we were regular guys. We weren't angels. You

know, we had our share of fun.

ESPINO

Well, just talking about this one influential Sunday School teacher, looking back at your childhood, can you talk to me about some of the other adults who were influential, him as well, but maybe some teachers or some other community members who were influential?

GUTIÉRREZ

After South Pasadena or before?

ESPINO

Well, I guess before. Elementary, junior high.

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, the uncles and aunts were very influential growing up, my mother's side of the family and my dad's, a couple of aunts he had. My parents were both working, so our Tía Chuy—her name was Jesus María, so they called her Chuy—she basically took care of us, my younger sister. I have one sister that's just a year younger. Another one is eleven years younger. So, Gail, who is the one one year younger— Tía Chuy basically raised us in terms of being home after school and such, until, well, really, even after we moved to South Pasadena for a short time. So that was an important family connection, and her daughter and such.

My mother's family had kids that were our age, my cousins, so we would spend time with them, and they were adult. You know, you don't realize it at the time, but seeing them and what they're doing, and the adults, how they're leading their lives were important.

Beyond that, I had a very influential teacher in Glen Alta, Miss Fiedler, who was interested in history, and I liked California history in fourth grade and fifth grade. She was trying to nurture that in me and others. I remember it really hurt me—she sent me out with a friend to her car to pick something up in her car. My mother was a teacher, so she trusted me. So I went there, and she had her ballot to vote in the 1952 election, and she was voting for [Dwight D.] Eisenhower, and I couldn't believe she was a Republican. [laughs] I was like, "That's my favorite teacher. Why's she not going for [Adlai] Stevenson?" But she helped and encouraged me in that regard.

In junior high, Mr. Avakian at Lincoln High took an interest in us, a group of boys, Anglos, Mexican, and doing things with us. I remember once he brought his son and one or two friends of the son. He lived in Arcadia, and he brought us on a Sunday and he picked us up. We all went to a football game together, and the kids, Arcadia—again, we're trying to connect with these kids. We didn't know them. I don't know how much was social. We just didn't know them. But he would stay for after-school activities. It was a passive kind of a thing. We were the Stamp Club, the Service Club, things like that. So he was helpful in terms of seeing there's more potential. Most teachers just seemed like they wanted to get you through, go through your paces and do your thing.

In South Pasadena, I guess the closest was the Boy Scout leaders. It was a parents' group, Dads Club, they called it, that we used to go camping with. I was in Boy Scouts in Lincoln Heights, and we'd go camping maybe every two or three months, with South Pasadena, every month. It was very organized. We'd do shooting camp this month; we'd go to the desert this month; we'd go to the beach camp this month. It was very South Pasadena, I guess like soccer is now, in those days. So you got to know them because they would be on trips. You'd ride in a car with them to go on the camping trip and such. So those were influential.

I thought when I graduated from high school to write them a thank-you note, because, you know, I didn't have a

dad. But I didn't, because for some reason I thought they wouldn't think that was manly or male or something, but I just wanted to say thanks for just playing a role in my life.

The Sunday School teacher, Boyd McCullough, he was twenty-seven years old. He'd gone to college, then he quit and then he went in the army, and then he came back and then he went to college, so he got out of college at age twenty-seven. So he'd come in, you know, he used to have a pack of Marlboro cigarettes while he's teaching the class, and he was just telling war stories and army and college and this and that. He was a charismatic kind of a guy, so we would go to his. And there was a full-time youth minister who we did other activities with. Both of them had a way of taking larger issues and bringing them down to manageable size.

South Pasadena was all white. They would deal with some racial issues, but it was all black and white. I remember once there was something about blacks, I can't remember what it was, some issue anyway, and somebody said, "Well, you know, they're okay but their own place," or somebody, so they're trying to get a discussion.

So I said, "Well, why don't you like—?"

"Well, they're dirty and this, and you don't know them," and on and on and on.

So then the analogy was, "Well, what do you think about East L.A.? Have you been down there?"

"Yes."

"Well, did you see how the people live there?"

He goes, "Yeah," this and that. I could see where he was going.

"So do you think all the people of that race are the same as that?" meaning here's this Chicano kid in here. And he made the point to the young person there, but that was about the only time there was any Mexican thing. We had a Japanese American kid in the Sunday School, too.

So race, when it was spoken of, was black or white, and among the kids, Mexican was something they could make fun of you about. It wasn't a plus. It was part of who you were. I don't know how to say it. I think it was more externally visible than internally real.

I never went to any dances when I was in high school, never went on any dates, anything, but that could have just been as much because I was a little skinny kid, a short kid wearing glasses. You know, I had minimal social skills. I ran track and worked on the school paper and joined the Spanish Club and a few other activities, and did all this stuff on the outside. I was a good enough student to get into Cal State, L.A. State, but I wasn't a good scholar. My younger sisters were very excellent scholars, did very well there.

ESPINO

So can you tell me a little bit about your experience on the newspaper? What kinds of articles did you write and what kind of support did you get?

GUTIÉRREZ

In what part of my—

ESPINO

Well, first, in high school. We're still in high school.

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, I just wanted to break into the newspaper, and again, it's hard, because I haven't sorted out which was race and what was hierarchy. But I wanted to work in junior high, and I've never really traced it back to this, if I wanted to fulfill my dad's legacy and he died. I don't think—it was more that I'd seen him do it and it looked like fun, so let me do it. But there was kind of a class or perception of there's certain kids, so I didn't sign up for the paper in junior high. I probably could have, but the kids that were in it weren't people I knew well or weren't comfortable with. I don't think they would have kept me out, but anyway, I didn't feel that you could—it's kind of, who's going to be my friend when I get there? There wasn't anybody I could identify with.

When I went to high school, I really wanted—I mean, I wanted to do journalism. I just knew I wanted to do it, but I didn't know how. So I took print shop my first full year when I was a sophomore in high school. Sophomore was the first year of high school. My mother asked me, "Why are you taking shop?" You know, she wanted me to go to college. "Why are you taking shop classes?" She didn't confront me. It was more like, "Explain it to me."

I said, "Well, I want to go into journalism. I think it would be helpful if I knew printing." It was before computers and all this stuff. We were still using metal type and letterpress and all this. So, "I think I should. It'll help me. It'll help me if I go into journalism."

Then I made to myself that I wanted to work as hard as I could for whatever I had in my English class, to work hard. There were very few classes where I wanted to go all out. What do you need to get, a C and maybe a B if you're lucky. But I saw in the English class, every assignment I'm going to just go all out.

I remember Mrs. Bowers was the teacher, and the first assignment, she said, "Write your impression of something." I wrote my impression of when the Russians had launched Sputnik. I was delivering newspapers in the morning when I was in ninth grade. I couldn't believe when the papers, I opened it up and it said "Russians launch a satellite." I said I couldn't believe it, and I wrote about how I felt. So she read that to the class, so that made me feel, well, maybe I've got something. So the whole year, every assignment I tried to work really hard.

But I still didn't feel, even with the print shop and that, that I could do journalism comfortable. I signed up for my classes for my junior year. But the last assignment the teacher gave me back, the English teacher wrote back that, "You did very well this semester. Maybe you should try journalism."

I ran to Mr. Gregg, the counselor, and I said, "Sign me up for journalism."

He'd already had the cards filled out. He says, "You want to change?"

I said, "Yeah. Yeah, I want to change to journalism."

I was sure he was going to say, "Well, you know, there's only special kids, and you're not in the group," or whatever, but it was a social thing. And he said, "Journalism. All right," and took out the card and changed it.

So I took journalism and I really wanted it to be all that I wanted it to be, so I wanted the teacher to be great, I wanted the assignments to be great, and I learned early on, soon enough, it's exciting on the outside and then you have to learn to do the work, so I did. The teacher was not particularly inspiring. He knew his stuff, but he was kind of an old-line editor type. I did that in junior and senior year.

My first assignment was going to the cafeteria and getting the menu for the next week, what they were going to serve in the cafeteria. I walked across the lawn there at the high school. It was a school paper in the 1950s, so it wasn't looking at any hard issues. I served as sports editor my senior year, and then they rotated the editorship the second semester. They would let somebody do two issues, so I was editor for two issues. They had the editors and assistant editors, but when I was editor, I changed it from "assistant editor" to "editor's assistants." [laughs] Just to give myself a little more clout.

When I went to college, I wanted to work on the paper, but I didn't want to major in journalism, because I saw few role models. There were some who I knew. My dad had known Lupe Saldaña, who was the fishing editor of the *L.A. Times*, and I read Manny Pineda at the *Star News*. There was nobody on TV who was not white. I don't think there was anybody who wasn't male.

I didn't want to—I think part of it was losing my dad. I didn't want to prepare for a career where I wasn't sure I could get a job, so I decided, well, my parents were schoolteachers in East L.A., and that sounds pretty good. That's what I'm going to do. So in college I majored in social studies for a credential and I never majored in journalism. But because of a gap in the—you find journalism students, they know how to work the system. So if you were a journalism major, you couldn't work on the school paper unless you'd taken certain prerequisites, basic news writing and editing or whatever, I don't know. But if you were not a journalism major, you could sign up for it with the advisor's permission. So in the second semester of my freshman year, I'd registered for classes, which was a big hassle because it wasn't computerized, so you had to get in line and then maybe this class, "Oh, it's closed. Then let me switch to that class. Oh, no, not that one."

So anyway, I finally got my class schedule and I was going home. Actually, I'd gone home to South Pasadena. My mom had let me use the car that day. When I got home, I read this paper, and it said "Staffers wanted," and it was that the *College Times* was looking for people to sign up. So I drove back to campus—I mean, I really wanted it—and went to the advisement table for journalism and asked the advisor if I could sign up for the paper. "I'm just a freshman. I haven't taken any journalism classes." And he said I could, so I got in that way, and I worked every year. I never changed my major, but I worked every year as an undergraduate on the school paper and edited it when I was a junior.

ESPINO

What kind of responsibilities did you have as editor of that paper?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, you run the staff. It was campus-focused, so a lot of it was campus news and events, speakers, activities. There were some civil-rights activities starting at the time, some pickets and protests, which we editorially supported and covered. I remember—this is 1964—we had one student who went down to Freedom Summer in Mississippi, so we did a story about her beforehand. Then I stayed editing the paper during the summer, and so she wrote a column from Mississippi about what she was going through. I wrote a column about it. I think I wrote a column asking people to support her.

But it was pretty much the fraternity, homecoming, student government, who's speaking on campus type of thing. I'd try to get some Latino stuff in there. They have this mariachi at UCLA, Mariachi Uclatlán, UCLA Atlán, and they

were going to play at Cal State L.A. Tim Harding, who taught there in government, played with them. So they sent us their picture. So I look at that. I'm going to run it. Everybody is Anglo, except there was one dark-skinned guy at the end.

So I go to Harding—I think it was Harding—I said, "Where's the Mexicans, man?"

He goes, "There aren't any."

I said, "So you have the mariachi and there's—?"

He said, "Yeah."

So I ran the headline or the caption, the kicker leading into it was "What, no Mexicans?" It says the Mariachi Uclatlán is going to be playing at Cal State L.A. on such-and-such, but there's no Mexicans in the group. The dark-skinned guy at the end is from Fiji or something. He was from a South Asian island and such.

I ran for student-body vice president when I was editor, because my time was up at the paper. John Huerta ran for president, and Bob Carrasco ran for men's student president, and we all won. So the headline of the paper for the next issue was "¡OLÉ! Huerta, Gutiérrez, Carasco Triumph," to kind of let us know who we were. I remember we put a poster up, a big sign over the cafeteria, "Muchas Gracias," because we didn't run as a Chicano ticket, but we all got elected to the top three offices in student government.

There was some antiwar stuff starting in that period, anti-Vietnam War. It was more "Ban the bomb," I think, than directed at Vietnam, but there was a suspicion of the military and such.

So I enjoyed it. We got an award when I was the editor, the best paper in California. We beat the *Daily Trojan* and the *Daily Bruin*, and they couldn't believe it.

ESPINO

That's a big deal.

GUTIÉRREZ

Yes, a little commuter college paper. We were picked by the CIPA, California Intercollegiate Press Association, as the best campus daily in California, so I was proud of that.

ESPINO

It seems like that would be your first opportunity in directing the content of the paper, or do you think that even in high school in your senior year you were able to do that when you were editor?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, you could. In high school you could, but in high school, kids more had their beat, so you're going to do this column, you're going to do that, and they did it. The college paper, you've got five speakers, you can only cover three, which ones are you going to go after? So you could assign the—I'd been the sports editor before then, so I'd got some experience running a staff and editing copy and writing headlines and deciding what we're going to do, what kinds of stories. I liked it.

My mother—I don't know to believe her or not, but I used to pick her up sometimes, put out the paper. She taught in East L.A. We lived in South Pasadena. So sometimes she didn't have a ride, or she didn't drive, so she'd get a ride to school. Mr. Zabriskie, who was the principal at Belvedere Junior High, lived about five houses down from us, so she could drive in with him sometimes to work, not all the time, and then he'd leave her off, because she was at different schools. She was a psychometrist then. She'd go to different campuses. But then she didn't have a ride home, because he'd stay late or he'd have to go to a meeting or something. So sometimes I used to pick her up. Then I'd come back to the school and write a few headlines or whatever, just check on things and then go home. She said one time she walked in and I'd come back and, "Oh, here he comes." And the staff's, "When he gives you stuff, you've got to make sure you get it right." I never heard that. I got along. But she sensed some "Félix is in charge" type of thing.

I really wanted to get a black, African American, as a succeeding editor to me, and Clint Wilson, who'd transferred over from L.A. City College, African American, where he'd been the managing editor, was working on the sports staff. I said when I become editor, Clint, I'll make him sports editor. Because it was male kind of—the sports editor could move up to be the editor, because you'd run a staff. You had like two or three pages to lay out, you had to design. But he wanted to play baseball, so he didn't come.

So there was another African American, Charles Bonner, who'd been on the East L.A. College paper, so I appointed him sports editor and then he ran for editor and he was elected editor, but then he didn't continue in school. So I felt some sense—it wasn't all racial, but it was some sense that you're opening things there. I was the first non-white editor of the paper. Let's let some other people come in.

The editor before me, Dennis McCarbery, he was a navy veteran, white, but he did surveys and issues about race relations and race attitudes on campus, so we were dealing with this. Because for most of us, I think Cal State L.A. was the first really multiracial experience that you'd have, because the schools, the area, L.A. is very segregated and separated. Even then Valley State was—Northridge was kind of just getting started. Fullerton was kind of just getting started. Long Beach State was a little smaller than this. So we had a lot of kids from the west side, you know, Jewish kids, valley. You meet somebody and you want to get to know them better, and it turns out they live forty miles away.

So it was a mix of a campus that had been what I thought a school should be, homecoming, fraternities, sororities, football teams, things like that, becoming what it really was or should be, not should have been but should be, which was a campus that relates to the immediate community that it's a part of, not apart from.

ESPINO

So then that reminds me of the work that Edward Roybal did as far as bringing those issues like your parents to the forefront, you know, progress is education, that kind of idea. Was your family or were you involved in any of his campaigns or the Community Service Organization [CSO]?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, my dad was. He was out of that generation. Again, my mother's from Arizona, so she came in as a teacher and then she came in as Félix's wife. So she knew all the people, but he was more on the outside, Mother. She had more of the responsibilities at home.

But I remember when Ed Roybal ran for lieutenant governor in 1954, my dad was real proud that if he got elected, that we'd know the lieutenant governor, the CSO. I knew Roybal's daughter Lillian and had some contacts with him. He always said I look like my dad, but you know, he's a politician, so he's going to say the right thing.

His right-hand man, Juan Acevedo, who was one of his community contacts, not staff, just somebody, had been on *The Mexican Voice* and had done a lot of the covers of The Mexican Voice, so he and my dad were very, very close.

But in terms of politics, we were Democrats in the time when South Pasadena in particular was all Republican, but it wasn't a lot of going to meetings and things like that. My mother had three kids to raise, so there was a limited amount of time that she could spend beyond the demands of being a teacher.

She used to go, like when the school bonds—I remember this. They were trying to pay taxes or issue a bond or something, and they needed voter approval. So she went down. I remember taking her there, because we stayed at my aunt's house when going to homes. I left my sister off at my Tía Chuy's house, and my mother visited the parents of the kids. She had to tell them to vote for school bonds.

Then the bonds passed and they built the schools out in the San Fernando Valley. So we did this and that and the Mexicans did vote for it, and then they built the schools, Chatsworth and Granada Hills or wherever, places where we didn't live. But they got the Mexican vote out.

When Roybal got elected to Congress, Mayor [Sam] Yorty appointed [Gilbert W.] Gil Lindsay, African American, to his seat. I don't know the whole story, but anyway, he figured he had to work the East Side some, because he was out of the black community. So he came to my mother in her classroom, before he was a councilman, before they announced the appointment, just to get to know her and to see her and talk to her. I guess they said, "You've got to meet people who have some influence in this community." She was a kindergarten teacher, so she had her classroom away from the main building, and she said he just knocked on the door and there he was, and, "I'm going to be the councilman."

ESPINO

How influential do you think your mother was then? If he's coming to her, he must have heard her reputation.

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, she wasn't unique. There were more Mexican teachers then than when she started in the 1930s. I think the fact that on Rowan Avenue, that we had lived just three blocks away, and my aunt still lived there with her family and her daughter's family, and so we had connections there. The Plaza Community Center, which is a Methodist-run operation. My dad had taught summer school at Stevenson Junior High, so she had a feel for the community that perhaps some of the teachers didn't have. It wasn't an alien territory to her. I mean, she know which stores you could shop at and where they'd treat you decently and where they weren't. The First Street store was—you could go there. She didn't like the Safeway on Rowan and Brooklyn, now Cesar Chavez. So she had some connection there beyond, "It's the place where I was assigned to teach."

She used to be invited every year during Public Schools Week to be on Margarita O'Farrill's show on Radio KALI. It was a morning talk show for women. I remember I used to take her down and she would be interviewed about schools and why school and education is important and such.

When they started bilingual education in the late sixties, early seventies, she'd gone back to the classroom. The federal funding for the program, the testing she was doing had been pulled back under, I guess, [Richard M.] Nixon, when Nixon changed things. So she taught at Huntington Drive in the bilingual class, and I remember Ed Roybal came to her class to have his picture taken visiting the bilingual education class.

So she knew everybody, but she wasn't going to every meeting. I guess that would be the best way to say it. She

knew people who knew people, and she saw things moving. See, this is the other—she had this feeling. I remember when it was the time leading up to the walkouts. She said, “If these people had been doing what I’ve been saying, they wouldn’t have to do this.” And it was both sides. “If the school had been doing what I’d been saying and if the community had been doing what I’d been saying, we wouldn’t be so far apart.” Her saying, and I’m not sure if she made it up or she got it from somebody on the school board or whatever, is, “Get the community into the school. Get the school into the community.” That’s hard to realize now—you know, it’s forty-plus years later—that there was really a separation, and also the role of the school, there was no reflection of us in the school.

I remember when we were in Glen Alta, when I was in elementary school, May Day was a big deal, May first. Everybody would dress up like cowboys and such, and they’d be doing the Virginia Reel and square-dancing and all that. My mother had the first grade, and they’d do La Raspa, so that was the only Mexican thing in the whole May Day, and everybody in the school was Mexican. I mean, we had like four Anglos in the school that I can recall there, but we were all trying to be something else. It was an assimilation process through loss of who you are. My parents, they were not saying anything about anti-Anglo. They were very accepting of all races and very supportive of all races, but it was hang onto your identity, too. You don’t have to lose in order to learn. And I think that’s part of her identity.

She taught Spanish, not a formal—Spanish phrasing, I guess it was, how you could use things, to other teachers and other counselors later in her career. She’d do an additional class where they could go and learn that. So she was kind of ahead of the curve. She wasn’t the only one, but it’s before there was the federal funding or the priority and such. How do you connect who we are with who we’re going to be, without losing what got us here in the first place?

ESPINO

You mentioned earlier that you really weren’t excited about speaking Spanish, about learning Spanish. Did that change later on, as you got older?

GUTIÉRREZ

It changed in two ways. One, I learned in high school that I could learn Spanish and I could do okay in the class, but it wasn’t of a lot of service in communicating with my grandparents. It was classroom Spanish, and conversation were two different things.

Secondly, my Uncle Rosalio Muñoz, the one who went to ‘SC and got his Ph.D., took a sabbatical from the school districts in 1962, ’63, the school year, and lived in Mexico City. They went to Mexico and they went to Torreón and lived there for a while and then to Mexico City. So during Christmas, I got a job in the post office. Cal State L.A. only cost $47 a semester, so the thing was you had to make enough money to pay your tuition and books. I could live at home. I could have a little help with clothes, but pretty much after that it was up to me. So at the post office I made some good money, because it was Christmas and all that. They invited me, my uncle and aunt invited me, “So I’m going to go down to Mexico during the break after Christmas and New Year’s.” There was kind of a two-week break or something—to Mexico City.

So I went down there and it was a whole different view of the world than I’d ever seen. I remember my first card home I wrote my mother, I said, “The first time in my life I don’t feel different. The first time in my life everybody looks like me, whether they’re rich or poor or work in an office or just cleaning the streets or whatever.” I’m paraphrasing it. But basically, I didn’t feel out of place, and I’d never realized that I had felt out of place, that I had basically always been a minority in a situation. So that kind of opened up there’s more there than grandparents and old family connections and things like that, and I think that was the bigger change.

I remember I got these Mexican records, you know, folklorico stuff, and I brought them home and I played them. I lived in my mother’s back—she had a house in the back, and she let me live there after my sophomore year in

college. So I'd go over, and Cal State L.A., you know, I was popular and worked on the school paper and everything, and had to put up with some of the jokes, too, but still. But anyway, I'd go home and then I'd be doing my homework, playing the Mexican records, or listening to Chico Sesma on the Radio KALI, who had a show where the commentary of the disc jockey was in English, but the music was all in Spanish, Sonora Santanera and the groups that were popular in the early sixties. So I saw a larger role, a reinforcement of Spanish and Latinidad and such that I had not experienced other words. But if I had not made that trip, I don't know how it might have played out differently. I always knew that I was Mexican. I never tried to run away from it. I just never knew what it meant.

Then the following summer I got a job through my Sunday School teacher. He was a personnel manager at a tile factory in Pomona, so he hired me. They always used to hire a college student to fill in for vacation people, so he hired me for part of the summer. Again I made a lot of money, so I had enough money when the job ended and I went down to Mexico for a month and stayed with my relatives in Torreón. I went down with a friend of mine and then we just traveled through Mexico, taking the train, the bus.

We met a guy in Tampico and he gave us a ride to Mexico City, where we met this guy, who we didn't know, from Montebello, by the name of Eddie Olmos, who said, "Hey, why don't you guys stay with my relatives. I'm staying here with my relatives, my aunt and uncle. I told them friends are going to come from the U.S. Why don't you come and stay with us." So he put us up for about a week and then we took a bus.

So I saw a whole 'nother side of Mexico than what I'd seen, and think about what you've seen in the movies, what you've seen in the news and such like this. It was more of a human—in a way, I certainly was a tourist, but I was seeing it through not tour guides. I guess that would be the way to say it. You see Torreón, but through the eyes of your cousins who are showing you what this is like, what it's like to live here.

With Eddie's aunt and uncle, they were showing us—we could have stayed there for a month. They had something every day they wanted us to—we had to sneak out in the morning, because we had to leave to get back to class. So that changed things in terms of my self-perception and the use of Spanish and such.

I'd also gotten help along the way for being Mexican. When I was a senior in high school, my mom went to a meeting in East L.A.—I don't know what it was of—and she ran into Alberto C. Diaz, who was the editor of the *Belvedere Citizen*, who'd worked on *The Mexican Voice* with my dad. She'd see him, and he'd just ask, "How's the family?"

She said, "Well, Félix is going to graduate from high school."

He said, "Well, you know, there's a scholarship for the Mexican kids who are the outstanding Mexican American in their class, so he could apply for that." Well, hell, if you're going to Garfield or Roosevelt, it could be pretty competitive among Mexican American students, but if you're going to South Pasadena and graduate in 1961, it wasn't much.

Somehow I got the information how to apply, and you needed a letter from the counselor. I still remember, I went to Mr. Gregg again, "Can you sign it?"

He said, "I'll recommend you." He read the thing.

I got $75 to start my college at L.A. State, it was called then, so it was single, and to get pulled into this group, but I didn't have any connection with them, it was a group of East L.A. kids who were older. I shouldn't say "kids." They

were older. They were out of college. They were raising money and doing things. It was a different world. I went to a couple of meetings. They were all older. They were working. They were wearing suits. They were very friendly. I'm one of their scholarship winners. But I guess it just wasn't a connection. Plus I didn't have a car. I had to borrow my mother's car.

Then when I was a sophomore going into my junior year, there was a Mexican American Professional and Businessmen's scholarship which would pick one student from Cal State L.A., 250 bucks, and I applied for that and got it. They had an awards ceremony in some hotel on the near Westside. Ricardo Montalbán was the speaker, and I remember that's where I heard the rumor that singer Vicki Carr was Mexican. [laughs]

ESPINO

Rumor?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, somebody said, "Yeah, she's Mexican." [laughs]

So I had a feeling that I was being—this is before all this other stuff that exists now—that there was some reason to promote education, that I owed something back to a community that had helped me, that I had a responsibility, I guess would be a better way to say it, to the community. Because these were nickel-and-dime operations. They didn't have a lot of money. And 75 bucks, it doesn't seem like much now, but I mean tuition at Cal State L.A. was 47 bucks and 25 bucks for books, so that was your semester.

The other thing that changed, since now you're getting me—when I graduated from high school, I needed a summer job, and I'd struck out. I just hadn't been able—and the previous summer either. I did lawn jobs around town, but I wanted something, and my mother had told me about that you could apply to work for the city schools during the summer as a gardener, so I applied in March or April or something, and I never heard anything. I just filled out the forms, turned it in.

In South Pasadena they had this Grad Night, where you went the night after graduation, took a train ride to San Diego. They had a motel and they had parties and stuff. So I went with a bunch of guys who didn't have dates or girlfriends or anything else and had a good time, went home and slept. You get home, you've been on the train all night.

That afternoon I'm sleeping at home and the phone rings, and it's the L.A. City Schools, and the guy said, "I see you applied to work for the summer," summer relief or whatever it was called.

I said, "Yeah."

He says, "Well, can you start next Monday?"

I said, "Yeah! That's great." I was assigned to be a gardener in the East L.A. schools. I worked at Jackson, at Stevenson, at Garfield, at East L.A. College. Franklin was the closest I got to—which was white in those days. But I went around and it got me back connected with a community that I had been apart from.

I still remember one night I went down on a Friday night after I'd been working. My mom let me use the car, so I just drove down, because I just could go to the school or see my aunt, then I'd come home. So I said, "Well, let me drive

around a little bit more." I remember I went down by Laguna Park, which is Salazar Park now, and there was a bunch of kids about my age, all with their khaki pants and white t-shirts, Pima cotton shirts, and they were just standing in the yard. I didn't know any of them, but I remember I looked at them, I said, that's where I would be if I hadn't been in South Pasadena. So I felt, you know, there's a connection. I'm not sure I'm going to make it, or I'm not sure where it's going to fit. But I had the advantages of here, but I still want to be part of this place, in East L.A., where my mother works all the time.

ESPINO

That's beautiful. I think that's a nice place to end it for today. It's been an hour and a half.

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, you got me into college at least. [laughs]

ESPINO

Yes. I'm going to stop it. Thank you so much. [End of October 4, 2010 interview]

1.2. SESSION TWO (October 11, 2010)

ESPINO

This is Virginia Espino and today is October 11th, 2010. I'm interviewing Mr. Félix Gutiérrez in his office on the campus of the University of Southern California [USC].

Today I want to start with some recollections that you might have had after our interview. You mentioned earlier, before we started taping, that you wanted to talk a little bit more about your father [Félix Gutiérrez] and your father's family. I think you were mentioning his siblings. Do you want to start with that?

GUTIÉRREZ

Okay. Well, my father's father, Francisco Gutiérrez, the family was Californio when it was part of Mexico and Spain, had come up and had been here for a while at San Gabriel Mission in the 1770s and went back and forth.

My great-grandfather, also named Félix Gutiérrez, was born in Sonora in the 1830s, I think, and then came to the Gold Rush in 1848, before the '49ers, did well in the Gold Rush, then was, I think, forced out of the mines when the Yanquis arrived, as happened to a lot of the Californios, went to San Francisco and then came south. He became a blacksmith and a silversmith—I mean a blacksmith and metalsmith in El Monte, California. That's where he had his shop. During the Civil War, he shoed horses for the Union Army and contributed as a farrier in that area. He had a shop with covered wagons and, my dad would say, repaired the covered wagons when the Yanquis came across the old Santa Fe Trail that ended into El Monte.

His son, Francisco Gutiérrez, was born in 1871 and baptized at the San Gabriel Mission, where they have the record. Francisco's his father and mother, Mamá Dolores Cruz, had been married there earlier. Francisco later went to work as Southern California was starting to grow and when the railroad came and such, worked in laying concrete ditches when they were building the orange groves in Glendora and San Gabriel Valley, for a while was the deputy constable in Azusa, California, prior to 1900, I believe, was a Los Angeles County deputy sheriff also in that era, based in Monrovia, Arcadia.

In those days they used to round up the winos or drunkards or whatever in L.A. and put them on the train out of town. They would round them up, they'd put them to send them out of town on some night train or late at night. So

one of his assignments was to show up at the Arcadia train station—it may have been Lucky Baldwin station, because he had his own train station there on his ranch—and get them and then put them back on the train to go back to L.A. It was a morning assignment.

In 1905 he moved to Monrovia and began working as a cement contractor and sidewalks, curbs, things like that. He did a lot of work in Monrovia, first as a subcontractor. Then he had his own business in the 1910s, 1920s. There are still sidewalks in Monrovia that I can find that have his name, “F.J. Gutiérrez, Contractor, 1926”, and such. I remember seeing pictures, when I was young, of the people they said were relatives lined up at construction sites. I remember ones at Arcadia Public Library when they were building the library sometime around the turn of the century.

He was very active in the Knights of Columbus, the local Catholic church, built his family there. His wife was from Sonora, Mercedes Garcia. Her family had come over from Sonora, then to Tucson, and then settled in the San Gabriel Valley, Duarte area and Monrovia.

My dad was born in 1918, and they lived in what I found out later was the Mexican part of town, or where the blacks and Mexicans and poor whites lived. But he lived a very—I don’t know how to say—mixed existence in terms of having friends across borders and barriers. His dad was a businessman, so he had some role there. He also was athletic, was involved in sports. He was a friendly guy, as I remember. He always had a good thing to say about somebody here and there and everywhere. He ran with a— [interruption]

GUTIÉRREZ

They grew up on Monrovia. My grandfather [Francisco Gutiérrez] made a house on Huntington Drive in Monrovia, where Huntington Drive curves just before it goes into Duarte. There’s a big shopping center there now. He ran around with a group called the Shamrock Rovers. Shamrock’s the name of the street there. He grew up telling me, growing up, stories that they would pick crops and things like this when he got a little bit older.

When he was young, he found out that they were going to make a swimming pool in town. I don’t remember if I told you this story or not. He was riding in the car with his dad—this would be about 1925 or maybe ’26—and his dad nudged him like this [demonstrates] while his dad was driving. My dad looked over and his dad did it again. My dad looks back while my grandfather’s driving the car, and my grandpa said, “Pay attention.”

My dad said, “I am paying attention. You jabbed me, and I turned around to see what it is.”

“No, I meant pay attention. When I hit you there, I want you to look outside the window.” So he looked out the window of the car, and it was a vacant lot, a park maybe where kids played. He said, “They’re going to make a swimming pool there, and I’m going to do the cement work for it. I got the contract to do the sidewalks and all the stuff around the pool where the people would walk.” The pool house is still there, the sidewalk’s still there, although it doesn’t his name in it, because it was a public project.

So my dad and his friends got very excited because they were going to make a swimming pool in their neighborhood, right on Shamrock, in their town. Well, as it goes on and on and on, he’s following the construction and the progress. His dad’s coming home with stories about what they’re doing, and they find out that no Mexicans were going to be able to swim except on a certain day, where the white kids could swim every day, but the kids of color could only swim certain days. So his friends were dejected and saddened, because they’re going to make this big pool, it’s in our area, and we’re not going to use it.

So the night before the pool was going to open, my grandfather had the key to the construction site because he was

the contractor. So he rounded up my dad and his friends and he opened up the gate and they swam in the Monrovia swimming pool before any white kids did. He was very proud of that story. It was kind of, “Don’t let them keep you out.” I think it was symbolic. He always would say, “You can’t keep a good man down. Show them what you can do. Show them who you are.”

They wrote an article about him—I think I mentioned last time—in 1945 in the Christian Science Monitor. He just said, “I took an ‘I’ll show them’ attitude. People are always going to try to put you in your place, try to define your space where you belong, but you show them that you have a right to do what you want to do and where you want to go.”

He stayed in school. His brother did not finish high school. His older brother, Frank, was ten years older, got hurt in some kind of an athletic accident and didn’t finish school and went into the cement work with his dad. But my dad kept going and went to high school.

It was during the [Great] Depression by then. My grandfather lost his business, as many did during the Depression. It may have been because some cities passed laws saying that they would not give public contracts to companies that hired people who were not citizens. I’m not sure. But those were passed in the Depression, and it was common in Southern California, I’ve read. But he lost his business, and so my dad had a very tough upbringing when he was in high school, basically, in the 1930s until he got out of college. It was not the life that he had known when his dad had a full-time job and had his own business.

Through that he got involved with the YMCA, journalism, through his art. He was an art major, very good artist, and so he got involved with the school paper and then went on to community college, which I did talk about last time.

ESPINO

Sounds like there were some big changes that occurred in the thirties for your father. Is there anything that he conveyed to you specifically about those changes?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, there were a couple of things he’d talk about. One was he grew up in a multiracial neighborhood. I remember his best friend was a Japanese American, Art Tsuneishi. When we’d go visit my grandfather when I was little, he lived in Monrovia, and so my dad would see guys he grew up with all the time, and a lot of them were black. He would see white kids, people he knew. So he had this idea that any kind of racial, any kind of putdown he would not—“We accept everybody. We want everybody to accept us.”

I remember once we were in the—we bought a new car in 1950, and my dad had the dream of we were going to drive to Canada just to see what was there. We got a ’50 Ford at Kelley Kar Company on Figueroa. So we drove the car up, and it was a big vacation. We stayed at relatives all the way to Fresno, in San Francisco with friends, and then we didn’t know anybody, so we had to stay in motels sometimes, and I’m not sure we could always get the motel. He would always go in to check and then he say, “Oh, well, they don’t have any vacancies.” You know, there’d be a sign that said “vacancy.” “There’s a place outside of town they said we can stay.” He wouldn’t let me go in with him, and I thought it was just because I was 7 years old. But I think it may have been “will they let Mexicans in or not?” This was Washington, Oregon at that time.

But at one point we were coming down, when we were coming back they had—not a bridge. We had to cross on a ferry to cross a river or something, and so they were all lined up. The cars were all lined up to cross the river, and the ferry would take you across. My dad pointed to a couple of cars over, there were some Indians in there, and these were guys with kind of derby hats on, wearing braids, right out of the movies. So he said, “Look.” So I looked over and saw them, and I’m seven years old. My eyes bugged out. “Wow. Look at that.”

He says, “Okay, look back.”

I said, “No, no, no. I want to see the Indians. I want to see the Indians,” I’m saying out loud like a little kid.

He says, “No, you look straight ahead. That kid in the other car is saying, ‘I want to see the Mexicans. I want to see the Mexicans.’ They might be looking at you from the other car, so you just take it.” That was kind of his attitude and my mother’s, too, that we accept people who they are, as they are. We want people to accept us as we are.

The only thing I ever heard him—getting back to your question—close to a racial characterization is he remembered during the Depression he lived on Huntington Drive, which was Route 66, the main route, east-west route, and sitting on their porch or their steps to their house and watching the Okies and the Arkies, which those were the terms he used, coming in on their jalopies, their beat-up cars, the Dust Bowl, *The Grapes of Wrath* people that John Steinbeck wrote about.

Now they’re coming into California and going straight to the orchards, because they could get the jobs. The growers would play the pickers off against each other, and they didn’t know what you got paid. You know, they were desperate, the domestic workers who’d been picking in the twenties and tens and into the early thirties. He never said anything, but he just said, “Yeah, they took our jobs. They got our jobs.” That was a growing-up experience. Basically, we didn’t have much, but at least we could pick. At least you could pick the oranges and the fruits. You know, the San Gabriel Valley was all orchards and produce in that time, and now they lost that.

He said one day he woke up or he got up and there was flyers all over town in Monrovia, “Pickers wanted, pickers wanted, pickers wanted.” So he and his brother saw this. “Wow. We can get something.”

Their cousins, Isador Guardado and his brother from Duarte, got together and they got in the car and they went out to where the picking was going to be and where the jobs were, and when they got there, or just before they got there, there were the sheriffs there, and they just told them, “There’s a labor dispute. The Okies have gone on strike for higher wages. So you can go in, but there’ll be people that will try to keep you out.” So they had to decide whether they’d go in or not. In the end, they didn’t go in. They didn’t want to—it still was a solidarity, or they didn’t want to be threatened or put themselves in harm’s way, so they went home without any picking that day. He worked hard at UCLA, and the 1945 article in the *Christian Science Monitor* said he worked four jobs at one time to make it through UCLA.

ESPINO

Your father?

GUTIÉRREZ

Yes, when he was a student.

ESPINO

Not your grandfather.

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, my grandfather, he was born in 1871, so by 1930 he was up there in age. The hard physical labor would have been tough for him. He wouldn’t have been able to get the work.

The other thing my dad used to tell, his mother died when he was five, so he was raised pretty much in a male environment. He had a younger brother, Luís, who died. I think either his mother died in childbirth or shortly thereafter, and then the younger brother died when he was very young, too, the baby brother.

But he said he never knew when his dad was going to come home, because in construction, if you're framing a house or a door, you can just stop where you are, come back the next morning, but if you're dealing with cement, the cement, the mud is wet. You can't go home at night, come back the next morning. It's going to harden. So if they didn't get all the sidewalk done, they just had to keep going as long as they had the mud to work with until they finished it. So sometimes his dad would come home earlier and sometimes he'd come home later. In those days, they'd mix it on the job. You didn't call a truck to bring it to you. So they'd mix how much they figured they needed for what they had to do, and sometimes it would be a lot longer than they thought. So he spent some time—I think that may be one of the reasons he got into sports. He'd have something to do when his dad wasn't home. There wasn't any mother to be there for him.

ESPINO

What about aunts or neighbors?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, his mother's sisters—his mother was Mercedes, and then she had a Tía Chuy, who I mentioned last time, Jesus Maria, and Clotilde, Tía Tillie, and they really took him under their wings, but they did not live close by. Tía Tillie lived in Echo Park in L.A. In those days you could ride the Red Car all over, so he would go see her, and Tía Chuy lived in East L.A. So, I mean, they'd helped raise him, but they weren't a daily presence in their life. But he would go and he would spend time at their houses. One had a son that was about his age, Tino, Bill Hornelas, and then the other one had a daughter, Mercedes Calvillo who was about six years younger than my dad, so he was an older cousin to her.

Then the cousins in Duarte, Tio Sarapio, who was an orange picker, he had a daughter and his family, so he would see them.

ESPINO

That's really interesting. He didn't grow up with a traditional family dynamic that, like, the stereotype, the mother, the father, the mother at home cooking. So I'm curious, when he married your mother, how they decided what the roles would be, since he didn't really grow up with that kind of—I don't know if you can describe maybe the way they divided up the labor at home.

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, our home was different in a different area in that both my mother and dad worked. My mother was a schoolteacher, so they both had jobs. My mother was never a stay-at-home mom, except for when my youngest sister Lorraine was born in 1954, when I was about ten years old, she got maternity leave. So they both worked, they both were professionals. My mom actually made more money than my dad, because she had started teaching earlier, so she had some seniority. But I think beyond most of that, it was pretty traditional. The mother took care of the family and the cleaning and the laundry and the cooking and stuff, and my dad always worked. I mean, he'd work summers. He'd teach night school. He'd do after-school sports where he'd coach and they'd pay a little extra.

For me it was kind of, it's like your dad had the dream job, because he worked at the L.A. Times Boys Club in Lincoln Heights, so your dad works at the Boys Club where all the kids want to hang out and such. But he was active in a lot of church activities, as my mother was. He had more of an outside role than my mother did in terms of community-type things. I don't know. I was just too young. I was twelve. I can't recall that there was a lot of sharing

of—there may have been. My sister might remember better than I do. But my mother was the cook and such.

ESPINO

Yes, that's exactly what I mean, like who decided who got the dinner on the table for the kids, and then who cleaned up afterwards, and then who was doing the grocery shopping.

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, shopping was more of a family thing. It was a big deal to go to the Bi-Rite Market on Broadway by Griffin, so that was kind of—we would do that. My mother taught in school. We lived in a home next to where she taught, so she got home earlier. We were Lincoln Heights. She taught in Happy Valley, and my dad taught in Maravilla at Kern Junior High, now Griffith Junior High. They renamed it. So it took him longer to get home, and it seemed like he had longer hours, maybe because of the after-school sports and stuff.

ESPINO

Then if your mother always worked, who took care of you when you were very small?

GUTIÉRREZ

Tía Chuy. Well, when I was very small, she lived in the front house. It was her property on Fifth Street between Ditman and Rowan, and then we lived in the back house, and then her daughter was there, too, because her husband was up in the Coast Guard, I think, during World War II. So she would take care of us.

For a while I went to daycare down the street, but mostly—it was not a stereotypical family, but it was a true extended family where there was others around. Rose, who worked in the war plant, her husband, Pops, was in the army or military. She lived in the house, too, with her son Butch, so there was always people around. You had the Ortegas on one side and the Cisneros on the other, so everybody knew each other.

I mean, I look at it now, it was not a—I look at pictures of the house now. It's not fully painted. We had no telephone. We had no refrigerator. We had an icebox, so it was kind of you did with what you had, but you didn't feel you were missing anything because you didn't have stuff.

We moved to Ontario when I was four, because my dad got a job. Out of UCLA he got a job teaching in San Bernardino, and he used to commute. He'd go on Sunday night, I guess, and then he'd be there. He stayed at a boarding house and he'd be there all week. Then he'd come home to East L.A. on Friday and then he'd be home on the weekends. So we moved when I was four years old to a place in Ontario that he built with some of the people next door, and then Tía Chuy went and lived with us there and took care of us.

Then we lived in San Bernardino for a year when I started kindergarten, and we went to California Kiddie College, which was a preschool my sister and I both went, and then we moved back to L.A. the next year, 1949.

ESPINO

So can you talk to me a little bit about within the family, for example, the language that your parents used with you, I think you'd mentioned that last time, but also the influence of religion, because you said your grandfather was a Methodist minister. What kind of celebrations did you have or traditions, or how did that influence your childhood?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, everything revolved around the church in terms of family activities, and churches were not a Sunday-only activity there. So there'd be programs and events, Bible School during the summer. When you joined the Boy

Scouts when I was eleven, there was the Boy Scout troop affiliated with the Asbury Methodist Church in Lincoln Heights. My dad actually worked for the church in Lincoln Heights when he came back from San Bernardino. I don't think he had his credential, was maybe why he taught at San Bernardino. It was hard to get in the L.A. City schools in those days. So when I came back to first grade, my mother was teaching at Glen Alta, and then he was taking classes at USC, and I was in first grade. That's the first time I came to this campus.

So he worked for the church that year as a youth worker or family-service worker at the Asbury Church in Lincoln Heights, which is how we ended up there. So he was always away doing things, but he was also organizing picnics and they'd have parades in town. They'd get a truck from the Goodwill or something. Everybody'd get behind and wave at each other and things like that. So there was a lot of activity around. Your friends were from the church.

Lincoln Heights was changing in those days. It had been a white working-class, maybe middle-class area. I remember going to people—we were just young, but we had joined the church and then they would have these kind of housewarming things for people that moved out, who moved from Lincoln Heights to, I don't know, West Covina or wherever. I still remember going to these places. It was kind of like going to another world and seeing these new stucco houses, what they call mid-centuries now, and seeing it was different. It was becoming a Mexican, more Mexican area. I think we were the first Mexican American family in that church, although I'm not sure, and then my Uncle Rosalio [Muñoz] came a year later, maybe two years later, and then they joined the church too.

ESPINO

He came from Arizona?

GUTIÉRREZ

He came from Arizona, from Flagstaff, and they lived behind Tía Chuy after when we moved to Ontario. Then he moved. It was very hard to get in the housing projects then. People wanted to get into the housing project. Public housing was desired, and you had to be a veteran. You had a priority for being a veteran, and he had been a veteran. He'd been in the navy during World War II, so they got into the Maravilla housing project and we couldn't, because my dad hadn't—because of his eyes, he wasn't accepted in the military. So they lived there for a year or so and then they moved to Lincoln Heights in '50 or '51.

ESPINO

Then they moved to Highland Park?

GUTIÉRREZ

They moved to Highland Park in 1956, the same year we moved to South Pasadena.

ESPINO

Can you tell me a little bit about what that was like, having this extended family and this family of intellectuals? He was college-educated, like your mom. Did you have family gatherings or discussions at the dinner table, or debates, that kind of thing? Did that go on in your childhood?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, first of all, the environment, I just thought everybody was like that, because that was the world of my cousins. So I never thought we were different because our parents had educations and the other kids didn't, although sometimes the kids at Glen Alta would say, "Well, of course, your mom's a teacher." But it was more within the kids. I didn't think we were any better, and certain athletically and some of the things when you're a kid that you—it was tough for me. I didn't measure up on any of those, so that wasn't counting for much.

There was an awareness of larger issues in society, largely related to movement, status of Latino people, because my parents would be going to meetings and hearing things and participating in that. There was a strong emphasis on education. They were both teachers. There was a strong emphasis on community. We lived where my mother taught. We weren't strangers. And education was of value.

My dad, in Bert Corona's book or his Mario Garcia book that has Bert's memories in it, is referred to by Bert as being involved with socialist conversations and far-left-type activities, but I never heard any of that in the house. I remember he used to get sent to him, but he didn't subscribe to it, it was some left-wing publication. This is during the [Senator Joseph] McCarthy era, early 1950s. And they would circle, if there was an article like "Police Beat Up Mexican" or something, they would send it to him and they would circle the article for him to see that. He would look at it, he says, "Yeah, I don't know who's sending me this." He wasn't against it, but, "How'd they get my name?" Of course, this was the Red Scare. This was when they were naming names and getting on lists.

It was more, "Improve yourself. Do the best you can with what you have. Work to provide other opportunities for more people and through your own work." If you saw a sign, a real estate with a Mexican name as the realtor, he's, "Ah, way to go. Show them what we can do."

I remember there was Maldonado Bail Bonds on Third Street over by Maravilla, where the sheriff's station is, and he knew Maldonado. "Oh, he's getting a hit. He's doing something to show." So it was to move ahead and move out and to not let people keep you down. We were encouraged to do that.

ESPINO

I'm going to pause it just a second.

GUTIÉRREZ

Sure. [recorder turned off]

ESPINO

Okay, we're back. So you just mentioned Bert Corona's oral history that Mario Garcia edited and how he describes your father as someone who had left-wing leanings in his ideology, and socialistic. I also heard from another person I might be interviewing that your father was a member of the Communist Party. Can you speak to that and tell me if there's any recollection you have about that or knowledge of that?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, I've been asked the same question, and my answer has been that in my recollection, he was more of a Methodist and not a communist. I don't recall any leanings in that direction. I do know he came up at a time, artistically, when these pictures like woodcuts or linoleum cuts of the massive people doing good things—let's see now. But some of the covers of *The Mexican Voice* look much like what was being done in Russia at that time artistically, and my sister, who is an art major, she has her MFA and all that, says that that's a style of art that was popular in that period.

I don't recall him being anti-communist in the sense of running in the other direction, but I never heard any other—it was all self-improvement, improve yourself. Yes, there's barriers there. Yes, people aren't going to accept us all, but some people will work with the people. I didn't hear anything about overthrow the system or this country would be better off in that regard, politically.

ESPINO

How about ideologies? I imagine he was someone who was well read. Marxism and those theories were very

popular at the time.

GUTIÉRREZ

I don't know. No, he was more of an activist. My recollection, he was an activist. He was an organizer. He was, "Let's go out and let's make this happen." I don't know how much it was theory-based and how much it was, "Let's just show them what we can do." He was building bridges with Anglos, and he had roles where he would be the only Mexican in the room. And my mother the same thing. It was really, "You're representing yourself, but you're representing your people." That was the feeling that I got and I still have, I think, to a certain extent, in my own life. It was individual achievement and then, through that, opening doors for others to have opportunities that you didn't have or that others like you may not have had. But I don't recall him, in terms of philosophy or theory. You know, his art was a means of expression for him. Writing was a means of expression. It was kind of, "Be proud of who you are and don't let anybody count you out because of your race, your language, your culture."

ESPINO

Do you remember if *The Mexican Voice* was ever targeted by those who saw anyone—anybody who believed in equality was labeled communist or red-baited?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, I was too young. I mean, *The Mexican Voice* goes through 1945. I was two years old. They changed the publication to Mexican American Forward and then Youth Forward under the Mexican American Movement. There's a reference in there by Gualberto Valadez in one of the issues in I forget which one of those publications, in the late forties, very late forties, saying that the organization had been investigated, but it didn't say by who, and it says that we were found to be—basically, we were found to be good Americans, you know, basically that we're working for is what America should be.

Beyond that, I mean, there may be a file someplace in the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] this or that that I haven't asked for. I did look for it. Rudy Acuña did get the FBI files on the Zoot Suit Riots, and they did do a media survey as a part of that report, what media do the Mexicans use in L.A., and *The Mexican Voice* was not—it wasn't listed one way or the other. I mean, they had sports publications in Hollywood, *La Opinion* and such, so they didn't make the radar in that regard.

ESPINO

Who do you think the audience was for that publication?

GUTIÉRREZ

It was young people who were looking at their future and the world in which they would have to make their future. It was the model, an inspirational educational magazine. So it was, "Here's people who are getting ahead. Here's people that are doing something with their lives." It was the hope—what my dad had faced in Monrovia. You're waiting for the streetcar, and your street-corner buddies were over there by the pool hall or wherever, saying, "Fine, go to college. You're going to be back here picking just like us next year. Nobody's going to give you a chance. You can get the classes, but you're not going to get the job."

So part of it is showing them, yes, here's somebody who got a scholarship or has a job. Leonard Nevarez joins the police force. The LAPD [Los Angeles Police Department] hired a Mexican as a police officer. That was a story in one of their things. So it was a kind of role modeling of what we could achieve and at the same time discussion of what are our responsibilities as kind of not quite a new generation, but a different class of leaders, taking advantage of what this country has to offer, but making a difference in our own communities.

These are people on the margins of both communities. They're not typical of most Mexican youth, and they're not

typical of the kids who were going to college either, and so they looked for ways to come together. They felt like strangers in both communities, to a certain extent. It's college students, so a lot of thinking of what's my life going to like, what are the opportunities, what role do I play, where do I go with all this education, where is this education going to take me?

Corky Gonzales has this line—I don't think I quoted it last time—[Spanish phrase], "We have come a long way to nowhere," and I think there was some of that questioning there. We're going to get this education, we're going to have these opportunities, but what are we going to be able to do with it, and where can we take it?

Then during the war, things open up in terms of employment. Then the question is, is it going to last? Yeah, we can get hired now where we couldn't get hired five years ago or two years ago, but when the war is over, are these opportunities—are the white kids going to come back and then take those jobs? Then after the war, it's the G.I. generation. It's the same people, but they become the G.I. generation, and they're more aggressive. They fought a war and now let's fight at home.

ESPINO

Your father was pretty young when he got ill. Did he know he was dying?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, my mom said he was never the same after his dad died. His dad died in 1952, and it was a real shock. He didn't know his dad was ill. His dad was in his eighties, I think he was eighty-one or eighty-two, but he died suddenly, and it really hit my dad real hard. I think he was hoping that he could make a better life for his father, who lived with his older brother in a house in Monrovia, basically. It wasn't anything fancy. We used to go there and clean the house for the two guys.

My grandfather had lost his leg during the Depression. He had been hit by a streetcar, so he couldn't get around, and the older brother, Frank, worked sometimes, wouldn't work sometimes. So I think he had wanted to—"If I can do something, I can help my dad," and his dad is gone. So I don't know if it was connected to that or not, but he started having stomach problems. We were in Ross-Loos, which is like Kaiser. It was a medical plan you could go to. So we would go to the Ross-Loos in downtown, I remember, for years. At first they told him he had an ulcer. Then they told him he had a spastic colon. Then they told him he had a nervous stomach. Anyway, they had all this misdiagnoses, and he was going to the doctor. I remember every Friday we'd go down there, because my sister and I, we'd play around while he's seeing the doctor. And never correctly diagnosed.

So we lived in Lincoln Heights then on North Broadway by Griffin, and there was a doctor next door. There's a gas station there now on Griffin and Broadway. So my mother said, "Why don't you go to Dr. Aragon next door. He's not our doctor, but he's there and let's see." So he operated on my dad in 1954 and found out that he had cancer. In those days, the treatment was they would cut the cancer out. He had cancer of the colon. They would cut it out and then they'd sew you up and then hope it didn't come back. They didn't have all this radiation or chemo or things, or if they did, we didn't know about it. So he knew he was very sick.

Then he went to a place in Texas where somebody had a cure for—the Hoxsey Clinic, where they said they had the treatments for cancer. We had people from church who were saying, "Make this," or, "Do this," or "Drink this tea," and this kind of thing.

But he continued working. He taught in '54. He taught the school year '54 to '55. Then they did an operation again in—I don't remember exactly. It was in '55, may have been the end of the summer, and the cancer had come back, so they could cut that out, but they knew it was going to spread. So he started the fall semester at Kern in 1955.

I remember one day I went out—you just figure, you're twelve years old, your dad's going to live forever. He'll lick this somehow. He came home one day. He had all these gifts, and it had been his last day at school. It probably was October, and he died in November.

ESPINO

It seems like his life was purposeful as a parent, but also purposeful as a human being, as a community member. He gave more of himself than most people to the outside world. Was there anything that he told you before he died that wanted to preserve that?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, it was more through his example than through him telling. I just thought it was normal, and my wife [Maria Gutiérrez] can talk about this to some extent. You'd have a job, and you'd have been involved with other organizations, and you go to meetings. I know when we got married, her dad worked and came home and then he was home. I'd come, "Well, there's this Chicano meeting on this," or, "We're going to do that," so I integrated that through the example of both my parents, that you had your responsibilities for your job, for your family to take care of, but then you also had larger activities that you would be part of, and some of them were very small. I mean, they weren't larger that they were big grandiose things. They were kind of do your part to help advance things.

I think there was a feeling that you have a larger responsibility beyond—I think that was the church, too, beyond just going home, having a job and doing that. I didn't feel I was missing him, but I can see now—I remember once he was doing the after-school sports at Kern, so once I told him, I said, "You know, it'd be nice if you came home." So the next semester he didn't do the after-school sports. I didn't know he was going to die then, but this was earlier.

We'd have meetings at the house. He was involved with the Boy Scouts. He ran their camping program for whatever the district was for that part of the Boy Scouts, Lincoln Heights, Eagle Rock, Highland Park, that area. The Boys Club, he ran the camp for them, the summer boys' camp up in Big Bear, and we would take the family. When the Boys Club went to camp, my mother and sister, we all went, my dad. I was in the Boys Club, so I could go. So it was a life beyond—and the church, both my parents were active in different—teaching Sunday school or such.

He had been raised a Catholic, but at some point, and he never told me what, when he went to Pasadena Junior College, he said, "I learned the truth about the Catholic Church." He never told me what the truth was, and so he stopped going to church at all. Then he met my mother, and he was not practicing. They were married in the Methodist Church in Arizona in 1942. She would go to church on Sunday, and he wouldn't. But in the end, he would see her singing and all that, so he started going to the church, too, and taught Sunday School at the church on First Street next to El Gallo Bakery, across from Zeferino Ramirez Mortuary.

[interruption]

[recorder turned off]

GUTIÉRREZ

I can't remember. I don't remember. We were pro-U.S. It's the Korean War. I wanted to be a Marine. The Marines were based at Chavez Ravine or what's now called Chavez Ravine. I remember for the Cub Scouts I did a little project on what it's like to be a Marine. So I don't recall any preaching in that regard.

We did take a magazine called *Fortnight*, which was a California-based magazine. It was like *Time* magazine but about California and the West Coast, and I read later others have characterized it as a more left-leaning magazine. I

remember we used to get that when it came out. Fortnight, it came out every two weeks.

But beyond that, from what I can recall, there was not—we were Democrats. We didn't like the Republicans. He didn't like the *L.A. Times*. It was a very right-wing paper, conservative. We took the *L.A. Daily*, the original *L.A. Daily News*, which was the paper of the people. The Hearsts owned the *Examiner* and the *Herald Express*, and the Chandlers owned the *Times* and the *Mirror*, and so we wouldn't read the *Times*, and the Hearst paper, you wouldn't take that either.

The *Daily News* folded in '54, and the *Times* bought it and combined it with the afternoon *Mirror* and called it the *Mirror News*, they brought over the columnists and the sports writers, so they basically bought it out, and my dad said, "Now we'll never know the truth." Basically, "Our news is from the Hearsts' and the Chandlers'. We'll never know the truth." That's the way he looked at the world. He wouldn't allow the *L.A. Times* in the house. So he was more, I guess, more anti-conservative, anti-Republican.

ESPINO

That's interesting. Those are hard lines that you draw. Can you talk to me a little bit about the religious aspect of your childhood and your father's and your mother's—I mean, he obviously had strong beliefs in politics, but what about those religious beliefs that they passed on to you or that they shared in the church? Because I'm not that familiar with the Methodist religion. What makes it approachable to people, do you think?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, there's an evangelical outreach that's part of Protestantism, going out, missionaries going out and converting people and such. My grandfather Esau P. Muñoz had been a minister in the Mexican, the Spanish-speaking churches, which for many years were run as separate divisions. The Methodist Church was divided in the Civil War between the North Church and the South Church, and so the churches in Texas and Arizona were part of the South Church. The South Church believed in segregation, so they had the Mexican church. They had their own conference. They had their own hierarchy. They were Methodist and they were affiliated, and they had ties with the white churches, but you ran your own operation, everything, so if you wanted everything in Spanish, it was all in Spanish.

In 1939, the Methodist Church unified. The South Church and the North Church came back together and made one church and that became more of an integration model. So the Mexican churches became a provisional conference. It was like a lesser-than-white type thing, as opposed to a side-by-side hierarchy.

So my grandfather was always—he was in the church where he was kind of, you could go all the way to whatever bishop or whatever it's up to, where you'd be this, and where they would conduct at the higher level—at the annual meetings, everything was in English. So they'd gone to this conference with "We could run everything, our own show," to, "We can run our local congregations and we have our hierarchy, but when the real rules get made, it's all in English."

My mother said—I don't know, she may have overstated it, but she said in 1939 when they changed all that, some people walked out of the meeting and they just kept on walking. They never came back.

So we went to the Spanish-speaking churches when we lived in East L.A., before we went to Ontario, La Trinidad on First Street and then when it was a big occasion, we'd go to the Plaza Methodist Church next to Olvera Street. I was baptized there in June of 1943. But I didn't understand it. I didn't understand Spanish. So they'd be singing and talking and stuff, and I'd kind of be watching and I could pick up some things here and there, but not much.

When we moved to Ontario, there wasn't a Spanish-speaking church, so we went to the Methodist Church in Ontario. I remember my sister and I—I was four, I guess she was three—we stood up in front of the church—we were probably the first Mexican family there—and we sang "Jesus Loves Me, This I Know" in Spanish in front of the congregation. But I think, again, that's the Mexican American—see, that's that generation. "We're here. Accept us. We're Methodist too. Just because we're doing it in Spanish doesn't mean it's not the same song that you know. You just know different words."

So from then we were in English, predominantly Anglo congregations. San Bernardino we were in an Anglo church there, and then Asbury was a white church too. It was more religious of do good to others, don't cheat, don't lie, Ten Commandments types of things. It wasn't you're better than other people, but you can be better by being better, be better for yourself, be true to yourself.

ESPINO

Was there a social service component to your church?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, there was. There was a social service component, but it was through the—like, "The Boy Scouts are doing this to raise money," or something like that. It wasn't like help the homeless, that I saw. It was more the "We're going to have a project. We're going to do this." It was like a group kind of thing.

ESPINO

The Boy Scouts were affiliated with the Methodist Church?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, in Lincoln Heights, the big troop was at Sacred Heart, which is a Catholic Church, Troop 600. The Methodist troop was a lot smaller. We were Troop 76, on Workman. The Catholic Church was on Sichel, by the Griffin Avenue School, in that area. So we'd go to these camporees, I mean, this big contingent of the Catholic troop would come out and there'd be us.

But I think the other thing is—and I've heard others refer to this—we had more contact with Anglos, see, because we were in an Anglo-Mexican environment. Others were Al Juarez, who became president of UMAS Central, was in the church, was in the troop, my cousins, both Ricardo and Rosalio, were in it, but it was an integrated environment. Freddy Garcia was the Scoutmaster, but J.C. Allen, an Anglo guy, was the Assistant Scoutmaster, so we saw a level of racial mixing and working together that may or may not have been seen by others.

My dad, when he worked at the church, '49, '50, before he went to teach at Kern, when was when he was going to USC, I think for his credential, there was Japanese American kids and white kids and Mexican kids, Irish. There was a guy named Murphy who lived in the neighborhood. So it was never an exclusive thing, just racially exclusive. It was really an integration approach to things. Your standard church plays at Christmas, all these things. I mean, there was always some church-related thing that was going. It was very active. There was a gym in the church, and they had athletic leagues that they played in. I didn't play in them. I wasn't a good athlete. But it was a full, full kind of thing.

ESPINO

Was there a social service component to the Boy Scouts then?

GUTIÉRREZ

I can't recall that there was. I think there must have been. Like projects, we would go like Scout-o-Rama, we'd go to

the Coliseum and put up a booth and show your crafts and things. We did camping, those types of things. There may have been some other, because you have to get these little badges and stuff where you have to help people, do a good turn daily, that kind of thing. But I can't recall that it was a major—oh, I know. We painted the church once. I remember that. We'd come on a certain night when they gave us cans of paint and rollers and we painted the Sunday School rooms. It was probably more at that level. Probably some things I can't remember.

ESPINO

Tutorials or tutoring, that kind of thing?

GUTIÉRREZ

No, I don't remember. At Lincoln High, where I went to junior high, I was in the Boy Scouts. I was in the Stamp Club, but I was with the kids from Happy Valley, which were the gang kids. That's where I'd gone to elementary school. It wasn't a separated—the gangs were geographic, so if you lived in a certain area, you just had to know the people up the line there and they had to know you, and they would take care of you.

Lincoln was a six-year school. You went in seventh grade to twelfth grade. That was mid-year, January graduation to February, so one Friday I'm at Gates Street School, sixth grade, on the top of the thing, and the next Monday I'm at Lincoln, going to school with kids that are eighteen. I didn't live in Happy Valley though I'd gone to school in Happy Valley, my mother taught there in Glen Alta, but we lived around the block on North Broadway. So the kids from the other gangs would want to—like I said, I was the easy pickings for them. So I would hang around with the Happy Valley kids, the older kids, at lunchtime, nutrition time. My mother was a teacher, had been their teacher, some of them. But you had to have that kind of identity.

I was very all-American. On the other hand, I was scared to walk home from school, because after school is where the kids from Happy Valley went up toward the Happy Valley, and I had to go down North Broadway. That's one of the reasons I got interested in journalism. I used to stay in the library at Lincoln and read magazines, because I figured if I'd stay longer, it'll be five o'clock, kids would be gone and I could walk home without worrying about things.

ESPINO

So would you get harassed? Would you get bullied?

GUTIÉRREZ

Yes. Yes, you'd get pushed around and stuff, but not in school, because you were with the Happy Valley kids.

I remember once, somewhere I was walking and the—I don't know who they were. Anyway, a bunch of kids started chasing me, so I was just running, running. I was fast. When you're scared, you're really fast. So they were chasing me down the halls of Lincoln, and I ran up the stairs, and the stairs had—you went up and then it turned around. So I went up and I go to the top, and there's the Happy Valley guys are just talking with each other. So I'm running up the stairs, and Tony Vasquez, who was my age, said, "Oh, hey, Félix." I just glanced over my shoulder like this [demonstrates] and kept running. [laughs] I ran through them, and I could just hear the close, closing ranks at the other ones coming up the stairs, and you could hear the screeching halt, [demonstrates], because they had their fun with me, but these Happy Valley guys, that was another story. So I just kept on running. I remember going, "Ah," wiping my hands. I was lucky on this one.

The Happy Valley guys used to have me read—at lunchtime I'd sit with these—I mean, these kids are in high school, I'm in junior high. Sometimes they would have me read their assignments to them, their schoolwork, books and things like that. They called me "Profe," before I became a professor.

I remember one time one of them had the paper, the *Herald Express*, and he said, “Read the paper.”

So I read the paper. I was reading him the stories in the paper, and one of the teachers came by, and this shows you what—he says, “What are you guys doing with a paper? What do you read in the paper?” “Who do you think you are?” kind of.

I said, “We read the paper.”

The gang kid says, “Yeah, we’re checking out our Dow Jones.” [laughs] That put him back in his place. But again, they’re keeping you there.

The vice principal, Mr. Van Pelt would walk around with a paddle on the yard, on the grounds, and he just saw you, you’d just bend over, take your swat, no reason given whatever. So there was an element to life that was the Stamp Club and the Boy Scouts and all this, and then there was another part that you needed to contend with.

I still remember my eighth grade, my last picture at Lincoln. When I was in eighth grade, there was a picture for the annual I still look at, and we’re all there lined up wearing leather jackets and looking as tough as we can. When I moved to South Pasadena, it was a whole different story.

[End of October 11, 2010 interview]

1.3. SESSION THREE (October 18, 2010)

ESPINO

This is Virginia Espino and today is October 18th, 2010. I’m interviewing Dr. Félix Gutiérrez in his office at the University of Southern California [USC].

Well, today I’d like to start with a little bit about—well, not a little bit, but whatever you want to tell me about how your parents [Rebecca Muñoz Gutiérrez and Félix Gutiérrez] viewed themselves when they were growing up. I guess you mentioned that you have a long legacy here in the United States. Do you know if they identified as Mexican, as Californio, as Spanish? Did that ever become part of your family history?

GUTIÉRREZ

They never identified themselves as Spanish. It was clear that our ancestors had come from Spain at some point. My dad’s family had come to California, Alta California, in the 1770s and gone back and forth to the west coast of Mexico. But he was very, very proud of his Californio heritage. He was very proud that one of his ancestors had come when the San Gabriel Mission was at the first point, which was in the 1770s, by the Whittier-Narrows Dam, that his father Francisco had been baptized in the San Gabriel Mission in 1871, that his grandfather, my great-grandfather Felix had been married there. There was a strong Gutiérrez, on his father’s side, Californio tradition.

His mother Mercedes García was from Sonora, and it turned out his grandfather had also been born in Sonora, I found out later, and they were proud of that. They were more light-skinned, I guess would be the best way to say it, but I never heard that they were trying to be Spanish or anything like that. We ate Mexican food and all these kinds of things.

My mother was born in Mexico and was very proud of being born in Mexico. She was born in Torreón, Cahuilla, came up during the revolution. She traced her ancestry to the Carvajal settlement , that went to Nuevo Leon, Monterey in the 1500s, which included—it was not restricted to all Christians, so Jews were able to escape the Inquisition to that. She always told us that our ancestors had been Jewish on that part of her family. She was proud of that. She didn't tell us a lot of other details about it, but it was something she took pride in.

My sister, who converted, Mercedes Gail, who converted to Judaism about fifteen years ago, has done more family history in that regard and says that a lot of the Protestant things or things we associated with being Protestants, in terms of religious traditions, were really Jewish traditions that had been adapted into Mexico.

ESPINO

You mentioned the last time—it probably was the first time that we interviewed, that in your family you had what you thought were Christian or Protestant traditions, and they actually could be called Jewish traditions. Do you have any examples of that?

GUTIÉRREZ

My sister revealed those to me when she—you go through a process when you convert, of tracing your family lineage. I'm a lifelong Protestant Methodist, so I don't know. Maybe at some point I'll want to do the switch. So as she was researching that, she came across incidents, things she recalled. She was much more religious than I was growing up and so she followed that much longer. I'm sure what she says in on target. She's a very careful person. But I don't recall the specifics. It was like things we might do on Friday before a religious holiday that she remembered. Lighting candles I think was one thing she mentioned. But I was probably there doing what you had to do before you could go to see Santa Claus or whatever else you were doing in that area.

My dad, they'd get involved with Mexican American activities, youth activities in the thirties and the 1940s, and some have cast this, some historians who've written about the Conquistadores at Arizona State, the Mexican American Movement here in California, Mexican Youth Conference, see that as an assimilationist type of phenomenon. Certainly it was about full participation in the United States and taking advantage of what this country promises but doesn't always deliver. But they were clearly Mexican. The newspaper is called *The Mexican Voice*.

The paper in Arizona, *Juventud*, which my mother was not a part of, but they covered the activities her campus group was involved with, *Juventud* in Mesa. Their slogan was "Better Mexicans make better Americans." So it was clearly a keep who you are, go where you're going, but keep touch with who you are, you have a responsibility to yourself and to your community.

When they organized formally as an organization, they called it the Mexican-American Movement in the early 1940s, and MAPA, Mexican American Political Association, '59, is always credited—well, they used "Mexican American" when that was not a popular term, when you didn't want to be associated with being Mexican. Well, if it was kind of an over-the-edge term in '59, just think what it must have been in 1940, 1941. So it was kind of looking for how do you manifest your identity in a way that keeps touch with where you came from and where you still want to be, but it's not used as a means to exclude you from what you've earned, to become.

So we were always taught to be proud of being Mexican, Mexican American. If anything, I resisted it some. I didn't see what the payoff was at a very young age. Spanish was the language of my grandparents. It was the language of another country. It was the language of another generation. In high school I said, "Oh, wait a minute. There's something here I need to know," so I took Spanish as a language.

My mother, of course, was teaching in East L.A. We were living in pretty much all-white South Pasadena, but she's

teaching in East L.A., we have relatives in East L.A., so we'd go back and forth and I always felt comfortable living in what I think my classmates would think would be very, very different worlds.

ESPINO

You just mentioned something a few minutes back, and that is the idea that educating Mexican Americans made better—or Mexican Americans made better—

GUTIÉRREZ

Better Mexicans make better Americans.

ESPINO

So that makes me think that educating and helping to elevate Mexicans into the middle-class makes better Americans. Is that what that—

GUTIÉRREZ

That was one of the slogans of the División Juvenil group in Mesa, but remember, they're going up against the melting-pot myth or model, which is forget who you are to become who you want to be, and the more you can shed, the more you might be accepted. See, the boundaries for entrance are still being regulated by those who control the institutions, so the idea is that maybe you should leave that behind. It's not going to help you where you need to go. What they're saying, "No, stay in touch with that. Yes, our communities are poor. Yes, we live in slums. Yes, yes, yes. But we can make it better. It's up to us to take advantage of the educational and other opportunities we might have to make more of our lives so that we can make better communities for ourselves."

ESPINO

That's an ethnic group, and then there's the religious group, like the Methodist and the Protestant factors are influences on Mexicans in the United States. One of my interviewees also mentions that, but it was in reference to women. Educate the Mexican women and you will educate the entire family, was the philosophy of St. Frances DePauw boarding school, Industrial School for Mexican Girls. So can you maybe talk a little bit about the parallels with that kind of religious philosophy and the self-help, I guess, within the ethnic group?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, I'm less philosophical and more journalistic. My grandfather on my mother's side Esau Perez Muñoz, when they moved to Phoenix—he'd been a minister, so he'd been going through these towns, some of them with segregated schools and such, some with no schools in Texas for Mexicans. When they moved to Phoenix it was a larger city, and he went to the schools. Apparently, from the family's tale, he told them that he wanted his children that were going to high school to take the classes that would help them go to college, and he made it a point that all of his daughters went to college, as well as there was an oldest son, Rosalio [Muñoz], and then they had the daughters, Lucinda [Muñoz], my mother, Rebecca, Liza or Elizabeth [Muñoz], and Josefina [Muñoz], and they all went to college. Then there were two younger sons, Salamon [Muñoz] and Abel [Muñoz], who also went to college, but they were the World War II generation, so they went after the war. So he did not see the—or the family did not see this was just for men and not for women, or just for women and not for men.

The organizing papers of Los Conquistadores at Arizona State Teachers College at Tempe, in 1937 they had to petition the president, Grady Gammage, for the recognition of the club. It was called Los Conquistadores, and they had to list the members, and the members were separated male and female, and the first three female names are my mother and her two sisters. The female list is about as long as the male list. My Uncle Rosalio was also on the list for the male members, so four members of that first organization were out of that same family.

They were preacher's kids, so they knew how to play the piano and they'd been involved in church activities and

organizing and such. They also had a more direct contact with Mexico than my father had. In the early 1930s, my grandfather took the family to Mexico for a year. He took a year off from being a preacher so they could know the country that they had left, and then they came back and he picked up. So my mother and all of her sisters were all fully bilingual, speaking both languages without an accent, very proud of it.

My dad was more—he was born in the U.S. His father had been born in the U.S. His grandfather had effectively lived in the U.S., so he was not as conversant in Spanish as my mother, but he was comfortable in it.

ESPINO

How much time do you think you spent in your religious upbringing thinking about education and not necessarily thinking about your relationship with God? Did you see those two as separate?

GUTIÉRREZ

It was more of an integrated "This is part of who we are." The thing is, see, because your cousins and all of your—so I kind of thought that's the way everybody was. I thought everybody's mother played the piano and sewed. That's what you did. Or I thought everybody went to church. I knew they didn't all go to the Methodist Church, but in East L.A., if you weren't Catholic, you took it at school because you were going to go to the devil.

We had religious training in the catechism. I think it was Tuesday afternoon. They'd all march out and go to the Catholic church, and there was like, I think, five kids who were Protestants in school. They'd just put us all in one room, or five or six, and we'd just draw pictures or whatever, because all the rest of the school was down at the Guadalupe Church.

So for us, it was an integrated type of approach to life. There was never any doubt that I would go to college. Part of it was an expectation, I think, but part of it's because your parents had done it. But there also was not a looking down at others whose parents had not.

I remember at one point—I don't know, did I tell you about when they had the gathering for college students? At one point my aunt, my Uncle Ross' wife, María, I'm pretty sure she was one of the organizers, very active in the PTA at Avenue Twenty-One School in Lincoln Heights, which is taken up by the freeway, they organized an afternoon where students from East L.A. College would come to the elementary school and talk to people who were interested, parents and children, about going to college. I think it's part of that group in the early fifties that Julian Nava and Ralph Guzman and others, there was a good cohort at East L.A. College working with Dr. Helen Miller Bailey. I'm not sure, but I think it was.

So anyway, we were all excited. We were going to go there and find out about going to college and see about going to college and talked it up and talked it up. It was not just for that school. It was a PTA thing for Gates Street, Griffin Avenue Schools. We were at Glen Alta. The different schools could go. Anyway, we went there and the auditorium was set up with chairs, row and row and row of chairs, and hardly anybody—it was like three o'clock in the afternoon—hardly anybody was there. The students from East L.A. College were there. There was my aunt María and her kids, and we were there, and I'm sure there were some others, but it wasn't a lot. So I remember they just got the chairs and put them in a circle on the side of what would be the auditorium, and we heard them talk.

But I remember the student talked that said when he went to college, he found out it only cost nine dollars or fifteen dollars. He said, "Oh, I can afford that. I can do that." That's the first time I ever knew, gee, college, it's affordable. It wasn't the first time I thought about going to college, but kind of how do you do it, and they talked about what their experiences were at that time.

My dad was going to USC, working on his master's credential in counseling, so from time to time when I was in first grade, he would bring me down. He'd pick me up after school and we'd come down or I'd look at the campus. At one point when I was in junior high or elementary, late elementary, he brought me to the class on Saturday so I could see a class he was going to, that my uncle was also taking, so I could see what a college campus was like.

ESPINO

So it was demystified pretty early on for you.

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, it was something your parents had done, it was something your aunts and uncles had done, and it was something that you figured you could do. There was never, I mean like now SAT is—it wasn't, "Study hard or you won't get into college." It was kind of, "Work hard, see what you can make of yourself."

ESPINO

How did you choose the college that you wanted to go to?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, that was after. I went through eighth grade, half of eighth grade in East L.A. in Lincoln Heights, and it was kind of—I talked about the gang stuff last time, which was a presence, but my activities were the Boy Scouts and the church activities. They had a Stamp Club on campus where we collected stamps and put them in little books, and Victor Murillo and I and others were in the Stamp Club. We'd get on the streetcar. It was a big deal to go down to downtown L.A., where they had stamp and coin shops and you could buy stamps. We were in service organizations, so in many ways it was kind of an all-American but kind of a brown American version. I'd been a Cub Scout earlier than that. So that was kind of an environment that I was comfortable with.

When we moved to South Pasadena when I was thirteen, after my dad died, it was a move of five miles geographically and about five thousand miles sociologically and economically and everything else. My sisters did very well at the South Pasadena schools. Both of them graduated, and when they graduated had full scholarships to Stanford [University], and both of them went. I, fortunately, was the older brother, so I didn't have to live up to any expectations, and I was lucky to get into Cal State L.A., L.A. State.

Most of my friends went to Pasadena City College and then they were going to transfer to UCLA or Arizona or whatever. They were going to go to some big-time school. I knew I wouldn't have the money to go. Scholarships weren't as available then as they are now. So I figured, well, I'd better go someplace where I can just stay. They had just started entering freshmen at what was then called Los Angeles State College in 1959, two years earlier, so I applied there. Somebody told me when I was applying, all you need is fourteen As or Bs to get in, in college-prep courses, so I looked at my South Pasadena report cards and said, well, I had fourteen As or Bs, so I guess I'll get in. So I went there.

That's the only school I applied to. I knew I didn't have the grades—it was really a formula. I didn't have the grades to get into a UC [University of California] campus. They were opening Riverside, or had just opened Riverside that year, so I thought about that and I said, well, I probably wouldn't get in, and then you're out in Riverside and it's a new school, and what's there. Here I lived at home and commuted the five years I was at Cal State L.A.

I also picked it because, well, the four factors, it was close to home, I could get in, I could afford it, it cost forty-seven bucks a semester—what was the other one? You didn't have to take any math to graduate, which I was not a very good math student. So it just kind of added up that that was the place to go.

ESPINO

That was your first choice and your only choice.

GUTIÉRREZ

It was my only choice. You know, it's a reality thing. I don't want to romanticize it. But it's where can I get in, where can I afford to go, and where can I graduate from.

ESPINO

How do you feel about your education, the kind of education you had back then, the teachers? Was there anyone that really impressed you?

GUTIÉRREZ

At any level?

ESPINO

At Cal State. Because we talked, I think it was our first interview, we talked a little bit about your high school experience and working for the newspaper, so I think we can move up to college and your experience at Cal State Los Angeles.

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, I benefited from my high school education in South Pasadena. There they were gearing kids to go to college. That was an expectation. Not everybody did, but it was an expectation, which was very different than what I'd had in Lincoln Heights. I actually thought, or actually when I was applying, that, gee, if I'd stayed in Lincoln Heights, I'd probably have better grades. If I'd been in Lincoln, then I could have gotten into UCLA, because my scores would be higher or my grades would be higher.

So when I went to college, it was a little more social, making friends, meeting people, where do you fit in. It's a big campus. It's a commuter campus. It was replicating what a college was supposed to be, football team, fraternities, sororities, these kinds of activities, but nobody lived on campus. All of us were commuters. There were a few apartment houses around there. It was a new school, and it was really kind of bare bones. The state provided the classes and the teachers. Everything else you kind of had to figure out on your own, through student-government funding or other types of things.

So the most single influential faculty member was the journalism professor, Bob Blackmon, who let me work on the campus newspaper when I was a freshman. I was not a journalism major. I intentionally did not major in journalism. I majored in social studies with an eye toward getting a secondary teaching credential, because I figured I could get a job teaching. My parents had both been teachers. My mother was still teaching. And I wasn't sure journalism would be open. There weren't role models for Latinos in those days, or what there were very few.

So because I was a freshman, I shouldn't be able to work on the paper, and if I was a journalism major, I wouldn't, because you had to have certain prerequisites. But as a non-major, you could just kind of walk in and if you want to take the class, they would let you. So I did my freshman year, so all four years of my undergraduate I worked on the paper and edited it. They opened a journalism minor I think when I was a junior, so I minored in journalism, and he kept me on the paper. He let me know when I was messing up, he helped me when I needed help, and in terms of undergraduate faculty, that was probably the longest relationship I had. Then I ended up being a journalism professor, so he wrote one of my recommendations to go to get my Ph.D.

ESPINO

One of the issues at that time was the lack of courses in Mexican American, Mexican history. Did you find that was something that you sought or wanted?

GUTIÉRREZ

Yes. I was a social studies major. It was designed for social studies teachers, history, geography, government, these kinds of things, so you took a lot of classes in different departments. It was a major they abolished the year after I started, because it was too broad. But you had to take certain classes in history, and then you could take history of Mexico. So I looked at the curriculum. I knew it was an option. You didn't have to take it, but you had to have certain prerequisites. So I remember when I looked at it, I said, wow, when I'm a senior I can take history of Mexico. That's something that I'm looking at. And I did. I wanted to be great. It was a tough professor, Louis DeArmond, but I liked it. So I was looking for that.

When I was working on my credential after I had graduated—you did another year for your teaching credential—they had some course on curriculum. I'd done well in extracurricular activities, had edited the school paper and student body vice president, and then I was student body president at that time, so I had a lot of outside activities in addition to student teaching in East L.A.

So I had to do a term paper, and I wanted to get something that wasn't going to take me a lot of time. So I proposed that I would do a term paper on how Mexican Americans were covered, and Mexicans, in history textbooks in California. So he approved the thing and I did it, because I knew there was not going to be much I'm going to find. So I did and I surveyed, I think, six textbooks, and there were little references to the missions and maybe some on the Mexican war. That was my first content analysis, later, I had to do when I was a doctoral student. So I was looking for that, but it wasn't in the curriculum.

On the other hand, for a credential you do observation at a school. You watch a teacher teach. That's one semester. Then you do two semesters of student teaching. So the observation I did at Garfield High School in East L.A., near where I—in fact, if we'd stayed living in Belvedere, where I would have gone to school. Then I student-taught journalism at Lincoln, where I'd been a student ten years earlier, and I did summer—my last student teaching at Wilson, so I wanted the Mexican schools.

I remember the year after I graduated, or maybe the year after that, they made a requirement at Cal State L.A. that if you were getting a credential, you had to do one student teaching, one of those assignments in an inner-city school, and I said, "Well, wouldn't everybody want to do that?" That's what I wanted. That's what I wanted to do, but it wasn't required. They were looking at the suburbs, Alhambra, Glendale, places like that.

So I looked for a connection and looked for ways to connect. I took history of California under another professor, and there was some there, but kind of after the Yankees came, that our people disappeared from the tales of what had happened in California. So there wasn't much in the curriculum. I mean, there were some who would look at—I think took an interest because I was Latino, and they had an interest in Latin American politics, which I didn't know much about. I was not at all conversant—well, maybe conversant, but I wasn't comfortable in written Spanish, things like that, so they couldn't give me a book and read it in Spanish, so there were limits to where I could take my interest at that level. On the other hand, they were cultural expressions, so there were other ways you could—outside of the classroom.

ESPINO

Like, for example?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, part of it was—I guess I should start out with a negative, or unhappy. There was a lot of jokes you had to put

up with, starting with my first day on campus, really. A group of guys I'd gone to high school with I saw because I recognized them, and they were talking with some kids from Temple City, which had been our big opposition but now were all at Cal State L.A. So I went up to say hi to the guys who I knew from South Pasadena, and they were all telling jokes. When I got up there, the guy from Temple City was telling jokes about when Temple City had played some school football team with a lot of Mexican kids and what they were shouting at the beaners and taco benders and stuff like that. Everybody's getting a big laugh. That was the kind of thing. You're outnumbered and you don't know anybody. It's your first day of school. I remember the guy who was telling jokes looked—"Oh, I'm sorry. Are you Mexican?"

I said, "Yes, but I can laugh about it." I mean, it was kind of "get along to go along," "go along to get along" kind of an attitude, and that continued through much of the time.

On the other hand, we all knew who we were and—I may have mentioned—when we ran for office, we got elected to the top—three Chicanos to the top student body offices at Cal State L.A., and I put a big "Olé." I was the editor of the paper, "Olé. [John] Huerta, [Felix] Gutiérrez, Bob Carrasco triumphant." We put a sign on the top of the cafeteria, "Muchas gracias," with our names, that the student body had voted for us.

John Huerta, he was president, I was vice president in '64, and we took student body funding and had a Diablo Fiesta the school was called the Diablos. We brought in Mexican entertainment in the gym and just kind of had an evening of Latin-flavored type stuff that had not been done before.

ESPINO

This is sixty—

GUTIÉRREZ

Sixty-four.

ESPINO

So that's on the cusp of the beginning of the Chicano Movement.

GUTIÉRREZ

Yes. We would probably be Chicanos off campus but Mexican Americans on campus. I think that would be the way to say it. I mean, the thing is, you didn't want it to work against you. It might not keep you out, but it would never be a plus. It was never seen as a plus.

ESPINO

Unless you might have been with your own, because it sounds like the people that you ran with—

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, but even then it's kind of you're on your own. You're with your own people and you kind of joke. There was three or I don't know how many—there were several Chicanas, women who rented a house right off campus, and we used to call it "the doll house," because they were all Mexicans and so were we. So there was an identity with us, but it wasn't anti-Anglo. It wasn't trying to connect with something we weren't. It was just kind of we knew who we were.

On the other hand, we were probably more involved in campus service projects. Huerta started Project GO, Greater Opportunities, at Lincoln High, which is where I'd been a student, to get tutoring in '64, '65. I helped start EPIC,

which is still going, built on Project GO, Educational Participation in Communities, when I was student body president, and then I went to work for it after I got my master's.

We volunteered to do—so I spent Saturdays my last year as a student with junior high kids from Belvedere Junior High as part of a larger effort for college students to connect with junior high kids. We'd take field trips around town, but this was a mix. It was probably more Anglos than Mexicans in the student body, Cal State L.A. student body, doing that.

So you're looking for a way—how do I connect where I am and what I'm learning to where I'm from? And it was not a connection that you could make through the curriculum. It was something you had to make on your own or through activities or finding opportunities. When the Great Society that LBJ [Lyndon B. Johnson] started, there was more federal funding for these kinds of activities, and some faculty got it and we would plug into those.

ESPINO

Can you tell me, then, a little bit more about the genesis of the EPIC program, how that came about?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, Project GO started it. It was out of Father John Luce's church, the Epiphany Church on Sichel and Altura in Lincoln Heights. I remember he came to the student government and talked about getting volunteers, and Huerta really got involved with it, really got interested in it, so he got it moving. It may have even been before—he might have done it when he was vice president. But it was one school, and students wanted it, and the next year or a couple of years later, when we had this thing where you'd go on Saturdays, it was where you'd go to multiple schools, and there were probably other tutoring things going on. But the concept was, or the problem was that we were all students, and there wasn't anybody that could control it or run it. If you could make the connection, we'd be there, but talking to the principal, setting up this, all this, this was a level of bureaucracy at which we could not work, or if we did, it would take all our time.

So the idea of EPIC was to have a multi-service center on campus, where students who wanted to do volunteer work in community-service work in low-income—this is right after the Watts Riots had been in '65 that previous summer—could have a place where agencies or schools could come to the college and they could get in touch with EPIC, then EPIC could recruit the students, and then some of them would have some training and somebody would just go out.

So when I was student body president, we put together a committee—it wasn't called EPIC yet—to look into could we do this and then could we get federal money for it. So Peggy Newgarden, who had just been appointed as a student activities coordinator to work with the student government, was assigned to work with that. So we had several committee meetings, kind of what would it do, how could it work. I wrote something as student body president to kind of talk about my vision, which was being from communities like that. Then she went to work and did the proposal with Ed Hallberg, the Dean of Students, and Bob Brass, the Director of Student Activities, encouraged her to do that, and came up with a very nice proposal in the spring, which was sent to the appropriate federal agency and received no money.

So I was active in—there was a student body presidents' association of the Cal States, California State College Student Presidents Association (CSCSPA), and I was vice president of that. So I went to a meeting, I think it was our last meeting in May, and somebody announced that there was state funds available from the federal government. When the federal money started, they would fund local school districts and local cities and local this and on and on, and so the state's saying, "Hey, where are we?" Because now they just go to the feds. So there was some provision somewhere in all this federal largesse that they would give money to states and then the states would administer it.

So the State of California, somebody in Sacramento had all these federal dollars that people weren't applying for because they didn't know you could go to the state to get the federal. They would just go to the feds.

So I came back from this conference, and the guy—we'd met at Chico State, and somebody from Sacramento had come up. I said, "Hey, there's supposed to be money under this program, and here's the guy that's giving it away." So I told Brass and I think maybe Peggy, too. So they applied for it and they got it there, and the name became EPIC, Educational Participation in Communities, and so it was funded in '66, '67.

Then I went to Northwestern [University] that year. I was off campus. The following year, when I couldn't get a job anywhere where I could use my journalism, with my master's from Medill, they offered me a position to work at EPIC, and so that's how I got back to Cal State L.A. as an administrator in 1967.

ESPINO

Do you remember those early ideas you had about EPIC program? You said you wrote something out.

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, it was like a letter. The problem is that we're a working-class—I don't know if I used the term "first generation," but basically we're struggling to get our own education. The image of college students, some Daddy Warbucks or some big daddy is paying the bills, and you're just sitting around taking classes, that we're from these communities, we're working to get our own education. I think I said most of our students are working part-time—we all did—and we don't have time to administer, but if given the opportunity—and it had been, it's been demonstrated—that we'll go out there and work in these efforts that could help the communities and help make things better. So it's forty-five years later. That's what I remember of it.

But it wasn't my idea. I mean, this was something that we said, "Let's look at what we could do," and it was real collaborative effort between administrators and students and then probably some faculty who'd been involved, because they would come to the student government. "We need forty kids to go to junior highs," go to the fraternity, which they had. They'd gone to the fraternities and then they'd assigned their pledges to do it, and then others would just sign up because they wanted to. But there wasn't a magnet that would pull people together.

EPIC's been—I don't think they have the franchise, but there's EPICs in other parts of the country. Here at USC it started later as JEP, the Joint Education Project. So this idea of service learning, service components where you can take your education and use it to better communities has taken hold, and that was, if not the first, one of the first that was actually launched with some federal money.

ESPINO

You had your student teaching before the EPIC program, correct, or around the same time?

GUTIÉRREZ

No, it was before.

ESPINO

Did that inform your ideas about service learning and that kind of thing?

GUTIÉRREZ

No. EPIC originally was all volunteer. I mean, now they get credits. The kids get paid, this and that. None of that

was part of the original proposal. It was that we have students who'd like to give back and who will give back and are available to give back. They just don't have the time to get involved with the administration of this thing and who to show them what time to make sure this kind of stuff, so if we afford them this opportunity, they'll take advantage of it, and they did.

Then later with the funding, they hired student coordinators to administer certain programs. I went to EPIC about four or five years ago, because I was seeing somebody whose office happened to be there, and it was a dream. I mean, one, kids are all excited they're going to an elementary school where my mother used to teach, to get ready for the Christmas party. Another one's going to the school where I'd gone to, and they were all excited. So when they left to go do their thing, they were making decorations and they were going to take the school—the faculty member I went to see, Lena Choao, I said, "That's really great, all these kids volunteering."

She goes, "Well, they're not all volunteering. They're getting—," I don't know, it's a work study or some pay thing. I'm not saying it's not good. They need the money. If we could have gotten paid—getting paid was beyond us. You got paid for being a janitor, which is what I'd been doing before I got into student government. You got paid for doing factory work or whatever. Getting paid to tutor was unheard of.

ESPINO

That reminds me of what President [John F.] Kennedy said about, "Think not what your country can do for you, but what you can do." Was that something that influenced you? Because that was happening at the same time.

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, there was a service component. Kennedy was a big influence on my generation, obviously, and then he's killed at a young age. So the idea of the Peace Corps, and the Teacher Corps came around a little bit later, that you should do something for the betterment of your world rather than just make money for yourself was embedded in us. But for me it was consistent with my parents and what they had been doing.

I remember all the Chicanos, when the three of us got elected at Cal State L.A., said, "Oh, we've got to—."

I said, "Yeah, we can call it the Mexican American Movement." Well, that was basically the title of the organization my parents had had. So I kind of saw this as taking it to another generation.

The idea of expanding it into a real movement came later with the Chicano Movement. It wasn't my idea. But it was kind of individuals finding a way to make a difference, kind of a ripple effect type of approach, as opposed to kind of change everything all at one time.

ESPINO

The idea of volunteerism is something that—like you just gave an example of how what used to be an organization that was based on people's desire to volunteer is now something that they get paid for or there's compensation for that.

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, they get course credit. You didn't have any course credit in those days for EPIC. I mean, some classes have service-learning requirements in them. This is forty-five years later. It's probably to the good. We didn't always know what they were doing. I'm out there tutoring and maybe the kid is, maybe they're not. Or maybe they think they're tutoring. They're reading stuff to the kid who may or may not be learning things. I'm just glad it's continued, and, if anything, has gotten larger.

My younger sister, Lorraine, was head of the Service Learning Center at University of Michigan, where she's a professor, and she was telling me about all this stuff that it's become, and when she talked about it, it was like I hardly recognized it. Different courses, different classes, different majors have units you can get for doing that work.

ESPINO

So do you think that that brings more students to the program?

GUTIÉRREZ

I don't know. You're asking me beyond my expertise. I worked for EPIC from 1967 to '68, and here, when I was a dean here, I was responsible for administering the JEP program at USC, but it was so well run. You become an administrator. You don't have to fix everything if it's not broken. It was so well run that I said, fine, they know what they're doing. They don't need some guy from what then would have been, heck, twenty-three years later, telling them what to do.

Although they did tell me that it was the first time—staff told me, the director—it was the first time that a dean at USC had ever set foot in the building of the Joint Education Project. I think it was kind of a nice thing USC did, to help the underprivileged communities. Now USC is much more integrated with the communities that it's a part of. It was a good effort. It was kind of a do-good effort, and now it's a work-together effort.

ESPINO

I guess the point that I'm trying to get at is the idea that sometimes there's been the critique of the War on Poverty and how all this money just poured into, say, for example, East Los Angeles, and that it became a corrupting source in the sense that the services didn't always get translated into something productive for the community. Can you speak to that?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, the availability of federal funds was just—and I was in school, so I wasn't a player, but, basically, all of a sudden you could get money or things could be funded that were good ideas. My mother is a schoolteacher from the 1930s, and then in 1965 there's this federal program for the Reception Center. She has her psychometrist credential. She's teaching kindergarten at Rowan Avenue School, and they say, "Now there's going to be a federal program, federally funded. Kids come from Mexico, families come from Mexico. They'll test them in Spanish. They'll have a social worker work with the family." Well, this is the kind of stuff she would have liked to have seen happen all those years. So all of a sudden you had an ally that hadn't been there before.

With the passage of the Civil Rights Act in '64, the immigration law in '65, which we didn't really understand the implication that would have, you suddenly have a different mix coming into the country, and they can't discriminate. They used to go, "Oh, no, this job is just for men," or, "This is for women," or, "Mexicans can't apply." I mean, that was legal. So all of a sudden you had this clout that was available to you and funding to back it up.

So, yes, there were what they call the "poverty pimps" and the "Tío Tacos" and all of that existed. I'm not trying to whitewash any of that. But in the end, people found ways that they could make good things happen.

I did public relations. My job after EPIC, I spent a year as public relations for the anti-poverty agency here in L.A., the EYOA, Economic and Youth Opportunities Agency, and it wasn't really for the agency; it was to get publicity for the projects we funded, the teen posts and the drug-abuse programs and different things. You'd go to some projects and they were doing what they were supposed to be doing, and then you'd go some places that are kind of sleepy operations.

ESPINO

Were you able to visit different projects when you were—

GUTIÉRREZ

Yes, yes.

ESPINO

Do you recall any specific details about any projects that you—

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, one. This is ’68, so this is old hat now. Drug addicts were criminals. They were bad people doing bad things with bad stuff. So the approach was, in East L.A. and Boyle Heights, was that, no, a lot of these guys, they have a habit they’re trying to get rid of, so they need help kicking the habit. You can send them to jail, you can do this and that, but if they’ve still got the monkey on their back, they’re just going to try to go to a next fix.

So a project was funded and actually it was run by a guy my dad had worked with closely, Juan Acevedo, who’d been the artist for *The Mexican Voice* covers, so maybe there was a closeness there because he had known my dad so well. They’d been in operation for a year. My job was to get some publicity of what they were doing. Their new concept was “the kicking pad,” that you could just come in and say, “I’m high on drugs,” or, “I’m hooked,” and you could stay there for a certain amount of time. I don’t know if you kicked the habit, whatever, you got off of what you were on at that time, and then you could go on to the rehab and the counseling and things like that.

So I’d seen the Frank Sinatra movie, *The Man With A Golden Arm*, about drug addiction. I had this image of drug addicts and on and on. So I go there and there’s a couple of guys just watching TV, you know. [laughs] They weren’t climbing the walls, or they weren’t clawing, they weren’t crawling, and they weren’t sweating. So my job was to get publicity for it.

Their concept was that the agencies have a press conference with like six administrators lined up, each one of them giving a pronouncement. I was just starting out, but I said, “This isn’t good TV.”

“Oh, no, that’s okay. We’ll show them good stuff,” on and on and on. When I got there, that’s what they were doing.

One of the TV stations came. They said they were going to come and they hadn’t, so I called them up, KTTV, and I said, “How come—?”

“Well,” they said, “we’re not interested in a press conference. Well, I see they have a kicking pad. Do you think we could go on there and get film of guys kicking the drug habits?”

I said, “Well, I don’t know. I’ll call Juan and find out.” So I did.

He said, “Okay.”

So the TV guy shows up and the door opens, and there’s just two guys watching “The Dating Game” or some TV show. So he says, “Where’s all this and that?” The *Man With the Golden Arm*, that was the name of the movie.

So one of the guys who was a counselor, he said, “Oh, yeah, yeah.” He was an ex-addict. He said, “Well, I know what it’s like.” So he acted out what it was like to kick the habit.

Then another TV station wanted to do it, too, so they came, interviewed the same guy, but it was Channel 2. They were more ethical. They just interviewed what we were doing. So if you watched the evening news on Channel 11, the guy’s kicking the habit, and if you watched the eleven o’clock news on Channel 2, the guy’s Mr. Clean. So I learned about how you portray these issues to the media, and basically in that era, once the media showed up, you lost control of the story, because P.R. would just, “Show this. Don’t show that.” They would take that as an affront. They were going to go back with the story they came out to get.

I had no—I shouldn’t say no. I had two Chicano reporters show up—and I was very active for about a three-year period or a two-and-a-half-year period—come up to cover stories that I was doing. It was mainly Anglos who were good reporters, but didn’t know the East Side, didn’t know much about—if they knew anything about race it was about blacks, probably, so you had to interpret the stories for them, and it was hard sometimes with these anti-poverty stories.

There was one—we had these tremendous school walkouts in East L.A. in 1968 for better schools, better conditions. Sal Castro was one of the leaders of that. Then a year later they had Fiesta del Barrio or some community thing that I did the P.R. for, and I remember they had a dance group at Lincoln High which had been the center of some of the activities, so we got a TV camera to come out, and it’s what they call Mexican kids dancing. So I’m there with a TV reporter, and he’s filming, the guy’s filming, his cameraman’s filming the Mexican dances and stuff. I said, “I’m glad you could make it out.”

He says, “Yeah, I’m glad I came, too. It sure is a lot different than when I was here last time.”

I said, “When were you here last time?”

It was the previous year, ’68. He said, “They were marching and protesting and carrying picket signs,” and on and on. He says, “These kids are a lot nicer. These are really nice kids there.”

I just said, “The kids you’re seeing onstage right now are the same kids who were protesting last year, and this is what they were protesting for, was to have some exhibition of who we are.” But I don’t know if the point got made or not. They were trying to put us into kind of the good Mexican/bad Mexican paradigm, and that’s the way they framed the story.

ESPINO

So what was different, then, about the Chicano journalists that came? Is there any one specific—

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, they knew—Ruben Salazar knew the community. I mean, you could pitch him a story and he’d know who else was working that angle. Jack Jones covered for the *Times*. He knew the beat very well, covered the Anti-Poverty Program, white guy. But a lot of it was it’s just a spot story. Something’s happening out there, so do it.

The Chicano journalists on TV were new. Joe Ramirez had just been moved from the assignment desk to be a field reporter at KNBC. He covered a lot of the things we had at the headquarters, but he just covered it as a straight

reporter and such. The Spanish-language media, you could take them things and, like *La Opinion*, they would translate the stories. They didn't have reporters, so you'd take them a release, take them photos, and they'd run it.

KMEX just started a field reporter in '68, and you could get people on there. They had gone to an hour-long newscast. They'd gone beyond "rip and read" to more of an ensemble cast, and they had a segment called "The Hot Box." They didn't call it that publicly. But you could send people in and they'd be interviewed. Like we'd have an agency head or somebody who wanted to talk about things, so you could go to KMEX. They scheduled you in and the reporters or the anchors around the set would ask you questions.

Radio is a little tougher. Eddie Moreno had done a very good job at KALI, which was one of the Spanish stations. Jaime Jarrín was kind of a one-man operation at KWKW in that time. But you basically had to take it to them or call them or do a phoner for them to do things. They didn't have the capability to go out and send a field reporter and such.

I remember once I called KWKW to set up an interview with my new boss at the EYOA, Manuel Aragon. Anyway, the guy answers the phone. "Oh, Jaime. Glad to talk to you." I heard music in the background. So he's talking to me and taking the details, and then the song ends and he goes, "Secondito." So he puts the phone down. Then you hear him talking on the radio, "And that was just so-and-so doing this and this. Coming up, and don't forget this and that." Then he puts in a cartridge and then you hear that, and then he goes to the next song.

So when he got back, I said, "Jaime, you're on the air right now?"

He says, "Yeah. Basically I'm doing everything. I'm doing the engineering." Because usually they have a tech would do the engineering at KALI. "I'm spinning the discs, I'm giving the weather, the time, and answering the phone." But there were only the two stations, KALI and KW in that era, so they could get out to our community.

ESPINO

Did you feel like you had enough coverage, or how do you feel about the coverage?

GUTIÉRREZ

Oh, you always want more. I mean, what can I say. You always want more, and sometimes you were sorry they'd come. They took the story in a different angle than you. Sometimes they'd cover the protest but not the reason you're protesting, so the marches, the chanting, the signs, on and on, that makes good TV, but the reason you're doing that is because you're trying to get the schools to do a better job or get kids into college and things like that. It was a hit-and-miss thing. Others would come out, they'd do a good straight report.

Also, the community thinks you can just call a meeting and they show up because you're calling them. So somebody, "Well, you got them to come out for so-and-so's event. How come you can't get them to come for ours?"

I'd say, "Well, I'll send the word out and I'll get it to them, but it's up to them if they cover. They don't cover just because my name's on it." So sometimes there's an expectation. Or you get the thing covered and then they didn't like the story, so then they call you. I'd say, "Well, it's his story. He took it where he wanted to go."

My wife Maria Lopez, now my wife, on our first dates on Fridays would generally start out with—I worked downtown in L.A. and we'd meet, and then I'd go—we're going to go to a party or we're going to do this or whatever, but first, I'd go first to *La Opinion*, because Nick Avila did the local sections and on Fridays he had to the Saturday paper, the Sunday paper, and the Monday paper. So I learned that if I could get him something, it would make one of those

papers, one of those pages. So I'd take him pictures and stuff.

They were on Main Street in the back garage, because the office would be closed. You'd go in the back, he'd be laying out the pages, so I'd give him the articles to translate into Spanish. I was working for the government, so I'd have a suit and tie or coat and tie, and I remember once he said, "How'd you get involved with these people?" with some march or protest or picket.

I said, "Well, that's all we're fighting for. We're just trying to better the communities."

I'd take something to Ruben Salazar at the *L.A. Times*. They'd never let me in the building. I had to leave it off at the loading dock by where the trucks left, by the presses, and they would take the release up to him.

I'd go by City News on Hill Street, although sometimes I would hold that back until later. You could just go in. There was a guy on, basically, a teletype machine with a wire basket next to him and a spike next to the wire basket, and you'd put the story in the wire basket, and then he'd pick it up, he'd put it on a holder in front of the teletype machine, and then he would just enter it pretty much verbatim, as far as I could tell. It would go to all the local news agencies. Then when he got done with it, he'd put it on the spike. So, I mean, you could put a release saying fifteen thousand Mexicans are going to march tomorrow in the front of City Hall, and they'd just send it out as if it had actually happened.

ESPINO

That's pretty incredible. That's pretty impressive that it sounds like you had an incredible amount of power, or maybe not power—

GUTIÉRREZ

You knew how the media worked, and from that regard you had power, because you didn't have journalists coming to us. See, now you have more diversity in the newsroom, so you have people coming out looking, or hopefully looking for the—and plus, you didn't have all these PR, all this HPRA, Hispanic Public Relations Association. I mean, there were very few of us doing any of this kind of work at that time, and very few, I think, of those who did had any kind of journalism background experience, education or whatever. My goal was to write it like a news story so they wouldn't change it. I had one article in the *L.A. Times* that was pretty much word for word.

ESPINO

But you didn't get the byline.

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, no. It was a press release. I remember with the group there was a Feria del Barrio or Fiesta del Barrio. I think it was Feria del Barrio. They said, "Who wrote this thing?" They said, "Yeah, that's not Ruben Salazar. That's not his style." I was kind of basking in the thing.

Then after our date or after our evening, we'd go down to these local community newspapers, the northeast newspapers, Highland Park, El Sereno. They had their office on Figueroa and Highland Park, *The Bulletin News* in Lincoln Heights, the *East L.A. Tribune* on Whittier, the *Belvedere Citizen* on First you'd leave that under there. They had a longer deadline You'd leave it at night, because they were weekly papers.

So a lot of it was just trying to get some publicity. Most of it was education, marches, pickets, demonstrations, improved educational opportunities. Sometimes they'd play them and sometimes they wouldn't, but you'd go back

again next time with something else.

ESPINO

Was that rewarding, that kind of work? Was it rewarding for you?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, yes, you feel great when it's in the paper. Yes, when you can make the paper and when they show up to cover it, sometimes with photographers and that, you'd feel good about it. Yes, it was rewarding, and for me it was the closest I could get to journalism. I was unsuccessful in getting any paid employment working in a newsroom anywhere, so I was glad to be able to do my part. I learned how to do PR for the Latino causes because I hadn't been able to get into the newsroom. I was finally being able to use my training, and then doing some with La Raza newspaper and stuff. Over the years I did less. I did more at the beginning, besides distribution. I would distribute it and such.

ESPINO

So can you talk to me a little bit about your relationship with Ruben Salazar? Did you get a chance to get to know him?

GUTIÉRREZ

What time is it, though?

ESPINO

Let me pause it for a second. [recorder turned off]

ESPINO

Okay, so I'll leave that question for next time, because you have to leave, and I'm going to stop the recorder. Thank you. [End of October 18, 2010 interview]

1.4. SESSION FOUR (October 25, 2010)

ESPINO

This is Virginia Espino and today is October 25th, 2010. I'm interviewing Mr. Félix Gutiérrez in his office on the campus of the University of Southern California [USC].

Last time when we finished, we were talking about your role as public relations person for, essentially, the Mexican American community in East Los Angeles and the events and protests that they were having in the sixties. I wanted to know a little bit more about your relationship with Ruben Salazar, L.A. Times journalist, and maybe a little bit about him, what you were able to learn from his work.

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, first of all, I wasn't the only one doing public relations for the Chicano Movement; there were others who were doing the work. Most of my focus on student activism on the campus level, and then some community organizations would hit me up, but there were people trying to figure a way to get coverage in the media, and I think Ruben Salazar is a good place to focus.

I had wanted to be in journalism since I was in junior high, looking for a way through school publications when I was

in high school, taking print shop when I was in high school, working hard in my English class so I could qualify to get in, and really had very few—I had no role models who were Latino, who covered Latino affairs. There was the fishing editor, the outdoor editor at the L.A. Daily News and then the Mirror News, Lupe Saldaña, and then there was Manny Pineda, who covered prep sports for the Pasadena Star News, the two papers that we took at home. But aside from that, on TV, any radio, anything else, you didn't see any Latino names, and you didn't see anybody who covered our community. It wasn't that that was the only thing I wanted to do, but you want to prepare for a career where you have a chance of getting employed.

So when I went to college, I wanted to do journalism and I did work, as I said earlier, on the school paper all four years, including being the editor when it was chosen the best school paper or daily newspaper in California by the state organization. But I intentionally didn't major in journalism; majored and got a secondary credential and minored in journalism.

In the early sixties, '62, the Mirror News folded. It was owned by the Chandler family. And the Hearst newspaper in the morning folded, the Examiner, so the L.A. Times had the morning and then the Hearst paper had the afternoon.

My dad [Félix Gutiérrez], who had passed in 1955, had no love for the L.A. Times. He didn't allow it. But I remember my mom [Rebecca Muñoz Gutiérrez] asked me, after we talked with my mom, "What are we going to do now?" Because we didn't want to take the Hearst paper. I think that would have been worse, and we had the afternoon Star-News from Pasadena. So she said, "Well, your dad wouldn't like it, but we'll take the L.A. Times." I didn't have the history that he had with it.

As I read the Times, I saw the name Ruben Salazar on bylines on articles relating to East Los Angeles that was not connected all the time with crime and disorder or problem people, that had a greater breadth. We're talking longer articles, deeper issues, and I wondered who he was. He had the beat that I would say that was the kind of job I'd like to have if I could get a job at the L.A. Times, and he gave a breadth and a texture to the community that I hadn't seen in any news organization before.

I didn't believe he was Mexican. The social distance for me was so great that there were Cubans coming up at that time because of the [Fidel] Castro takeover in Cuba, so I thought, well, he must be a Cuban or maybe a Latin American who came here and got an education. So I read his articles with great interest, and some of them were about people I knew or places that I was familiar with.

He left Los Angeles in the summer of '65, first to go to Santo Domingo, and then he became a Vietnam correspondent for the L.A. Times later in 1965, and then he was posted to Mexico City as bureau chief at the L.A. Times, so I was reading—when I saw his name, I'd note it, seeing his career moving up.

In the spring of 1966, I taught at Lincoln High School, the journalism class, as a student teacher, to get my credential, where I'd been a student ten years earlier, and it turned out the advisor to the paper, Lowell Harmer, had met Salazar. The state put out some booklet, Si Se Puede it was called, State Employment Office, to encourage young Chicanos to get different kinds of jobs, so they had a picture of somebody who was a college professor and somebody who was a scientist and somebody's this, and they had a picture of Ruben Salazar as a journalist. So I remember I went to Harmer and I said, "Hey, there's Salazar. You know him?"

He said, "Yeah, I've met him."

So then I asked, "Well, where is he from?" I was sure he was going to say Peru or Colombia or Argentina or whatever.

He said, “Oh, he’s from Texas.”

I said, “He is?”

He said, “Yeah.”

I said, “He’s a Mexican American?”

He goes, “Yeah, he is.” I just—I can’t describe it, but, oh, that’s somebody like me, who got a job on that paper that looks so white and such. I’d applied for a job as a copy boy at the Times when I got out of high school and got kind of a thank-you letter but no offer to be a copy boy, and I didn’t know how to bust in. I’d applied to the Star-News too. Same thing. They’re nice and polite but nothing came. Well, there’s some guy who made it. There’s a guy who’s able to get in, and he was from in Mexico.

The next year I went to Northwestern [University], so I was out of L.A., and got my master’s in journalism, and then the following October I came back to work at Cal State L.A. for the EPIC [Educational Participation in Communities] program in June and got all involved with a new Chicano student organization, UMAS [United Mexican American Students] as the co-advisor with Ralph Guzman.

We went to El Paso when they were changing the Chamizal from the U.S. to Mexico, to give back the land, and also with the interagency hearings that President [Lyndon B.] Johnson had to focus on issues of Mexican Americans in this country. So I was there. I don’t know, I was doing press relations for that. And I wasn’t a student, but since I brought a group of students with me in my car, I was identified with the students, and I was young. I looked like I was probably eighteen or nineteen even though I was twenty-four. So I was moving with that group.

We went to a room where there was some kind of a huddle, and there was older kind of World War II generation older guys, forties, and then us at the Paso del Norte Hotel. So I’m watching what’s going on and hearing. It was a tightly packed room with maybe ten, fifteen people. A guy who I was with, who was teaching me the ropes on how to do media coverage, how to write press releases, how to get things out, pointed out, said, “That’s Ruben Salazar.” So I looked over across the room and there was this guy with a nice suit and tie, full head of hair, just slicked out, I mean looking very Mr. Establishment and looking very successful, very much a part of the media.

I said, “That’s him?”

He said, “Yeah, that’s Ruben Salazar. I’ll introduce you to him.”

If this was a movie, I’d have gone up and he would have said, “Yes, Félix, we need you,” but there was just too much of a distance, and I said, “Well, that’s okay.” And he was, he was working on covering the story. So I saw him, but I still remember that impression. It was kind of like, this guy’s doing what I wish I could be doing someday, and he’s the embodiment of success in that world.

He stayed in Mexico through ’67, the rest of ’68, and then he came back in 1969 to Los Angeles, to a very different L.A. than he had left. He had been covering the early—I won’t quite say upheaval, but the outspoken expression of concerns among Latinos, Chicanos, Mexican Americans, really before the Watts Riots, which brought a lot of racial

unrest to public attention. Then he left. So the years between 1965 and 1969 isn't really four years; it's more like fifteen years in terms of changes in the community. The Brown Berets, UMAS, the student organizations, the welfare rights, these issues, police abuse, were issues that they were talked about but didn't have a public outreach. We'd had the walkouts the previous year from the high schools.

So he came back to the community and was well connected with those who he knew. A lot of them were running agencies now, were working with different federal or government or public school programs, and I was trying to get them to cover—yeah, but how about the student this and the protest that and the campus something else?

So over the year or the part of the year that I was there, I would send him press releases. I'd call him on the phone if we were going to have something. He was always very professional. I had a professional relationship. I don't claim to have been his best friend. But he was always interested in the story and he was curious about finding out what's happening, what's happening in this community that he left kind of in the beginning, that now is in full bloom, full blossom.

He always would ask me to—he never invited me into the Times office. He'd ask me to leave the press releases for him in the—there was like a mail station or a guard station right by the trucks, where they would load the trucks to take the papers out. So you'd leave the press release there. "Yeah, I'll get it. Don't worry, I'll get it. They'll send a copy boy down. I'll get it." And they did. Then I'd call him maybe the next day or the next week. Usually these were advances on things we were going to do, ask if he had any questions and if he had anything else. I'm trying to get him to cover it as best I could.

I never tried any get-tough stuff with him. I heard others did. You know, "You should be a spokesperson for our community. You should tell our story our way. We're getting messed over." I heard reports that others had done that or at least had tried that, but I didn't.

So he was one of the stops along with the City News Service at the subway terminal, being La Opinion, L.A. Times that my wife and I, or my wife-to-be, and I would stop off for press releases.

I'd consider anything I could get out of him a plus in terms of—it wasn't a friendly relationship nor was it an adversarial relationship. It was professional. "Here's a story. You might be interested. Maybe you can do something with it." And I knew he wouldn't be able to cover everything I pitched him on, and he didn't, and other times he did.

We were going to have, in June of 1969, a massive march from East L.A., Obregon Park, to Cal State L.A., for the maintenance and expansion of EOP, the Educational Opportunities Program—I wasn't even working at the campus anymore, but I was still doing the public media relations—and then camp on the campus, pitch tents and sleep on the campus until the administration agreed to an expansion of that program, and they were tied in other Chicano Studies and other demands.

So I asked him if he would go and talk to some of the students before the march to get the story, and he said he would, which was a coup. So we had a Community Center that the Rockefeller Foundation had funded on Atlantic, just off of Whittier Boulevard in East L.A., through the campus, through the college. So I told them, "Ruben Salazar is going to come. He's going to want to talk to the director, Victor Morga, have some students there." I had told him I can't be there, because I had something at work at the time he could make it. I said, "He'll be here at this time."

So anyway, he said he'd be there and he came.

So after it was over that afternoon, I called Victor. I said, “How did it go? Did Ruben Salazar come?”

He said, “Yeah, he came, he came.”

“Did he interview—?”

“Yeah, yeah.”

I said, “Well, what was it like?”

He said, “Well, this big car drove up, this guy got out of it, in a nice suit, he ran in, he said, ‘Where’s Félix?’ I told him you weren’t here. He asked a lot of questions real fast, wrote some notes real fast, and then he ran out.” [laughs] I don’t know if that’s what happened or not, but that was his impression. The guy came in, “We’re ready to see him. Where’s the P.R. guy?” And I told him I wasn’t going to be there, but I guess he’d forgotten. He asked as many questions as he could, took notes as fast as he could, and got out as fast as he could, and then the Times did cover the story. So I was back and forth in touch with him.

In August I left L.A. to take—I could not break into journalism. I don’t know why. I knew everybody, and everybody seemed to know me from different news organizations. I’d pitch stories, they’d take them. When they needed stuff, “How can I get hold of an ex-gang member? Who do you know in this, that?” The Channel 2s, the Times, all of them. And they didn’t post jobs in those days. They didn’t have Job Fairs like we do now. It’s kind of like who knows you, where can you get in.

I may have been more hesitant than I should have, but I didn’t feel that if I’m pitching somebody on a story you want to say, “By the way, could you get me a job on your newspaper?” They see that I’m doing good stuff and they’re using it, and I’d seen stuff I wrote pretty much verbatim in the newspapers and the press releases.

So it turned out to be—I had my master’s from Northwestern had more weight in academia than my master’s from the Northwestern Medill School of Journalism had in the newsroom. So I decided if I can’t get—I’d gotten married, Maria and I had gotten married in March of ’69, so, well, it’s time to kind of settle down. So I said, “If I can’t make an impact in the newsroom, maybe I can make an impact on the newsroom. I’m going to see if I can be a journalism professor.”

Whenever you’re shut down at the entry level that you deserve, most people ramp down. They lower their expectations. I’ve had more luck—I won’t say success, but more luck in ramping it up. If they say, “Okay, you can’t do that,” fine, I’ll do something higher or—I don’t want to say better, but at another level.

So I applied for a position at Stanford [University] when they were admitting their first Chicano students, a large group of Chicano students, about a hundred, to be an assistant dean of students, and I was fortunate enough to get the job. I was twenty-six and I was an assistant dean. I tell people now, I say it was easier for me to be an assistant dean in ’69, easier to be an assistant dean at Stanford than to get a job as a newspaper reporter. That’s the way it was, at least the way it was for me.

So Stanford put out a press release that they were hiring a Chicano dean or assistant dean, and actually, the San Francisco Chronicle, the headline was “Chicano Dean At Stanford.”

So I'm in my office one day after the release went out, and the secretary says, "There's a phone call."

I said, "Who is it?"

"Ruben Salazar."

I said, "Oh, wow!"

So he called, and the first thing he says was, "Félix, how come you didn't tell me you were leaving town?" Like we were all good buddies.

I said, "Well, I got another job. This is the same stuff I've been telling you about Cal State L.A., get Chicano administrators, Chicano faculty, get more students in there." I said, "It's the same thing we're doing in L.A."

And his line—this is not an exact direct quote, but his sense was, "Yeah, but when Stanford does it, that's news." Kind of like, yeah, in East L.A. at a college, that's natural, but when a white, rich, elite-type school like Stanford does it, then that makes it into a news story. So he did an interview with me about the job and what I was feeling, and then ran my story in the paper, a little bit of a "local boy makes good" type of thing. And that was the last spoken contact I had with him.

In the autumn of '69, Ralph Guzman, who had been at Cal State L.A. and had moved to UC Santa Cruz, gave a talk at Stanford at which he and some students had gone through the deaths in Vietnam, who was being killed, and pulled out the Spanish surnames and then computed the percentage of the people killed who had Spanish surnames, and it was a much higher percentage than what we constituted of the population, or that age group in the population. He was preparing a report, an academic article, but he gave the results at Stanford.

So I went up to Ralph afterwards, I said, "Ralph, this is good stuff. I think Ruben Salazar might be interested in this." Ralph and I had been the co-advisors to UMAS at Cal State L.A., so we had a close relationship. The research wasn't done yet. "Can I send him what you gave?"

And he said, "Yeah."

So he gave me a copy of his data and his report, and I sent it to Ruben at the Times in probably November of '69 and said that this was given by Ralph Guzman at Santa Cruz, he gave the speech at Stanford University for a Mexican American seminars program, because I wanted to say, "Hey, let people know we're here."

So I sent it to Ruben. The next week or shortly thereafter it was in the paper.

So I was up there. This was before the Internet, before online and any of this kind of stuff, and from time to time I'd go buy the L.A. Times basically to keep up with L.A., but also to see what Salazar had in the paper.

In the following winter, in '70, he leaves the Times to become the news director at KMEX. He was the most prominent Latino reporter in any English-language major daily in the country, I'm sure, at that time, and he leaves it

and works for a very small news operation. It was beyond a rip-and-read. I mean, they had a news ensemble and they had a set from ’68 when I was doing a show there, and they had gone to one field reporter in ’68. But they brought him in and it was kind of, why would he leave the L.A. Times for this station over on Bronson Avenue that just has one studio and do that? But he did. He said publicly that he wanted to report not only on his people but for his people.

Well, the Times then switched him to columnist, and he ran a column every Friday. So every Friday I would go into Palo Alto—there was a newsstand where they got the L.A. Times—and buy the Times so I could read Salazar’s column and bring it home. I read that through the spring and the summer until he got killed.

He had much more expression as a columnist, in terms of his own personal feelings. You can really see him—because he’s forty-two years old. You can really see him coming of age. He’d covered the tough stories. He’d had this rise within the newsroom from local to bureau chief, then back to local but a bigger story when he came back. He was the news director of a Spanish-language station. He found that working for KMEX was not the same as working for the L.A. Times in terms of the way the authorities treated you, and he was not afraid to express his feelings. He gave voice to a lot of us who had feelings but didn’t have a vehicle to express them at that time. We lost a lot when he was killed by that L.A. sheriff’s deputy, because he was the one person, at the time he was killed, who could speak with authority and authenticity and respect to both the Latino community and the general population of Los Angeles.

ESPINO

What qualities did he have that allowed him to negotiate into those two worlds? It was not just white, the L.A. Times at that time, but it was male-dominated, and he was writing about serious—how do you think he managed that? Was it something about his personality?

GUTIÉRREZ

I didn’t know his personality well enough to answer if that’s what it was. He came to the L.A. Times in late ’59, 1960, at the time when the paper was seeking to enhance its reputation. It had been a right-wing—all the reasons my dad wouldn’t take it. It was anti-Mexican, pro-business, pro-Republican. In 1960, when Otis Chandler becomes publisher, it takes a change that it wanted to be taken more seriously as an authoritative—they beefed up their national staff, their international reporting, and their local coverage as well. So he comes up at a time when you could have more space and more time to tell stories much more deeply.

It was a male-dominated environment, as all newsrooms were in those days and to a certain extent still are. I think he may have been in the service. He knew how to get along with the guys. There’s a chapter in a book by Gottlieb and Wolt, Robert Gottlieb and Irene Wolt, called Thinking Big, and it’s the story of the L.A. Times from their eyes, about 1977. They have a chapter called “The Odyssey of Ruben Salazar,” and in it they reference when he goes to the column that his buddies on the Times staff wondered what had happened to “good old Rube,” because basically he was one of us and now they’re seeing that he has all these feelings and these attitudes about the way Mexicans are being treated that they hadn’t seen before.

The book that Mario Garcia did, which reprinted his articles from El Paso and L.A., is titled Border Correspondent. He could cross borders. He could build borderlands where people were drawing borderlines, both culturally and professionally. Many Latino reporters in the era that followed him, blacks as well and other ethnic groups, they hire you to cover a community that they can’t cover. They don’t know the language, the culture, the history. They’re not familiar with it, so they want you to be home boys when you leave the newsroom, and then they want you to be good old boys when you come back to the newsroom. You kind of have to have a split personality to be a journalist, and I think he treaded that line as an example to others who would follow him.

He also was a singular voice. Now there’s potential for many Ruben Salazars, because we have people in many

newsrooms and more than one person per newsroom. But in those days, he was visible because of his isolation to us. I'm sure he had feelings that he could share, but at least in my dealings with him, he kept a professional demeanor with them.

ESPINO

You mentioned earlier that the first time you met him, he looked establishment.

GUTIÉRREZ

He looked very establishment.

ESPINO

Can you elaborate on that?

GUTIÉRREZ

I probably did, too. I was probably wearing—well, he was in his late thirties. He was a bureau chief. He was coming up to El Paso from Mexico City. He wasn't like hands-off, but was very comfortable. Maybe this part is as much me. We were edgy, we were young, we were trying to get in. We walked out of an LBJ [Lyndon B. Johnson] conference with Ernesto Galarza leading us and Corky [Gonzales] and all these people, and went to Sacred Heart Church in Segundo Barrio, because this is just a show kind of thing.

Our attitude among the younger more activist was this is what the World War II had approached. It was my line at the time. You know, fine, they got these hearings. It's not going to solve the problems. They had hearings on health and police abuse and education, housing, all the key issues where the cabinet officers were there to hear. But this is what that generation could produce. Now it's up to us as a younger generation to see if we can push it farther.

So in that regard he looked to me—well, he was a little younger. He wasn't in World War II, but he was in the army in the late forties, early fifties. Kind of that's part of that generation and they made it, and we wanted to make bigger changes, I guess.

ESPINO

So that term, to represent the establishment, that doesn't have a race or ethnic definition.

GUTIÉRREZ

Not in that regard. He's a Chicano. It's the old HMIC thing: who's the Head Mexican In Charge? Who's the top Mexican at the L.A. Times? That's him, Ruben Salazar. He looks like the kind that—he has the qualities, he has the demeanor, he has the bearing of somebody you know who could have an impact on that newspaper. But he's there with us while we're kind of plotting and talking about what needs to change beyond this kind of showcase hearings that LBJ was having. He's not playing a role. He may have with others of his generation, but he's there to see what's happening.

I mean, in his speeches he would quote from the Chicano press. I mean, none of these, La Raza or East Side, Chicano Student Movement, La Causa, the Brown Beret paper, none of this existed when he left in '65. He comes back and there's all these other Chicano alternative underground newspapers, and he quotes them in his column. So he didn't see us as—he didn't see an oppositional relation like, "Be like me." He realized—in a sense, it's the same sense I had, that progress for our group would not be made based on individual achievement. You had to have something that would uplift or open doors or push or however you want to describe it, others, so they could have the same opportunity. You couldn't do it as a one-person-at-a-time basis, and I think he saw that, and it's reflected in his columns when he becomes a columnist.

ESPINO

So when you say “establishment,” you mean a different style, so to speak, in achieving those goals, from your own self and your own generation.

GUTIÉRREZ

No. He emulated what I would have liked to have been. At that point I said, heck, I’d be glad to be in the establishment if I could get in the L.A. Times and get a job, and probably would have. It wasn’t a frame of mind. It was more a way to get into the place where the decisions are being made so you could have an impact, and part of that was understanding how they did things.

I mean, in terms of my own case, it’s my own, I guess, my history. There was four Chicanos in the whole Administration Building at Cal State L.A. when I worked there, and two of them were secretaries. One of them I married, and the other one worked in the business section, and that was it. There was no Chicanos, so to the kids I was as much establishment as they were. I had been student-body president. I had a master’s from Northwestern. So, yes, I said, well, that would be the next step for me, so in that sense it was to see what he was doing, but also realizing when you get there, you’re not, “I made it, you didn’t. Tough luck,” or, “I’m hard. Work hard. Be like me.” It was that there was other changes that needed to be made.

I think in my regard there was probably some, “How could this guy be with us if he’d been the student-body president and he works for the administration?” and all that. On the other hand, he can get us money. [laughs] All these things come out, so you’re there, and I was younger than some of the students I was advising, supposedly advising as part of the group. So established was seen as he’d made it into the establishment.

ESPINO

You also had some experience with Ralph Guzman, who was older also.

GUTIÉRREZ

Yes. He was World War II generation.

ESPINO

So he was even older than Ruben Salazar. Would you notice some patterns in his dealings with the mainstream bureaucracy of Cal State Los Angeles and kind of treading those lines between the good old boys and the Chicano Movement?

GUTIÉRREZ

Ralph Guzman was—I think out of that group in UMAS at Cal State L.A. between ’67 and ’69, there must be at least twenty-five of us who have doctorates. There are probably more. I think Guzman was—I would give a lot of that role-modeling to him, what you can do with your education, don’t stop where you are.

He was out of the old East L.A. College crowd of the late forties that I mentioned, that I think was the one that had that Avenue 21 “Get your kid into college” when I was in elementary school. So he had been part of a very active student organization in the late forties, early fifties—I don’t have the years exactly—where they would go door to door and register people. He’d been involved in the CSO [Community Service Organization], all that. He had been part of those groups.

Then he’d gone from East L.A. College to L.A. State, as it was called then, and he’d worked. I’m not sure what all

his jobs were. He'd been in the Peace Corps as an administrator, not a volunteer, and then he came back to UCLA to get his Ph.D. in political science when they were doing—or at the time while he was there, doing the Mexican American Studies Project, [Leo] Grebler, [Joan W.] Moore, and Guzman, a big Ford Foundation project.

So when he came to Cal State L.A., he was at the dissertation level. He was working on the project. They were doing these advanced reports for the Ford Foundation before the big book The Mexican American People: The Nation's Second Largest Minority came out, and in his story—I'll just repeat—he and Joan Moore, who worked on the project—Grebler was the lead, was a professor, was the lead guy—were going to take faculty positions at UC Riverside, which was growing at that time. The way he said it, they're driving out from UCLA on the 10 Freeway—I'm not sure; I guess it was 10 by then—San Bernardino Freeway, and they go by this Cal State L.A. He said Joan Moore said, "What's that?"

He said, "That's L.A. State College. That's where I went to school."

She goes, "What's it like?"

He said, "Well, it's a state college." Then they kept on driving to Riverside. Well, he said by the time they got to Riverside, he said, "What the hell am I doing coming all the way out here to Riverside? I should see if I can get a job at Cal State L.A.," be in East L.A. where I lived. He'd grown up in East L.A.

So he came and got a job teaching. He was assistant professor of political science. He had not finished his dissertation yet, and he was working on the project.

He knew everybody in the Chicano Movement. He knew Corky, he knew [Reies Lopez] Tijerina, he knew Cesar [Chavez], so he was our outside guy. He knew he could get people. They'd come and they'd see us. Ernesto Galarza, whatever, you name them, he knew them. I was the inside guy, because I'd gone to school there, I was working there. So, "We need a room for this. We need to book the free-speech area for that. How do you get money for here?" Those were the two roles that we played in terms of UMAS.

I remember he had Corky—I think it's still a sore point with some UCLA people now. They had gotten Corky and Tijerina to come to speak at UCLA, funded by some student body or, anyway, some UCLA funds. Guzman found out when they were going to arrive, so he calls me up at Cal State L.A. and says, "See if you can get the free-speech area. I can get Corky and Tijerina on their way to UCLA, stop off there first." [laughs] We had a couple of days' notice, so we did. It was October 12, 1967

So he was connecting us with his world. He was a very inspirational speaker. It was kind of like we were all members of a religion and we thought we were the only members of the church, because everybody had this feeling. I'm in college, it's good, but what do I do with my learning here, and what can I do to get more people here, and how come they're telling me about this about my people that I don't really connect with? That's not really who we are. He had a way as a very captivating speaker. He had a way of inspiring people for them to do their best in organizing ways. But he was also trying to do his Ph.D., so he was like on call for everybody. I don't want to say he was the leading—well, maybe he was. He was the most visible academic that we had in L.A. at that time that I could think of.

When he went to El Paso—we were just going to go to see the things for the interagency hearings in this Chamizal. Clark Knowlton was on the faculty at University of Texas, El Paso (UTEP), who put us in touch with Junior LULAC [League of United Latin American Citizens], which was comparable to United Mexican American Students, and they arranged places for us to stay, on and on and on. They knew them.

[Robert F.] Bobby Kennedy is coming to Los Angeles. Guzman knew his press deputy, Frank Mankiewicz who'd been in the Peace Corps with him. He arranges for us to have breakfast with Bobby Kennedy out at Frank and Lucy Casado's El Adobe on Melrose. He picked the UCLA people. I picked the Cal State L.A. people. So all of a sudden you're in another league and another level through his connections and such.

You'd call him at home. I don't know what kind of personal life he had. He had a family, but he was always on call. He was always traveling. He got his degree. He was the first Chicano teacher I ever had in my life. I was working on campus and so I figured I'd take a class, so I took a poly-sci [political science] class with him first quarter he taught there.

ESPINO

What was that like?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, I hate to say this as a professor, but I don't remember a lot. It wasn't anything about Chicanos. It was some political science upper-division course. I do remember we had to go door to door and do a survey of people, their political attitudes, and he said, "I don't want anybody faking this. I know what the answers are. I know how people are going to respond to this survey." I guess it was some Gallup Poll. So we went out. Main thing I remember, it was early. It was eight o'clock in the morning.

He was on campus when he needed to be. He was not on campus all the time because of the UCLA commitments, and he was getting calls. I remember once I was in his office and somebody had called him, and he goes, "Yes, yes, this is Ralph Guzman. Yes, this is me. Yes, it's Ralph. No, no, I don't know, I don't know anything. No, I don't know the answer to that question. I'm not the right person to talk with." He finally said, "I'm an expert on Mexicans in the United States. I'm not an expert on Mexico. If you have questions about Mexico, you should call somebody who's studied that." I guess the person wasn't—he says, "Mexicans in the United States, people from Mexico." He had to explain like three times, you know, "This is what I know. This is what I can help you with."

So there were tremendous demands on him. There was maybe one other Chicano professor I can remember at that time at Cal State L.A., who was in the School of Education. There were others that joined later, but as far as I can remember, that was it.

We were co-advisors to the UMAS, so I was Mr. Inside and he was Mr. Outside. He would call me when he needed things from the campus or to know how to do things or basically how do things work, who's in charge of this or who's in charge of that.

ESPINO

So UMAS formed after you had already graduated?

GUTIÉRREZ

Yes. UMAS had formed in the spring—I wasn't here; I was at Northwestern. I think in March or May of '67. There had been these individual clubs that started on different campuses, of Mexican American students. I don't know if they were clubs yet. They started talking to each other. So they had a conference at Loyola Marymount [University], or maybe it was just called Loyola then, in which they got together, the UCLA and the USC and the Long Beach and all that, so there was already an UMAS organization forming at Cal State L.A. Monte Perez and Phil Castruita were the ones who were in the leadership. But they had different names. At East L.A. College it was called MASA, Mexican American Student Association. Up north, which was not part of this conference but was the same thing,

was called MASC, Mexican American Student Confederation. So you had kind of the same—like I said, you're in a religion, but you're the only person in the church. So you had these things cropping up.

When I came back from Northwestern with my master's, my Uncle Rosalio Muñoz, we'd had a family gathering at the house. I tend to remember that it was in my honor for getting my master's degree, but I'm not sure. Anyway, I was back. When I got done with it—we had lunch. It was Sunday afternoon or something. I remember my cousin Ricardo [Muñoz] came by, said, "You know, they're organizing a club for Mexican Americans at Cal State L.A."

I said, "Yeah. When I was gone, everything happened." I thought it was a one-year—[Julian] Nava got elected to the school board. I'd heard about this thing at Loyola. I said, "Yeah, the year I was gone, that's when everything took place."

He goes, "Well, they're organizing a club, and here's the two guys. I have the names of the guys that are organizing it." I think he might have been at the Loyola thing. So he gave me Monte Perez, who I did not know, and Phil Castruita, who I did know. He said, "Call them. They'll tell you what's happening."

About a week and a half later—I didn't do it right away—I met Monte outside my office. He was working with Peggy Newgarden on something, who also worked at the EPIC [Educational Participation in Communities] project. I said, "Man, I've been wanting to meet you." So he told me—and they had a problem that they couldn't reserve rooms because they weren't a certified campus organization, so they couldn't meet, and the student government didn't meet during the summer. So I said, "Well, I can get you a room. I'll just sign for it." So that was like manna from heaven or whatever.

So we met that summer in the student lounge in really a room that probably held eight, twelve people. Lillian Roybal was part of the group, Dolores Castro, Vicki Castro, and that's how it kept going. Then in the fall it just took off. So it was there.

ESPINO

Do you remember that first meeting? Do you remember what was discussed?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, it was kind of all, what are we here for? We're together in one place at one time. What's the glue? I mean, some of them were with the La Raza group at Epiphany Church, and were active in that, so they were very politically organized.

I remember Lillian Roybal. Her dad's [Edward Roybal] a congressman, so she knew a lot of people that she could connect us with, Robert Aragon and others who were working within federal agencies. Some of us, like me, I just said, "Let's have an impact on the campus." That was my world. "Let's get more kids in. Let's have more presence, have more visibility here." So it was kind of looking at what's the common ground that we can work.

The EPIC program had a lot to do with tutoring and service, so I said, "I can use these. They can volunteer to work at the Cleland House and Teen Post and things like that." So there was a lot of talking and some listening. I guess that might be the best way to say it. But it was a very small group. It was very intense.

Then later when school starts, then more people start—they hear about it and more people start coming and signing up, or you'd just see somebody on campus and say, "Hey, have you heard about the UMAS? We have a meeting." So then as it grew, then it developed more momentum, but there also was more space for the different levels of

activity. So the ones who wanted to go tutoring, fine, here's where you go tutor. The ones who wanted to go shake up the university, you can do that. The ones who wanted to be heavies in the community, organize the school walkouts, you know. We all hung together. We all knew that whatever you were doing, it was for the movement.

ESPINO

So there wasn't conflict regarding different political—I think with Philip's interview he talks a little bit about how there were some strong ideologies and some more mainstream kind of approaches.

GUTIÉRREZ

Yes, there was. Phil's a poli-sci major, so his expertise is far beyond mine in that area. I basically saw it as an organizing effort, as a way to bring people together without trying to make them all think the same, which would have been impossible anyway. But do we have enough—"glue" is the best—that can bring us together to form this kind of—antiwar, whether or not to be for or against the Vietnam War was not an issue that people had agreement on. That's all I can say.

ESPINO

They didn't have agreement?

GUTIÉRREZ

No, no. I don't think anybody would come out and say they were pro-war, but they would say, "Our issues are here. Let's do this. Let's do that. Let's fight our wars here in the barrio, but not protest."

When they had the first antiwar, big—the Dow demonstration when Dow Chemical came out to recruit on campus, because they made the napalm that was used in Vietnam, there were demonstrations across the country whenever they went to a campus to recruit. It was organized by SDS [Students for a Democratic Society] and these other groups. So we're there watching it and then some guy gets up and says he's from UMAS, and he's, "UMAS is in solidarity," and none of us knew him. He had never been to an UMAS meeting. He was a Chicano, I guess.

So it was not the top issue for the group. It was more, let's get ourselves together, how can we advance our community, how can we get more of us here, how can we have more of a presence on campus and have the campus have more of a presence in the community. Later it evolves. I don't think anybody signed up to support the war, but it wasn't the top issue on the agenda in those early stages.

ESPINO

Well, just to make a comparison with something that I know a little more about, and that is, like, pro-abortion, anti-abortion, reproductive rights and feminism, during the seventies, Chicanas saw those kinds of issues as white women's issues, the right to be sterilized on demand, that kind of thing. Do you think that at that time, that's how UMAS members might have seen the antiwar protests?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, you really should talk to a member, because I was an advisor. My perception was that we had very immediate issues in our communities that were not getting proper attention. When you looked at the racial issues, it was all black and white. We were not recognized even here. There were things that we could have an impact on. How are you going to have an impact on the war? Well, my cousin later does, Rosalio. But let's organize first here, and let's take on issues we can do something about.

I may have also been driven by some awareness of what my parents had been involved in thirty years earlier, getting kids into college, having a presence on the campus. They didn't try to start Chicano Studies or anything in

the 1930s, but it was kind of, college is for us, and we should have a force to be in college, not just a few kids get in and make something out of their lives. So I think at least from my standpoint—when it went to the antiwar, I was there.

I remember we had a blood drive. Peggy Newgarden, who I worked with in EPIC, she was Anglo, very much against the war. She'd go to San Francisco and march and on and on and on. So they had a blood drive to give blood, and so you could have your blood go to Vietnam or not to go to Vietnam. So she's all antiwar, but she says, "I'm going to give my blood and designate it to go to Vietnam. If a soldier needs my blood, they can have it."

I went, "Peggy, you're supporting the war effort. I'm going to give my blood, and it has to stay here." I think it's symbolic. That was kind of the way it looked to me. This is '67. That's an issue, it's a big issue, but it's not an issue I can have a big impact on. Getting more Chicano kids in here, having a president that brings speakers to campus, organizing, mobilizing people here, that's where the energy went.

Later it becomes a bigger issue. Really, '67 in December, we meet at USC, the North and the South, MASC and UMAS for the first time, and my recollection, I was doing the press relations, so I wasn't in the meetings. We met over here across from the library in an auditorium. The conference breaks up. It was a scripted conference. They were going to vote to get more Chicanos into college and this and that, but it breaks up on the war issue in the end. The North wanted to have a march, a protest against this and for Chicanos and that, and the South in the end said, "Okay, we'll do that," and the last day of the conference we went and picketed the L.A. Rams football game. Not all antiwar. It did not end up being a statewide organizing thing, although we had contact with people we hadn't seen before.

ESPINO

This was pre-Chicano Moratorium, then.

GUTIÉRREZ

Yes. This is in December '67.

ESPINO

That's early.

GUTIÉRREZ

Yes, I called. Jack Jones of the L.A. Times, he said, "I don't work on the weekends."

I said, "Fine. We're going to have a press conference on Monday," and basically it was all written down. "We're going to demand more Chicano Studies."

Anyway, the conference broke up, so they didn't vote on any of this stuff. So I called the City News Service to call off the news conference—it was on their budget. Well, I didn't know the L.A. Times didn't take the City News Service, so I get a call from Jack Jones on Monday. "Hey, Félix." It was a rainy day on Monday. It was raining on campus. "There's nobody here. What's going on?"

I said, "Oh, we cancelled the press conference."

"You did?"

I said, “Yeah, we told City News.”

He goes, “The L.A. Times does not take City News Service.”

So I said, “Well, I’m sorry. Well, I can go down to talk to you.”

He said, “That’s okay, I’ll go back to the office.” [laughs]

But there was not a unanimity on it. I remember that same conference, we had sessions on how to do tutoring, and some girls had come, a couple of girls who were pretty conservative for the group had come to do that, and then the tutoring session got cancelled because they were all political mobilization, this and that. I remember they just walked out. They just left. That’s not what they came for. They wanted to learn about tutoring, how to organize tutoring sessions. So it was a lot of people with a will looking for a way, and some wanted to dominate the way, and others said, “Well, let’s see where it all goes.”

I have no political insights, though. The UCLA crowd was much more—in my perception; I have to be careful—they were much more into what Che [Guevara] wrote. They were more politically connected in terms of the theoretical types of things, what I recall, and we would have—I don’t want to say battles, but who’s the real Chicano, the people who are born in East L.A., raised in East L.A., and go to college in East L.A., or the ones who go to college on the West Side? So we’re still here. You guys are over there. We worked together. It was a friendly kind of a thing. But they would come, some of them, they’d come with their turtleneck sweaters and blue blazers and stuff, looking very campus and having read everything in the original Spanish and all this stuff, and we were just kind of, hey, we’re just trying to get some kids from across the street to go to college here if we can do it.

ESPINO

It sounds very grassroots. Would you consider it something that was a grassroots initiative?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, it was, and I think that was part of the Cal State L.A. experience. You didn’t leave home to go to college. I didn’t leave home to go to college. I went five years; I lived at home the whole time. Most of the students at Cal State L.A., they stayed at home, so they had a daily contact with where they had been to where they were. We all lived on a triangle. You had a job, you had college, and you had home. We didn’t go to a campus and then kind of focus our lives on that for four years. From that standpoint, we didn’t lose touch with where—or daily touch. I don’t want to say that UCLA did. I’m not saying that. There was a good group there and a lot of leadership came out of that group, but we were in a daily contact.

I mean, when we started EOP, that’s the other thing. They had students from Happy Valley in Lincoln Heights, between Lincoln Heights and El Sereno, who got into the EOP program, Woozer and Tomás. I don’t remember their last names. Anyway, so the campus, the college, you could live in a dorm. So they had apartment houses near the campus, so they gave these guys rooms or whatever. Well, it was party central, because, I mean, they’re just like from two hills away. They’re over here going to college and their friends are here. They’ve got their own place.

So I remember once Maria [Gutiérrez] and I went over to chaperone a party. The UMAS kids are saying, “Those guys are just partying all the time.”

So I said, “Well, we’ll go and hang around with them for some Friday night,” or Saturday night.

ESPINO

How successful was a program like that?

GUTIÉRREZ

For those two guys and for some others, it was successful, but they did not come in with the discipline. They had not been trained by the high schools to go to college. I guess that’s the best way to say it. They had potential among the early group that came in, which is the one—because I moved to Stanford the next year. They went through and they graduated, as far as I know. At least the ones I know graduated.

But I remember Carlos Jackson, who was the UMAS president, I think, at the time, he would go to their apartment in the morning and make sure they went to class. They weren’t in a gang. It wasn’t anything they had been prepared to do. That’s the best way I can say it. And there was no Chicano Studies. The thing was, you kind of had your group where you might hang around together and then you go to your individual classes, so when we started having a few classes, then they’d, “Here’s something that I can connect with.” That started in ’68, ’69.

ESPINO

You mentioned earlier—this is going back to something that you said before—you were talking about walking out of LBJ’s—was it a breakfast?

GUTIÉRREZ

No, it was full-fledged conference. It was called the Interagency Commission on Mexican American Affairs or something like that. What LBJ had done, being from Texas, he had set up an agency within the federal government that would monitor Mexican American affairs. Vicente [T.] Ximenes was the head of it, and they had cabinet hearings. So he had his cabinet officers from the relevant agencies, HEW [Department of Health, Education and Welfare], Education, Labor, and then they were having hearings at El Paso del Norte at the same or just prior to, but in conjunction with the transfer of the Chamizal from the United States to Mexico. So we went early to be part of those hearings or to see the hearings.

We had a meeting up in Hess Kramer, Wilshire Boulevard Temple’s campgrounds up in Malibu, where the Chicano leader and Mexican American political leadership had gotten together to talk about what they were going to say at the hearings. They saw this as their chance to present our needs to the cabinet-level officers.

I got in and Phil Castruita got in, because we said, “You need student representation.” This was October, September, October. So we got to go, and they didn’t have any arrangements for press coverage. So then they remembered some guy up in San Francisco had done press, so I said, “I can work with him,” because I figured I could learn. He showed me how to do press conferences and such, and then Phil helped out, too.

So then we went to El Paso and we took a carload of—I just took my car and took three kids, two from Cal State L.A. and one from USC. We drove there. When we got there, Tijerina’s there and all these people are there, so then we got up and walked out. It was part of the more activist group. But it wasn’t all one room. We said, “We’re not going to go to the meetings anymore,” kind of thing.

ESPINO

What happened? What led to that?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, part of it was, at least on my standpoint, I remember Armando Morales gave this testimony on police brutality. He was a psychiatric social worker at UCLA, gave this really dynamic presentation on police brutality and police abuse. He was a role model for me. He had his facts, he could deliver them straight, he didn't pull any punches, and on and on. I remember when he finished I went up to him, "Man, Armando, that's great. You really told those guys—." I think it was the attorney general. "You really told them what's happening."

He just looked at me and said, "All I did was give their data back to them. Everything I gave them was out of federal or public reports. I was just telling them back what they should have known in the first place." And I think that was kind of our attitude. We're telling them about us by telling them stuff they should already know.

Secondly, you know, we're young. We had high aspirations, so, yes, we're going to overturn this. We're going to change things. I didn't understand what a hearing was. I just thought you went in and somebody said, "Okay, we'll do this," or, "We'll do that." So it was a showcase more than a place for things to happen. They issued reports. They do what agencies did and such.

So part of it, "Let's mobilize. Let's go to the streets. Let's go to the community. What are we doing in this fancy hotel, El Paso del Norte?" So there was a march or a walkout. We walked out and walked to the Sacred Heart Church. Ernesto Galarza was not the only speaker, but he was one of them. He was the main speaker and leader.

ESPINO

The walkout was because you felt like—

GUTIÉRREZ

It wasn't doing anything. It was a show. We were like, I don't know, extras on a set, I guess would be the way to say it. It was a staged event.

ESPINO

It didn't have anything to do with someone not being invited or included?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, that's another—I was invited, Phil Castruita wasn't. What the hell. We're there at the same time at the Hess Kramer. They say, "Set up the sign-up sheet." We both sign up. I get my name on the list, he doesn't.

I remember the guy came from the White House. We were there all weekend, on a Friday night through Sunday, and the White House is going to come. There was some Mexican or Chicano guy at the White House who worked for LBJ. The guy's not there. He's supposed to be there. Here's the California political leadership. So finally the guy shows up on Sunday, Sunday morning, and I remember the guys said, "Where have you been?"

"Oh, my mother lives in L.A. I've been visiting my mother," or something along that line. [laughs] We're out there, North, South, Central Valley, and he's there, it's a family vacation for him. He got a free trip.

So he's asked who's going to get invited, because everybody, Chicano, Modesto or whatever, and he just said, "The computer will decide," which in those days we didn't really—you know, computers get programmed by people. "The computer will decide who gets invited. You can all come, but the computer will decide." So some people got invited and others didn't.

Phil and I, I guess it can be told now, just put a phony name down to see what happened. There was a guy that I worked with named Carlton Blanton, African American, so we put down Carlos Blanton, to see, and Carlos Blanton got invited, who didn't even exist. Phil Castruita, who's the real head of the Mexican American kids at Cal State L.A., didn't. So I don't know what the system was.

We went there. I was walking in—I had credentials—when Hubert Humphrey, the V.P., was going to speak at the campus auditorium. They had open doors to go in, so Gil Cardenas, who's now at Notre Dame [University], was with me and was taking pictures. He wanted to get some shots. So they let me in and then they let him in, and then there was another door and I had the badge, and then they let me in the next one, and then they tell him to go out. So he looks around. All of a sudden he's two doors away from me and kind of, "Hey, Félix, help me out," and they're telling him to move on.

I just put my hands—I said, "I don't know. I don't know what—." So he didn't have the right kind of badge to get in. There may have been some who walked out on that basis, but there were those of us who had credentials who also walked out.

ESPINO

Was there a moment that you had decided "We're going to walk out during this?" Did you know what was going to be said at that moment?

GUTIÉRREZ

I was a bit player. I was doing the press releases with—the guy who was doing the press was very much involved with MAPA [Mexican American Political Association], so Bert Corona is boycotting the president's interagency hearings, press release. "It is rumored that Bert Corona may attend." So I'm cranking out these things. Well, the media's not waiting for that stuff, and Bert, in the end, does show up anyway, as I recall. So it was kind of—he always had a press release for me to do, and I'm getting wrapped up in the moment, plus these aren't going anywhere. I mean, they're going out, but nobody's running them. So there was a certain point where I just said, "Well, I'm going to hang with the younger generation and do what they're doing." It was more consistent with what I felt would have an impact.

But we were all there. I mean, there were people from Texas. I remember there was a guy from Corky's group who hung around with us from the Crusade for Justice. It was the first time Tijerina's group came down. We'd met the leaders of these different things, but we hadn't all been in one place at one time. For me, anyway, I saw it as an older generation. "The World War II generation, this is what they've been able to produce. Let them do it. Let them have their show. Let them run their thing. At a certain time they're going to be old when we're still young, and we'll take over." Now I'm older, they probably say the same thing about me.

But some people wanted to confront the World War II generation and to push it. "You haven't done enough. You're sellouts. You're Tío Tacos," all this stuff.

I said, "Look. It's their show. Let them play it out, and in the long run we're going to push them to do more, and then we'll do more on our own."

ESPINO

Do you recall if Edward Roybal was there at those hearings?

GUTIÉRREZ

I don't recall seeing Roybal there. He probably was. Jose Angel Gutiérrez, I swear he was there, but every time I see him he tells me wasn't, from MAYO [Mexican American Youth Organization] in Texas, so I'll accept his word. Cesar Chavez wasn't there that I recall. It was the ones who wanted to have a political agenda.

ESPINO

I'm just wondering, when you refer to the older generation, if there's anyone specific that you could put a name to that represented that older generation, World War II generation.

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, Julian Nava, in terms of an elected official. Julian Nava had just been elected to the L.A. City School Board the previous spring, and there was a lot of hope, a lot of aspiration, and so that was progress. We saw that. But we realized he wasn't going to be able to change the whole school district or the whole school board. He was there. I remember him.

ESPINO

He was at that meeting?

GUTIÉRREZ

Yes. Juan Acevedo, the guy who did the pictures, the covers for The Mexican Voice. He was Roybal's right-hand kind of—I don't think he had a position with Roybal. He's the one that ran the narcotic-prevention project I talked about last time. He was there. There were a number—Bert Corona. I mean, there were people who knew my dad. There were people who had known my dad from the thirties who were coming with the California group, so it was like your father's generation. I mean, we didn't think they'd been active enough or done enough, but in the end, what was there to gain for us pulling down what they did? Just infighting among our group not the real establishment. You just walk away.

ESPINO

So what happened? What were the repercussions of that move?

GUTIÉRREZ

The federal government put out all their reports. Guzman was there. He testified on some issues, I recall. At least I'm pretty sure he was there. As I recall, he was there. I might have to double-check that.

We met activists who were more at grassroots organizing level from across the country, at least for me, that we hadn't seen before. Corky has the youth conference in 1969, I think, in the spring. We got to know each other from a Movimiento basis.

ESPINO

So that was one of the positive things that came out of that?

GUTIÉRREZ

That and the realization that if something was going to happen, we would need to take our own responsibilities to make it happen. Phil was quoted, but I think I'm the one who said it, that if these older guys don't start showing some leadership, they're going to have tracks down their back, because we're going to—it was a lot of boastful-type talking. But it's up to us, and I think really up until that time you'd—that was the staging. You tell the leadership, the cabinet secretaries, what's happening in your communities and they'll take action to fix it. That's what a hearing is. Well, we came out of that, or at least I came out realizing that if we're going to change things, you can't just tell people. You have to make things happen. You have to create the conditions where they have to react to you rather

than you waiting for them to do the right thing.

ESPINO

Do you remember if there was a plan afterwards of how you wanted to do that?

GUTIÉRREZ

It led to the founding of the Southwest Council La Raza, which became the National Council La Raza. It was Ford Foundation-supported, I read later, and that they had retained Galarza as a consultant or organizer at that point, so I'm not sure that was the founding of it, but that led to kind of Aztlán-wide connections.

ESPINO

What about for yourself?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, for me it was a different—I'd driven through Texas, north Texas, but I had never been in Texas, to the extent that El Paso is Texas. I mean, so going to a place—college students here are very friendly. We'd say, "Could you get a job in the bank?" "Yeah, yeah, you can get a job in a bank, cleaning the back." "Could you get a job as a teller?" "Oh, no, they wouldn't," that kind of thing. We went one place to eat. Did I tell you this? Okay. We went one place to eat. This guy was Mickey, I can't remember his last name, was showing us around, and so I have a carload of guys and he had some kids in his car. So we drive up to this place—it's a hamburger stand—and we walk in. They have the menu above the counter, so we're all looking at the menu to see what to order, and the owner comes around from behind the counter and says, "What are you guys doing here?" He came to me. I said, "Well, we're looking for something to eat." "Well, what are you doing here?" kind of like. Mickey, I remember he came and says, "Well, we'll go. There's another place down there." I said, "No, we're here." I didn't realize they didn't serve Mexicans, or maybe not that many Mexicans. He didn't kick us out. He just said, "What are you doing here?" And the kid from Texas knew what that meant. We're there to have a good time, so there's nightclubs and dancing, so, "Let's go here." "No, no, we don't want to go there. There's another place you can go to." I think there were probably some places you could go, where Mexicans could go. Or, "Let's go to Juarez. It's better down there," or whatever. I hadn't had that level of upfront social segregation, so I went back with a history of that, not that I'd been to the toughest part of the world, but there's a reality there that they need to deal with that we haven't had to deal with at that level in my generation, maybe in earlier generations. It was a time when—

ESPINO

I'm going to pause. [recorder turned off]

ESPINO

We're back. One thing that came up for me when you were talking is just the idea that many of the leaders that you mentioned who were at these hearings were men and not women. Were there any women in prominent leadership positions, even of that World War II generation or younger?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, I remember in organizing, we went to the organizing meetings before the Hess Kramer conference, and Audrey Kaslow, who worked somewhere in the county social services, was a member of that. She may have been the only woman, at least in the meetings I went to, and was fully part of the meeting. She wasn't making the nachos and things like that. So she was part of the leadership group that brought that Camp Hess Kramer event together. They had separate hearings in separate rooms, so you kind of went to the one you wanted to hear, so I can't recall which ones had women that might have been testifying, and if the ones who were testifying, if there were women, were going beyond welfare rights or education or women's-type issues.

ESPINO

She's the one person that you—

GUTIÉRREZ

She's the one I remember. She was very prominent. She'd been out of the George Brown—when George Brown was a congressman from Monterey Park, East L.A. in the early sixties, he had a very hard-working group of young people around him, relatively young, well, I mean, they're older people to me, but they're younger than—who just worked for George Brown, and she was part. As I recall, she had come out of that group. It was a cadre of leadership that had come through that. Roybal had the more central part of East L.A. and then George Brown had more as you went to the east, that district.

ESPINO

Then let's just look a little bit at the prominent political leaders, the mainstream political leaders like LBJ. Did the community or yourself have an opinion about him?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, I'll express what I heard and saw at the Hess Kramer conference. Ed Roybal was not there the whole time, as I recall. He was there. Anyway, he wasn't on the program the whole time. Juan Acevedo, one of his right-hand men, had been one of the key organizers of this. At a certain point in the meeting Roybal got up to speak on the stage. He was a very strong LBJ loyalist, and he was talking about all the stuff LBJ was doing that was good for our communities, and there was a lot. Education, War on Poverty, a lot of these programs were federal dollars that had not been there before. But the issue was Vietnam that these people were raising. There were two issues. One was Vietnam, that the ones who were anti-LBJ, and the other ones they called the Green Card holders, the Green Card workers, which were Mexican nationals who could work in the United States because they had their green identity card. I didn't know what a Green Card worker was. Neither would Phil. I'd been to college, so I didn't have that. But the Green Card holders were taking the jobs away from the domestic workers, or that was the allegation. So I remember Roybal being put on the—"How can you be supporting LBJ on the Vietnam issue?" And he just said, "Look. Domestically, he's the strongest president we've ever had. He's the best president we have for domestic issues that relate to our community," and he felt support was merited on that basis. I don't recall that he said a lot about the war, but he recognized that there was opposition to the war at that point. Beyond that, who do we have? We didn't have any City Council, Board of Supervisors. Phil Soto may have still been in the state legislature, but I don't recall if he was or he wasn't in 1967. You know, Congress, Roybal. Julian Nava was on the school board and he'd just been elected. I can't recall if he was at Hess Kramer or not. I know he was in El Paso. But we didn't have a lot. There was not a political leadership there that you could go to that had elective office. Heck, being student-body president at Cal State L.A., I probably had as many constituents as some of these other people before, with 18,000 students. So everybody was trying to do what they could do, but nobody had a real lever on the power except for Ed Roybal.

ESPINO

He had Johnson's ear, possibly.

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, he did, and he was a Democratic Party loyalist. I mean, later—I can skip ahead nine months. The Bobby Kennedy delegation is elected in the California primary in June, first week of June in '68, and then Kennedy's killed. I was doing another press conference on birth control, that birth control information was going into the black and brown community, but they had to go through agencies which, I think, said "birth control" on the door. So people wouldn't go, because women, they didn't want to be seen going in there. So they started a program where they would provide the funds or whatever, or information, whatever it was, to doctors, so then you could go to your family physician and get the information there. So we set up a press conference, and Roybal was there. My job was to take him back after the press conference, back to the Federal Building. So anyway, they had the press conference and then I give him a ride back. It may have been July. It was into the summer. I said, "Are you going to be at the convention?" I mean, here's—he and Henry B. Gonzales are the longest serving Mexican American legislators that I

know of, at least, from Texas and California at the time, and he says—he was very friendly. He says, “I’ll be at the convention —.” [telephone interruption] [recorder turned off]

ESPINO

Okay, we’re back.

GUTIÉRREZ

All right. So I asked the congressman, as we were driving back to the Federal Building, would he be at the convention in Chicago that was coming up, and he was very clear and very direct and very careful of what he said, was that he would be at the convention, he would have full floor credentials, he’d be able to go in and out of the convention, but obviously he was not a delegate. He didn’t say that, because he had been on the LBJ slate, which had been beaten by the RFK slate. So I remember thinking, after I left him off, here’s our man in Washington, and because he was on the wrong slate, he has no official voice in the convention that he had. So we did not have the access or the levers to power, political power, that we have today. It was more kind of, how do we get in? How does it work? Again, the establishment, is there somebody who can get in there who can help the rest of us get in or have an impact?

ESPINO

Do you remember when he was elected to Congress, Roybal?

GUTIÉRREZ

Yes.

ESPINO

Some people have said that when he left East Los Angeles, he left a huge void because there was still so much work there, and then other people have said what he did in Congress had a larger, wider impact. Do you remember having any feelings about—

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, there were two things. I’m pretty sure I’ve got my history straight. He ran for Board of Supervisors against Debs, Ernest Debs, who’d been the City Councilman from northeast L.A. He’d been our City Councilman when we lived in Lincoln Heights. There was a long count that went into the evening, and in the end they announced that Debs had won, so Roybal, as far as I know, was still on the City Council, but he aspired to higher office. He had run for lieutenant governor in 1954, and the Democratic ticket had not prevailed. Goodwin Knight and his ticket had won. So like any politician, he was looking to go up. When he left the City Council, when he was elected to Congress, it was a big event, but there was no legacy behind him that was respected by the establishment. My mother [Rebecca Muñoz Gutiérrez], I think I’ve mentioned to you, was teaching at Rowan Avenue School in East L.A., which is actually in the county area. It’s not in the city area. Mayor [Sam] Yorty got to appoint Roybal’s replacement, and he picked Gilbert Lindsey, an African American, because there were no blacks on—I think it was because no blacks. Lindsey had been the kind of guy, he’d been a City Hall figure where if the African Americans needed something, he knew who to talk to in what agency. He was a fixture. He knew his way around City Hall. So Lindsey shows up at my mother’s kindergarten classroom one day in—whenever the appointment was, ’62 or whatever, and introduces himself. She said she had a list of people he was supposed to go see in East L.A. about who he was supposed to meet, because he was going to be the new—and she was on the list. So, the big story was that there wasn’t somebody out of our community who was then representing us in City Hall. Yorty had, at least when I was there in ’67, Al Ortega had some deputy mayor position. He was the top Mexican that you went to in the Yorty administration. I think you have to realize in those days these were white establishment institutions, and you’d find who’s the highest Mexican there in whatever position, and that person had to do their job plus represent all of us who didn’t have any way to get in. Ruben Salazar played that role at the Times, Al Ortega with the mayor, and probably others of us, me at Cal State L.A. for some people. That’s the way it was.

ESPINO

But then to go back to my original question, do you think he should have stayed in East Los Angeles?

GUTIÉRREZ

No, I don't think he should have stayed in East L.A. I think Yorty should have put another Chicano in. Fine. You can't criticize somebody for being ambitious in their own profession. He could have been forever a city councilman. He probably would have been elected forever, but he could play a larger role. But the Congress is a club, too, and you're there. I remember when Gloria Molina ran. She was in Congress, and she ran for supervisor. I was back East at the time. I think it was 1990. Somebody asked me, "Why would somebody leave Congress to be in the county board?" I was living in Washington, D.C., or just outside. "Why would anybody leave that?" I said, "To be a supervisor in L.A. County Board of Supervisors, you have control over your district. You have more constituents there than some senators in states. You have direct operational influence as to what happens there. She'll have more influence as a supervisor than she would as a member of Congress." But Roybal had gone for supervisor, and Debs had been elected, and then Molina had what was Debs' seat. Others filled it in between, Ed Edelman and others, but she has that same seat. He was open. We went to meet with him when I was at EPIC, my boss, African American woman, Vivian Gordon. He wondered is federal money funding the project, and I remember talking to him in his office and telling him, yes, his daughter [Lillian Roybal Rose] would graduate from Cal State L.A. [laughs] He was—at least my impression, he was a straight shooter. He was not a fiery speaker, but if you listened to what he said, you could understand where he was coming from and that he wasn't going to sugarcoat things, like, "LBJ's the best president we have domestically. Focus on this. Fine, you can oppose him over here, but if you want money coming into your communities, he's the guy that's doing it."

ESPINO

You mentioned Lillian right now, Lillian, his daughter, that she was at Cal State Los Angeles during the time that—

GUTIÉRREZ

Earlier Lucille was a student, too, but I don't think she was a student at the time we organized UMAS. She had already graduated.

ESPINO

Do you think that Lillian was treated differently because of her—

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, I haven't heard her say this directly, so I'd better not say. I've heard from others who have heard her speak that they said that there were times in speeches, that she was in the early organizing of UMAS, which she was in that small room, and that there was not equal opportunity for women, and that's one of the reasons she didn't stay involved. But you should ask her. I do know from firsthand that her dad was very anxious that she graduate. I think she'd come in about the same time I had. She was one of us in UMAS, I guess is the way to say it. She didn't say, "I'm the congressman's daughter. You all have to listen to me," or anything like that. She was in, connected. She had connections at other levels that we didn't have, which you would imagine, but she wasn't like, "Do it my way. I know how this thing works." She was very much in touch with what we needed to do and wanted to do, and we were figuring out what it was going to be.

ESPINO

You said she was one of you.

GUTIÉRREZ

Yes.

ESPINO

Can you maybe elaborate a little bit about what you mean by that?

GUTIÉRREZ

She didn't play the role of being the congressman's daughter, "Therefore I can wire this for you," or, "I can do that," or, "Listen to me." I think she, like a whole lot of us, was coming into age and consciousness as to who you were individually and who you were as a member of a group and how you could—I don't know how to say it—separate and combine both roles. You had to separate yourself out in order to get your degree and get your classes and to get into your profession, but you also had to combine a responsibility in the fact that as you being there, you represent a larger group of people who weren't there, and that you weren't just going to say, "I made it and you didn't. I'm smarter than you are." All of us were dealing with that. I wish she had stayed involved, but you'd have to ask her why she didn't. I don't know and I'd better not guess.

ESPINO

But as an observer, and not just about Lillian Roybal, but as an observer who was a little bit older than some of these younger students, the gender dynamics, the political approaches, if you can remember—I mean, it's a long time ago—how people were able to voice their different ideas, was it something that made people work together, or tension, or people were silenced? Do you remember?

GUTIÉRREZ

There were tensions. There were people who spoke more eloquently than others, people that always had it more together because they had had more time to think about it and could express themselves well. There were some like me, who came across as really Joe College, because I was, and there were others like Antonio Rodriguez, who is now an attorney, who was more connected with the community. He just came across as not gang, but just more community-based than I was. Male voices predominated in terms of number. The women would be like Maria Baeza, the vice president of UMAS, but the president would be a guy. There were different political tensions, but I think basically everybody was looking for a way to express themselves. Bob Gomez was an artist. He was an art major. He could do beautiful murals and things like this, and he was with us. If we needed posters and stuff, he would do them. But he probably wasn't the most political radical guy, but if we needed posters for a political rally, he would do it. I would do press releases for events that "I'm not sure this is all going to work." It's a mix. "But, fine, that's what they want to do, I'll see if we can get them some coverage." There was a lot of mutual support in that early era. I'm talking about '67 to '69, because then I left in '69. My wife, Maria [Gutiérrez], ran—I think it was just before or shortly after we'd gotten married—she ran for president of UMAS, and there were two guys. The group had kind of split into two groups, and one guy said—did I tell you this story? Anyway, they each had their candidate and neither was going to win, because the one from one side wouldn't vote for the other. So Maria ran for president. I wasn't there; I was working. But she said, "Well, elect a woman." But they wouldn't vote for a woman. Gil Cardenas, who's now at Notre Dame, said, "If you guys all say you're radical, this is supposed to be a radical organization, if you're so radical, vote for a woman to be the president of UMAS," and she couldn't get the votes. So then Carlos Jackson, who was somebody who was well qualified, he just wasn't a candidate, agreed to run and then both sides would vote for him, and he got elected president. So at certain levels it was a male-dominated preserve.

ESPINO

Sounds like it. You said you had Vicki Castro.

GUTIÉRREZ

Oh, women were involved. They were active. I remember once Francisco Martinez, he was using a lot of cuss words. Now, Vicki doesn't remember this, but I do, so I'll go with my memory. He would be at these meetings, and every third word would be some cuss word about this and that. So Vicki said, "You know, let's keep it civil. Let's be polite. Let's just kind of maintain." Her point was that she had worked that summer at Glen Alta in Happy Valley, where I'd gone to school, toughest barrio or whatever, so she said, "I was there and the gang kids where Happy

Valley gang always came." They worked on the school playground. "They were there and never in my presence did I ever hear—these are real cholo types—did they ever use any cusswords, and if they can express themselves without using cuss words, you should be able to too." Then Martinez just came right back at her. He said, "Well, if you didn't hear any cuss words, then you didn't really see what they're really like. Then you don't know those people and their reality," on and on and on and on and on. So it was kind of, how do we control the dialogue, the dynamic in that particular exchange, as to what it was. If you really want to be down with the barrio, they're going to be cussing all over the place. She's saying, "I'm there. They didn't, or they didn't when I was there. They showed respect for women." I think that was her larger issue.

ESPINO

That's really interesting. Did you find that same dynamic in other situations, where people felt like, like you said earlier, who's more Chicano, those who are going to school in East Los Angeles or those who are going to school in the West Side? Was that something that permeated the period?

GUTIÉRREZ

No, I wouldn't say it permeated. No, it was more like if you're tossing things back and forth. It wasn't a division. It was maybe something you'd pull out if you wanted to. I think all of us were self—I saw more of that at Stanford, where we have kids taken out of the barrio, out of their community, and put in this all-white institution, and then they manifest, a number of them, a more Chicano-barrio identity than they ever had back in their home community. It's kind of like, I'm so close to the center of being assimilated, I need to assert my group ethnic identity in a way that is counter, in many ways, to a lot of what I did to get in here in the first place. I think from us at Cal State L.A., we had that kind of, well, where's this going to take me? Corky's line, "A long way to nowhere." We're driven by the Anglo dream of success, so I'd better stay connected with what I have. Look at what my dad heard. "You may be going to college, but you're not going to get a better job." I'd better stick with at least something that I know, because I don't know where I'm doing here is going to end me up in any place any better than anybody else. So you manifest an identity or a thinking process as to what do I keep and how do I express it. There's others who've studied this third-hand or from a longer distance, but it was kind of, "I know I need to do this to be who I want to be professionally, but I don't want to leave back what I had," and maybe that wasn't connected. Maybe I'd lost some of that on the way. I certainly felt that way. I was going to write an article—I never wrote it—in '67 after I got out of Northwestern. Saturday Evening Post had some "Speaking Out," or it was basically you could write a column, and I was going to write one, "Don't Throw Me in the Melting Pot." I already had the headline. I never wrote the article. But it was like, "Fine. I can go to your schools, I can get your degrees, I can do this and that, but I'm not going to be just like you. I have other interests. I have other identities. I have other loyalties or whatever that are part of me that I don't want to melt them out. I don't want them to be melted away from me." I think a lot of us—all of us felt that way, and we were looking for ways to manifest that, to show that, to express that.

ESPINO

That's really profound. You didn't write it? You never wrote it?

GUTIÉRREZ

No, I never wrote it. Actually, I talked to Carlton Blanton, the African American. He says, "Yeah, don't throw you in the melting pot because you might melt." [laughs] He had a way of getting to—"Félix, you're the most melted guy around. You're even the student-body president. You're working on here." [laughs] So I said, "Yeah, well, maybe I already—." South Pasadena High School. "You've been melting since your dad died, basically." So, no, I didn't write it. Plus, heck, we were going to meetings every night and there was conferences every weekend, here, there. It was an intense period when a lot of people all came together at the same time for the same reason and for different reasons.

ESPINO

It reminds me, that notion of "Don't throw me in the melting pot," and what you said about kind of shedding some things that you are, your Mexicanness, to achieve in these white institutions, that's the same thing that Jesus Treviño talks about in his book, Eyewitness. I think that I would just like to ask you, did you feel some of that, some

of that “I need to release some of my identity in order to be successful”?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, I didn’t feel you had to release it. I didn’t have as much as others had, given South Pasadena, given we’d grown up in East L.A., but English was the dominant language at home. My parents had both gone to college. What I felt was that there was no reinforcement. It’s not going to help you where you want to go. None of that’s going to—where you’re going, that’s not going to be a benefit for you, even though I wanted to teach in East L.A., these kinds of things. I remember when I got the job at EPIC, after getting out of Northwestern, they had a banquet for the leaders of it, and they were introducing me as the new staff member as part of the banquet. I thought I’d been hired because I’d been student-body president, because I’d helped found it, all this stuff. So the Director for Student Activities, who the program reported to, Bob Brass who was a good friend and had hired me, said—he introduced me as Félix. Because this was a different group. When I was student-body president, it was the fraternity guys, the kids involved with student. The ones that were involved with EPIC were volunteer, more get out there, a little more liberal radical types, some of them. So anyway, he introduces me as the guy who came to Cal State L.A. and had been the editor of the paper and student-body vice president and student president and had helped write the EPIC thing, so this was my résumé. Then he says, “But the real reason we hired Félix, because of his intimate knowledge of East L.A.” The dinner was in Alhambra. I’d come down from South Pasadena. So I said, “Intimate? I haven’t lived in East L.A. for ten years.” I was kind of surprised. I was taken aback. I knew my way around geographically, but I didn’t have an intimate knowledge of East L.A. Then I realized, see, what he was saying is, “Because he’s a Mexican American and he knows his way around that part of the country.” So I said to myself, if they hired me because I’m Mexican American, well, that’s what I’m going to be. [laughs] So it was kind of like, I know I got the job at Stanford because I was Chicano. The worst thing that could keep you out, when this affirmative-action stuff started in the late sixties, that’s what would get you in, that’s what distinguished you. So then when you get in there, you don’t want to go in on a false credential. Some people, I think, may have tried that. So you manifest, you act out, you reinforce, and you try to make a more welcoming environment for others in the kind of positions that I had, so they would not feel as alienated from the institutions that they had to commit themselves to in order to get the education they needed to go into the professions that they wanted to enter.

ESPINO

Did you feel that you were being dishonest with yourself?

GUTIÉRREZ

No. If I had never lived in East L.A., yes, if I had lived in South Pasadena all my life, I’d have said I don’t even know where Whittier Boulevard is or something, but I did. Secondly, I don’t know why I never got a job in journalism, but I’ll tell you, with the credentials I had, I should have had at least one offer someplace. So when it started coming, I said, “Well, fine. I was there when they were kicking you out for being Mexican, or keeping you out for being Mexican. I guess I can be there when they’re letting you in.” I know what it’s like to go to college and work as hard and you can and be very successful and excel and go to one of the top journalism schools in the country, and come out with a master’s degree and not be able to find any employment in teaching or in the newsroom, in the newsroom or the classroom where you can use that journalism education. That was the greatest disappointment of my professional life. I said, “What the hell does it take? I mean, you can’t even get one offer? You’ve edited the paper and you won the best paper in the state.” I said, “Man, what does it take to get into this racket?” So I figured, well, if I was there when they weren’t letting them in, I’m going to be there and I’m going to open the door so more can get in. That’s where I got involved with getting more Chicanos into Stanford and communication and then later the California Chicano News Media Association. I don’t want others to have the experience I had of being ready, willing, but unable to enter into the field of journalism. I thought numbers would solve things. We have the numbers, but we still don’t have the solution. We’re still getting knocked around by the news media in ways that there’s more misunderstanding than there should be of our community.

ESPINO

I think we can talk about that the next time. I’m going to stop it here, because that’s a whole long discussion, how we’re portrayed in the media and what you’ve observed over time as somebody who’s really been paying attention.

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, yes. It's an arms-length relationship with me, because I know the people in the media or did or whatever, but when you ask me what's it like, what does the editor say to that, that's not an experience I have on a full-time basis.

ESPINO

Right, right. But I think as somebody who's observed and who's watched and who's analyzed—

GUTIÉRREZ

And heard some of the reporters. [laughs]

ESPINO

Okay, I'm going to stop it now. [End of October 25, 2010 interview]

1.5. SESSION FIVE (November 8, 2010)

ESPINO

This is Virginia Espino. Today is November 8th, 2010. I'm interviewing Dr. Félix Gutiérrez in his office at the School of Journalism in USC [University of Southern California].

Last time we talked a little bit about some really important meetings that occurred in the late sixties under the [Lyndon B.] Johnson administration. There was the Hess Kramer meeting here in Los Angeles and then the Interagency Committee meeting hearings in El Paso [Texas]. So can we back up a little bit and can you give me more detail about the Hess Kramer, who organized it and how you were involved in that?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, I was a newcomer. Again, it was held in October of 1977, and it had been in the works for a while. Johnson had a civil rights record, he had the anti-poverty program, he's putting more money into public schooling, and a lot of them were really New Deal reforms that he was putting under the Great Society, so kind of what had been done with FDR [Franklin D. Roosevelt] put into the 1960s. Part of this was that civil rights had been pretty much a black and white issue, but he being from Texas, and he actually had taught at a Mexican school in Cotulla, his first teaching assignment when he got out of San Marcos State, so he had something for the Mexicans, too. Of course, people were raising issues and they were legitimate issues as well.

So he formed, at the cabinet level, an interagency committee or commission of cabinet officers of his cabinet, to look at Mexican American affairs. In government fashion, they had an executive director, Vicente Ximenes, and they would issue reports from time to time. I don't know that it had any enforcement authority, but it could document things that we knew were existing.

In conjunction with the transfer of the Chamizal, the land in El Paso, between El Paso and Juarez that had been part of Mexico at the end of the Mexican War in 1848, which said the border between two countries would be the Rio Grande [River], and the Rio Grande or Rio Bravo from Mexico, had changed its course through the city, so a part of the land that had been in Mexico became part of the United States when the river changed its course.

So for years the Mexicans—it was called the Chamizal—had petitioned return where the border was when the river was in the place in 1848, and the U.S. had fought and fought and fought, but apparently it went to some higher tribunal and it was ceded to Mexico. So they were going to arrange the transfer in that land, in that territory, with

Johnson and Diaz Ordaz, the President of Mexico.

So in conjunction with that, or at the same time of that, he decided to have hearings on Mexican Americans by the interagency commission and to have his cabinet officers there. Not every cabinet officer was represented. The ones that related to Mexican education, [Department of] Health, Education and Welfare, [Department of] Labor, others. I don't remember all of them. So we were going there.

So part of the organizing effort was, what are we going to say at these meetings? It was largely put together by the World War II generation, the G.I. Forum, the Mexican American leaders who came out of that era, the MAPA [Mexican American Political Association], and other groups in California. I, of course, was of a younger generation. This would have been my parents' generation.

So they began organizing a California statewide meeting to organize what they said and how they'd present, who was going to be invited and those types of things. It was to be held at Camp Hess Kramer, which is in the Malibu hills, mountains, which was a camp, a Jewish camp owned by the Wilshire Boulevard Temple, where they had camping activities for Jewish young people, but that they also would rent out to other groups. As a student at Cal State L.A., I had gone there a couple of times for retreats, leadership. We had our freshman camp. Before you start school, some of the freshman go there. So they had booked it at Camp Hess Kramer.

The County Human Relations Commission also would have an annual conference for Mexican American youth, high school students, at Camp Hess Kramer, which was funded by A-1 Kotzin, who was a pants manufacturer. A-1 Peggers were very popular pants among the Chicano youth of the era, and apparently somebody got to them or he realized, "I'm making all this money off of East L.A. and Mexican kids, so let me do something for them." Then there were other events that were there.

As far as I could tell, it was put together by people with some political interests and clout. It was the older generation. I wasn't at all in the top organizing committee. Juan Acevedo was [Edward] Ed Roybal's representative or he represented himself in organizing this. But I was working on the campus at Cal State L.A. and advising with Ralph Guzman the UMAS [United Mexican American Students] organization. Ralph, of course, knew about it. So we made an approach to them, saying, "Well, where's the students? We have to have student representatives."

So they said, "Well, yeah, if you want to come, you can come to our organizing meeting," which was about five, six people that were handling logistics and program and stuff. So I went to some of those meetings. Audrey Kaslow was there, who had some county post, and I think Bill Gutiérrez. I don't remember all the names, but it was basically logistics and such, and then they planned for the meeting.

I wasn't a student, but I looked like I was one, and I worked on campus, so I went with Phil Castruita, and we said we wanted student representation at the Hess Kramer conference, which they were reluctant to give to us, because, "What have you been doing the last twenty years?"

"Well, we've been growing up."

They didn't speak out against it. It was kind of, "Who do you represent?"

"Well, we represent—." This is before the walkouts. It's before a lot of this activism had happened. Finally, they said we could go if we would help, well, like be the K.P., the kitchen patrol, the cleanup, so kind of help serve the delegates, observe what they were doing. This was the early days of Chicano student power. So Phil said yes for

that.

At the end of the planning meeting, they had not arranged for any press coverage. Somebody at the end said, “I want media. I want to get some attention.”

So I raised my hand and said, “Well, I have a master’s in journalism from Northwestern [University].” They looked at me like, what’s your track record? I remember that Lee Soto, Leander Soto, with Arriba Juntos, which was a group in San Francisco in the Mission District, had done work with the media, had done work in newspapers or something, and he was going to come. I think he was with MAPA, so he was going to come. He said, “Well, we’ll have Lee do the media relations stuff, and, Félix, you can work with him,” which turned out to be very good for me, because all my education had been how a journalist covers events. What I learned from Lee on this one event was how you get the media to cover things, how you hold a press conference, how you notify the media, all the stuff I’d never learned. I knew how to write stuff, but not how to get it out there. So they let me work with him.

So when all the K.P. duties came out at the Hess Kramer, I’d say, “Phil, they need you in the kitchen over there with the dishes. I’m working on the media relations stuff with Lee,” which I was. He had work for me to do. And that’s how we got involved with it. There was more observation that participation, I think. Students were not yet seen as players politically. We hadn’t shown our force yet.

A year later it would have been much different, after the walkouts and some of the other things. The moratorium, Rosalio Muñoz [Jr.], the student-body president, ex-student-body president, UCLA organizes that, so it was the beginnings of Chicano students flexing their muscles and, realistically, there were so few of us in college at that time, we were not seen as a large force.

Then I would guess you would say—I don’t want to get too sociological, but many of us weren’t sure where this education was going to take us in relationship to our communities, so I think some people were kind of exiting their Mexican American or Chicano identity as being in college, and this is the groups they know were going to affirm who we are. We’re going to reinforce who we are. We want to be players in this.

They went through the whole conference, which I think I talked about earlier, and then Lee set up a press conference. He called to book a hotel room. “You call City News Service. You call the L.A. Times,” on and on, when I was kind of tailing him, trailing him. So we drove back from Malibu and went to the Biltmore Hotel, where he booked a room. I remember he went in and he comes out—I was bringing some stuff—he said, “We’re a success.”

I says, “When I looked in, there was hardly anybody.”

He says, “The L.A. Times showed up.” Sunday afternoon, hard time to have a press conference. “We’ll be in the paper tomorrow.” He knew, as I learned later, if you could get something in the L.A. Times, the broadcast media would follow. That was the agenda setter for other media. If you could get it there, the TV and radio, news people, they’d read what was in the Times and then they’d want to do their take on the story.

So I was nervous to go in there, and I remember I went to the bathroom before, and Bert Corona was there, who I’d seen off and on, but who I didn’t know. We’re standing over there washing our hands and he says, “What’s your name? I haven’t met you before.”

I said, “Oh, it’s Félix Gutiérrez.”

He said, “Oh, Félix Gutiérrez, one of my best friends.”

[telephone interruption]

[recorder turned off]

Anyway, Bert says, “One of my best friends was named Félix Gutiérrez,” and it was my dad [Félix Gutiérrez], because Bert had been the feature editor of The Mexican Voice when it first started. I told him that was my dad. So for me it was like connecting with my parents’ generation again, and I think part of it was whatever advantages I had beyond on campus, I felt like I was reenacting or becoming part of a continuation of their movement activities thirty years later, and in some cases, like with him and Juan Acevedo and others, people that they had worked with were people who had brought me into it, or at least knew who I was or knew who my dad was, knew my mom [Rebecca Muñoz Gutierrez] and such.

ESPINO

Do you remember feeling that at the time, or is this looking back?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, more at the time it was—it’s my first press conference. This is Bert Corona, the founder of MAPA. It was more like, what do I do to make an impact? I guess it was more me than them, but the fact that he knew my dad and that he mentioned him so directly and also, he didn’t say, “Oh, your dad was a great guy.” He goes, “Oh, one of my best friends.”

I think it reached me more later on, but the fact that I could contact people and give a name that sometimes they recognized meant something. I remember once we were at a dinner in Santa Monica where Ed Roybal was the speaker, and Juan Acevedo had put—it was a black-and-brown get together. That’s why they met in Santa Monica. It couldn’t be in South L.A., it couldn’t be in East L.A., it had to be on the Westside —and as he was thanking people—I’d helped with the press relations—who had organized the banquet, he thanked me for getting the news releases out and stuff, and Roybal got up and said, “Yeah, Félix, and you look just like your dad.” So it had an impact.

I’ve never seen myself as carrying his legacy forward, because he was active in his times, but more picking up what I wanted to do with my own times. But also the heritage, maybe it’s not a direct connect, but it’s a continuation of activities at that level, and both of us were trying to figure out how to use the media. My dad couldn’t get a job on a newspaper either, out of UCLA. He applied at nine newspapers with his UCLA degree, edited a paper. He was an artist. He had all this artwork that he’d done for newspaper graphics and things like this, and we still have the index cards at home. They don’t say, “We won’t hire you.” They just didn’t offer him a job. It was in the forties. I had the same experience in the sixties of trying to connect. How do I use my journalism experience to connect with the profession? So I think both of us were looking for a way in, and we both became journalism teachers, he in art and journalism in East L.A. and junior high, and then me at the college level.

ESPINO

He was fully bilingual?

GUTIÉRREZ

He was not as bilingual as my mother. My mother was born in Mexico and grew up in a Spanish-speaking household and learned English very well. My dad was not as comfortable in Spanish as she was, at least in me

hearing him, but I go back and I can see letters that they corresponded with each other when she was in Arizona and he was here, and he uses a lot of Spanish in that. So I guess you would say it wasn't his first language, but it was a language that he was comfortable with. As far as I know, he never wrote in Spanish, or at least I haven't come across anything that he did.

ESPINO

Do you think you entered journalism or you had an interest in journalism because of your father's work? Or was it something that you on your own came to love or appreciate?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, I still haven't figured that out, and I'm sixty-seven, so I may never figure it out. I had an early exposure to media by seeing my dad do stuff at home, writing, laying out—he was an advisor to the junior high newspaper at San Bernardino and then the yearbook at Kern now Griffith Junior High in East L.A. So he would bring stuff home and he'd be doing layouts and designs and stuff. He would take me with him to the print shop. It was different. In that day you had to go to a print shop, linotype, metal type, all this stuff. It was a mechanical process. So he would take me with him sometimes on those things, and I would see him doing that.

I don't remember reading—oh, he did some artwork for a Methodist publication, El Laico Methodista, which was lay Spanish-speaking pastors in the 1950s. It was the last publication he worked on. He did the cover art for their magazine. But I don't remember reading a lot that he—I would see what he did, the yearbooks. I was twelve when he died. And I would see how he did it and so that looked interesting to me. Then he died when he was thirty-seven and I was twelve, so I didn't see myself as picking up the mantle. It was more like here's something that he's doing that I might like to do.

I also was not adept at any of the things boys were supposed to be good at. I wasn't good at sports. I was just a short skinny kid who wore glasses and didn't have any great social skills and all that stuff, so writing was kind of—I had friends, but there was nothing you stood out as, that you would say he does this better than most people do. So writing attracted me, had some attraction to it, but I didn't start until I went into high school. I didn't do anything in junior high. I wanted to, but there was a social distance between me—or that I perceived, between me and the people who put out the paper. Even then, I didn't get involved until I took print shop so I could learn the mechanical process. I thought that would be part of my calling card, and then worked very hard in my English class.

ESPINO

Did you ever think about asking some of these leaders about their relationship with your father? Did you ever talk to them about him?

GUTIÉRREZ

Yes, I did from time to time. I wish I had done so more. Juan [Acevedo] I got close to because he was running the Narcotics Prevention Program that was one of the agencies that we funded, and I asked him once about things, but it was more anecdotal. He'd say, "Your dad and I, we used to organize these track meets." Juan had lettered at UCLA in track, and my dad had run track in high school. He said, "But we organized the races so the Chicano kids would always win." I don't know how they did it. So it was more like, "Here's kinds of things that we did," as opposed to, "Here's what we were up against or mobilizing."

I asked my uncle once, Rosalio Muñoz [Sr.], because my mother said how the Conquistadores group at Arizona State [University] that he had been a part of, that they would hop the freights and go into the mining towns to recruit kids to get them to go to college if they had the grades, and once I asked him, I said, "Did you really go to the train yard and hop a freight train and go to Bisbee or Superior or Globe or whatever?"

He'd say, "Yeah, yeah, we used to do that." But he didn't talk in depth about it. I've got more paper record than that.

There also was not a lot of conversation about my dad after he died, among family and friends, among my own family. My mother, there was, but with cousins or uncles and aunts, it wasn't like a trip down memory lane. So the connections I had with my dad were through his cousins and others who had known him, but it wasn't a big topic of conversation.

ESPINO

What kind of service did you have? Did some of these leaders attend his service?

GUTIÉRREZ

Yes, but I didn't know who they all were. It was at Lincoln Heights at the Mater Simone Mortuary on North Broadway, between Sichel and Griffin, which was right across the street. When he died, he died at home, and Bob Mater [phonetic] was the mortician who was a member of the church, the Asbury Church, came from home, and they just put his body in a cart, a wheeled cart, and just wheeled it across the street. The mortuary was across the street, so I still remember. That was the last time he left. They carried—it was respectful, but they took him out the front, down the front porch and then ran it across the street, because it was late at night. He died around eleven o'clock at night, so they went there.

There was a write-up. It was written up in the L.A. Times and Mirror and some of the other local—Bulletin News, the paper, so there were people there who I would meet. Martin Ortiz, who for years was at Welfare Planning Council and then was at Whittier College for a long time—he died in '08 or '09—he would talk about my dad, because he knew my dad and my mother both as adults, not just as young people.

ESPINO

Sometimes friends and acquaintances have insights into historical figures that family members might not have, so that's why I ask what kind of comments did people say about him.

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, they tended to remember him as a—he was good-natured. He always had a joke. He had a reinforcing, positive attitude. "Atta boy. You can do better. You show them what you can do." He'd have nicknames for people. He did a lot of youth work, and I think part of youth work is getting kids to feel they have an identity of their own, so he'd try to find something special about everybody.

My wife's brother, Bobby Lopez, had my dad in art class, and her nephew, who's older than her, Dickie Delgadillo, also had him in art class at Kern, and when they heard that my dad was—had been their art teacher in junior high—right away they had memories of him, and specific memories. So I don't know how many teachers from junior high I can remember. So it was more what he was like, his personality, than what was driving him or what was motivating him.

ESPINO

When did you start looking into his work? Did you do your graduate work on his papers, or was that your own?

GUTIÉRREZ

No, it's still a work in progress. In the sixties, when I was working with La Raza and the Chicano Movement stuff, and it's tear down the system and build it up better, my mother had had all these Mexican Voice publications, so I wanted to look at them to see what he was saying. I wanted it to be a 1930s version of what we were doing, change the schools, police brutality, welfare rights, farm-worker organizing and all that. It had a more moderate tone in that

it was, you know, get an education, basically things we took for granted, that, yes, you can go to college. Our thing was, can you get a job? But there was never a question could you go to college at my level. Can you get an opportunity to improve yourself? You don't know what it would mean after campus. That was a big question mark. But it was more kind of show how good you can be without losing your identity of who you are, was a lot of their message, and, of course, for us at that point, the identity was not something we were thinking of losing; we were thinking to reinforce it. So I wanted it to be more in your face, more activist, more, change things, and it was more prepare yourself, get into things, make a difference there by staying connected with your community. So I read it and I looked at it, but to me it was not as much of an advocacy as I was hoping to.

Then when I went on, when I got my Ph.D. and that, then I wanted to do it, but there has to be a certain amount of distance, I think, age-wise and maturity-wise. I think if I'd taken it on as my dissertation, I'd probably still be writing it, because thirty-five years later—I mean, because how do you put it to rest? How do you put it to bed?

Fortunately, my parents didn't throw anything away, so we have a lot of the materials there, which my mother bequeathed to Stanford [University], because her three children—all of her children had all gone to Stanford, so when I'm done with it—I've been scanning it this year and will get it at some point to Stanford.

ESPINO

[whispers] They get everything.

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, my mother did it. It meant a lot to her. I mean, here she is, a widow in 1955, three kids, none of us even teenagers when he died—I was just twelve—moves to this white South Pasadena, kind of Leave It to Beaver, Ozzie and Harriet type town, where the houses looked like movie sets, and the people did too, and in moves this Mexican family. I don't know why we were a threat to anybody, but they did put a petition around the neighborhood when we moved in 1956.

ESPINO

They did or they didn't?

GUTIÉRREZ

They did, they did. I don't know how many people signed it. And all her kids end up going to Stanford, which for South Pasadena in those days would have been the best place, so it was a big deal to her that all her three children had gone to Stanford.

ESPINO

Can we talk a little bit about that petition?

GUTIÉRREZ

Sure. Well, I just heard about it. We moved in. We moved from Lincoln Heights. I think I said earlier it was a move of—from Lincoln Heights to South Pasadena is five miles in terms of geography, but in terms of demography, it was more like five hundred miles. I remember before we moved there, because we were looking at houses, the main realtor in town, E.O. Anders , would not show my mother any houses, and I don't know because she was a woman or because she was a widow or a Mexican or whatever. She'd worked. She'd been school teaching for almost twenty years at that point. She always had a job. But he just said, "It won't work out. You should look in Highland Park." He wouldn't show her any houses. He would not show her any, and he had signs all over town. This is before multiple listing and all that.

So she found another realtor, Hector Powell, who would show her houses, and then she did buy the house that we still have today. But as we were looking at them, I felt like I was on a movie set, because from Lincoln Heights, which had some nice places, to there, it was like the TV shows we watched, with the all-American family and the husband goes to work and the mother does this and that, and the dress and all this stuff.

So when we moved there, I found the houses not only looked like the TV shows, situation-comedy TV shows, but the people did, too, all-American kids, neatly combed, well dressed, on and on. It was something you identified with, but I'd never—they had what they called Ivy League clothes, which were the style of pants where you had a belt in the back. Remember, I was junior high. I was in eighth grade. I never had Ivy League clothes and such. They traveled at a different level.

Once my mother asked me when I came home, I think in eighth grade, "How is this different from Lincoln Heights?"

I said, "Well, the kids at Lincoln, their parents worked for factories or worked in whatever jobs they had. The kids I'm going to school with now, their parents run the factories or own the companies that they're at." That was the biggest difference.

It was a friendly town, made friends quickly and easily. There wasn't an exclusion, but there was an underlying racism in terms of—which I talked about earlier—putdowns and jokes and nicknames and things like this. You just had to deal with it. I mean, you couldn't take them on. We were outnumbered like 99 percent, and yet you didn't want to deny who you were. So whatever you brought from home, that kind of had to stay at home. There was no value placed on anything Mexican.

ESPINO

Did your mom talk to you about that?

GUTIÉRREZ

No. I don't think she knew what we were experiencing. She was looking at—I mean, she saw us. I was in Boy Scouts, I was in church, I went to the Y[MCA]. My sisters were involved with things, so we were in those club activities. Like I said, we weren't excluded. We were players, I guess is the way to say it. But there was always—you never knew when somebody was going to hit you with something like that, to which you had really no—what are you going to say, I'm not Mexican? You are, but what's the plus to it? What she saw as a plus, they would never see it as. Knowing another language or anything, there was no—it's kind of like you were an oddity, I guess would be the way to say it, but in a negative way.

ESPINO

So at the time that you moved, you had no idea that there was a petition? Only your mother knew that?

GUTIÉRREZ

I don't know when she knew it, but she told us later that some of the neighbors had passed a petition. They didn't want a Mexican family living on that street. But by the time she told me that, we'd been there so long, and I said, "Well, most of them are gone and we're still here, so I guess it didn't work out."

About ten years earlier there had been a legal action in another part of South Pasadena, Oak lawn, when a Chinese American family had bought a property there, in which the people said they were not racist, they just didn't want their property values to decline. There was a law or something—my mother said she saw it in the Realty Code—I'm not sure what force that has—that Negroes could not own property in South Pasadena, and they could not stay overnight unless they were a servant or like a maid or chauffeur or something. The summer we moved there, a

black, African American girl had gone to the swimming pool with a group of white friends, one of whom lived in South Pasadena, and they let all the white girls come in and the black girl they stopped.

ESPINO

How did you hear about that?

GUTIÉRREZ

It was in the paper. It was a big story. Again they said, “Well, this is just for people who live in South Pasadena,” and the woman who took the money at the swimming pool just “happened” to know there were no Negro families in South Pasadena. [laughs]

I remember we read it and we said, “Oh, yeah, the reason she happens to know is because they don’t allow Negroes.”

Then we went to go swimming. I remember we were nervous the first time we went, because we didn’t have any ID, or she still had her driver’s license with Lincoln Heights, but they let us in, so I guess they knew there were a few Mexicans there.

She couldn’t get a second mortgage on her house from a black, African American who was the father of her school principal. He went to South Pasadena City Hall to look at the specs for the property. She had a note from the Teachers Credit Union for the big part of the mortgage, but they just said to him, “You can’t have title to any property here in town, South Pasadena,” and the guy just pulled it back. He brought the folder out. I think he thought the guy was a contractor or something, because he wanted whatever records they had. He told them he was going to make a loan or was considering making a loan on the property, and they just pulled it back. That was it.

ESPINO

So how did you decide to move there yourself and put your children in that—

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, it was a little different. 1980s, I still had memories. I mean, I was glad to have been in South Pasadena. The education certainly benefited me. I did well in college based on that education. I had plenty of friends. I don’t want to make it feel like I was an outsider or outcast. I had a core group of friends that I was especially close to and some people I still see today. But I had no good memories of that underlying current.

I remember my mother, when I was coming down from Stanford—I did my doctoral dissertation in 1973 on Radio KALI. I had two kids and we were going to have another one on the way, and I was trying to get a job at a college in L.A. She said, “If you want to move here when you come down, I could live in the back house.”

I thanked her and I just said, “I’d really like to live in an area where there’s more Mexicans,” which we did. We moved to Highland Park when we did move. But it was not a favorable memory.

But then ten years later, we’re living in Monterey Park. We needed a bigger place. My wife’s [Maria Gutiérrez] teaching at Pacific Oaks, I’m here at USC. Our oldest daughter, Elena [Gutiérrez], was getting ready to go into high school. So, you know, good town, good schools, close to Maria’s work, close to mine. South Pasadena, just added up. We looked for three years until we found the right house and went there, and at that point I had put most of it behind me. It’s funny. You go back and you see people you haven’t seen for twenty years who are still in town, kids I’d gone to high school with who were still there. So at that point, I didn’t experience it. I understand now from my

kids that they experienced some stuff, and the realtor who sold us the house or handled it for us, who passed away last year in ’09, told us that she had very real concerns—she was white—when she moved us there.

ESPINO

In the eighties?

GUTIÉRREZ

Yes, in 1984. She said, “I had real concerns about what your children might encounter, but then I knew you’d gone to high school there, so I figured you knew what you were getting into.” But again, they had friends. Elena had one friend who her dad was Mexican and the mother was Anglo, and I think the rest, there was some mix. There were some Asian-white kids, mixed race, and then the rest, everybody else was Anglo kids.

ESPINO

Well, it’s really changed now, that’s for sure. 2010, it’s a lot different.

GUTIÉRREZ

Yes. Well, I’m involved with Vecinos de South Pasadena, which is the Latino club there, and I help with their press relations and stuff to get articles in the local paper.

ESPINO

What do they do, that organization?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, a lot of it is, there’s a Chinese American club. When I lived there, there were no Chinese there. There were Japanese Americans, a few, but there was no Chinese that I ever met, no Jews that I ever met. But the club, they raise money for scholarships for Chicanos. There’s a real issue in the schools. I’ve seen the test scores, where the Latino kids at the kindergarten level are at the same level testing-wise or entry-level, primary level, with the whites and the Asian kids, and then as you go through the school years to high school, you see the other groups creeping up and the Latino kids lower. A gap appears. I don’t know what it’s as a result of, but during the education process at which kids pretty much come in at the same level, two groups keep progressing and one group stays lower. Go figure. Something’s happening in the schools.

ESPINO

So that’s the job of the—

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, that’s one of the issues they take on. They do fundraisers. They want a presence in the town. They have a lemonade stand. I mean, it’s small-town USA, so when there’s a parade, they want to have a float in the parade and things like that. I’m not there. I haven’t lived there full-time—there wasn’t any Vecinos when I moved in. We moved out in 1990, in January. I still have my mother’s, what had been her property, where I stay during the school year, but I’m not there year ‘round.

ESPINO

I see. Well, we probably should get back to the—

GUTIÉRREZ

Not South Pasadena. He’s from Alhambra. He’ll tell you about Alhambra.

[recorder turned off]

ESPINO

Okay. So we were talking about the—yes, that's really interesting. I think it's also really important, because South Pasadena is next door.

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, it is, and for me South Pasadena was that early exposure to Anglos, very successful, accomplished, economically well-off Anglos, that I think had a leavening process as I went through college and then when I got involved with the Chicano Movement, because Anglos were not unknown to me, I guess is the way to say it, and Anglos in positions of authority.

When I was at Stanford—I'll just close with one story—I was a student. That's when I was doing my Ph.D. after I was working there. We were having some controversy on campus, and one of the Chicano kids came and said, "Well, you really know how the Anglos think." We were always strategizing, protest this, march that, petitioning. He said, "How did you learn?" I said, "Oh, I don't know how they think.."

"No, you know. You know the gabachos—you know what they're going to think. Where did you learn that? How did you get that?"

Finally I just said, "Well, you know, when I was thirteen years old, my mom moved us to this little town called South Pasadena, and I guess it helped me, at a comfort level and also in an advocacy way, to have some understanding of them. I might not have been the ones that were the leaders, but I knew who they were, because it's a small town. You had some sense as to how they looked at things, how they thought about things."

ESPINO

It's almost like there was some demystification as well.

GUTIÉRREZ

Yes. There was a social distance in terms of—well, South Pasadena was like a club. We were all members of it. If you were in South Pasadena, you were automatically in the club. There was a hierarchy in the club. If you met somebody who said, "We're from South Pasadena," even within the South Pasadena there might have been a pecking order. When you went out to your beach, Huntington Beach or whatever, you were part of this group, this little town that nobody knew. They thought it was part of Pasadena. So there was an identity in that regard that we're from South Pasadena. Somehow we're special. I think for some of us, somehow we're better. So they had that kind of an identity that reinforced, and then within the group you could see people who were moving or were going and they were going to do something. They had some advantages.

The jobs I got out of high school, summer jobs, I look back and everyone was something connected to somebody I knew in South Pasadena. Their brother owned the cleaning—it was a janitor, not a glamour job, but he owned the company. I worked in a window factory. My friend's mother worked in the office in El Monte in the window factory. I worked at a tile factory. My Sunday School teacher was the personnel guy there. So these are connections I would not have had if I'd stayed in Lincoln Heights. So I saw the advantage of connections.

ESPINO

Let's go back, then, to those early meetings where you are involved with non-Chicanos. You're working with African

Americans and—well, maybe not so much. With the Johnson administration you're dealing with white—

GUTIÉRREZ

These were all Mexicans. These were all Mexican Americans.

ESPINO

Well, what about the people that you face? What about the people that you're bringing your issues to?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, I don't want to overplay my role. I wasn't presenting at the Council. That was the G.I. generation. It was the Armando Moraleses and the people that were—they were the people in their forties and such, Ralph Guzman and such. I helped to get publicity for that, such, but what were they going to say and what are they going to do, what's the testimony, I was there while they were planning. Basically, they were jockeying for position and prominence and who's going to talk about labor, who's going to talk about police brutality, these kinds of things. So I was kind of a spectator watching that, and then when they got the press release, worked with Lee Soto on how to get it out or how to get the media involved.

ESPINO

Last time you talked a little bit about walking out of the El Paso meeting, so that's where you took more of an active role as far as—

GUTIÉRREZ

Yes, a lot of us did. Yes. I don't know what the expectations were. We were there and I guess the idea is the White House pays attention to you, then something good is going to happen. But you get there and it's kind of a show. You're talking, and Armando Morales, who was a psychiatric social worker at UCLA at the time, I think I mentioned gave this data on police brutality. When he got done, we said, "Man, you really knocked it—."

He says, "All I did was give them back the figures. I gave them back their own data. I gave back their own figures." So we were seeing this, and it was kind of a choreographed political thing for Mexican American, Chicanos, whatever.

So then there was this movement to walk out. Ernesto Galarza played a big leadership role. He was being supported by the Ford Foundation, and that led to the founding of the Southwest Council La Raza or was counterpart with it, which became the National Council La Raza.

So at a certain point we were just dissatisfied. We're there. I'm there with the students, so we're hanging out with some of the UTEP [University of Texas at El Paso] students. I remember we went to a dance show. They had a TV show after American Bandstand or the same time, and we're out there dancing around and saying we bring in the latest dances from East L.A., and the guys with the camera were hamming it up. So in a way, we're being young kids. On the other hand, we're looking at this. And others. Corky's [Gonzales] group was there. MAYO [Mexican American Youth Organization] was there from San Antonio, and we're meeting them for the first time, and said, "Look, this is not—." So there was some talk about disrupting it.

I remember this is probably the one thing I said. "Look. This is their generation. This is the most they've been able to produce since World War II. So let them do their show. We don't want to take on Bert [Corona]," or not Bert. "We don't want to take on that generation, because this is what they've produced. We're young and we're going to be around here for a lot longer, so let them do their thing, and let's do what's relevant to us." And people were organizing that beyond me. So they had the walkout from the Paso del Norte Hotel and walked to the Sacred Heart

Church someplace in Segundo Barrio and had basically a mass rally there with a lot of speakers.

ESPINO

What came from that? What came out of that?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, I think what came out of it was the Southwest Council La Raza, but I'm not the historian of that. I remember Galarza was the most—there were a lot of fiery speakers. [Reies] Tijerina spoke and I think Corky spoke. I'm not sure if Bert Corona spoke or not.

ESPINO

How about the sentiment to abandon the Democratic Party?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, it was not at that level. It was, "Here's the show. How do we show how we feel?" We walk out of the show. I mean, in the end, most of us ended up working for Bobby Kennedy anyway, although he hadn't declared yet. We met with him, with UMAS. We met with him the next month at the El Adobe Café on Melrose. So it was not the Democratic Party. "This is what the Johnson administration is doing. This is a political show. We're not going to be a part of it. What's our agenda? What are our issues?" I'm sure there's some statement of principles or demands or something that came out of that.

ESPINO

So you're saying that you looked at it more as the inability of the Johnson administration, or the inability of the Democratic—

GUTIÉRREZ

It was more the inability of the generation before us to get more than a hearing at the federal level, but we realized, or I realized that the hearing was a big accomplishment for that generation, but that that shouldn't be the ending point. I don't think they thought it was, but that was their big show, so let's mobilize in a different direction, more toward community organizing, more toward grassroots, more a willingness to walk out. I mean, they had worked for years to get something like this, and then we just said, "Fine." We were a bunch of troublemakers anyway, but, "We're walking out of this. We're walking out of the big show."

I remember Ralph Guzman had been invited to something at the White House in this era. He was at Cal State L.A. There was some community something happening the same night, and so he turned down the White House. He showed me, "Here's what happens when you get invited to the White House," a big invitation and sign the check this, all this stuff. He said, "I turned down Johnson for this."

People liked his domestic policies. This is Roybal saying, "Domestically, he's the best president we've ever had," but the [Vietnam] war, which was having a devastating effect, which we were just beginning to realize, and also getting beyond the, I guess, handout programs was seen as a need that—adjudicating—immigration, the Green Card workers. There were other issues. We weren't just all looking for a federal grant.

ESPINO

You weren't?

GUTIÉRREZ

No. There were other things that we could be doing in terms of mobilization.

ESPINO

So would that be a critique of the War on Poverty?

GUTIÉRREZ

Yes. If you had an agency, you were a “Tío Taco”—and some of them were—they were seen as a sellout. On the other hand, people would be there to get the jobs if they had them.

I remember when I went to work for EYOA [Economic and Youth Opportunities Agency], which was the local arm of the Federal anti-poverty program, in a public information capacity, thinking I’m going to be representing these people who were basically getting federal dollars to do what they should do anyway. Then when I got to meet more of them, I saw, basically, again, it was this G.I. generation, the World War II. They were doing what they believed to be doing. Some of them, again, had been companions of my father, so that was part of a connection that I had there.

ESPINO

You were able to see some of the manifestations and be a part of those War on Poverty funds. Looking back, can you tell me, was anything gained from that as far as long-term change?

GUTIÉRREZ

I think a lot was gained from it. First of all, there was a political process. I remember when I was hired, I’d just applied for the job, and Clint Wilson, African American from Cal State L.A., who graduated that year also—I remember some guy came to the office and said, “Who are you guys connected to?”

We just said, “What do you mean?” Because everybody was there from Congressman [Augustus] Gus Hawkins or somebody that had some political connection. We just said, “No, we just applied for the jobs.” We had, and we’d put in our résumé and went through an interview.

But everybody had some connection to somebody somewhere, or at least that was the perception, that you all had some political wheel in the county or the city or the state or whatever. So part of it was a political process, and it did feed into the political apparatus that operated in that time. On the other hand, on the plus side, you saw people’s doors opening, wider opportunities, a chance to improve your skills, to get some training, to get some education, to mobilize some things on the community level that hadn’t been available there before.

I came in ’68. [Richard M.] Nixon’s elected president in November of that year, and then in ’69 he puts people in charge of the anti-poverty program and Job Corps and all these, who basically were against those programs. It eviscerated some of the good momentum that was going on. So it was not a perfect process, but it did afford opportunities to segments of our community that had not had an access to opportunities at that level.

I remember students at Cal State L.A. with UMAS, they’d get these jobs working at Cleland House or different community agencies. Even when I was a student three years before, they didn’t have those kinds of things, or they were just opening them up.

ESPINO

I’ve heard mention of Cleland House in several of my other interviews. Do you know the history of the—

GUTIÉRREZ

Yes, Tony Hernandez. I don't know the whole history. Robert Glass Cleland, who it's named after, was a California historian. I think he wrote California Pastoral, kind of the rancho image of that. It was a Presbyterian Church-based settlement house. The Methodists had one, Plaza Community Center, still do, just off Indiana on, I think, Princeton, north of Whittier. Cleland House was over by just off of Cesar Chavez now, Brooklyn Avenue by where the freeway goes now, just east of Eastern Avenue, and Tony Hernandez was the reverend there. He was a minister, but he was running the house then.

It was basically a settlement house, social work approach. Both of them were at that time, where you would have youth programs and parent programs and such. These provided meeting places for us. I remember some very heated meetings at the Cleland House, where people would be putting demands down or raising forces and speaking and such like that, so it was a place where you could come together. Father Luce's church, Epiphany Church in Lincoln Heights, played a similar role.

ESPINO

Was it a house or was it a church, or was it—

GUTIÉRREZ

No, it was a building. As far as I know, I recall it was a building that was set up as a community center. The Settlement House Movement was widespread throughout the Southwest. My godfather, Steve Reyes, was head of the Pasadena Settlement House in Pasadena, which lasted till the fifties or so, maybe even the early sixties. So it was kind of a reception center for people who needed help getting a job, or where kids could have recreational activities. See, for many years Mexicans couldn't go to playgrounds. That's part of the Zoot Suit Riots. They didn't have any place to play, so they were in the streets or in gangs. So settlement houses were a safe haven where you could have activities. They would have sewing clubs, mothers' clubs, things like that. They were kind of like multiservice agencies.

ESPINO

And the Cleland House was in line with that kind of self—

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, I wasn't involved. I was more involved with Plaza, because it's Methodist, more Methodist. But you'd go there and there'd be kids playing basketball, and then you'd go to another room and there'd be some club where they're doing paper crafts, and then you'd go on a Saturday and there'd be some community meeting where they're talking about some issue from schools or education or whatever.

ESPINO

You mentioned just a few minutes ago that you attended some heated meetings. Do you remember what they were about?

GUTIÉRREZ

The one I remember was the headline in the East L.A. Tribune was "Blend or Burn," which was probably an overstatement. But I remember we had a thing with [Mervin] Merv Dymally, who I think was a state assemblyman at the time, later went on to become lieutenant governor, came to East L.A. and I think he was well intentioned, but he basically was, "Here's how the blacks did it, so here's how you guys can do it." But he wasn't preaching.

There was just a resistance, because we were always, "The blacks get all the attention, and there's more of us, and we're worse off. How come we don't get any attention?" So people got a little heated at him. That was the one I was

thinking of.

Then some people are ready to go down, march off on that, and others just came to learn about how to get involved politically. I mean, not everybody was inoculated with the movement fever at the same time, and so you'd have these meetings where some people were ready to just "Let's go march," or, "Let's do something else," or tear it down, and some others were saying, "Well, let's look at it differently."

But in that regard it was a free-speech area, where you could come in and you could air out community issues and different perspectives, get involved with the political process, and in the end, Tony Hernandez is very strongly involved with the Tom Bradley campaign in '73.

ESPINO

Did you know him yourself? Did you have a chance to work with him?

GUTIÉRREZ

Bradley?

ESPINO

No, Tony Hernandez.

GUTIÉRREZ

Yes, yes. We had EPIC [Education Participation in Communities] students who volunteered from Cal State L.A., who did volunteer work at Cleland House, so I'd go down to see basically what they were doing. Then Carlos Jackson had a job at Cleland House. Carlos was one of the UMAS leaders at Cal State L.A., and he was down there, so sometimes I'd go. He and I, we used to play handball, so sometimes I'd go down and drop by and see him, too, and Tony.

But I remember once I came and Hernandez was wearing a military uniform. I said, "Oh, where are you going?"

He said, "I'm going to a funeral." I think, I don't know for sure, that it was probably some kid who was killed in Vietnam that he was going to.

ESPINO

He was a World War II, Korean, maybe Korean—

GUTIÉRREZ

I don't know. I don't know. He was wearing a military—you can ask his daughter Dottie Hernández. She can tell you, who went to Stanford. But anyway, he was very serious.

Later, my cousin Rosalio told me that when they were organizing the moratorium and the antiwar, the hippie and all this, some of these agencies didn't want to get—that Tony was very, very involved with the antiwar effort.

ESPINO

Well, he strikes me as one of those unsung or unwritten-about heroes of East Los Angeles. A lot of people don't know who he was or never heard of him, but in many of my interviews his name always comes up, so I'm just trying

to get any bits and pieces of information about him from anybody that I talk to.

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, my impression of him was he ran what it is he was supposed to run. So the Presbyterians came around. He'd say, "I've got my sports club going on over here. I've got the women's sewing circle doing this. I've got the new mothers' thing doing that." Basically that's what they wanted to see in the settlement house. And he did all these other things, political meetings, organizing, mobilizing, activism, advocacy types of things. I mean, there were some people, particularly some of them who were associated with federal funding, if you started rabble-rousing a little too much, it's kind of, "Take that someplace else." He wasn't that way at all, or at least I don't remember him being that way at all. You could talk to him about things. But he was a very good administrator. He ran his things. Some people, they'd run off with the movement and then what they were supposed to be doing didn't happen, and he made sure what he was supposed to do got done, and that you could have a place or you could go to Cleland. Where could you get a room if you were going to have a meeting? The schools, you're going to take on the schools? You couldn't get a place there. The Catholic Church became an issue, later on with Católicos Por La Raza. They're not going to hook you up with the CYO Building or anything like that. So he had a place there and the same thing with the Epiphany Church up in Lincoln Heights. Plaza Community Center, which was the East L.A. or the Methodist group, as I recall, didn't have a big meeting room.

So he was there, and he didn't try to dominate. He was really an organizer. He didn't have to be the main speaker or anything. I think he was kind of—I might be going too far, but I think he was glad to be in the kitchen making sure things ran and other people would come up there, and then when things needed to get done, he would be there to make sure, "I can call this. I can do that." He was very direct but in a soft-spoken way. He didn't have to yell at you to make his point.

ESPINO

You mentioned earlier that not everyone was inoculated at the same time. I think that's really interesting. But that's also what you said about the antiwar position, that in the beginning it was about the war within East Los Angeles against substandard education, etc. Do you remember, was there a moment or something you witnessed or heard when you realized that you needed to start looking at the Antiwar Movement as something to be involved in?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, the Antiwar Movement had the image, much like the women's lib[eration]. It was—I won't say a white-people thing, but it was not central to what we were doing. It was being organized by people who didn't include us in the leadership or membership, who didn't recognize us, so I think there was that distance.

Secondly, there was this heavy political aspect to some elements of the Antiwar Movement, the SDS [Students for a Democratic Society], that were really radical politics stuff that I think not everybody was ready for or even would have gone into if it had been put before them. We had more immediate concerns that we could see directly in our community, that you could see every day. So I don't know, it was not anti-antiwar, but it wasn't like as we line up our top issues, I don't think initially that was at the top of it.

It may have been—some of us were—they had been through on student deferments. I had a student deferment until I went to work, so the war was not an immediate issue for us, but we certainly had cousins and, in some cases, brothers that had gone on. So it wasn't distant from us, but it wasn't directly attached to us.

For me it was seeing the mobilization that was taking place and some of the tactics they were using, and then we were using similar tactics and we saw the effectiveness of those tactics. Then the Ralph Guzman study, which showed the high percentage of Latino deaths in comparison to the population, that really said, "Wait a minute. We're giving more than our share in this war." Plus the farm workers were very strong on this. These grower kids could get deferments and then the kids who were really working on the farms and really doing the labor, they were getting

drafted. So we're saying, well, yeah, these white kids we're going to college with, they get a deferment. Somebody else's little brother or cousin couldn't. So you start seeing those discrepancies that were built into the system that sent more of us there when there was other potentials we had here.

ESPINO

Did you ever feel guilty that you were in that position to have a deferment?

GUTIÉRREZ

No. When I signed up, I signed up when I was eighteen. I was in Draft Board 92, it was on Main Street in Alhambra. I remember I went down, and they didn't tell you—you were just supposed to know when you're eighteen you had to sign up. There was no notification. You just knew it.

So David Zabriskie, whose dad was the principal at Belvedere Junior High, lived on the same block in South Pasadena, so he and I, we just went down and signed up together. I remember there was this Chicano kid right next to me in line. You went up to a counter. He worked for Odono's Meats, I still remember, and he was just crying. He was crying. I was just signing up. I was in high school still and on and on. I looked at him, and I could tell East L.A. and such, and I'm sure it was happening. He knew he was going to get called, he was going to go. He may have been from Mexico, where military is a command performance.

So I went through. You just filed your papers every year that you were a student, and I graduated. I mean, I didn't extend it. Some kids were perpetual students. I got my B.A. in four years, which is unusual at Cal State L.A. I had another year for a credential, which I had signed up for at the beginning. I did that and then I was in the master's program at Northwestern for a journalism degree, and I got that on time. So I'd finished everything on time.

When I got out, then I was draft-eligible, but the job I had with EPIC was federally funded, so you could appeal your status. I'd been drafted, or I'd been to the physical. They'd reclassify you 1-A. You could challenge the 1-A classification based on certain criteria, if your dad had been killed in the military, and there were some others. Anyway, one was that if you were working, if you were federally employed, so I made the argument that I was working for a federally funded program on the campus, and also I extended. You had a certain amount of time to appeal, so I waited till the last day until you could file your appeal. Then you have a right to see an attorney that they provided, so I extended again.

My grandparents Esau and Febronia Muñoz had been attacked in their home the previous winter, and my grandfather had been murdered, basically, and my grandmother was in a state of where she needed somebody to take care of her. My mother was having a very hard time. I was helping her financially every month to make ends meet, so part of it was that, and I had no desire to go to the war. In the end, I went through the appeal and it was a split vote, two to one. Two said I could have a deferment in the national interest, and one said I had to go, if it had gone the other way.

Rep. George Brown, I'm not sure—there was a Roybal involvement with it because we'd contacted—because the money for EPIC came from the federal government. One of them wrote a letter to the draft board on behalf of the program. I think it was asking about my status. But by the time they acted on it, the board had already given me the deferment. I wrote to them. "Your letter got there after the actual date." Anyway, I was glad to get it.

Then the next year was anti-poverty, the EYOA [Economic and Youth Opportunities Agency], so that was all federal money, so that I got a deferment there, and then by that time I was twenty-six, so when I went to Stanford, I was getting too old for them to take me.

ESPINO

Some people look at the antiwar protest among Mexican Americans as a rejection of an old-fashioned kind of patriotism, like the World War II generation that you talked about.

GUTIÉRREZ

Sure, yes.

ESPINO

Do you agree with that? Can you talk to me a little bit about—I don't know if your situation fits, because—maybe you could talk to me a little bit about your own patriotism and what you think it means to be an American citizen. What does that mean to you?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, I believe in the United States and I believe what it stands for. I just wish it stood for that for everybody. I didn't like being excluded out based on race, ethnicity, nationality or whatever you want to call it. It means more—it's the Bill of Rights and all that, and the Declaration of Independence has more meaning for people that have a buy-in to it because they've benefited from that. We've been excluded out legally, socially, economically in all kinds of ways. And that was very much what motivated my parents' generation, as I read what they wrote. You have rights here. Nobody tells you you do, but you do. So exercise them. Don't let somebody keep you out because of where your parents are from or the race of who you are, the language you speak at home. So I felt that.

But growing up, it was a Mexican American dynamic. There wasn't a lot of space for a Chicano. You were this or you were that. So you'd be very—how do I say it? For me, anyway, you felt very Anglo among the Anglos, even though to them you looked very Mexican. Then you felt very Mexican among the Chicanos or Mexicanos, except to them you looked very Anglo. So you negotiate that space amongst and between yourself in a way that allows you to be all you were supposed to be and all of who you are, which is what the U.S. is supposed to stand for. The melting pot isn't part of the U.S., but that's what we were forced into.

The war for me was not a—I didn't see it as a [unclear] for individually, and I think that's what led to more of my Chicano Movement activism. I realized I'd been advantaged in South Pasadena and parents went to college and school paper editor at college, student-body president. There was advantage that I'd had. I didn't get them for free, but I had them, and one at a time wasn't going to be—just because I could get a deferment didn't mean everybody else was going to get one. The kid from Odono's Meats, he wasn't going to go to college and so he wasn't going to get a deferment. So you saw that as an inequality when you saw what it took to get into college and how our kids were kept out and such.

ESPINO

How about the idea of fighting for democracy and the whole anti-communist spirit? Was that something that you felt? Did you have a strong opinion about that?

GUTIÉRREZ

I was proud to be an American. I didn't have any hatred for the communists, though. I mean, I didn't buy into them. I don't know. I wasn't as political. That's the UCLA—they knew more about the theory. I was glad to be in the U.S. I was glad I could visit my cousins in Mexico and stuff, and come here. But I didn't feel Vietnam was our enemy or China was our enemy or even Russia was our enemy. I'd been trained to grow up in that Cold War generation, but I didn't see how fighting them was getting us any—I don't know, was any advantage to the U.S. I didn't see how killing them helped the U.S. be better, I guess is the best way to say it.

I remember when Maria and I first went to Russia in 1991, we went to Moscow and we landed—it was right at the

end of—it was the last weekend of communist domination, the weekend of the coup, but we didn't know it was going to happen. I remember when we got out of the airport—

[recorder turned off]

ESPINO

Okay, we're back.

GUTIÉRREZ

So we went to Russia in 1991. It was in August, just before the coup which happened later that weekend, but we didn't know it was planned. We were getting out of the airport, which was kind of like a third-world airport, it wasn't all paved—I mean, the runways were, but you got out and right away you're in this countryside.

We're driving into downtown, into the main part of the town, and you're going through these really rundown areas and massive buildings, but you could tell they're not being well kept. It was the end of the communist era, so things were probably run down more. But I remember looking at her and said, "This is the country we've been afraid of all of our lives?" I mean, it looked like, basically, some third-world places we'd been to.

I didn't have a hatred toward communism. I didn't have a feeling one way or the other, and I didn't think it was the best use of my patriotism, my education, talents, whatever you want to say, to do that. I didn't think I was better than those who were going. I think some people felt that.

ESPINO

Can you explain that a little bit?

GUTIÉRREZ

Not Chicanos, but just, "I went to college. Why should I go fight in the war?" I didn't feel that. I just felt I'm fighting the war here that's more important to me. And when they called me for the physical, I went. My cousin, Rosalio Muñoz, he protested when he got called for his physical four years later. But they said it was time to go, and I went down to the station on Broadway, Broadway and Eleventh or so.

ESPINO

What was that like?

GUTIÉRREZ

It was a voluntary process. You line up, you take off your clothes, they poke and do things to you, and they sign you up. I remember one thing they said—you had to fill out this questionnaire at the beginning, and one of them was race. I remember the guy—these are all military guys running it. He says, "Fill out race. You've got to check out this, the other—," just rapid fire. He says, "And if you don't know what race you are, raise your hand. I'll tell you." [laughs] Because everybody was trying to figure out a way not to go. They were, "I can't figure it out. I'm too stupid. I can't figure out the form," or whatever.

I remember when I took the GRE, Graduate Record Exam, I think in December of '65. This is when they were getting wise to the student deferments, and so they were realizing guys were just going continually to school and not graduating. So they made a rule you had to be in a degree program in order to get a student deferment. So I took it out at Loyola, Loyola Marymount [University] now, and I remember there were some people taking the GRE that could not figure out how to fill out your name. They had to start the test late, because, I mean, everybody was

trying to get a deferment one way or the other. It benefited me. I got high percentile scores, probably because of some of that.

But it was something you had to deal with. You go into the reserves, you get a deferment, or you go. Very few of my South Pasadena friends went, could actually go—some of them did, but very few to Vietnam. Most of them, if they went, they went to the reserve or to fill the service some other way.

ESPINO

It sounds like there was a lot of discussion around movement politics, Movimiento politics, but I'm not sure if that same kind of discussion existed among people regarding the Vietnam War and to resist the draft or to go.

GUTIÉRREZ

I think the war was more—and I'm going just on my memories, okay. The war was more—there were some people who felt very passionately one way or the other. It was less of a dialogue or discussion and more of hearing somebody speak on this or speak on that and then deciding that one makes sense or this one makes sense. I mean, there was an Antiwar Movement. It was a national movement. It mobilized people. And so if you want to be part of it, fine. You went and you could march with it, or you could not.

I remember my cousin Rosalio, he went to San Francisco. They had these moratoriums where you stop everything for one day and just talk about the war, and they would have marches that would precede or follow these basically sit-down days where you'd just talk about why are we there and what's the history of Vietnam, what are we doing there and such. He went to one in San Francisco where there was a big turnout, but there was no presence of Latinos. Later he says he went to Armando Valdez's house—Armando was active in the Chicano Press Association and then later got his Ph.D. at Stanford when I was there. We were both there in the same class. They said, "Well, we should organize a Chicano Moratorium." Armando lived in Oakland, and out of that was the—or at least Rosalio says that was the movement that led to the Chicano effort.

It was not a popular effort initially, because it was associated with college kids who basically had deferments, and we were going against the G.I. generation, who were very proud that they had fought for the country, the Medal of Honor winners. Among the Valiant, Raul Morin's book, was one of the few Chicano Studies books around. But in the end, people could see the inequalities of the war, and I think Ralph's study that he did at Santa Cruz, and also Ruben Salazar's playing of that on, as I recall, the front page of the Times, created an awareness that there were inequities in the war.

Also some of the Democratic—Bobby Kennedy was pretty much against the war, and others. I mean, there was not a unified Democratic front. [Eugene] Gene McCarthy runs, wins primaries. So there weren't a lot of votes in being for the war at a certain point.

ESPINO

I wonder, because most of the people that I have on my list to interview are people who are activists, and it would be interesting to talk to some soldiers who went and decided they needed to go and they wanted to go and what their perspective would be.

GUTIÉRREZ

You should. George Ramos, who worked for the Times for years, went to Vietnam and is still very active in veterans affairs, Vietnam veterans affairs. We didn't think less—we didn't think, "Oh, you're going to—." Basically, it was your choice. Some people didn't have much of a choice if they got called, but I never heard any criticism of people going to Vietnam, that I can recall, Chicanos going to Vietnam, "That kid sold out," or something.

I remember when they started coming back in ’68, ’69, and hearing the stories of what was going on in the war, which was not the Joe Patriot stuff. You realize we’re not getting the whole story from the media. There’s other things going on there that we’re not being told.

ESPINO

When you look at some of the old movies about the white Antiwar Movement, there seems to be a tension between those soldiers that go and the antiwar activists, and almost a demonization of the soldiers. Did you see any of that among the Chicanos?

GUTIÉRREZ

I don’t recall any of that. I don’t recall seeing that. I recall veterans coming back and becoming part of UMAS and MEChA [Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán] and wearing their military fatigues. I remember Gil Garcia was a student. He was president of MEChA at Stanford in ’71 or so. He’d been in Vietnam. He’d come back and he’d gone to junior college in Stockton, his hometown, and transferred over. I remember once they were protesting the U.S. incursion in Cambodia, that they were expanding the war from Vietnam into Cambodia, the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and he goes, “What are these guys protesting?”

Everybody came who came up there said, “They’re protesting because the U.S. is going into Cambodia.”

“I was in Cambodia two years ago or three years ago. We’ve been in Cambodia for years.” He was wearing his army fatigues, his jacket. He wasn’t trying to be part of the—he was basically going to school, he had a child and a wife, didn’t have any fancy clothes.

So I didn’t recall any—I think it was seen, “Fine. That’s what you did when you were called to do it, and now you want to do something else. Welcome.” Carlos Muñoz, president of MEChA, UMAS at Cal State L.A., one of the L.A. Thirteen, was a navy veteran. Al Juarez, one of the founders of MASA [Mexican American Students Association] at East L.A. College in ’66, ’67, later he’s the president of UMAS Central when he goes to UCLA, was a navy veteran.

So it wasn’t a litmus test, I guess would be the way to say it. You were free to have your views and your opinions. There were conflicts, but I think a lot of them were internal, people deciding do I do this or do I do that. Now, you may get other views, but that’s my recollection.

ESPINO

Great. I think we’ll stop now, because you have a meeting. Thank you.

GUTIÉRREZ

Thank you.

[End of November 8, 2010 interview]

1.6. SESSION SIX (November 15, 2010)

ESPINO

This is Virginia Espino and today is November 15th, 2010. I’m interviewing Dr. Félix Gutiérrez in his office in the School of Journalism at USC [University of Southern California].

I would like to start today with a little bit of your understanding, going back to the 1970s when you started to research and study Spanish-language media. Can you talk to me a little bit about why that was an interesting topic for you and where that took you?

GUTIÉRREZ

I started my Ph.D. at Stanford [University] in 1970. The previous year I'd figured if I wasn't going to get a job in the media, maybe I could have an impact on the media by becoming a professor. So I worked at Stanford one year as an assistant dean of students with the first large group of Chicano students, but that year I applied for the doctorate because I still wanted a connection with journalism and a connection with media. I liked student services, but at a certain point you get older and the students don't, so you're basically not in the same age group as they are and not the same issues.

We were married, Maria [Gutiérrez] and I had gotten married in '69. Elena [Gutiérrez], our oldest daughter, was born in August of 1970. So I went into what I thought was an advanced journalism program. I'd studied copy editing and headline writing as an undergrad, then I got a master's at Northwestern [University] and got advanced headline writing and copywriting there, so a Ph.D., they called it communication, so that's advanced. I just thought it was what they called journalism at the higher level.

But when I got in, I found out communication was a whole 'nother field, of which they saw journalism as a very small piece, some of them, and others as a larger piece, but either way it was a piece of it. It dealt with how people communicate with each other, how they change each other's minds, a body of literature on attitude persuasion. Computers were just coming in. How people would use computers to talk with each other, communicate with each other and such.

So I got into this field where the faculty, they were studying the first group of people, they were very proud to say, at Stanford, who had gotten their Ph.D.s in communication. They're the first generation. Before that the scholars had been in poli--sci [political science] or sociology or whatever. So they were defining the field, and they were very interested in us learning what they knew and transferring the knowledge to us.

Well, me and Armando Valdez and Ernesto Ballesteros and later Jorge Reina Schement were in the doctoral program from a Chicano experience, and we come out of different media backgrounds. Armando and I were in the Chicano Movement media. We'd all grown up with Spanish-language media and Latino media that was not dealt with at all in these frameworks. So we had to show them we could master their classes, which we did. We took their tests and passed all their classes. But then how do I take what they're doing and apply it to what I know?

So what I decided to do was to look at Latino media, at areas of it in the United States. Again, this is the early seventies, so it's a critical—it's not glorifying it, but who owns it, who runs it, why do they do this, how do they behave? So I would do term projects or papers around something with either minorities in media or Latino media, and when I got for the dissertation, I decided to look at Spanish-language radio. TV was relatively new. It was still growing. Newspapers had been around for a while. I wasn't sure I could get a handle on it. Then radio, for some reason, just I gravitated toward.

So I did some theoretical backgrounding in internal colonialism, Tomás Almaguer and Carlos Muñoz, Frank Bonilla at Stanford and Bill Flores, others were working in this area, Carlos Vasquez, and they were theory types. They were poli-sci theoreticians. My sense is, well, there's some theory that there's a colonial system that we're part of an internal colony, that Chicanos are an internal colony inside the United States, then the systems that interact with us, the institutions, would follow into the colonial apparatus. They would reinforce or liberate us from that status, schools, police, other things. So I looked at media and looked at Spanish-language radio.

I was very intelligent but not very smart, so I could get the theory, and I'm not a theoretician, so I read what they had written and drew out of that what I could. Carlos Muñoz agreed to be on my committee. He was teaching at Irvine at the time. I said, "Here's the criteria, ownership, content, how they would be colonial." But it was like a mega-work. That's what I meant, I'm not very smart. I'd still be working on it.

I met with the committee. I had two from the Communication Department, Bill Rivers and Emile McAnany, and one from the business school, Jerry Porras, and then Carlos Muñoz from off campus, so of my committee, only two were from the communication department, and again, a very big proposal. They tried to get me to cut it down and, "Oh, no, no, no," so it started out larger than it should have been.

In the end, I cut out one of the chapters, which if I'd cut out another chapter, I'd still—when I turned it in, Porras told me, he said, "You have enough for two dissertations here."

I said, "I do? Well, I wish you'd told me that earlier."

He says, "Well, I did, but you didn't listen." He was right.

So I did a case study of one station, Radio KALI here in L.A., which had been taken over by new owners in 1967. I started in '73, so they'd been about seven years owned, and they had very good cooperation. Phil Malkin was the head of it here, the local operation. It was owned by Richard Eaton in Maryland. Kind of how does a station run, who works there, where do they get their programming, who are the advertisers. You could get some stuff on the public record, because it's a licensee, some of the economic data, and they gave me a place in the office. He gave me access to the files, not the financial files, but the programming logs and things like that, and they let me just interview people in the station, and that's what I did. I looked at public service announcements, news operation, program, who works there, what their backgrounds were and such.

Then I did one other chapter, which was a survey of data available on Spanish-language radio, largely from Broadcasting Yearbook and other federal documents, where are the stations located, what kind of population concentrations in cities, what kind of stations do they get, allocation in terms of frequency, size of power, where you are on the spectrum, ownership patterns and such.

I gathered all this data which I had very little understanding of how to analyze using computers, because when I had taken statistics in 1970, you were still computing by hand. This is even before calculators, so you had to do the math. So here I am now—it took me longer to get it, so '74, '75, I had all these data. So Nick Valenzuela, who'd been a student at the USC Annenberg School here, offered to help me. He wasn't in the program then. He was a Ph.D. student and decided not to continue. So he came and showed me how to do punch cards and run the SPSS, which had barely been invented when I was taking statistics. So I did the dissertation then.

I turned it in '76 and passed in '76, so it was a six-year process. I taught the last two years of it full-time at [California State] Northridge. We'd had another daughter, Anita [Gutiérrez], born in 1973, and then Alicia [Gutiérrez] in 1974. So Maria told me when we came back from Stanford in '74 to teach at Northridge, she said, "Up till now, you've been working on your time to get your degree. Now you're working on my time." [laughs] And she was right.

When I finished, I told her, "I can't ever give back these years, but if there's something you want to do for yourself, for your life, now I've got the dissertation done, you go on and do your thing, whatever it is." She went back and got a master's and went into early childhood education and then later got a doctorate in her fifties.

ESPINO

That's impressive.

GUTIÉRREZ

She's very impressive, yes.

ESPINO

That's wonderful. I'd like to hear a little bit more about that process of how do you divide domestic responsibilities when you're a graduate student and you're having these kinds of relationships in a very explosive period of feminism, but before I go into that, I wanted to learn a little bit more about what you found, because when I think of Spanish-language radio today, I don't think of it as being owned by Anglos or white Americans, and what you're saying is, is that that was the dynamic back then. What was the power structure of, say, Radio KALI?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, the structure of Spanish-language radio starts out in the twenties and thirties with Latino entrepreneurs, brokers, who would buy their time from the station. They'd buy a block of time like two hours from six o'clock in the morning to eight o'clock in the morning, and they would pay a flat fee to it. Then you would listen to their show, and they would play their music or make their talks or comments, whatever. Then they would sell the ads on their show to local businesses, and it was an entrepreneurial business class. It was called a broker system, personality radio.

Then over the years the personalities, they'd gather an audience, so then some stations, which would include KALI in the 1950s and KWKW—they were the two Spanish-language stations in L.A. up until 1976, '77—they'd package the brokers together, so you have the Teddy Fregoso Show or Pepe Peña Show in the morning, then Teddy Fregoso, then María Elenita Salinas and on and on and on. So they were individual shows, but it sounded like a format. It was all Spanish all the time, and the brokers were making the money, because they just had to pay the flat fee, and they could sell the ads for whatever they wanted to. Plus, if the station sold an ad and put it on the broker's show, they had to pay the broker because it was his time. He'd paid for the time. And if he read the commercial, they paid him a talent fee. So the brokers were doing okay.

This is where KALI changed and KWKW at the same time. In the mid-sixties, the station owner said, "Gee, we have the license, but they're making the money." Howard Kalmenson owned KWKW. I forget who the owner was of KALI before '67. But, "We need to change this." So what they did is they made the announcers, the brokers, employees and said, "All right, now you work for us. You don't have to pay us any more money every week," which the brokers, they were glad to. "Besides that, we'll pay you. We'll give you a salary." According to both the brokers who I talked to and the owners, they did okay financially at the end.

But what they did is they lost control over the show. The radio became format radio. You played the music, the songs the station wanted you to play. You didn't get to pick the music you wanted to play. If you wanted to talk longer about the great restaurant that your wife and you went to the night before, that "Maybe you should go by there and tell Don Jose that I sent you, and he'll give you a special meal," which is the way they'd sometimes get the advertising across, you couldn't do that. They had to log it as commercial time and this and that. So it gave them more control, so the stations made more money too.

That's the system that I went into in KALI. It was owned by Richard Eaton, based in Silver Spring, Maryland. He owned black and Latino stations across the country, and they ran as his own operation. Phil Malkin out of New York was the head of KALI. They had Latinos where they had to have Latinos. So the announcers were all Latinos, most of them from Latin America, born, and with some broadcasting experience in Latin America and then hired. They weren't local people who'd come up.

The sales department was headed by Mike Mullins, who was a Latino, but you wouldn't know it because his name is from Uruguay. Then they had this very Anglo guy, Richard Stratton, who'd worked for Bank of America. He was the all-American boy type, a solid guy, but they would set him up to represent the station to get the accounts from the Vons market and basically the drugstores and the auto-parts stores that were Anglo businesses. Then they had this other Chicano guy, Benny Dulleon, who was out of East L.A., lived in Lincoln Heights over by Cypress, in that area, and he serviced the Whittier Boulevard merchants, the people who were having a show or program or bringing in a performance or a dance or singer or promoting something at the Palladium or whatever. So they had a very Anglo guy selling to the Anglos, and a very Latino guy selling to the Latinos and such.

The music just about all came from Latin America, and they had a very tight Top 40 format where they played forty songs over and over again all day, and they'd have ten, I think, prognosticos that they would work in, so it was fifty songs and then there were projected hits. It was a very tight sound where they'd play the record and as the record was ending, before the music ended, the announcer would cut in with the time, the temperature, their name, the station, then they'd cue up jingles for the commercials on cartridges, bang, bang, bang, and then they'd exit out with, again, the time, the temperature, and they'd go to the next song, music. So it was a mechanical, predictable sound, which was what format radio was, that you'd get the same kind of music day or night. No matter what time you tuned to it, you'd get the same sound.

They had a news department that was largely rip and read. Every half hour they had news. It was off the AP [Associated Press] Latin American wire, which was in Spanish, so they didn't have to translate it. The news director was from Cuba. It was very rapid fire, two voices, one sentence by one, one sentence by—bam, bam, bam, bam, bam, short. It was a classic radio thing.

They had just brought in a student, Alberto Aguilar, from Northridge, who was taking journalism there, who was doing community reports. He'd file. If there was something happening in community, he'd do a local report. They had a guy, Danilo, who reported from Mexico, from the station, although somebody told me he really was reporting from Chula Vista, and then because of the international calls he'd cross the border. He was based in Tijuana, but they'd bring him up.

And that was the operation. I broke it down, where their public service announcements were and such. And he was very proud of what they had done, and he was very proud of what they'd accomplished and the changes he had made, because he'd come into this broker system in '67, Malkin, and converted he station to what he would call an ongoing, basically a modern radio station in Spanish.

ESPINO

Was he the brainchild of the Spanish programming, or were the owners? I can't remember the names you just mentioned, but—

GUTIÉRREZ

I don't know. I don't know. The owner was Richard Eaton, and he owned other Spanish-language radio stations. They had made a conscious decision, when they took over, that KALI had a large audience, it had a very loyal audience, but it was an older audience. My mother [Rebecca Muñoz Gutiérrez] used to listen to KALI. I remember getting up in South Pasadena when she was getting ready to go to work in East L.A., and she'd be listening to Pepe Peña in the morning, who had a very fast-paced kind of a wake-up show. When Malkin came in, or '67, I didn't know at the time I'd be doing a dissertation on it later, but Pepe Peña's show disappeared.

He used to have Margarita O'Farrill, who would have her on her show. She would invite my mother during Public Schools Week to talk about education. I used to drive her out there to do the show, which it was a housewives'

show, so that not as much music, but beauty tips and cooking things, homemaker-type things. They got rid of that show because they wanted the music. They wanted the fast-paced music all day long.

So what Malkin had decided to do was to change the personality—it was still kind of their show—so it was a consistent sound for a younger audience in 1967. So when I grew up, we called it Mexican radio, not just KALI but the Spanish—because it was music from another time and another place, and he brought in the more modern music that was being played in Mexico and other Latin American countries. They divided by tropicales and other genre, but it was a predictable sound. So what he wanted to do was bring in a younger audience, even if it meant losing some of the older audience.

I remember I was living in my mother's back house in South Pasadena with Maria and the two girls when I was doing it, and I was all proud. "I'm going to Radio KALI, and I'm doing my dissertation on Radio KALI."

She says, "KALI, they don't even want me to listen to it anymore," because they had taken away her favorites, Milt Nava and others who she'd listened to over the years. So it was a station—it was catching them at a point where they had made the transition and were basically making money or making a go out of what they had brought in.

ESPINO

Did you have a chance to interview any of the owners?

GUTIÉRREZ

I never interviewed Eaton, and it's probably better that I didn't, because he could ask Malkin, "What's this guy here doing his dissertation on us?" [laughs] He did visit the station once, and I didn't meet him, but I remember he was there and he was in Malkin's office, and the different department heads had to go in one at a time with Malkin to meet with him and talk about I don't know. I mean, I couldn't tell if they were scared or what, or not scared, but basically he made visits to the station. I was there for November, December, and part of January of '73, '74, and he came in, but I didn't know the relationship to Malkin.

I mean, some media chains have a formula. "This is the way we do it. You go do it and that's how we do it." Other chains are media chains, "We're the chain. We own you, but it's your local market. You do what works for you. As long as the money comes in to us, basically it's your operation. We can't replicate in L.A. what works in New York or D.C." I don't know what his philosophy was.

Eaton was quite a figure in broadcasting and was a white guy who after World War II had gotten involved with ethnic broadcasting. He saw a niche there that he could develop, and he had had a lot of problems with the Federal Communications Commission [FCC] with some allegations that he wasn't running everything straight and on the narrow. So when I came in, I didn't know any of that, but when I did background on him, I found out through the cases. What I could tell, he trusted Malkin to run the station, and he did.

ESPINO

How about the internal colonial model? What were you able to gather from your research?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, it did fit. If you take the criteria, basically you're testing a hypothesis, and so the ownership was not of the Chicano community. The employees, you have what they call a colonial class in internal colonialism, where you have people who share characteristics of the colonized but report to the ones who dominate. So it would be like the Chinese merchants in Southeast Asia that are brought in by the British to work in Malaya and places like that. So you found the Latinos who worked there were Latinos, but they were from Latin America, that had their first

education experience in media, for the most part, there. They weren't people who'd come up through the community. In that regard, that would be consistent with internal colonialism.

There was a low amount—it was heavy entertainment programming basically to subdue, to keep them happy, give them what they like, but there was not a lot of local news. There was a good amount of international news. They had a lot of public service announcements for community agencies and programs, and most of it ran between eleven o'clock at night and six o'clock in the morning. So I looked at those kinds of things.

If it's part of the colonial empire or whatever you want to call it, colonial apparatus, it would reinforce the colonial status of the people. If it was part of the decolonizing apparatus, it would be like the Chicano Movement media of the sixties, it would look for ways to liberate people from that. So I measured along rough criteria along those lines. In the end, they did conform to the colonial model, but in the end, the question was, so what if you had flipped these criteria, that it was locally owned, that there were local musicians being played instead of music from across the border and on and on, would that, in a sense, have changed the content, and my inside answer is, no, it probably wouldn't have. It's a commercial operation. It serves a purpose. It serves a need, and you attract an audience with the entertainment. The news and public affairs are part of it, but they're not going to be the total message.

ESPINO

Did you find anyone working for that radio station who could be compared to a figure like Ruben Salazar?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, earlier in the mid-sixties, Eddie Moreno had been there as news director, and Eddie Moreno very much could be seen as in the same model as Ruben Salazar. He'd worked both there and at KWKW. Well, when I knew him he was at KALI in '64, and he did local news and he did these things. But in '68 or '69, they had a show on Channel 28, KCET, the public TV station, Canción de la Raza, and he moved from the radio to Canción de la Raza and became the public affairs newsperson there. This would have been right about the time that Malkin is making the changes, and so he brought in more of a rip-and-read thing.

Alberto Aguilar was a student, did go on and reported for them and reported for KMEX later, did develop into a local hard-hitting reporter for the Spanish-language broadcasting, but at the time I was there, they covered stuff that came in off the wire and then they had the guy from Mexico, and then Alberto would do infrequent—because he was an intern, basically, so he wasn't there every day covering every story.

ESPINO

How would you describe his coverage? What would be the comparison with Ruben Salazar, if you could articulate that?

GUTIÉRREZ

From Eddie Moreno?

ESPINO

Yes.

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, my first experience with Eddie Moreno was I was editor of the school paper at Cal State L.A. in '64, The College Times, and I got this call from Eddie Moreno. I didn't know him. I'd probably had heard him on the radio, but I didn't know him. He'd gotten a press release from the college that they were having their honors convocation for the students who had real good grades, and he wanted to know were there any Mexican American students,

basically, on the Dean's List. Somehow—I mean, this shows you the way this place worked—he called the Public Relations Office at the college, and they referred him to me. I wasn't doing P.R. for the college. I was just a Chicano who happened to be the editor.

So he called me. I said, "Well, I don't know how many are on it. Basically, I put out the school paper. But if you call me back, I'll go through—," because they'd given us the program. "I'll go through the program and I'll count up the Spanish surnames I can find. I've got to put out the paper too, Eddie, but if you do that, call me back in two hours," whatever it was. I had a good managing editor. He did a real good job with the paper. So I took that out and I went down, I counted the names, and he called me back, and I did my first live interview on the radio, in Spanish. So that was just one example. He went after local news.

Jaime Jarrín at KWKW, who had been doing the Dodger broadcast for years, was also a newscaster, and he would chase down stories. He didn't work at KALI, so I knew him from another context. But you could approach them. They, like La Opinión, basically did not have field staffs, so if you approached them or you called them or you had a phone or did a set up, bring somebody by the studio, you could get things covered. But they couldn't leave the station to go out and cover your news event because then there wouldn't be anybody there to do the news on the half hour. So you had to learn to work with these people. So when I came in when I was doing the study in '73, '74, it was pretty much that kind of operation, except for what Alberto was doing.

ESPINO

Did you have any conclusions from your research, what you thought might improve or what was missing or what could have been different?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, you're asking me a very pregnant question, so I'll try to give birth to a decent answer. There were faculty members at Stanford who wanted to see me graduate. They'd brought in some Chicanos. They wanted some Chicano graduates with Ph.D.s. My chair, Bill Rivers, was glad to sign whatever I put in front of him as long as it looked good. When I went in for my orals, he had paper clips on just about every page, and I go, "Oh, man." He'd been very helpful. Then I said, "Man, these guys are going to torpedo me."

It turned out that the term was "Spanish-language radio" with a hyphen, and this is before computers, and the typist who typed the dissertation had put dashes where there should be a hyphen, so he had copy-edited that. At any rate, he read it for style and he read it for wording, but the substance I'm not sure he paid a lot of attention to. Emile McAnany, who was on the faculty of Communication, did pay a lot of attention —he'd worked in Latin America and done studies there. He understood the colonial model, and he was very helpful in that regard. Carlos Muñoz was, too, and so was Jerry Porras.

But there was nobody who had done work in this area before, or, as far as I can tell, on any other Spanish-language media topic in the U.S. There had been one dissertation done about a year, maybe two years before I did my research, at Missouri, which looked at Chicano activism in related to the media, by Joe Lewels at the University of Missouri, so there wasn't kind of, "Where does this fit in the literature?" It's kind of just out there.

I had one faculty member when I was back writing my dissertation, or when I thought I was going to finish it but I didn't, who asked me—I'd been away. He'd been away a year and then I'd been away doing my field research. He said, "So, you must be doing your—."

I said, "Yeah, I'm doing my dissertation."

He said, “What are you doing it on?”

I said, “Spanish-language radio. I just got back from L.A.”

He said, “Spanish-language radio?” You know, big question mark. “Why are you studying that? That’s a dying medium.” It’s kind of, “We’re glad you’re getting done, and if that’s what you want to do, fine. We taught you all this that Stanford has to offer, and if you want to take it and put it in this little piece of the world that’s important to you, okay, you can do it, but it’s certainly not seen as having much relevance to our world of communication.”

So at the end, I thought I had written the book on Spanish-language radio and combined with Jorge Reina Shement’s dissertation, which was also on Spanish-language radio, he started after me, but he finished on schedule, so we finished the same year, ’76. We did do a book and it was published by University of Texas Press. The book was, in L.A. at least, that there were two Spanish-language radio stations, Radio KALI and KWKW, and then one you could hear from Mexico, and that was it. The market was medium of chance, not medium of choice. It happened to be in Spanish, you happened to prefer Spanish, those are the stations you listened to.

Well, a year later, PSA Airlines, which owned radio stations, which all had love in—they were romantic music, English-language stations—sold KLVE to a Spanish-language broadcaster on FM, and so you see this FM station go Spanish—there had been no FM stations in Spanish—and it changed the whole spectrum, not just them alone. But Spanish-language radio took off. There’s about sixteen, eighteen stations now in L.A. that broadcast in Spanish.

So I’d thought, all right, this is a dying medium. Here it is. Before it goes, we’ve got to—I’m paraphrasing their language—we know where it is, we know it’s happening, and everything changed within a year or two after that. So my conclusions would not be very serviceable.

Actually, it’s grown more. Many stations have gone back to the original broker-personality, Piolín and Cucuy and these. I mean, that’s personality radio all over again, with, like, Pedro J. Gonzales and others. I interviewed a broker, a guy who’d been a broker in the thirties for the dissertation. He had an office by the Million Dollar, and, basically, you listened to their show. You listened to El Cucuy or you listened to Piolín. They don’t broker. They get paid by the station. But the idea of personality radio has come back.

ESPINO

That’s another interesting question. Did the autonomy come back too? I don’t know if this is relevant to what we’re talking about in the Chicano Movement.

GUTIÉRREZ

It’s beyond my expertise. You hear stories during the ’06 marches. I mean, here’s the Spanish-language radio, the locutores, you can’t really call them disc jockeys, because they do more than play music, yet you can’t call them totally political, because they’re not like Rush Limbaugh, just talking about their side of the news all the time. They play music, they give advice, they tell little off-color jokes from time to time. Humberto Luna was really the first one here on KLVE that I can remember back in the eighties.

But I don’t know that they have autonomy. It’s their show, and I guess as long as they build the ratings in, but they have this family that’s around the microphone talking about stuff, and there was talk that they were promoting the marches and speaking against the marches, or ignoring the marches, but I didn’t ever see any evidence that they were, not that I did a study, but that they were doing other than saying that this is going through the community, people are talking about it, and we’re not talking about it on the radio. Then they look out the window and people are marching down the street calling for humane immigration, and you’re playing some music, people are going to

change to the station that's going to be talking about the marches.

Where we have seen the change is I think we have seen that the formats are tighter now, in terms of the music. I'll probably mix up the genre, but you'll have regetón on one station and banda on another station, and then you have—I keep looking for the oldies stations in Spanish.

Maria and I were up in Santa Maria this weekend and there was a station, "Sin Tí," they were playing the bolero "Sin Tí." So, "Oh, I like this music." Then the next song was a rock and roll song, I forget the name of it, from the sixties, from Mexico, in Spanish, that when I went to visit my cousins. I said, "Man, this is my station. It's got the boleros and it's got the rock and roll from the sixties." So that's another format.

Some of them are sports talk in Spanish. So what they've done, they've stayed with the format radio, and sometimes the format includes the personality, and sometimes it's a very tight sound that you can predict it's going to give you the time, temperature, song, on and on.

ESPINO

Getting back to what you said earlier about—well, what someone said to you about it being a dying media, did you agree with that? Is that what you're saying?

GUTIÉRREZ

No, but I didn't want to argue with—see, in a dissertation, theoretically—I don't know that it ever happens—any faculty member could walk into your orals and vote, in theory, whether they were on your committee or not. It's the last rite of passage. So I didn't want to make any trouble with any faculty member. And I didn't know that it was going to die or not. I had taken it because it was something that I'd grown up with and listened to and heard and didn't really understand who owns these stations, who runs them, how do they pick the music, so it was of interest to me.

I don't want to sound—it's going to sound like heroic or something, but it was kind of, "Well, this is in your face. Fine, here's a medium. Here, you guys are all experts at communication. You've never even paid any attention to this, so I'm going to go find out what's happening there." It was a little bit of this journalist, the scoop. "I'll go dig out this story and see what I can come up with and come back up with something that you've probably never heard of." So that was it. I'd never thought whether it was going to grow or going to die. It wasn't a factor to me. I didn't think it was going to die, but I had no idea it was going to grow as much as it has and is continuing to grow.

ESPINO

Yes, that's really interesting. I don't know if there's a connection. Maybe you can elaborate on whether or not there's a connection to that growth and to the Chicano Movement.

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, the growth is driven by three factors in all media, as they relate to Latinos. One is there's population growth. Without the continuing influx of people and families and larger family sizes—that's why we have issues of people trying to control our birth. Natural reproduction it's called. Without that, without a population, you wouldn't have the media.

Secondly, there's been technological growth. We just have more channels, more avenues to go after. FM, even in the sixties, there was very few FM stations available, so you see a whole spectrum open up. So more people go into it, and so you're going to start subdividing the audience into sub-segments and segments of sub-segments of sub-segments.

Then third is the advertiser interest. The Latinos are a desirable target for advertisers. We're younger, we have larger families. The English-language advertising is seen as not reaching us because of the language differences. It's a growth population. It used to be —they were ethnic-themed advertising, and now the general market has developed us as an audience for toothpaste and shampoo and detergents and all that, so they go after us. That has been driving the growth, too, because if you can make money in these media, then you move into it.

So I don't know to what extent the Chicano Movement did it. I remember in KALI, in one of the files they had some approach to advertisers. They would send letters to get people to advertise. I just found them in the file. But one was, it says, "You've been reading about Chicano Power in the paper. Our newspaper, our radio station can connect with the Chicano Power. It's the purchasing power of the Spanish-language audience," and this and that. I don't know how effective or lack of effective it was. They would cover issues as they were taking place, but they weren't an advocacy. There wasn't similar to what we saw in '06 with the locutores on the immigration marches. And by '73, '74, things are quieted down some. It wasn't the same as in the late sixties.

ESPINO

Trying to get back a little bit to the Chicano Movement and the Chicano Moratorium, do you see that as an important historical marker? Because you said after 1970, '72, '73, things quieted down. Do you think that the moratorium had anything to do with that change?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, I think the moratorium—and it's all think, because I wasn't there—it showed the potential mobilization power of our community in very significant numbers around a single issue, and that you could get really what had been somewhat of a divisive issue and unite people around it, and that people were willing to march peacefully across generations. And we saw that again in '06. But I think it made people aware and that both people who wanted to keep us in our place, which is part of the quieting down, destabilization and such of the movement, and also it created some opportunities for people to move into other avenues.

I mean, before it was very abrupt. I mean, you could tell that we can be here, we can't be there. The year I got into Stanford, in the communication department they let in six students of color for the Ph.D. for the first time, and that's probably the last time they let as many in at one time. I don't know for sure, but I think so. So people realized, it was not us against all the whites. There were people realizing we need to do things to change.

So where we had encountered barriers, now we were seeing opportunities, and so then you get absorbed in the other, the requirements of somebody else's reality. So, okay, you want to get a Ph.D.? Here's what it takes. So all of a sudden you're doing that to meet their—you want to be a professor? Fine, here's how you get tenure, and you do that. So you had to keep an eye on what you wanted to do that was important to you in terms of a substance area, but it had to somehow fit or be judged as valuable in the model that the others were using to look at it.

It's not quite cooptation, because a lot of good things happen, but you had to learn to bring your agenda in concert with somebody else's agenda, because ultimately they controlled the degrees and controlled the jobs.

ESPINO

When did you decide to do that? Was that something that happened in the seventies, or earlier?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, I decided I couldn't find a job in journalism. I couldn't get a job in the media, so I figured, well, when you can't get a job, what do you do? You keep on going to school. My parents had both been educators, and it was a good

life. I'd had two years of experience in higher-ed student affairs at Cal State L.A. and then at Stanford, and I wanted to find something that had to do with media, but I couldn't see it. Maybe if I'd stayed here another year when Salazar went to KMEX, I might have had a shot at the Times, but when I was here, they had their Mexican, and he was it. So at that point I said, "Fine. If this is what I've got to do, then this is what I'm going to do."

I also was scared. It's the scaredest I'd ever been in my life professionally at that point, because I had done everything that I knew how to do to prepare myself for a job in journalism in Cal State L.A., editing the paper, winning the best paper in the state award, master's from Northwestern, Medill, top-ranked journalism school, or among the top three, and blanked out, no job in teaching or in the newsroom, classroom or newsroom. So when I went for the Ph.D., I said, "Man, Félix, this is your last shot, because if you don't cut it here, there's no post-Ph.D. after that."

So I realized, I've got to cover what they want to have done so I can do what I need to do. I know I can do whatever I want to do, as long as I get done what's on their agenda. They weren't at cross purposes with each other, but it was a different agenda. They weren't antagonistic to each other, but what might be most important to me might be less important to my boss or to my faculty.

ESPINO

How about the repression, how did that affect you, of the moratorium, as far as those kinds of decisions that you would later make with your profession and your career?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, we became suspicious of people. I remember Rosalio came up, Muñoz, my cousin, a few weeks after the moratorium. He just needed to get out of L.A. It was September, I'm pretty sure. It might have been early October. But he just called me up one day and says, "I need a rest. Can I come up and stay at your place at Stanford?"

I said, "Yeah, come on up." So he did. He slept on our couch. So I'd watched the moratorium, but I hadn't been there, because our daughter Elena had just been born.

So we started talking about people and this and, "Well, so, he's a police agent. Well, so-and-so, he's this," and these kinds of things. "He's working undercover," or, "That so-and-so, he sold out to that." So he was kind of an update of what had happened in the last year, since I hadn't been there. So I realized that there were other forces coming into our community.

The movement was basically people who knew each other in other contexts who became involved in a movement. As the movement got larger, then you had other people coming into it, and he had reason, and I think justifiably so, that his operation had been targeted. This is when COINTELPRO [Counter Intelligence Program] was going on with the destabilization of movement activities and such, so you kind of were watchful, I guess was the way to say it.

I think I was always suspect anyway, because, heck, you're from South Pasadena, you work for the administration. What are you doing in our movement? Not that I did anything with them, but you didn't see very many administrators who were out there, or there weren't very many, period, but who were out there marching or coming on Saturdays or doing things to do that. I didn't have to report to anybody.

My lessons were, you have to know who you are and where you are and what you are, and sometimes you can go along with everything, and sometimes you say, "This is as far as I can go on this one." But when they don't know where you are or where you stand, then that's when you get conflicted.

So at Northridge, there were times when I sided with the Chicanos protesting the school paper for how racist the coverage of the school paper was. I said to the student journalists, “No, they’re right. We need to listen to them.” But if I hadn’t, then I would have been pulled in two directions.

ESPINO

Can you talk to me a little bit more, then, before we go on to your time at Northridge, about that visit with Rosalio? I mean, that must have been very soon after the repression, the death of—how did you find him?

GUTIÉRREZ

He just needed a rest. He needed a break. I don’t know what else to say. He needed a place where he could get away where nobody could find him, I guess is the best way to say it, and he came up and stayed at our place. He was going to stay the week. He stayed, I think, three days. He had to get back. There were all these Chicanos from East L.A. that were going to Stanford, so they saw him, so it wasn’t like a secret kind of thing.

I remember I took him to Arturo Islas’ class. Arturo said, “Can you bring him to my class?” which I thought he wanted him to talk. He called me. He said, “Rosalio Muñoz is staying at your house?”

I said, “Yeah, he’s staying at our apartment.”

“Well, can you bring him by my class?”

I said, “Yes.”

So I said, “Rosalio, I know you want to rest, but this class—.” So he went. It was a Chicano English literature class, one of the first Chicano Studies classes. So he went there, but he did, he just wanted to meet Rosalio. [laughs] So he sat through the guy’s class and then the students came up and talked to him, went to one of the dorms afterwards and kicked back a little.

I think he wasn’t yet in a reflective point. He was still in the midst of it all, kind of, “What did I create? What came out of all this?” So there wasn’t a lot of—it was more like updating who’s doing this, who’s doing that, what are you going to do next, that type of thing. It wasn’t yet a time for self-reflection, and he’s always been very reflective. He can see beyond the immediate things. Since we were kids, he has a sense of the wider perspective of things.

ESPINO

What about psychologically? Do you think maybe he was in shock, looking back?

GUTIÉRREZ

No, I didn’t find him like that at all. I just found he was like a guy who needed a break. He wasn’t shell-shocked. He wasn’t like, “What happened?” or anything like that. It was like it was unfolding and here’s where it is. He had been student-body president at UCLA and other—I mean, he’d been through movement kinds of things before, and this was bigger and more and at a higher level of repression, but also a higher level of success in terms of mobilization. He basically needed a place to stay where he could kind of—I remember he was on the phone all the time. I remember that. [laughs]

ESPINO

Did he leave you with a big phone bill?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, no, it was not that. No, it's like, "I need to get away from it," but then when he gets there, he's on the phone connecting with this and that and the other thing. So it wasn't that. It wasn't like a retreat away. I don't know, you might ask him if he even remembers how much time he spent. He came up and he needed to kind of regroup, "And then I'm ready to go back." And he did.

ESPINO

Then how was the decision to move back to Los Angeles—that was in 1974?

GUTIÉRREZ

That was a condition of our employment. Maria and I had gotten married in March of '69, and I'm trying to connect a job here, there, whatever. I was working for the anti-poverty program in a press relations capacity, so I'm still here in L.A. at EYOA [Economic and Youth Opportunity Agency] anti-poverty agency in Los Angeles, and I had learned a lot about how to do public relations and how to get media to cover both anti-poverty agencies but also movement things and protest marches, pickets, sit-ins, sleep-ins, all that. But you reach a time professionally where you're going to get two years' experience or you're going to have one year's experience to two years over, and I kind of thought, well, I've got to either move into the media or—it's a good job and I love the job, but it's not where I'm going to spend my whole life.

So I had heard from my sister Gail, who went to Stanford and got her B.A. there in '66, when she came home for Christmas that they were going to hire some Mexican-American at Stanford. She found out some alumni thing. So I applied for it on a flyer, just sent it in. What the hell, you don't lose anything. They contacted me back then that the job they had advertised they weren't going to hire—they had somebody they'd moved in, Luís Nogales, who became assistant to the president. But they had an opening in the student affairs area, and they'd seen that I'd had student affairs experience at Cal State L.A., and the Dean of Students there, Ed Hallberg, was a graduate of Stanford, so would I be interested in being considered for that?

So here we are, just been married two, three months. We're both close to our families. I told Maria this job at Stanford might look pretty good, plus nothing's developing in the media side. So her first question was, "How long do we have to be there?"

I said, "Well, if I get the job, I'll go for a year, and if we like the job, works out for us, we'll stay two years." But at that point I decided I wanted to be a professor if I could. I said, "But they have a Ph.D. program there in communication." There were very few. 'SC didn't have it then. Texas, I think, was the next closest one, and I didn't want to go to Texas. So I said, "But they have a communication department, so if things look okay, then I'll apply to communication and then I'll get a Ph.D. there."

She says, "How long is that?"

I said, "Well, that would take about four years."

So she goes, "Okay. Five years?"

I said, "Yes."

She goes, “Okay. We can go for five years,” and we did. We both wanted to be at home. We both wanted to come back.

So when I leave in ’74, when I would come back to Stanford from my dissertation research and was at the analysis and the writing phase, I looked only for jobs in Los Angeles. I remember this guy at Stanford said, “Where are you going to go? You’re getting your degree.”

I said, “The best job I can get in L.A.”

He goes, “What?”

I said, “Yeah.”

It was kind of like, “It’s a wasted education. You come here, you’ve got a Ph.D., you live in Northern California, and your own ambition is the best job you can get in L.A.?”

I said, “Well, our families are there. Our kids are young and we want to raise them around family.” It was the best job I can get in L.A.

So I applied at Northridge. My dream was to go back to Cal State L.A., and they had an opening. It was right out of the movies. The day I went to tell them I was interested, a woman resigned from the journalism faculty because she didn’t want to get a Ph.D. and that was going to be the requirement. So then here’s the guy who’d been the editor of the paper, who’s coming back and he’s doing his dissertation at Stanford in communication to teach journalism, but it never went anywhere. I never got an offer.

Fullerton would hire me in communication if Chicano Studies would pay half my salary, which I didn’t realize it till the third interview, and the Chicano Studies is, “They want us to pay them to hire you to teach?” Which didn’t make any sense. UCLA I applied to and never got an answer. ‘SC was pretty much a professional school. I had no professional experience except for the EYOA. Then Northridge had an opening, and I applied at Northridge and got the job there.

ESPINO

Were you not in Chicano Studies?

GUTIÉRREZ

No, I’ve always been in journalism. But when I went there—and again, this is part of the edginess—I had a job, I was glad to be in journalism, but I told the chair, I said, “I want to teach one class in Chicano Studies.” He was a straight Anglo. If you looked at him, he looked like Mr. Middle America, but he was perceptive and sharp [unclear], my first boss.

He said, “Fine. There’s a procedure here. They buy your time. Basically they pay part of your salary.” There was some state thing. “You have to fill out a form. But if they have a class they want you to teach,” —it was El Popo, the Chicano newspaper class—“that’s fine with us.” Raúl Ruíz had been teaching, who’d been with La Raza and had been a student at Cal State L.A. when I worked there. So there was never any question that I would come back here if I could get a job, and Northridge was the only offer I got.

ESPINO

Can you talk to me a little bit about El Popo and that class that you taught?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, it had been started by Frank Del Olmo in 1970, as best I can tell, either the last year when he was graduating, or right after he graduated, and it was to put out the Chicano newspaper. The campuses had Chicano newspapers. I had taught one at Stanford called Chicano Journalism in 1970. We put out Chicanismo. So it was the process of putting the paper out.

Then Raúl took it over. He'd been the editor of La Raza, Chicano Student Movement, and I don't know if he had it just before me or if he'd been out for a year or not, but I remember when I went to teach it, I talked to Raúl about it, and he said, "It's a great class." I still remember his advice. "Just make sure they put out the paper." [laughs] Because I guess there's a tendency, you know, you're faculty, you know how to do it, that they—fine, you do it. He said, "It's their paper. They have to put it out." I still remember that. I had my experience putting out a newspaper. Now this is their experience.

It was a tabloid. I think it came out once a month and pictures on the front page. Students would edit and stuff and put it out together. They had a core group of students that would work on it. Some were artists, some were writers, some were in journalism, most were in Chicano Studies, and we took on the issues of the day. They did run an article I wrote on the front page. Chico and the Man, the TV show, had just come out, and there was a lot of protest because of the negative portrayals of Mexicans and the bad language. It's like Archie Bunker, all these bad words about Mexicans were being portrayed or carried in the show. So they did that. But it was pretty much a student effort.

One of the students is the editor of the San Fernando Sun, Diana Martinez. There were some people that went on. Another one went on to work at the Corpus Christi Caller-Times, went home to Corpus, got work on the paper there. I taught it every year I was at Northridge.

ESPINO

What was your relationship like during that period? I suspect that there was still tension, even though time had passed and you're in the middle of the seventies now, but tenure, getting your Ph.D., being part of academia. Northridge is one of the biggest Chicano Studies departments now, and at that time it was pretty big. I think it was probably one of the biggest even back then.

GUTIÉRREZ

Probably was. Well, I was very much under suspicion in Chicano Studies and maybe in journalism. First of all, I'm coming from Stanford. So if you're coming from Stanford, how can you be a real Chicano? I was from L.A. and East L.A., but, still, that's your thing.

Secondly, I was teaching in journalism, and they had what they called the annual pilgrimage. They were in the same building, Chicano Studies on the first floor, Sierra Hall, and then journalism on the second floor, the paper. They had what they called the annual pilgrimage from Chicano Studies to journalism every year, because every year there'd be something in the Daily Sundial, the school paper, that offended the Chicanos, and they'd just go and they'd go sit in the office, and they'd basically pretty much not quite shut—well, shut the paper down till we settled this issue. So I'm teaching on that faculty.

Thirdly, I had been very active in the sixties. Hell, that was five years ago, and for students, that's like when they

were in junior high. So the fact that I knew so-and-so in the sixties —there were three—no, two, two Chicano Studies faculty, Raúl Ruíz and Carlos Navarro, who'd been UMAS [United Mexican American Students] students at Cal State L.A. when I was the advisor, who'd gone on and gotten their degrees, so it wasn't like I was unknown to any of this stuff. But for the ones coming in, they didn't know me. So here's this guy from Stanford who was teaching in journalism.

I remember I went to the first UMAS meeting, which was a massive, massive group. They have a big gathering hall there. I went in and it was a Wednesday afternoon, and I saw Rudy Acuña, who I knew a little bit but I didn't know real well, and Rudy said, "Come on and stand by me," as the meeting was—I got there early. So everybody came in. "Well, that's so-and-so. He works in counseling. This person's that, and that's the president of MEChA [Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán]." So he gave me the rundown on the different characters. I think it was that and plus everybody there, Rudy very respected, honored father of the place, they see him with me and me with him, so I think the larger message was, "This guy's okay. Maybe he's from Stanford and maybe he's in journalism, but he wants to be with us." So there was not a tension there at all.

Actually, there were students who would gravitate to my classes because they wanted to take a class. Well, I won't say gravitated, but they'd come to it because they wanted to have a Chicano professor, including a couple of my cousins, who I didn't even know, from San Fernando, three. There was a Gutiérrez branch in San Fernando, and when my dad [Félix Gutiérrez] died, we hadn't really stayed in touch with them. Then one of my dad's cousins had passed away, so I'd been to a funeral. Then all of a sudden they start coming and taking my class.

For me the pressure externally was more—and it took a tremendous toll on the family—being the one, only Chicano at your level of your field, meaning professor, assistant professor with a Ph.D., you just got called to do a lot of stuff, and you didn't feel you could or should say no to it. I knew I wasn't any smarter than my parents' generation or the generations in between, but they had not had an opportunity to have a Ph.D. from Stanford or to be a professor at a state college in journalism. So people would call, "Can you help out on this?" "Can you do this on a Saturday?" "We're having a meeting on a Thursday night." And I just felt, how can you say no? I mean, you got this degree because you're representing interests and needs that have not had representation.

But here we are with three preschool kids. And the teaching load at Northridge, which is four classes, it's not light. So you have all your classes and that stuff. So it pulled me. I just felt for a while there that I couldn't say no to anything that was worthwhile. For instance, early on I said, well, if it's Hollywood, if it's movie stuff, there's other people to do that. I'll stay close to media. First it was all media and then as I got closer to—well, it was news, and I'll closer to it, so I would narrow the range.

But the activity increased. The California Chicano News Media Association, there was a group, Chicano Association of Latinos in Broadcasting [CALIB], "Can you come to Texas and give a talk?" Can you do this, that. "Can you go to Notre Dame? Can you do this?" I didn't do everything I was asked to do, but I probably did more than I needed to do.

And, again, how did it compute? I mean, the Northridge people were glad I was doing it in journalism, but they'd never heard of the CALIB, the Chicano Association of Latinos in Broadcasting. If I'd been doing something with the National Association of Broadcasters, then that's the group, but you'd do it because you had your thing, and then you felt you had to teach their classes. Over my career, I look now, most of my students have not been Chicano, and most of the classes I've taught and still teach are not Latino-themed classes.

Part of that was my uncle, Rosalio Muñoz, when I was at Cal State L.A., had told me—I was a junior, maybe a senior—he said, "You're going to come out at a very important time."

I said, “I am?” Because I was just glad to get out of college, out of Cal State L.A.

He says, “You’re going to come out—there’s going to be more opportunities for Mexican Americans.” This is before the movement. This is like ’64, ’65, before the movement really took off. He says, “And you’re going to have a chance to show people what we can do.”

My mother had always had that message kind of, not as directly, but, “I know what you’re capable of doing,” and you realize that by seeing you, people are seeing Mexicans or Latinos in a role that they hadn’t seen us before, and so you had to make sure you were pretty good at what you did, or at least you did it as best you could, because you might be the first and you didn’t want to be the last to be in that kind of a role.

ESPINO

Did you feel like you represented a whole people?

GUTIÉRREZ

I didn’t feel that I represented a whole people, but I had the feeling that people thought I represented a whole people. I mean, I’m not the spokesman for all the Mexicans. I never thought I was, and I still don’t. I’m clearly not. But this was common to many in my generation. You’re the first Chicano accountant that anybody’d ever met, or the lawyer. We’re the generation that started the different professional associations, in many cases, in different fields for Chicanos in business or law or whatever, so we felt lonely in the fact that there were not others like us who had been there before us.

Sometimes people would turn to me, kind of, “What’s the Mexican view on this?”

“Well, I can tell you my view, but I can’t represent it as being everybody’s view.”

I did a lot of speaking to editors’ groups and educators, journalism educators and stuff, where I was the Mexican, nationally and in the state. In the late seventies, when I got involved with the California Chicano News Media Association as their first executive director, I’d go to these different American Society of Newspaper Editors and educators in journalism, and they’d pair me usually with a black guy or a black woman and me. I used to call it the black and tan review, and the black would be Bob Maynard or Jay Harris or Lee Barrow, others who were major figures, and I was this assistant professor at Northridge who had never even had a job at a newspaper.

I had a lot of anger initially, because I was talking with the people who had not given me a job, is what I felt like, and I didn’t want the kids I was teaching to have that same experience of being ready, willing, but unable to get a job in the newsroom, so I delivered with as much power as I could that, “There’s good people out there. You’re going to find talent where you go looking for it, and if you’re not finding it, you’re not looking in the right places.”

ESPINO

You’re talking about challenging the mainstream—

GUTIÉRREZ

The editors, the educators. Nobody would ever admit they were racist. “We’re looking. We can’t find anybody qualified.” That was the mantra of the late sixties, seventies. They’d kind of gotten the message, but, “No, we can’t find them.”

So the California Chicano News Media Association—we call it pipeline issues now. Yes, there are people in the pipeline. Those scholarships support, internships, other kinds of things, the Job Fair that Frank Sotomayor and I started here at USC in ’80, which was the second largest minority chapter in the country, because they kept saying they kept looking, and they said that we didn’t exist in terms of having newsroom qualifications to get in there, do the job, and tell the story they wanted plus the stories we could tell that they were somehow missing. But I had to overcome that initial anger and say, “This is it. If you’re serious about it, we’re ready. Tell us what the qualifications are, and we’ll find people who can meet those qualifications, and then you hire them if you want to.”

ESPINO

How successful do you feel you were?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, we had a lot of success initially, because there was such a shortage, and in the long term, there were people like me who basically were out there with degrees, walking around with no newsroom employment, and you could connect them. They had the summer program up at Berkeley, minority training program. They were very successful, training people. There was a lot of goodwill on both sides initially, but you had to get them beyond tokenism and into critical mass and then from critical mass into up-the-line editorial responsibility, news directors, editors. And that’s still a battle today.

There’s a hard time understanding that we can do everything that an Anglo can do, just to put it in racial terms, and a lot of things they can’t do. But somehow the one thing that they can’t do that we can do, they kind of see that as the only thing we can do. But in reality, we went to the same schools, had the same experience, so we know all the stuff you know, plus we know about this other language or community. Not just Latinos, other people with other cultural capabilities or community knowledge, that it’s not part of their world, but it’s been part of our world before we became journalists.

ESPINO

So can you tell me exactly when the California Chicano News Media Association was formed?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, I wasn’t here. Many times I’m credited, and I don’t know where it comes from, with being a founder of the California Chicano News Media Association. I’ve never put it on any résumé, or written—it’s not true. It’s not done. But I’ll be there. Last time I was at Cal State L.A., I agreed to give a talk there, and the person said, “I ran your bio,” and he starts into, “and he’s the founder of—.”

I said, “No. I was at Stanford.” It was founded in 1972, out of the first token hires, is the best way to say it. Each station needed one. When I left, they didn’t have hardly any. When I came back in ’74 to teach at Northridge, every station had at least one, some of them two Chicano reporters. Del Olmo was working at the L.A. Times, Frank Sotomayor was at the L.A. Times, there were others. There were people there that didn’t exist when I’d left five years earlier, but most of them were the one or the only or one of very few people in their news operation, and they would get assigned to the same stories. “César Chávez is doing this.” So they got to know each other and though they were there to compete to cover a story, they were having common experiences within their newsroom, not all negative, but basically they were trying to make their way into a profession which there weren’t many or any role models ahead of them like us, so they got together. I wasn’t there at the beginning.

Alberto Aguilar was involved with it when I was at Radio KALI, and he told me, the fall of ’73, that they were going to meet one night and that he would pick me up at my house in South Pasadena and take me to the meeting. I can’t remember why I couldn’t drive. I just don’t remember. So I stood out in front of the house that night waiting for him to come, but he never showed up. [laughs] This is before cell phones and all that stuff, so no email or anything. So I just went in. Maria said, “How was the meeting?”

I said, “I didn’t go. The guy never showed up.”

So the next day he said, “Oh, they cancelled the meeting,” and he didn’t have my phone number or whatever. So I had a chance to be almost a founding member.

Seventy-four, the next year, I’m teaching at Northridge. Frank Del Olmo, who looked like he was an undergrad, looked young enough, came by my class. I thought he was a student. My class was breaking up on a Friday. He didn’t work Friday during the day, and asked me if I’d meet with the group, but told me I could never join, because it was only open to full-time journalists, and I was a professor, not a journalist, but they thought they’d have some academic credibility if they had a professor involved.

So I started going to the meetings. We met at Herman Sillas’ office, a lawyer, around a conference table. There were maybe eight, at the most ten people, probably not even, at most meetings, almost all guys, but there were some women, Eunice Valle, Estella Lopez and others. I’d better stop mentioning names.

ESPINO

No, that’s really important.

GUTIÉRREZ

No, I can’t remember all the names. I’ll leave somebody out.

ESPINO

Do you remember any other women’s names, just by chance? No?

GUTIÉRREZ

I’ll leave somebody out. There were more women in the late ‘70s and ‘80s. But it was mainly a guys’ thing. It was a guys’ night out, part of it, and they had just graduated to becoming a two-six-pack organization. I think they have enough guys that went, so they’d come and they’d sit around and talk about things they wanted to do and were doing. Then at a certain point during the meeting we’d all go to La Fonda and hear the mariachis, and they were celebrities when they walked in. They would introduce, “We have so-and-so from Channel 2 and so-and-so from Channel 7. From KNBC we have this and that.” They’d all stand up, people would applaud, because we didn’t have the movie stars before Fernando, sports stars, so the TV reporters were celebrities in our community. They had the most media visibility, the singers and all that. What they called crossing over into different cultures didn’t exist at that time. You really were in English or in Spanish. So we’d hear that.

Then we’d have conferences for young people on Saturdays and raise money for scholarships. We got money. Frank Del Olmo was a very driving force between the vision of how it could happen. Frank Sotomayor, who worked at nights, he was on the night desk, foreign desk at the Times, so he’d take a lunch break and he’d come to the meetings. Joe Nevarez, who’d gone to work at the L.A. Times in 1931 and was in his mid sixties, joined as soon as the group came in, Frank Cruz, Henry Alfaro, Joel Garcia, others that were in there.

So the feeling I got, they may have been the first Chicanos or among the first Chicanos to work at their news organization, but they didn’t want to be the last. Some like Pete Moraga had gone back and forth, English, Spanish. He’d been on KMEX, news director, and then he’d be at Channel 2, KNX news radio. Most of them worked in English, some of them worked in Spanish. Alberto Aguilar, who had been at KALI, was an active member too.

So I was kind of the go-to guy because I was teaching. When they needed a hit man, I could fill that role, because they were vulnerable. They're on short-term contracts. But I could come out and speak directly, because I had the professorship behind me. I had no professional experience in the newsroom. I had public relations. But for me it was a way to connect my students with jobs and others who had jobs.

ESPINO

How successful do you think they were?

GUTIÉRREZ

We were very successful. We were the first incorporated—it happened before I got there—first incorporated minority journalism association not working in ethnic media. There were other groups, but they were working in their ethnic media. We had funding from the L.A. Times, which one of the Franks talked to Otis Chandler in getting a check. We had funding from the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial for a staff person, Andrea Cano, in 1976, who organized a lot of the conferences.

In '78 we got funding from the Gannett Foundation out of Rochester, New York, and out of the newspaper fund, and at that point they offered me a chance to be the executive director. I was teaching. I'd just gotten tenure at Northridge in '78, so I said yes. So I took a leave. I taught one class at Northridge and I did CCNMA [California Chicano News Media Association] and set up an office in half of our garage in Monterey Park, with a desk. It was all show and tell. We had a post office box so they wouldn't know they had an office. I had an answering service, so if somebody would call—it was before phones would record—so they'd call in and they'd say, "Chicano news media. Oh, he's not in the office right now. Let me take a message."

But we had work. We placed, I think, thirty-five people the first year in jobs or internships, had conferences all over, Ventura, Inland Empire, Orange County, as well as L.A. I said I would do it for two years, and I did. Then the next executive director, Frank Newton, out of that grew the National Association of Hispanic Journalists.

ESPINO

That's an interesting shift, from Chicano to Hispanic.

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, it was. I've always felt that the basis of any organizing is local, and I've always had suspicion of any group called themselves the National Association of whatever, with national. Sometimes they don't have a foundation or a base. But funders like the national impact. In California, they had California in the title. So we gave birth to what people would think would be our parent, is the best way to say it.

The funder, the Gannett Foundation was the major funder of CCNMA, not the only one, but the major what they called basic support. Jerry Sass, their Director of Education, had an interest in a national group, and he came and he just said, "Will you guys do it?"

So we started arguing about, well, should we do it, should we not? We still have needs here in California. So finally he came to one meeting at the Taix Restaurant after the Journalism Opportunities Conference, and he said, "If this organization doesn't take responsibility for organizing a national association or at least funding, looking to see if they're going to form a national group of Hispanic journalists, we'll find somebody else who will." So they got the message.

ESPINO

But how about the shift from Chicano to Hispanic?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, we didn't. No, we stayed CCNMA, and they didn't have the title yet. It wasn't called NAHJ [National Association of Hispanic Journalists] at the beginning. We organized a conference in San Diego in 1982. Newton put it together with our names, for journalists from across the country, and he had put together an organizing committee. He'd asked me and others for names, because I'd go around the country and meet somebody in Houston or somebody in Texas or somebody here and there, Albuquerque, wherever. So I gave him names. I said, "These are people who might get involved," and a lot of them he involved, and they wanted to do wherever they were what we were doing.

We even had a panel— Frank Del Olmo and I were on it—on how to organize your own local Chicano group or local Hispanic Journalists Association, but in the end they went national. I wasn't involved in the national aura, what took over.

Actually, when he did come—I might lose the sequence. We had a meeting and we couldn't decide whether we were going to do it. Then Jerry Sass came and said, "If you guys don't do it, we'll find somebody who will."

The next Monday, we had a meeting here at USC. The CCNMA has been headquartered at USC since I came here in '79, and it's still here. So we put together a proposal, ideas, have a scholarship and an office. I was going to see Jerry the next week—I was on their scholarship committee meeting in South Lake Tahoe [Nevada]. I said, "I'll take the proposal to him," because they knew the money was going to someplace else, or were afraid it was.

So Newton wrote out the proposal and I was supposed to pick it up on the way to the airport to go north, but it was a rainy day in L.A. and stuff like that, and I couldn't get by here to pick it up to make it to the airport in time, and this is before email, faxes. So I got to the airport, I said, "Frank, I couldn't get by."

So he dictated over the phone what the points were in the proposal, and I gave it to Jerry written on a napkin—I guess I was up at the hotel—on the napkin of the Harrah's Hotel where we were meeting. I gave it to Jerry and then he came back a week later and gave us a $50,000 check. So I think he had the money ready already.

But when he made the grant, when it was all done and he announced it, as we were walking out of the meeting Jerry asked, he said, "Well, are you ready for another one? Are you ready to get involved with this?"

I said, "No. This is somebody else's opportunity." I really saw at that point that there was more critical mass of Latinos who had newsroom experience that I would never have. I just hadn't had it, and they were more connected with what the issues were then. It was okay for me at the beginning to break through and get things on the plate and stick your neck out so they could hear you, they could hear you sing and show them you could dance, too, but if it was to organize journalists around journalism issues, I really felt the leadership or the core leadership should be among journalists, so I pretty much watched it from the CCNMA sidelines.

ESPINO

Did they ever make you a member?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, I was proud to be a founding member. When they incorporated in 1984 in Washington, D.C., I think it was Henry Mendoza who had been active in CCNMA, said they had this provision you had to be a full-time journalist to

be—oh, you mean CCNMA?

ESPINO

Yes.

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, CCNMA, when I left in ’80—I did two years as executive director—Mendoza, he got up and said at the meeting—we were meeting at La Fonda in the back room—that they vote me a lifetime membership by acclamation, so everybody voted, so I got that at the end.

Then at the NAHJ, he came up. He was active in organizing that. He said that you had to be a full-time journalist to be a member of that, but that if you were a founding member, you could be a member for life, as long as you paid your dues. So I signed up right away for NAHJ. Then after I paid, they demoted me or whatever. They said I couldn’t be a member, along with Ray Chavez, who was a professor at [University of] Texas, El Paso, that the founding group was if you were on the organizing committee, not that you could just pay some dues. So I wasn’t a member of NAHJ, and then I was honored by being admitted to their Hall of Fame for NAHJ in 2002, and then that qualified me as a member because I was in their Hall of Fame.

So I’ve been an undocumented member of two Latino journalism organizations in my life, but I’ve been active in both, and I’ve always felt two things, one, that organizing is local. It’s at the chapter level. It’s at the community level. And secondly, if you paid less attention to who’s getting the credit and more attention to what’s getting done, a lot more things could get done in our lives, so it wasn’t like a sore point with me.

ESPINO

But it seems like you were there at the grassroots, even before organizations like that existed. It just goes to show you what these memberships mean. You can find somebody involved in elevating Chicanos and Chicanas to journalism who are not part of these organizations, so you need to always look in many different places.

GUTIÉRREZ

Yes. Now the groups have gotten so big in terms of the potential membership, but the initial need, that we’re one of a few people in our place, is less pronounced. They need to find new organizing bases and new bases of support if they hope to continue into the next thirty years. They have some real challenges.

ESPINO

Like, for example?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, a lot of the funding initially was from media corporations or media-related foundations, but you’ve seen a concentration of media ownership. They’re part of conglomerates now. Media is not their central business. Those who it is their central business, if they’re in newspapers or network television, they’re having declining profits. They have to squeeze more out. The leadership in those days were people like Al Neuharth at Gannett and Frank Batten at Knight-Ridder. These are people who came up the newsroom ranks to become the corporate head, when now the corporate head is probably the attorney, as likely to be the attorney of a corporation as anything else, or come with the business side or some other part, and they don’t have the foundation level of activity that they did. So they need to find other sources of revenue.

Secondly, the activity, they’re still focusing a lot on pipeline issues. More people, get them in to school, get them through school, get them to college, get them out, get them scholarships, which, I mean, there’s still a need there,

but the pipeline is there now. There are other professional needs, whether advancement or whatever it is, that are needed, and you also have this whole group now of people who don't have jobs anymore.

We have a tremendous talent pool of Latino journalists who cannot do journalism where they used to do it because of cutbacks in what had been their home organization. If I was in this racket or business now, I'd look for ways of tapping the talents of those people who are well experienced, good writers, good photographers, good photojournalists in video and all that, and find a way to get some so they could tell some of these stories that aren't being told the way they should be told. But I'm not there. I'm not there. You know, it'll be thirty years next month that I stepped down from being executive director of CCNMA.

ESPINO

But it sounds like some of the issues that you talk about are across the board. They don't just affect Chicanos and Latinos, that they're affecting all journalists, and the idea that the print media isn't really as relevant as what's online, that's another issue. Do you think that that's going to change, it's going to go back to—do you think the need is going to grow for the print media?

GUTIÉRREZ

Print media are going to be with us for a long time. What's dying and I think will continue to decline in influence is the general-circulation daily newspaper, the kind of the one voice in town that tells everybody's story to whoever wants to get to it, and primetime network television, including the network news. But there have been transitions over the years for new technologies, and it's always predicted the old technology is going to die, whether it's radio, magazines, movies or whatever when TV came out, and they survive by going from mass media, mass audience, to class media, targeted segmented media, where you're picking out a certain audience and have content for them.

I don't know if that'll be the future of newspapers, but we're seeing these—I mean, really they're community newspapers, but they call them hyper local sites where they're online and they may have a print edition. In El Sereno, right next to South Pasadena, there's two magazines there that are coming out that are supported by local businesses in El Sereno. So I think we're going to see that they have to reinvent themselves in a way that makes them relevant, and in that standpoint it makes them more relevant to local communities, if that continues.

But again, I'm not—how to say it—I don't want to rule with a dead hand or a dying hand. That's probably the wrong analogy, but basically I always felt you do what you can do when you're there to do it. You leave a place in better shape than you found it, and then you say, fine, I'm available, advice counselor or whatever, but now you pass the ball to the next generation, the next whatever, the next leadership. I've left some excellent opportunities, some things that I really loved and that were really a part of me, but you kind of say, well, I did what I could do when I was here to do it, and now it's time for somebody else to see what they can do with it.

I go back to Cal State L.A., the EPIC [Educational Participation in Communities] program is still running, still going full steam. It's changed. It's not the way it was in 1966 when we first got the funding, but I can go back there. Here's something that I had a little piece of, that I helped start, that's still here, or go back to Stanford and see the Centro Chicano and these things, the dorms and all this, the Chicano dorm, Casa Zapata that we helped get going. So at a certain point you say, fine, I helped get things at a certain level, and now go on, and the same thing with the CCNMA and the NAHJ.

ESPINO

You just said something right now that I heard before in another interview, and that is leaving a place better than you found it. Where does that come from?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, I don't know. I used to have a woman who worked with me named Beverly Kees when I worked with the Freedom Forum in San Francisco. My other life has been as a foundation vice president, which I did when I left 'SC. She was a Girl Scout, and she said the Girl Scout motto was something along the lines of, always leave your camping place better than you found it. So that may be it.

But for me it's more that you do all you can do when you're there to do it. But some people can't let go. They leave something and then they're looking over their shoulder the whole time instead of looking ahead and where they could be going, or, "If I was there, we'd be doing this or we'd be doing that," or, "They shouldn't—." I'll have views and I'll have opinions, but it's not my role to tell somebody what they should be doing. If they want to hear, I'll be glad to tell them what I think, but I'd like to leave it better than I found it.

ESPINO

That's not a Methodist philosophy?

GUTIÉRREZ

Oh, it probably is. Methodist is more like do unto others as you would have them do unto you, the Golden Rule as such. I'm not sure it's—the Methodist, at least as I learned it, and it was more church than just Methodist, is that you have a responsibility to yourself but also to a larger community, larger society, and then within the larger society, within the family, your race, ethnicity was part of it. You do good things that help everybody. There are certain things that your community needs that if you're in a position to provide them, you should.

ESPINO

Okay, I think that's a great place to stop.

GUTIÉRREZ

I'm glad you didn't ask me have I left the world better than I found it, because some things are in worse shape.

ESPINO

I'm going to stop it right now.

[End of November 15, 2010 interview]

1.7. SESSION SEVEN (November 29, 2010)

ESPINO

This is Virginia Espino and today is November 29th, 2010. I'm interviewing Professor Félix Gutiérrez in his office in the School of Journalism at USC [University of Southern California].

I wanted to start with your relationship with your wife [Maria Gutiérrez]. You mention her several times in our interview, and it sounds like it was and still is an important part of your life.

GUTIÉRREZ

Yes, still is.

ESPINO

I'm interested in how the Chicano Movement or what was happening in the sixties and seventies, how that shaped your relationship, because it seemed like you were really interested in improving the conditions for Mexican Americans and in changing the institutions. How did that desire to change and improve, did that have any impact on your interpersonal relationships?

GUTIÉRREZ

I think it had a lot of impact on interpersonal, and I think also it was based on the female role models that I had around me, an older generation. My mother [Rebecca Muñoz Gutiérrez] had gone to college, was an educator. Her sisters Lucinda, Luiza, and Josephine had all gone to college and were teachers or in some form of education, so I'd always seen accomplished Mexican women around me and who were comfortable in the traditional home, family role that women are assigned to, but also had lives beyond that and were active in either profession or community affairs.

My dad [Félix Gutiérrez] died when I was twelve, and so my mother is left with three pre-teenage children, and she works and raises us, moved us from East Los Angeles or Lincoln Heights, to South Pasadena, and is a strong role model there, working, raising a family of three as a single parent in the 1950s, keeping her career going and also keeping her family going, providing for us. So she was a strong role model.

Then both my younger sisters, one, Gail, Mercedes Gail, who's one year younger than me, and then Lorraine, who's about eleven years younger than me, were all much more accomplished and are much more accomplished and much more intelligent than I am. So in school and music and sciences and things, they just gravitated to things that I could never quite get a handle on. So I was used to having women around who were strong women and were strong role models in a number of ways.

So when I get involved with the movement, you see women coming in who identify with different kinds of strengths and identities. We're all breaking out of what had been our traditional identities, and women as well. I would not say, though, that the Chicano Movement, or at least as I experienced it on campus, was an equal-opportunity movement. It was male-dominated, not anti-woman, but just male-dominated. There always were women in the leadership, but not as president. Maria Baeza was the vice president of UMAS [United Mexican American Students], but it always seemed probably a male would be in charge.

Then I was working at Cal State L.A. There was one other Chicano administrator I knew, and then that was it. There were a couple—Ralph Guzman, another faculty member, maybe a few others, but I don't recall. So in the Administration Building there was a couple of Chicanas who worked there in secretarial positions, and Maria was one of them. She had been hired by the president's office first. She'd been going to Cal State L.A., left Cal State L.A. to work, and then came back and was hired as a secretary in 1967, and that's when they were starting their kind of Chicano visibility. So the president's office hired her and put her right in the reception, so when you walked into the president's office, she was the first person you saw. She was a receptionist, although she had the qualifications of being a secretary, shorthand and typing and all that.

Then the vice president saw her and offered her a job to be a secretary in his office, to his assistant, and the V.P. runs the university or the college. So she moved there and that's when I met her. I had a meeting with her boss and his assistant, and we were advocating some Chicano thing. I don't remember the exact thing. It was early in the 1967 school year. The V.P. on the way out said, "You know, we're trying to do a better job here too. Take a look at Dave." That was his assistant. "Take a look at Dave's secretary on the way out." So I took a look and I took a long look, and that's how I first noticed Maria. She was in the highest-level office there in terms of running the place. I was working with student affairs, where you could raise all kinds of hell, but she was more tight-lipped in terms of what they were handling, what kind of paperwork, what's going out and such.

But over the semester she started coming during her lunch hour to the UMAS meetings, and she and I were both

dressed up. We weren't going out or anything. We might have had an eye on each other, but we weren't seeing each other socially. So I'd be there with my coat and tie, because that's what administrators wore, and she'd be there with her office attire, which was more formal, so when we started going out, the kids used to call us Ken and Barbie, the Chicano Ken and Barbie, because we were dressed up because that was what you wore when you went to work in those days.

So she would come during her lunch hour and be part of the meeting, and then she would from time to time—I guess it can be on the record now—would slip information to the leadership of UMAS. I don't think any of it was confidential or anything, but, "They're looking at this." The V.P., Ken Martyn, was very involved with the efforts with Jesse Unruh, who was the Speaker of the Assembly, I think at that time, of getting more access, EOP [Economic Opportunity Program]. These were all issues being discussed at a higher level, and Ken Martyn was very much involved with that. So, reports, things coming down the line. So I saw in her a role that insiders could play. She looked like—and she was—the assistant's secretary, just there taking notes and minutes and things like that at the meetings, but when something crossed her desk that she thought might be of interest to her people, she was not afraid to let it be known.

At one point—I'll tell two stories and then we can go beyond if you want to. At one point the BSU went to meet with the vice president with some demands, the Black Student Union, and the leader went there, and I don't know the nature of the meeting, but apparently some confrontation was involved, and on the way out, Ayuko Babu, the guy from the BSU looked at Maria and said something about, "Oh, you're just working for the man," putting her down because of her role there.

The head of the BSU, who was the same guy I met, was scheduled to speak before UMAS. We were looking for black and brown unity on campus, because both groups had started the same time, but they were separate. We were after the same thing. We weren't coordinating our efforts. So Maria told Carlos Muñoz, the president of UMAS, "The guy went to talk to Ken Martyn and he came over and gave me some lip on the way out." Carlos told Babu that Maria was a UMAS member and was sharing information.

So when the president came from BSU, he started his speech saying then, "I didn't realize," to the UMAS he said, "I didn't realize that you had a sister," he used that term, "sister working in the V.P.'s office. I just want to apologize, to say I'm sorry." Because, again, she's formally dressed and everything, taking care of business. And he realized—so to me that meant a lot. I was just trying to get to know her then at that time, and said, well, here she is, she can be right in there in the center of where things are happening and still get stuff to us, and if somebody gets out of line with her, she knows who to talk to so that they know the way things work.

The other part, she was very suspicious of me, for whatever reason. We had taken a class at the same time when I was taking classes at Cal State before I went to Northwestern [University], and she said, "Oh, you're always with those—." That's when I was student-body president. "You're always there with those blondes," and you're this and that, although in that class I wasn't. But the thing, I think, was a Mexican American guy who makes it in the white world, he's not going to want anything to do with Chicana or Mexican women, and I guess I'm guilty at the girlfriend level of that. I don't say guilty, but anyway, I had friends that didn't—ethnicity was not a major factor. They're just people you're going out with. It's not like when you're getting ready to find somebody special.

I went to work at Cal State L.A., so now I'm Mr. Chicano with UMAS and on and on, and with the troublemakers in some cases, and so she was very guarded initially. I remember once Ken Martyn had done some report on access to higher education for the state, so I went to go see if I could get a copy, because it was about how kids get into college and how you could have EOP and things like that, and I remember she didn't want to give me one because I wasn't on the vice president's list or something. [laughs] So finally I was trying to be friendly, I said, "Well, can't you just get one?"

So she said, “Well, these are very,” not precious, but, “Only certain people—.” So anyway, she opened up the cabinet of the thing where they had them, and they had a whole cabinet filled with these things. They were piled on every shelf at the top.

I said, “Heck, you can spare one.” So she went out and gave one to me.

I tried to get fresh with her once. She called me. Governor [Ronald] Reagan was having some Chicano event at the Biltmore. This is not the one where they had the fires later. This is the year before in ’68. Martyn bought two tables and then he wanted to get one with the UMAS students. We were totally against Reagan and everything he was doing. So she called me up to see if I could go to the dinner, and I remember I said, “Well, I’ll be glad to go to the dinner if you’re going to the dinner.”

And she said, “Well, I’m just supposed to ask people. I don’t know if I’m going.”

I said, “Well, if you’re going, you can count on me to be there for sure.”

“Vice President Martyn just asked me to ask you and to get some of the students from UMAS to go.”

I said, “Well, you’re in UMAS. You can go.” Anyway, she wasn’t ready to get that neighborly. We did go and we agreed that when we went, when Reagan was introduced or spoke, whatever, we would just sit down, we wouldn’t clap, we wouldn’t applaud, which we all held to except for Monte Perez, the founder of UMAS. Reagan was a great speaker. He was the great communicator. [laughs] When he finished his speech, everybody’s standing, all Republicans here, they’re Chicano Republicans. They all stand up to applaud, and we’re all sitting there with our arms crossed, you know, and Monte is, “Hey!”

So I grabbed him, said, “Hey, Monte, remember we’re supposed to be sitting down.”

So we got to know each other then. I think part of it was there was an attraction to get to know each other. I certainly was attracted to her. Secondly, there was not a lot of other people around. We were a little older and we were active in things. We both had positions within the administration, and we both wanted to make things to prove that we had like a different base than what a lot of the other students did. So we started going out in the spring of ’68, and we’re still seeing each other.

ESPINO

She sounds like an incredible woman. I wonder if you could articulate, or if you noticed anything during that time that made you—because you talk about the legacy of powerful women in your family history, but was there something about that period that shaped your relationship, something about Chicana feminism or just women’s rights in general that affected how you treated each other?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, it was probably more practical than theoretical. It was more if we’re fighting for equal rights for us, it’s not just for the guys, that it should be for the women as well. At the same time, we were probably—and I certainly was as guilty as anybody—ignorant of the cultural norms of the time that basically had women in a subordinate position, and also that you wouldn’t see—I mean, I wouldn’t see why a woman wouldn’t be comfortable speaking out at a meeting. Many of them, they were comfortable, and others were just held back, had stuff to say but they wouldn’t say it.

For me it was kind of like growing up in South Pasadena. There was just kind of, white kids could perform at a certain level, and you could be there and you could be part of it, you could be accepted, but there were certain things where you didn't feel comfortable speaking out or acting out. I think women had the similar role, and there were probably some guys who kept them in their place.

I know Maria did run—I don't know if I said it before—she did run for president of UMAS after I'd left. This is in the winter of '69. We were going out; we weren't married yet. She ran. There was two camps in the group, and the two guys, and the guys from one camp were not going to vote for the other camp, vice versa. They were split. So she ran. She didn't run as a women's candidate, but she ran, and neither camp would vote for her as a woman. [laughs] They would not.

Gil Cardenas, who's now the head of Latino Studies or I forget what they call it at [University of] Notre Dame, was a member then, and Gil just got up and said—I wasn't at the meeting, because I wasn't a student anymore. He said, "Look. You call yourselves radical. If you're so radical, why don't you elect a woman president?" And they wouldn't. They didn't do it. So another guy ran, a third-party candidate ran, a guy, Carlos Jackson, and was elected. So there were definitely limitations on women.

For me it was an asset to have—she connected me—her family was more traditionally Mexican American than mine. I mean, very few families both parents go to college or both are educators. She'd grown up in Maravilla, not the housing project, but on Mednik [Avenue], grew up in the neighborhood where my dad had taught. Her brother Bobby and nephew Dickie had my dad as a teacher. And so when I met her and started seeing her family, I have this whole other family that I could then connect and relate to, who were all working people not college-type professionals. One was a meat cutter in the packing house, a barber, another one in construction and such. But they accepted me right away, or at least I think it was right away. So, to me, she opened a lot of doors that were distinct and different from somebody who'd been raised in South Pasadena, or most of whose relatives were college-educated, in that regard.

When we went to Stanford [University], I know the fact that I was married to a Chicana, I found out later, was one of the reasons the Student Committee liked me when I was hired to be assistant dean of students in 1969, and then she became the first Chicana administrator at Stanford. Women now, you talk to them now, who were students when she was in the financial aid office and she had to work out their financial aid programs, we've been to reunions, and for a lot of them, that was the first Chicana they'd ever seen in a position of authority, where you had an office and had a role in things like that. She had a tremendous influence on a lot of women there, and guys as well, because they couldn't get their financial aid without going to her.

ESPINO

How about when you were planning your future together? Did you decide together about children, about who was going to do the cooking, those kinds of division-of-labor responsibilities?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, I think initially we fell in the more traditional roles, except—and she'll give you a better view than I could—I always saw her as a full and equal partnership with some focus on responsibilities, but I had lived in a different world. That's all I can say. I think part of it is gender—I don't know what they call it—gender preparation, what you're trained to be as you grow up. Of her sisters, she's the only one who even graduated from elementary school, and she'd gone to junior high and high school and was finishing her college degree when we met each other, so they were very home-and-family focused, and she was very good. There was never any discussion about who would cook, because she's a very good cook and knows how to do that.

But when things came up, when options came up, I would want to sit them in front of the table and so let's talk

about this, what's best for us. She didn't understand initially why I was so—I forget what she called—impatient or dissatisfied. I had a job. I'd worked at Cal State L.A. Then I was working for the anti-poverty program, a federal-funded position. I mean, I was doing okay. But for me, I hadn't been able to get into journalism and I hadn't been able to get into something that I could really commit to, so when I'd hear about a job here or there, I'd pursue it and see if there's something. I liked what I was doing, but I didn't want to do it for the rest of my life.

So options were coming in front of us that she had never thought about or had never considered, and I had never really thought about them either, but when affirmative action kicked in, all of a sudden these things were opening up that hadn't been there before, so I thought, well, if they're there and if you have a shot at them, go for it, because they weren't there last year and they might not be there next year.

So there was a little—she was more focused on what does this mean, family, home type of thing, where I was more into career professional advancement, and also they were all related to being Chicano, so how does this help us advance our cause and such. That part, I knew what I wanted to do or what I thought it would be best to do. I wanted her to buy into it. I think she had questions that would not have struck me, that were more related to lifestyle, family, and things.

ESPINO

Was she more interested in settling down and staying in one place and raising a family? Is that what you're saying?

GUTIÉRREZ

I think she was less interested in being married to a comet on the ascent, or a rocket on the ascent. [laughs] I think for her it was you get married and then you settle down, and I was you get married and that's part of what you do, but all of a sudden you see this trajectory opening up, so take that ride, too. I mean, take it with you. You're not leaving. I mean, there are lot of people who did split up. Their marriages didn't survive really the sudden changes that happened in people's lives. So it was kind of, "We're in this together," was my thing, "and I want to make sure that you're part of this."

I think more for us it was the demands, in terms of the family part, the demands of being at Stanford, where there were very few older Chicanos, basically. There were some. In terms of working there, there weren't any who were married, who were Chicano couples, so we became like an older brother, sister, aunt, or uncle to this whole group of a hundred—no, not all of them, but a group of undergraduates who were away from home in a strange institution at the same time, and we were doing movement stuff like what we'd done in L.A. But we were married and then we had children, Elena [Gutiérrez] the first year we were there, at the end of the first year, in 1970, and then Anita [Gutiérrez] in '73, and then when we came back, Alicia [Gutiérrez], so we're kind of raising a family, but at the same time we're getting pulled in different directions, and both of us were. She was as well as I was.

So that part it's—I don't know how to say it. There's a time when you say, look, all these things are landing in front of me and they're all a nice stretch, but I don't have to do them all. There are other people that can take these opportunities, because in the end, they do pull you away from your family, even if it's all for a righteous cause.

ESPINO

Most of the people that I interview do talk about how they feel, looking back, that that was a bit of a sacrifice, not to be there for their kids for all the different events that happened during their childhood. Is that kind of what you're talking about?

GUTIÉRREZ

I don't feel that so much. I'm sure the kids can all mention things that I didn't make, but I was more like, whatever you're into, throw yourself into it. So I'd be at some conference or whatever and be the speaker or coordinator or

whatever, or planner of it or anything, and then come home and then go camping with my daughter Elena on her Girl Scout camping trip and be 100 percent into that. I would go to all the events that I could. If there was an Open House or a teacher conference or church activities or things like that, I always wanted to be there. One of the flexibilities of being a professor is you have some flexibility of your time, so I had some advantage over other people in that regard.

On the other hand, our kids asked me once, “How come every time we go on vacation, there’s some journalism conference involved?” Because you get travel stipend and you could either pay the airline ticket or you could take the money and use it and take your car. So not every time, that’s a little overstated, but we’d have some journalism thing, responsibility. “We’re going to do this.” I’d go to this conference and then we can go here. If we’re going to go up to Washington, we’d drive up to Seattle and that, but there was a journalism conference there.

One summer we spent in New York at Columbia University. I had a fellowship, visiting scholar. It was great, but I was based at the School of Journalism. We drove across the country, drove back, went up and down the East Coast. So there was always a sense, which I see that now, it’s linked or it’s tied to the job in some way, and the job is tied to some larger Chicano identity or cause. But I enjoyed the time with the kids. I tried to do as much of that as I could. You could never—I don’t know how to say it—I guess unless you’re real rich, you don’t have to worry, you could never just say that’s all I’d do. But I looked forward to it.

When we lived in South Pasadena, we were half a block from the high school and a block and a half from the junior high. We had three kids in school, and our house was the hangout for their—all three of them would have groups over, and I enjoyed that. I think they enjoyed having a parent around.

So it’s a pull, but it doesn’t have to pull you out. It’s time allocation and, yes, if I had it to do over again, and if I’d known the way things were going to unfold professionally, I would have not felt as obligated to do as much as I did. But there was a time when there was no other Chicano Ph.D.’s in my field that I could point to, or teachers, and the professionals, most of them were in the first rank, first generation of being hired, so they kind of needed a hit man who could go out and talk tough to the editors and publishers and broadcast, because if they did, they might not have their job.

ESPINO

Is that a role that you—

GUTIÉRREZ

Yes, I think so. That’s looking back retrospectively. I’d wonder, how come I’m being asked? I never even worked for a paper. How come they want me to go talk to the editors’ group or that? Well, I realized later that they were junior reporters, and they were. I mean, they were relatively young. But somehow if you’re a professor, even if you have no job experience, you have some clout or you have some cachet.

ESPINO

Do you feel that the editors responded to you?

GUTIÉRREZ

I found in most cases, and it’s a gross overgeneralization, but if you were there at a meeting, probably talking about some diversity thing, probably about, I don’t know, half or a third would just turn off. They weren’t interested. This was in the late seventies, early eighties, up to the mid eighties. Of the ones that stayed, about half, they would listen, they’d listen to it, but there wasn’t anything they were going to do about it. But another half of that, so like 25 percent, would want to do something, and it was a Ping-Pong match thing. They’d keep hitting the ball into your court, like, “I’ve looked, but I can’t find anybody.”

So then you say, “Well, what’s your qualifications? What do you require to be a reporter on your paper? Or what do you need for this?”

Then it was up to me to come up, when I was working with the California Chicano News Media Association [CCNMA] and other places, with, “All right, here’s a candidate.” I found the editors—I always tried to get them to be more involved with their communities and know aspects of their communities or parts of their community they hadn’t paid attention to.

I found a number of them would come up and they wanted like a checklist. “So what should I do? Should I call them Chicano or should I call them Latino?” It was more they wanted real specifics, and I think that’s the difference between the academic, you’re looking at big-picture thinking, analytical-type stuff, and editors, “I’ve got to get a paper out, so should I label them this or label them that?”

So you would push them, “Well, you’ve got to get to know your community. I can’t tell you what the answer is in Visalia or Fresno or whatever, but there’s people there who can help you.” Sometimes they were confrontational, but generally it was you were at their meeting. I learned that from Bob and Nancy Maynard, with the Institute for Journalism Education, that you go to their watering hole. You go where the editors meet and you get on their program, and then you’ll have them listen to your message.

A lot of times, I think I said earlier, it would as paired with an African American. We’d call it the black-and-tan review. I’ll say this, they were more aware of the blacks and African Americans as an overall issue than they were of Latinos, even in California. We were like people they hadn’t thought of. Well, we were in our place, and that’s where we were supposed to be.

ESPINO

That’s interesting, especially after the career of Ruben Salazar and his untimely death, that that was still the case.

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, editors don’t generalize. Journalists, a lot of them, they go on a story-by-story basis, so we say they cover revolution better than evolution. So something happens, and to us Salazar was, is, and will continue to be a role model of what a person can do in the newsroom if given the opportunity, and he keeps in touch with who he is, but I think for others it was a guy who was a reporter, who died or got killed. It wasn’t a ripple, like, here’s an example, “Boy, there might be some other Ruben Salazars out there. I should get them for my paper.”

Some of them, they’d want to hire one. It was getting them beyond the token hire, two, three, four, looking at critical-mass issues, looking at women. The first hires were always men, that I can recall, and then looking at women as, yes, we have women who can do this kind of work, too.

Basically, you work with people who’ll work with you. I mean, you could go after the most racist editor and just spend your time knocking your head against the wall. I’d rather work with the guy who says, “All right, I’ve got a job. Do you have somebody who can fill it?” and then get him two or three or four candidates and say, “Well, there they are now.” I can’t tell him who to hire, but, “There’s the people you say don’t exist,” and see what they do with it.

ESPINO

Yes, that’s an interesting strategy, because people would say the opposite, you know, go to the person who’s racist. So then let’s look at some of these accomplishments of the Chicano Movement and from your perspective, from

your understanding of what is Chicano, and maybe you can tell me a little bit about some of the gains that you think you were able to witness and you were able to observe from your involvement.

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, the biggest gains were on the pipeline, what we call pipeline issues. I'll just speak for me. It's basically an unsophisticated analysis, but it's a very vibrant one and a very clever one, that the main thing wrong with the system is that me or people like me aren't a part of it, and that if we could only get into it, if we could get into the colleges and then from there into the professions and then into the leadership of the professions, that somehow we could correct this system or myriad of systems that keeps us in our place, that other people think we belong but that does not make full use of our talents and our abilities and our ambitions. That fits into the role that I ended up taking, which was in education, because you are training people to take leadership or entry level and then leadership roles. So initially, I think in that regard we've been very successful. There are more people, I mean compared to where we were. We still have a ways to go in terms of where we should be.

But where it was less sophisticated was that getting in, you become part of the system. I mean, sometimes you've changed more than the system's going to change, and you can raise issues and you can fight them, but just because you win a battle here or you implement a new program there or there's a new initiative that comes into play someplace else, does not mean that this is a continuing—it's not a momentum. It's not a linear type of dynamic. You have to be a watchdog.

I later took on the analogy of Jiminy Cricket—this is the 1980s—in terms of media. We had to be the Jiminy Cricket, the Jiminy Cricket from Pinocchio, where the kid is a puppet who's trying to be a boy, and Jiminy Cricket's the conscience, trying to keep him on the right track. I said, "We get in, but we're Jiminy Cricket. We have to keep the media and media industries and other professions in line and in touch and on contact with the issues that we're talking about and the people that we're talking about. They're just not ready to go out on their own." In media, it's really in their own self-interest. The population growth and all that is in our direction. That's where they should want to get people. They should want to find people to do things and stories to cover that they haven't been doing.

So I'm sure that you can talk more theoretically and analytically about it, but that's basically what it was. First it was get us in. Then it was keep a watchdog role to keep advancing the issues, and then realize, at least for my generation, that that was going to be a constant role, that they could not yet be trusted to their own devices.

ESPINO

Do you feel that that's been a strength, that people have actually taken on that responsibility of the watchdog role, or do you think that they've been more changed by the system rather than changing the system?

[interruption]

[recorder turned off]

ESPINO

Okay, we're back. Do you want me to rephrase that question?

GUTIÉRREZ

Just state it, please.

ESPINO

I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about what you just described as far as some people who were able to enter into new areas of maybe political arenas, economic arenas, educational arenas, places that had been previously closed to Mexican American and Chicanos. Once they got in, you mentioned that some people were changed more than impacted the system itself. Can you talk a little bit more about that, and maybe if you can see more of that happening or more changing the system happening, looking back?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, I'm not sure it's more comparison. The way I look at it is the people of my generation, across almost every profession, those of us who got jobs in the sixties and the early seventies, in most cases, in many cases, we were either the first or the only or one of a very few Chicanos in that type of profession or job or getting into those types of things. There always were a few exceptions here and there, but for the most part, certainly when I went into journalism teaching, there was one other Chicano assistant professor at UT [University of Texas] El Paso, and that was it that I could identify in the whole United States.

So you have this role. I remember my Uncle Rosalio [Muñoz Sr.] told me once when I was at Cal State L.A., "You're going to come out at a good time when there's going to be opportunities for Mexican Americans." Never anybody had ever told that to me. But his second part, which I don't think I relayed earlier, which is, "And you're going to be able to show them what a Mexican American can do." So there is a role-model effect that comes over you, a role that you have, that you're maybe the first or maybe the only or maybe one of a few, but you don't want to be the last, that somehow a larger group is judged by the way you behave, by the issues you raise, by the way you advocate those issues, by what you bring to the table.

Some react to that by becoming more part of the system, want to replicate those who are here before me because that's how I can move my own personal ambitions or larger ambitions. Some take a more counter against—like [Reies] Tijerina [Lopez] said, "I want to be the cricket in the ear of the tiger, just cricket away and he keeps scratching his ear, scratching his ear to get rid of the cricket, and eventually I can get it to change." And others take that other role.

But ultimately, you still work for whatever the institution is or whatever the profession is, so whichever role you choose, you end up in some—unless you have your own independent wealth you've got somewhere, you're a creature, to one extent or another, of the demands and your criteria of what you're expected to do in that profession.

For me it was, first of all, I had a lot more exposure to Anglos and an Anglo-dominant world at an earlier age than most Chicanos. That's just South Pasadena, and that's all I'll say. I had success in an Anglo world in college at Cal State L.A., the editor of the school paper, student-body vice president, student-body president, so this was not a different world for me. And my parents had both been to college and both had friends of all races. We would go to black and Asian and white and Mexican, so I'd had this larger world view than many people had had.

I also had role models. I had a mother who was a teacher. I had an uncle [Rosalio Muñoz Sr.] who was the highest-ranking Chicano on the Board of Education in L.A., so I had others who I could see who had done these kinds of things. So when I got into where I wanted to go, I wanted to raise the issues, but I realized you had to pay your taxes. So when I was a grad student, or even when I was working at Stanford, if you weren't doing the job you were hired to do and you're raising hell over here, they're going to move on you for the raising the hell over here. But as long as you're doing what you're supposed to be there to do, that's kind of a cover for what else you wanted to do, not that you're doing secretly, but you're just doing it.

So at Stanford I took the classes you had to take, all the statistics and methodology and all these things and did well, or well enough, anyway, to get through, because if I was flunking my classes, then they could say, "Well, what the hell? This guy wants us to change the department. He can't even pass statistics," or whatever.

When I went to work, the same thing. When I went to work at Northridge afterwards, I taught one class in Chicano Studies, at my request, but the rest I was teaching basic introduction to journalism, reporting, public affairs, graduate research for the master's students. So I always figure, you've always got to do the job they want you to do, and then you use that as a cover to raise the issues that you want to raise.

As things evolved, I was able to switch more to the issues that I wanted to raise as funding became available for the California Chicano News Media Association, and basically you could divide. You could get grants to raise issues that had to do with the people who were giving you the grant, so we did. Again, it went back to pipeline. It was scholarships, it was jobs, it was internships to get people into the media. So there was a range of opportunities that were available then that you could move between and among and within.

Then within the research field, which I think is probably what I think will be my longest lasting impact if there is—getting involved with research related to Latinos in media and the development of Latino media, which was just an open field. Nobody had really looked at it. Nobody had considered it important. So rather than replicate the studies, another study on Thomas Jefferson and the press, I said, well, let me go look at Latino media, and it was wide open. So you could do a lot of things there, and a lot of other scholars have come in the last thirty years, but initially it was kind of lonely, but because it was lonely you could get some notoriety out of it.

So I can't claim that I changed the system, but I can point to things that every institution where I've worked and where I went to school—well, actually, everywhere I worked that are there today, that I was a small part of getting going and that wouldn't have been there if a group of students hadn't taken it on, or administrators or faculty.

ESPINO

When you look back—we talked a lot about those different organizations that you were involved in and some of your projects to develop that pipeline, but when you encountered people who thought differently than you, or when you disagreed with certain perspectives of the Chicano Movement, can you talk a little bit about some of maybe the weaknesses or some of the failings, if there were any, in your mind?

GUTIÉRREZ

Within the Chicano Movement or people that were looking at it?

ESPINO

Yes, within the Chicano Movement.

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, you always have to separate people who were in it for themselves and people who were in it for I guess what you'd call the common good or the greater good, and there were opportunists who saw an opportunity, and maybe somebody might say I was, too, but where they basically saw a chance for some personal advancement at the cost of their—that there wasn't any Chicanos here.

I remember there was one—I won't mention the name. There was an issue with the Chico and the Man TV show, which was that people saw it as racist. In 1974 it came out. So the Chicanos were protesting it, so he was going to go to Chico and the Man. He was a Chicano. He said, "Well, hire me and then they won't protest, because you can say you have a Chicano here," and they actually had had—Ray Andrade was working for them, so it wasn't like they didn't have any. But he saw that as kind of his entry level to get in there, and other things like that. Because our absence is so conspicuous, you have a chance, by being the first or the only or one of a few, to advance your own agenda, your own personal agenda.

I saw it more, and I think most people did, as the way you get in because you want them to have a greater awareness of a larger community or a larger set of needs that they don't see, and so, yes, you do what they need to do, and there's some self-promotion in media. There obviously is. But you don't advance yourself at the expense of somebody else. There's infighting. There's always some who is the first, who is the only, who is the—this kind of thing.

My sister Gail went to Stanford in 1962 as an undergraduate, and she wasn't the first Chicana at Stanford, and she's never claimed to be the first Chicana at Stanford. But I'll go to meetings where somebody who got there in '68 or '69 or whatever, they'll claim, "Well, there were no Mexicans till I got here," and that's kind of a self—part of your identity is that you're a barrier breaker that you may not have been, and I've always been somewhat suspicious of people whose credential or their first credential is that, "I was the first Chicano to do this," or, "I was the first Chicano to be hired there." It's as though you were better than anybody who came before you, when the reality is, there weren't opportunities for the people who came before you that were available to our generation, and we were there to take them. But my mother or my dad were just as well qualified to have the career that I've had. They just didn't have that chance.

Beyond that, I guess are there things we'd do different? Yes, there's things we'd do differently. We looked very much at the clear and present disparities in the society. We're not there. We're not working at this level. So just get us in and then we can make a change from within. And it was real. I mean, as I said, I had a master's degree, a teaching credential, a California General Secondary Credential. My parents were both teachers. I applied for school districts from Santa Barbara to San Diego, not everyone, but that range, and as far east as Pomona, and went individually to a lot of these school districts to fill out the forms and everything. I got one job offer in 1967, to teach history in Pomona. That was it.

So a year later there's the school walkouts in East L.A. and these school districts are coming to Cal State L.A. to hire Chicano teachers. I remember Santa Barbara came down, where I had applied the previous year and hadn't even gotten an offer, and they said they were looking for Mexican American—well, I was there a year ago. What happened? So we had felt that. So when you get in, hired, I mean there is a sense of accomplishment. But you have to see, you realize often it's not a personal accomplishment alone, it's also that they decided to open the doors a little bit wider than what they had been before and look at something that maybe they'd seen as a negative or as something you had to overcome, as an attribute.

ESPINO

So what you're saying is that accomplishments of individuals during that period, like the seventies and maybe even into the eighties, many of those people were able to get in because of the work that other people had done previously.

GUTIÉRREZ

Preparation is not enough. Individual preparation is not enough to break a barrier. You need some kind of collective action that leads to a greater institutional awareness. So, yes, somewhere, someplace. I mean, the reasons that jobs opened up at Stanford, yes, there were the students who—Luis Nogales and Frank Sotomayor and Frank Ponce and Robert Anchondo, who met with the Dean of Admissions in spring of '67, and they had a force. But also I heard when I got there that Stanford had been up for accreditation under the WASC, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, and they said, "Yeah, you've got a great school here, but it's pretty white." So there was somebody else at the top saying, "You've got to integrate this."

So you have two things working together. If the Chicano students hadn't been able to produce quality applicants, they could say, "Yeah, we opened the door and nobody came in, so I guess we're doing it the right way." On the other hand, if there hadn't been a higher-level attentiveness to this, they might have been able to just keep coming up with candidates who would not get accepted. Because these kids, you know, we had farm worker kids, migrant

worker kids. A lot of them had gone to the wrong high schools in that type of town because they went to the Mexican school. They didn't recruit at those schools, those types of things. So it's a coordination of converging forces.

ESPINO

In contrast to that perspective of the pipeline idea of getting in, there was also the idea of just breaking it down and creating something new, not assimilating into those systems. Was that an idea that you think had any success?

GUTIÉRREZ

That was very much a part of it. I mean, Corky Gonzales in I Am Joaquin—I won't get it exactly right, but basically, "I've come a long way to nowhere, driven by the Anglo model of success." So the fault in the pipeline, which we addressed early, was that basically you get on the Anglo pipeline, you're going to come out an Anglo. You might have brown skin, but basically you got processed by a system that took you from where you were to what you were supposed to be, and nothing you brought with you, or very little you brought with you, was going to be valued at the end.

When there were very few of us in the campuses, like I've mentioned my own, basically you mixed in. They had a very integrated environment on campus, and then I'd go home and play Mexican records and listen to Chico Sesma and things like that, trying to be as Mexican as I could be, but not being able to take that back to campus in a way beyond talking to a few kids here and there.

When you get more numbers, then you say, well, you can create parallel institutions here or organizations here that give a supportive environment to people as they come here, rather than process them out of what they came with. I also think at places like Stanford, where you leave home and you're in another environment, that I think there's an acting out that certainly took place in that world, where kids act out as more Chicano on campus than they were at home. We had kids who would walk around, put placas on the walls and all. You know they didn't do that in high school. They wouldn't have got into Stanford if they had, and were trying to be more Chicano than this and that. But a lot of people do stuff in college that they wonder why they did it when they're older, and a lot of it was an affirmative in your face. "We're here, but we're not here to become just like you. We can take your classes and we can do okay in them, but we don't have to give up what we brought here, and matter of fact, we're going to show you some of it, and it might not be the parts that you identify with initially." So, yes, there's a "Don't put me in the melting pot. I don't want to melt."

ESPINO

You were able to witness the birth of EOP and affirmative action, and then also recently its demise or criticism of it, its decline, lawsuits against it. Do you think that it's time to look at race differently and admissions differently, or do you think that that's a program that's still very much in need?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, the problem is not with the EOP or with the affirmative action, but it's with the standard that people are made to think that that's the gold standard. There's a certain way you get into college. You have certain kinds of grades, you have certain kinds of scores, and that's the way you get in, and the people who don't meet that come in as some kind of special exception or some kind of difference. It's not always race. It could be they're a musician or they're an athlete or whatever, but somehow they're an exception to the rule.

The reality is that the single standard only works if people have equal access to meeting that standard, and that simply is not the case in terms of classes that give AP [advanced placement] credit or access to The Princeton Review and these ways you get into college or the level of the quality of education you have. They'll value a student who went away in the summer to go to music camp, which is great if your parents can afford it and you don't have to work. But why not give as much credit to a kid who worked in the summer at McDonald's or wherever, to help

support their family? I mean, they learned something there too. So it's in the weighting of experiences that I think that it works against and that makes us look as though we're less well qualified.

When I first heard this explained to me, which was sometime in '67 or '68, probably '68, and I don't know if it's true, but it's the way it was described, it was by somebody who was dealing with the UCLA law school and said that they—and I don't remember the number. He said in order to do the work at the UCLA law school, you need a certain numerical score on the LSAT. But they had so many good applicants that they had set a higher score as the standard, even though if you had a lower score you could do the work. So what they were doing to let in more blacks and Chicanos is the way it was described to me, was that they were asking the Latinos to meet the lower score and blacks to meet the lower score.

Well, right away it makes the whites think that they have to be more qualified to get in than what the Latinos or blacks have to get in, so that sets up a differential equation in which you're on the lower end or the less valuable end of it. In reality, they should look at a wide range of criteria in terms of who's going to be the best lawyer, and part of it is going to your score, but that's not all that's going to be at the score.

Another way they could have done it, if they said, "Everybody who has this score, the lower score, is admissible. Now we'll look at other criteria beyond that score and then we'll decide the best class that we can admit." But they didn't frame it that way.

When you got into affirmative action under goals and timetables, which are part of federal contracting, because institutions would set goals, "We're going to hire women and engineers. We're going to hire blacks and Latinos," but there was no timetable. There was no, "When are we going to do it?" It's kind of, "Yeah, we're going to do it. We don't discriminate anymore."

I remember, again, '68, it was described to me, somebody's working for IBM, that they had goals and timetables that they had to meet. Well, my suspicion then, and I think it turned out, was that these would end up becoming quotas, and you have to have so many women or so many Mexicans or so many blacks to get in, and once you got that quota, then you don't have to work on it anymore.

So there were implementation mechanisms that made sense at the time that they were put into effect that I think have had a long-term negative effect. It's either made people look as though they were less qualified, or once you had a certain number or a certain level of participation, you didn't need to go beyond that.

ESPINO

So then you're not advocating for a return to that kind of program today.

GUTIÉRREZ

I'm advocating that they should look at a broader range of criteria and a more realistic range of criteria than they do. I mean, the hardest-working students I see here at 'SC are the children of immigrant parents. I'll just say that. They've had to learn the most to get here. They come from families of different languages, different countries very often, different abilities in terms of what their parents do or didn't do. They're eager learners. They're not afraid of hard work, because they've been working hard all their lives. But where does that get measured? It doesn't. You can't measure against a standard that you set unless people have equal access to the standard, so that's it.

The best man at my wedding is African American, Carlton Blanton, who I met at Cal State L.A. He's actually the one who told me once—Maria and I were eyeballing each other, but we hadn't really gone out or anything, and he said, "You know, Maria's looking back at you, but she's not going to be looking at you for long." [laughs] He says, "If

you're interested, you'd better get over to her office and start talking to her." So, man, I jumped up from my desk and ran around. Her office was right on the other entrance away from mine. I ran over to see her. So he was a wise man.

But in the context of this, we were talking about bootstrap, pull people up by their bootstraps, and I said, "Yeah, this is a bootstrap operation."

He says, "Yeah, except we don't have any boots." That was a way of saying that it's not an equal, not a level playing field. It's not an equal access to get in, and by the time you get to the end, there's not a measurement you can go against. So they need to look at a wider variety of criteria that more accurately assesses the potential for success in college and then beyond college.

ESPINO

I don't know exactly where the idea of EOP came from and how it came about, but I know at Cal State L.A. there were certain programs that were pioneering in that regard. Were you ever a part of any of those?

GUTIÉRREZ

Yes. Well, the way I heard about it was this. I always thought you had to get in—nobody got in unless they had the criteria, and at Cal State L.A. at that time when I got in, it was fourteen As or Bs in college-prep courses in high school. If you had fourteen As or Bs, you got in. That was it.

I remember I was taking out a young lady when I was president, my last year as an undergrad, as a student there, I was a grad student, and I asked her how come she came to—her dad taught at Cal State L.A. So I said, "Oh, it's nice you came here."

She says, "Well, I wasn't going to come here."

I said, "How come?"

She said, "Well, I didn't have the grades to get in."

I said, "Oh, you didn't? How'd you get in?"

She said, "Oh, my dad talked to somebody in admissions and I was admitted."

So I just kind of took it with, "Oh, I didn't know you could do that."

Well, two years later we found out there was a certain percentage of students that they could admit who did not meet the normal criteria if they had other assets or other abilities or experience or something like that. I think it was 3 percent, and I think I heard it from Gus Chavez at San Diego State, in terms of me hearing it, but I'm not sure. I remember it was somebody from San Diego, and that's how, then, EOP.

So we said, "Well, let us get us some kids in," and we got six in the first time, as I recall, who didn't meet the normal criteria, and out of that, then that became EOP. Again, Ken Martyn and others were doing these studies to show

access to higher education. I saw that as a plus, because here again, I'm looking at my own experiences, which we all do, and it was nice that I went to South Pasadena. But the same kids I'd gone to elementary and junior high with in Lincoln Heights at Glen Atla and at Gates Street in Lincoln Heights, they didn't have that same access to the same education. So why shouldn't they have a chance to go to Cal State L.A., too? So I just saw it as widening the circle and coming in, and then we had support services and things that would help them adjust to college and do the work.

Now I hear the EOP, the service they provided are available to more students who are not even in on EOP because of the way the secondary school system is not preparing students the way it used to for college. David Sandoval, who just retired a year ago from EOP, says that basically they take them—anybody can come in for the counseling or I don't know what it is, tutoring, to do that. But again, you're an exception to the rule. I think what should be changed is the rule.

ESPINO

That makes a lot of sense, especially when you talk about how at Cal State Los Angeles there was a program that provided those kinds of exceptions based on criteria that anybody could come up with and very arbitrary, it sounds like, but when it's contextualized in race, then it's more up for scrutiny, it appears. But you and your daughters didn't benefit from EOP or—

GUTIÉRREZ

But they were perceived as having benefited, at least from what they told me. People would tell them that, "You got in because of your race." They had the scores, they had the grades, and they'd gone to South Pasadena, although we did live in Monterey Park till Elena, the oldest, went to high school, so they've been in predominantly minority schools for part of their education. But that was the perception.

I still remember Elena, when she was a senior in high school, we'd go to these information nights for the UCs, and they would just say, "If you're white, you need to have this score on the SAT, and if you're black or Latino or Hispanic," whatever term they used, "you have to have this score," and it was a lower score. So how's everybody going to read that? I mean, I could see why the white kids would be mad and parents would be mad. But they all went to college and they all had some experiences that they probably shouldn't have had, and they've all gone to work in some field where they were linked to their ethnic identity, so maybe those are created to reinforce that. You'd have to ask them.

ESPINO

Yes, that would be a whole different discussion. Well, we've covered a lot of territory, looking at the sixties and the seventies. In one of my previous interviews, something came up in relation to the eighties, which kind of shifts the objective of the movement, the people who were involved in the Chicano Movement, and that's immigration. Does that strike something for you as far as looking back at the 1980s, when you're no longer in this momentum of the Chicano Movement and you see a lot of new immigrants from Central America coming to Los Angeles or California?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, two things happened. In the sixties and seventies, we were a minority, and I think we always thought we'd be a minority. I mean, if you'd have told me what our percentage would be then, I just never would have thought about it, because basically you're building on your background of what you've known. So the idea of numerical strength was not something that we looked—it was more social justice and equal rights, civil rights, that you shouldn't oppress people because they're different or because they're less in number.

The president of the California Chicano News Media Association, Frank Cruz, who's now a trustee of USC and was one of the founders of Telemundo and, before that, was teaching at Lincoln High and Chicano Studies in Long Beach State, used to give this talk. We called it "the talk" because, well, we'd bring these publishers and TV station

managers to speak to the organization and he'd always kind of give—and the talk was, "Time and numbers are on our side. There's going to be more of us in the numbers, and the time is going forward."

So in the eighties you see the time and numbers hit, but they come on the wave of the late seventies, when there's a real backlash—well, early seventies—against this population growth, some of it forced sterilizations without permission here at [Los Angeles] County General Hospital, which you're very familiar with, which my daughter Elena wrote a book about, some of it on the immigration front, the restricting, the "illegal aliens," the phrases that are put on in the seventies, the targeting of this. So you see this population growth come on the heels of very public and very assertive efforts to limit the Latino population within this region and within this country overall.

We also saw it was a very diverse, much more diverse population. We were really Mexican. It was a Mexican-origin community here. During the troubles in the Central American stuff, you see Nicarauguenses and Salvadoreños and others coming up from Central America, which had been less of a factor before.

I remember going to the Mission District when I went to Stanford in '69, which was more Central American, more Latino, pan-Latino, and said, "Gee, not everybody here is Mexican. They kind of all look like us, but they're not." It was more of a pan-ethnic thing, which really goes back to the Gold Rush in San Francisco.

So you had to look for coalitions and people that did not identify with the word "Chicano." That wasn't part of their background or experience. You had people coming up with the immigrant energy of ambition, of hard work. "I want to make a new life in a new country, and I'm going to work hard to make it, maybe not for myself but for my children."

I remember I said in an interview with the L.A. Times in the early eighties that the really big generation of leadership would be the children of the undocumented, and I think that's turned out to be the case, because they've seen the direct sacrifices their parents made in leaving home, setting up a life here, oftentimes taking jobs that they would rather not have had, but to provide a better opportunity for their children. So we had to learn to make coalitions across different nationalities, across different generations, and across different needs. I don't know if that's deep enough.

ESPINO

Well, I'm curious when or if you move out of the Chicano identity and move into a Latino identity or a Hispanic identity. Did that happen for you?

GUTIÉRREZ

I think for me it happened more with the audience you're dealing with, who you're talking to, because I don't draw a distinction between a Chicano identity. I guess the Chicano identity, that's all Mexicans first and everybody else not, but I mean if you're for equality and equal rights and civil rights, you're for everybody. I mean, it doesn't stop with your own nationality or race or culture, it's Asians and Mongolians and people from wherever.

I remember I first started hearing the term "Hispanic" in the mid seventies from Chicanos or Latinos who had to go to D.C. to do business with federal agencies, and "Hispanic" was a term that was used back East. I had heard the term "Hispano" before, which was associated with people in northern New Mexico, but "Hispanic" wasn't the term that I'd grown up with. Then at the L.A. Times they had should they use "Latino" or "Hispanic" and the thing is a big style-book issue.

I worked for the AP in the summer of '84. It was an election year, and I did an article on the candidates trying to get the Latino vote, and I put "Latino" in throughout the story. When I turned it in, the editor said, "We use 'Hispanic'

here," and he could flick a switch where you could find and change my story. All the "Latino" turned into "Hispanic," because that was the style of the Associated Press. So there was a certain amount of labeling and identity, I guess identity politics based on labels that took place. But in the end you said what does this mean to me individually, what does it mean to those who were closest to me.

What I've seen more of is the—and I may be totally off base—is that there's been this umbrella effect of trying to get everybody into the same umbrella but with a label that they can all buy into. I think the difference there is that as you get more people, there's more diversity under the umbrella. There's generational, there's gender, there's "recency" of arrival, length of time you're in this country, there's professional—so somehow I see us more replicating the Anglo population in different demographic subdivisions and stuff within our community and everybody all being the same just because they have the same umbrella label on top of them.

I think there's been more emphasis—I could be wrong again, but I think there's been more emphasis than there should be on nationality and national origin, like how are Nicarauguenses different from Puerto Ricans or versus Colombians or Dominicans or whatever, and I think we should look more across generation, across gender, and across other demographics that would cut across the nationalities and look more at how are the experiences of women distinct from those of men, no matter what national origin you have, or how about people who've been here three generations versus those who this is their first generation. But again, you have those umbrella labels. They're just very neat and they play nicely with the way they collect the census data.

ESPINO

Just looking at your own identity and from your own perspective, how do you describe yourself today? I mean, how do you identify today?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, I'm still Chicano, but I probably would say Latino in most Anglo audiences. But I remember forty-five years ago when I applied to Northwestern to go to journalism school for the master's, and somebody came out from the faculty and he was interviewing people, so I went to the interview. He invited me. I'd written a letter. We had the interview and I had all my journalism credentials and stuff that I'd done. I mean, I was very unsophisticated by today. You didn't know, and again, they didn't train you how you do a vita, you have a portfolio. I think it was handwritten, "Here's what I've done."

But I remember we went to the interview. The interview went real well. Then at the end the guy said, "Well, I just have one more question, professor. I have one question. What are you?"

I said, "What do you mean?" Basically, I just gave you the whole thing, we just had an interview, that's what I—and he just wanted to know kind of basically where are you from. I still remember I stood up and straightened out in the chair to get as much height as I could and said, "I'm an American of Mexican descent," because it was a term my parents had used on occasion with Anglos. I'd seen it. It was basically you didn't want them to see you as less than American, and you wanted to see it as, yes, Mexican. You're not denying where you're from. You're not denying what your context is. But I think that's probably the only time I used that phrase.

I remember when I went home that night and my mother asked me, "How did it go?" and I said, "Oh, it went really well, a good interview. He liked me."

He'd told me, he said, "You're the kind of guy we're looking for to go to Northwestern."

I said, "But then he asked me at the very end what I was, and I told him I was an American of Mexican descent.

Now I don't know if I'm going to get in." Because my experience up to that point is that could only be used to exclude you. It would never been seen as a plus. Now, in the end I got in and everything, so maybe it wasn't as big a factor as I thought it was. So how you projected yourself.

Then you come back a year later, when I come back from Northwestern, "Chicano" was a term I'd grown up with, my dad used it and it was used around the house. It wasn't negative or anything. But then, "So we're going to use this in front of Anglos," so we become the Chicano Movement.

Now, within the group there had been efforts to take Chicano out of some of the centers on campuses, because it is seen as being Mexican-specific. Others say, no, you keep it in, because it recognizes the group that brought this center into being, or these programs into being. I just figure when I was student, I wanted a student voice heard, and I was not afraid to articulate it, so basically the students should say what they—I'm not going to pass judgment on what they think is appropriate or inappropriate now. If somebody wants my opinion, I'll give it to them.

ESPINO

That's really, it's a question of our generation, it's a question of our time, or maybe not our generation, but it's a question of our time, and what you're saying is that you think it's the students who should make those ultimately.

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, here on the campuses, yes, because it's the Centro Chicano. I know they had it at Stanford, an issue, and they had an issue here as to what they should call it.

ESPINO

I believe they had the same issue at UC Santa Cruz, and eventually it's going to happen over the Southwest.

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, how inclusive do we want "Chicano" to be? That's what it ends up being. And then how many people that we want to include want to be included under the Chicano label. I mean, some people may not want to be seen with those people, or that represents them, it doesn't represent—they're using me to advance their issue. Although I don't really know how the issues are different. I mean, I don't. It could be in teaching. It could be in the classes. We just talk about Mexico here, we don't talk about Central America or whatever, yet we call it a Latino Studies class. At Northridge they have Central American Studies.

I mean, I'm basically an organizer at the end, so how do you get more people to participate in the cause? How do you get more people to identify with it and then to contribute to it, not just ride along with it, but be part of it. I think for some people, the label is an important one. The California Chicano News Media Association is now—which went by the initials CCNMA, changed its official title to CCNMA Latino Journalists of California.

Then you look at other—within the blacks you've got NAACP is the National Association for the Advancement Colored People. You don't see "colored people" used as a term very much. You have the UNCF, the United Negro College Fund. You don't see the term "Negro college." They've changed it to "black college." So within other groups you have historical roots that are tied to a specific nomenclature that perhaps might not reflect the terms being used today, but yet the mission and the tactics used are still consistent with what was there in the past.

ESPINO

Was that term important for you back then in the sixties?

GUTIÉRREZ

Which term?

ESPINO

Chicano.

GUTIÉRREZ

It was a way of acting out. But again, it came along publicly as—I was about as much into the Anglo system as anybody I knew could be, you know, basically where I'd grown up and all that. So it was, well, good, here's a term that we've used that now we can use it in front of other people. I didn't react against it negatively or positively. I just thought it was good that they were using it.

ESPINO

How would you define it, the term "Chicano"?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, then it was a Mexican in the U.S., somebody of Mexican origin in the U.S. Now I see it more defined as a movement. It's kind of like the Civil Rights Movement, which is kind of seen as only black, even though there was a lot of activity in other communities as well, that it's the embodiment of an assertive movement that, to quote Ruben Salazar, who has a non-Anglo image of themselves and wants to be defined and accepted and participate in their own terms, not on terms that somebody else allocates to them. I think that you can take that and translate that to a lot of different nationalities and cultures.

But self-definition, self-description are the first steps to self-determination. I didn't make that up. That's quoting somebody else. So you have to define yourself and describe yourself first before you can say, all right, here's what I'm going to do to advance what I think is important. If you don't know who you are, it's hard to become who you want to be.

ESPINO

So looking at from today and moving forward, does "Latino" carry that same political importance for you as "Chicano"?

GUTIÉRREZ

It could if it was identified as a movement. Now it's identified more, along with "Hispanic," as a market, as an audience to cultivate for consumer reasons. So it's basically the people who are identified with the movement or how the label, how do they define it and how do they use it. I mean, in and of itself it's a label, but how the label is put into action or how people use it to motivate things or not—and certainly "Hispanic" is market. That's marketplace-driven or political-action-driven, but it's geared toward—in my mind, it's geared more toward influencing the sale of products or participation in the political system. Those are just my opinions. I'm sure there's others.

ESPINO

That's why I'm here, for your opinion.

GUTIÉRREZ

It doesn't have the resonance of something that said, look, here's what we've called ourselves, even though their "Hispano" has been around for a long time, and now we're taking who we are public to you, our needs public to you, our issues public to you, and the way we're going to do it is our first impression is by what we call ourselves.

I remember when—I don't know if I told this—when Ernesto Galarza spoke at Cal State L.A. in '68, somebody asked him—he spoke at the student Trident Lounge, a packed house, and somebody at the end of his thing, somebody got up and said, "Well, what should we call ourselves?" Because there was Mexican American, Chicano. What label do you—here you are with their education and all that.

Somebody had studied this for a long time. I think it was Ruth Landies, who was an anthropologist. "The term we should use based on her anthropological studies is that we should call ourselves the Hispanoids." And everybody just broke out laughing. He wasn't serious. He was doing it to make a point. But he said also they had Negroid. "So we're the Hispanoids, because that's what they use." Well, he could have said "Hispanic" and he would have gotten just as big a laugh, I think, in 1968. It was not a term that was indigenous or used by us.

ESPINO

In California?

GUTIÉRREZ

Yes, and even in New Mexico. Hispano, it wasn't the "i-c," it was the "o" at the end.

ESPINO

Right, that's true.

GUTIÉRREZ

At least as I—I'm not an expert on northern New Mexico.

ESPINO

So do you have any final thoughts or any reflections, anything that we didn't cover that you feel you want on the record?

GUTIÉRREZ

Well, I can edit when the text comes?

ESPINO

Yes, definitely.

GUTIÉRREZ

Because then that would probably be the better place. You've caused me to think, and I appreciate your guided tour through my life, through this, but anybody's life, it's difficult to sort yourself out from the movements in the times that you're a part of, that shape your life, and the individuals and family and friends and stuff that support you, so I've just been very fortunate.

Up till now it's been a pretty good life, but it's been because I had the support of family along the way, all the way from childhood into adulthood, and children and grandchildren now, or a grandchild now. It's good to be able to look back at things that have changed and realistically in my life to have been a very small part of a very large movement. So many times people, they participate in things that don't lead to anything. They chug away, but it's kind of like they're on a treadmill. But in this case it was a little bit a role, and maybe because it was an early role for some people, it looked like you were leading something, but in reality, you were just there a little bit earlier than

some other people. There was always a sentiment, there was always a capability and a motivation to make things happen. We just didn't have the people there to do it. Now we have more people, I would hope we'd get more done.

ESPINO

Time will tell.

GUTIÉRREZ

We'll see. That's the end of any term paper. I always give them a low grade if they say, "Time will tell." "You could have written that before you turned it in, man. Give me something more definitive."

ESPINO

Yes, well, it's not up to me to be definitive in your oral history.

GUTIÉRREZ

I know you're not. But these students, sometimes they'll just say, "Well, what'll happen with this? Only time will tell." At this point you get a F. I mean, this is when they're supposed to be analyzing things.

Thank you.

ESPINO

Thank you so much.

GUTIÉRREZ

Thank you to you and thank you to UCLA. I look forward to this being someplace there, maybe close to where my dad's stuff is that he donated to UCLA.

ESPINO

In Special Collections, definitely.

GUTIÉRREZ

In the 1940s.

ESPINO

Thank you. It's been a wonderful experience for me, and I'm going to stop it now.

[End of November 29, 2010 interview]