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The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Mario T. García

Mario T. García: Reflections on a Career in Chicana/o Studies

Chicana/o Studies Oral History Project

Interviews conducted by
Todd Holmes
in 2018

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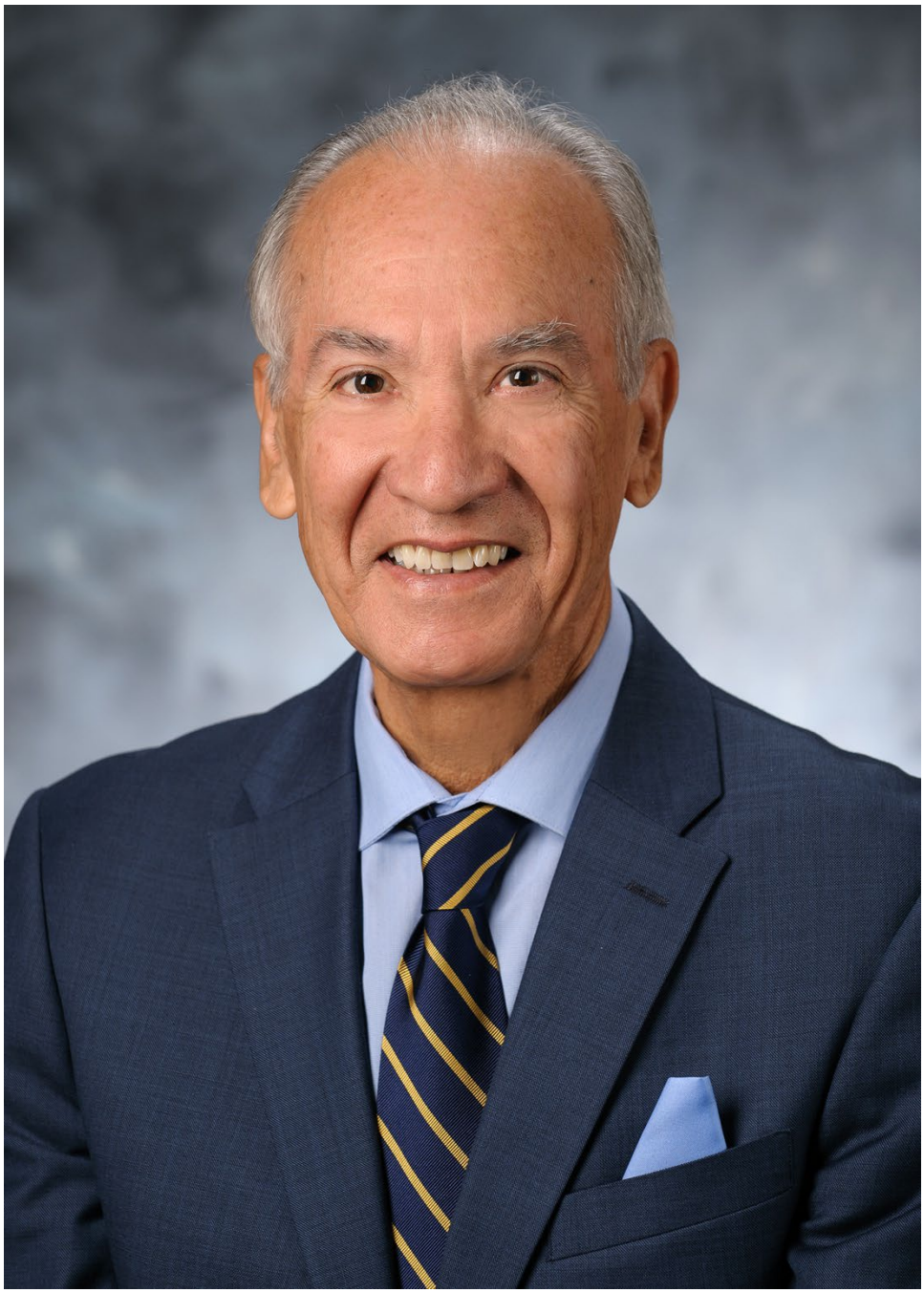

Mario T. García

Abstract

Mario T. García is a Distinguished Professor of Chicano studies and history at UC Santa Barbara. Born and raised in El Paso, Texas, Professor García received his PhD from UC San Diego in 1975 and joined the faculty of UC Santa Barbara that same year. For over forty-five years, he has trained scores of graduate students and worked to make the Department of Chicana and Chicano studies at UCSB one of the leading institutions in the field. Above all, he is widely recognized as one of the most prolific and influential Chicano historians. A Guggenheim Fellow, he is the author and editor of more than twenty books, including: *Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880–1920* (1981); *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity, 1930–1960* (1989); *Memories of Chicano History: The Life and Narrative of Bert Corona* (1994); *The Making of a Mexican American Mayor: Raymond Telles of El Paso* (1998); *Blowout! Sal Castro and the Chicano Struggle for Educational Justice* (2011); *Católicos: Resistance and Affirmation in Chicano Catholic History* (2008); *The Latino Generation: Voice of the New America* (2014); *The Chicano Generation: Testimonios of the Movement* (2015); *Father Luis Olivares, A Biography: Faith Politics and the Origins of the Sanctuary Movement in Los Angeles* (2018). In this interview, Professor García discusses: his family background and upbringing; his educational journey from high school to attending UT El Paso; his graduate experience at UC San Diego and getting established in the academy; his reflections on the state of Chicana/o studies during the early years and how the field evolved over the decades; the aims and contributions of his scholarship in the field; the reception of Chicana/o studies in higher education and the field of history; as well as his thoughts on important works, themes, and high points in the field's development over the last fifty years.

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Project History

By Todd Holmes
Berkeley, California

Over fifty years ago, UC Berkeley anthropologist Octavio Romano founded the publication, *El Grito: A Journal of Contemporary Mexican-American Thought*. In many respects, it was one of many actions of the time that sought to channel the educational aims of the Mexican American civil rights movement into the corridors of higher education. And in the years that followed, scholars on campuses throughout California and the West built upon those objectives, ultimately establishing the academic discipline that became known as Chicana/o studies.

The Chicana/o Studies Oral History Project was established in 2017 with the goal of commemorating fifty years of Chicana/o studies and documenting the formation of the field through in-depth interviews with the first generation of scholars who shaped it. As a research unit of The Bancroft Library, the Oral History Center has enjoyed rare access to the academy since its founding in 1953, compiling one of the richest collections on higher education and intellectual history in the country. Interviews with Nobel laureates and university presidents fill this collection, as do those with renowned poets and leading scientists. Thus, oral histories with the founding generation of scholars in the field of Chicana/o studies were a fitting addition. Moreover, documenting the formation of an academic field aimed at studying the Mexican American experience was a rare and special opportunity all its own.

The importance of the project was without question; the reality of executing a project of this size and complexity, however, ushered forth a host of logistical challenges. To that end, we at the Oral History Center forged partnerships with scholars and universities across the country, establishing what could be considered an unprecedented collaboration to document the history of Chicana/o studies and celebrate the scholars who played a vital role in its formation. I first created an advisory council composed of recognized junior faculty in the field. Establishing the council was important, as it not only brought a larger, community voice into decisions on the project's scope and direction, but also seasoned expertise to the nomination process for interviewees—a procedure that likely proved much lengthier and more complicated than anyone anticipated. Ultimately, the council helped develop a list of over twenty-five prominent and pioneering scholars to be interviewed for the project.

The second part of this collaboration developed with universities. The Oral History Center is an independent, soft-money research unit at UC Berkeley, which means the office receives very little direct support from the university. Endowments and fundraising underwrite the OHC's operations. For the Chicana/o Studies Oral History Project, a generous consortium of deans, provosts, chancellors, and presidents stepped forward to extend support. Stanford University sponsored the first two interviews, with the University of California Office of the President raising the bar by pledging to fund all UC-related interviews. The pledge not only sought to highlight the role of UC campuses in the field, but also served as a call to arms for other universities in the West to follow suit. Many university administrators answered that call. Deans at UT Austin, Arizona State, and the University of Arizona pledged support, as did administrators at Loyola Marymount, Gonzaga University, UT San Antonio, Brigham Young University, and the University of Houston, among others. Again, highlighting the leading role of

California in the field, the California State University system agreed to fund all CSU-related interviews for the project. The outpouring of support behind the Chicana/o Studies project stands as an inspiring collaboration within the academy.

The scholars included in this project represent some of the most influential writers, educators, and activists in the field of Chicana/o studies. To be sure, their contributions to the field are many, from teaching and scholarship to mentoring and administration, with each playing a unique and significant role in advancing the study of the Mexican American experience from a mere idea in the late 1960s to a mainstay on college campuses across the country five decades later. I'm indebted to each for their generosity and participation in this project. They not only opened up their homes and offices for the interviews, but shared their work and experiences with sincerity and candor. They also exhibited a noteworthy level of humility, as each would be among the first to call this project far from complete. Projects are often imperfect, and this oral history series is no different. Some of those we wished to include, such as Juan Gómez-Quiñones, passed away before they could be interviewed, just as funding complications have delayed the inclusion of others. Thus, as the first installment of this project goes to press, we remember those who passed before they could participate and look forward to the new additions to be made in the years to come.

This project significantly advances our understanding of the development and evolution of the field of Chicana/o studies. Yet the development of Chicana/o studies, as captured in these interviews, is more than just the story of a discipline. It is the story of a generation of scholars who broke through barriers to take their place in the nation's universities, and spent their careers documenting the history and experience of their community. It is the story of educational reform, where scholars of color demanded that America's curriculum equally include all its citizens. In many respects, it is also a story that highlights another side of the civil rights movement, one where actions in the classroom, rather than those in the streets, proved the long-lasting vector of social change. It is my hope that this project does justice to that legacy.

Advisory Council

Interview 1: February 26, 2018

01-00:00:13
Holmes: All right. This is Todd Holmes with the Oral History Center at UC Berkeley. Today's date is February 26, 2018. I am here with Mario T. García for the Chicana/o Studies Oral History Project, and we are here at the beautiful campus of UC Santa Barbara. Mario, thanks so much for taking the time to sit down, especially, I know you just finished a conference, so you've been busy the past few days.

01-00:00:43
García: Oh, very much so, but very exciting, very exciting. I'm looking forward to our interviews.

01-00:00:46
Holmes: Yes. Well, I'd like to start off with maybe talking a little bit about your family and background before we get into your academic career. Now you were born in El Paso, Texas. Tell me a little bit about your parents.

01-00:01:00
García: Okay. Well, my father was an immigrant from Durango in Northern Mexico, and he met my mother sometime I guess in the 1930s, there along the border. My mother, on the other hand, came from a family also from Northern Mexico, from the state of Chihuahua, but they were political refugees out of the Mexican Revolution of 1910, and they had lost everything. Actually, her grandfather lost his life. He was a supporter of Porfirio Díaz, and so he was killed, and the family fled with very little. It was a fairly well-to-do family. The grandfather had relationships with American entrepreneurs in the mining areas of Northern Chihuahua. And so, they had to flee, and they came to the border and crossed into El Paso as political refugees. My father, on the other hand, went to Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. His family owned a large dairy farm in Durango, and so here his family had prospered as a result of the revolution, or at least they hadn't lost anything.

So here you had my father who actually benefited from the revolution so to speak, but my mother, whose family had lost everything. But they met there along the border. My mother—although they didn't have very much, they made do with what they had, and they settled. They didn't settle in the main barrio of South El Paso, but they settled just across the tracks in areas that were becoming a little bit more integrated or more mixed. But like a lot of the political refugees that fled, many of them had been well to do, whether they were Porfiristas or Maderistas and so forth, and they tended to still congregate a few years after the revolution like into the 1930s when the politics had settled down a bit, they came together socially. They would party together; they had clubs together; and it cut across the border, so sometimes they would have social functions in Ciudad Juárez, and it was in one of these social functions that my parents met at a dance. My father was about ten years older than my mother, and then they, you know, my father courted her for a while

and then asked for her hand in marriage, and they were married, I don't remember the exact date, but it was around 1940, maybe '41, right at the time as the war is breaking out.

El Paso was interesting. I want to go back because of the political refugees. They settle, because some of them did come with some of their moneys and so forth, especially the ex-Porfiristas, and they settled in West El Paso in an area called Sunset Heights, very close to the university and close to the downtown area. They were able to buy homes there, although there weren't any covenants that restricted them. They had enough money. And so, they settled together and I don't know when it was named, but the main avenue of Sunset Heights was named Porfirio Díaz Avenue, and it still is, and I tell my students, "This is the only street in the entire world named after Porfirio Díaz." [laughter] You certainly will not find one in Mexico, because of his dictatorship. My parents didn't live there, but they were married at Holy Family Church, which was the church of the political refugees in Sunset Heights.

So anyway, they got married, and the idea was that they were going to then go back to Durango, because my father had been sent to Ciudad Juárez to study at this agricultural college there. It was, I guess, the equivalent of a community college maybe, and he got his degree there, to learn more about the skills of agriculture, whatever they taught them there, and of course, and then he would go back. He had two sisters. He was the only son, and he was the oldest, so he was going to inherit the dairy farm. So they go back, with my mother, and they settle in Durango.

Now my mother is a US-born Mexican American, effectively bilingual. My father knew English, but Spanish clearly was his main language. My mother was never comfortable living in Durango. She felt that his family looked down on her as a *pocha*, as a US-born Mexican American—the term *pocho* or *pocha* suggests someone who has kind of lost their culture, which was nonsense. My mother was very effectively bilingual and bicultural. But she just felt that his family, especially his sisters, and maybe even her in-laws, kind of looked down upon her, and she began to have her children, but she always insisted that she wanted her children born in El Paso. Maybe that was partly because she wanted to make sure they had US citizenship, I'm sure she thought of that, but also because of just better hospitals and medical care.

So my two older brothers, Richard and Edward—Richard who would go on to become a historian too—they were born first, 1941, and then I came along in '44, but I was born also in El Paso. So she had three children, three sons. She's still living in Durango, but I think shortly after I was born, she told my dad that she just was no longer comfortable. [phone rings]

01-00:06:54
Holmes: Oh, it happens. That's a good reminder for me, too.

01-00:06:58
García: Let me just see who it is. [answers phone] Hello?

[break in audio]

01-00:07:17
Holmes: All right, we're back after a little phone break. Okay. Now you were speaking about your mother, and the importance of having the children, her three children, in El Paso because of medical facilities, but she also had, it seemed, more of an attachment to El Paso.

01-00:07:36
García: Well, she was uncomfortable. I mean, she was made to feel, I guess, that they didn't really accept her, on my father's side of the family, looked down upon her as again, a *pocha*, a US-born Mexican American, supposedly that lost her culture, which was ridiculous because she was bilingual and bicultural. But shortly after I was born in 1944, January 1944, she approached my father and said that she, in fact, was more uncomfortable there, and she had made the decision to return to El Paso, with her children, her three sons, and that if he was willing, if he wanted to come, fine, and if he didn't want to come, well that was up to him. Now of course, this is my mother's side of the story. I've never actually asked my father—both of them are dead now, of course—but it would be interesting to get his side of the story. But this is my mother's side.

The point is that they came back and my father did come back, although according to my mother, my father went and talked to his father, my grandfather, about what my mother had said, and my grandfather, according to my mother, told my father, "*Fájate tus pantalones*," you know, "Straighten up your pants, tighten your belt, and tell your woman where she belongs." And my dad, and I didn't appreciate this until much later in my own life, was a very gentle person, a very nice person, a kind person, and he wasn't that kind of a macho type, and he couldn't do that. He couldn't do that, so he returned with my mother to El Paso, and for that, he effectively was disowned. He never got the dairy farm, and my father struggled economically for the rest of his life, and his two sisters inherited the dairy farm and continue to be quite well off, because we would visit from time to time.

And so they came back to the border, to El Paso, and rented a home. We never owned a home in El Paso. We always rented. I don't know why, but we always rented. So what was my father now going to do? He had a degree in agricultural science, but this was an urban area. Eventually, he started a used furniture business in South El Paso. He would buy used furniture and then resell it, and he would sell it in South El Paso. Sometimes he would sell it in Juárez and I remember sometimes working with him, or going with him, and we would drive into Juárez and up in the hills where the poor people lived and deliver various pieces of furniture, and that's how he made his living for many years. And so we grew up in El Paso. We never lived in the hardcore barrio of South El Paso which was really—well, it's not just an immigrant barrio;

there's also Mexican Americans there. But we always lived north of the tracks because already, by then, there was already migration from the south side to the northern side, and so we were now living in a little bit more mixed neighborhoods.

But, we moved around, and eventually we, again, still renting, we rented a house on Arizona Street, and that's the one that I remember the most in terms of growing up. My mother then had one more son, Leonard, after me, and then eventually, my sister Alma was born, and so, there was five of us. But, also my grandmother on my mother's side, and my aunt on my mother's side, always lived with us. They lived with us, and so, it was an extended family within one household. And they didn't know any English, so we grew up speaking Spanish with them, until we went to school. We might've known some English because my mother knew English, but we probably spoke Spanish at that time primarily, in the home and also with my dad, who was more proficient in Spanish.

My mother always insisted that we go to Catholic schools, so all of us went to Catholic schools. For elementary school, we went to Saint Patrick's [Elementary] School, which was taught by the Sisters of Loretto, so that was kindergarten and all the way through eighth grade. I don't remember; I have a feeling that I already knew some—I must have known some English because obviously, my two older brothers, who were two grades ahead of me, already knew English. So I'm sure I knew English to some extent when I started kindergarten, because I don't remember any kind of a cultural shock or a language shock.

So, we went through Saint Patrick's. Saint Patrick's was a mixed elementary school. There were Mexican Americans, but I do remember there were a number of Anglo-Americans, probably mostly Irish, as I look back on it, and the school was on the northern side of the city, north of the downtown area. I remember a good education. The nuns could be a bit strict, but not overly strict, and they certainly never punished us if they caught anyone speaking Spanish, like on the playgrounds. You weren't physically punished or reprimanded. Of course, that was happening in public schools. My mother, who had gone to public schools, and she graduated from El Paso High before she got married, I think she had a sense and especially at the elementary level, but maybe also on the high school level, that education for Mexican Americans wasn't what it should be. She had a sense that the public schools were more on the inferior side, and she felt that the parochial Catholic schools would be better. And I think she was right for that time, because the nuns, of course, they had a sense of discipline, but they were good teachers as well. I don't know whether many of them actually had college degrees, maybe some did or some didn't, but they were very committed teachers.

And so, I had a good experience overall at Saint Patrick's, and one of those good experiences: we all played sports. My two older brothers were very

good, well, principally, football and basketball, and I followed in their pathway, and I was good in football and basketball too. And we had a very good coach, Julius Lowenberg, wasn't that much older than us but he was a good coach. And at that time, we're talking 1950s, because I graduated from elementary school in 1958, so, it's in that period of time, and there was a very active athletic program among the parochial schools. There was the Catholic Youth Organization that sponsored football leagues, and basketball tournaments. So it was very active. I remember in my eighth grade, playing basketball, we had like about ten basketball tournaments, because all the parochial schools had their own basketball tournament. So every weekend we would have a tournament, and that year, I think we played—it was almost like in the NBA—I think we must've played at least sixty, seventy games! And, it was very competitive in football. In my eighth grade, we won the football championship, and we did the same thing in basketball.

So, for me, I think that early exposures to athletics was very important, because I think it helped to create a sense of competitiveness, and of leadership, which I think ultimately is transferred into other areas. I think one of the reasons, to kind of psychoanalyze myself, that I've been rather productive in my career as a historian, may be linked to that sense of competitiveness. I remember many years later, when I came to California—I taught one year at San Jose State, and we'll get to that—I remember talking with one guy, an administrator there at San Jose State. His goal in life, he told me, and this was 1970, he said, was "to make $25,000 a year." That was his goal in life, and I said, if I remember correctly, I said to him, "Well my goal is to be the best Chicano historian." But I think that sense of competitiveness goes back to those early years, and I think also my mother's insistence that we have a good education; she pushed us into pursuing education.

So after I graduated in 1958 from Saint Patrick's Elementary School, my two older brothers had gone on to Cathedral High School, which was a Christian Brothers high school, and I followed suit. I think overall a good education. It was a mixed school, of Mexican Americans and Anglo-Americans, again primarily Irish I think, and the Christian Brothers were good instructors, and the thing is about Cathedral that it was college prep. There was a sense that we would go on to college—now not everyone did, but at least that was the orientation. And so we had a good education, and again, football, basketball, athletics was very important to us and to the school. So I, along with my two older brothers, because we were closer in age, we played football. I was on the varsity team all four years. However, my senior year, it was so crippling because you always look forward to your senior year as being, going to be the best year that you've ever had. But, I dislocated my elbow like in the fifth game. Oh, it was so heartbreaking—

01-00:18:19

Holmes: Well, and basketball season follows right after football season, so that—

01-00:18:22
García: Yeah, but I wanted to really do well in football. And I could've come back to it the latter part of the season, but my mother said, "Well, no, I don't want you to get hurt again," and I wrestled with that, and eventually I didn't go back. But as I looked back on it I said, "I should've gone back. I could've still played maybe the last two or three games, but—" And so I always carried that, and I still see that as a loss, in some respects, and I hoped to do well in my senior year in basketball, but we had just gotten a new coach and there were some issues there, and eventually, I didn't play basketball really my senior year. I think I played a couple, two or three games, and then some of us as seniors, I forget what the issues were, we just kind of dropped out of it, and I still regret that, that I dropped out. I should've played my senior year in basketball. And many years later, I would tell my two children, I said, "We're not quitters. As a family, we're not quitters, but I did quit at that time and I still regret it. And so I don't quit now." [laughter]

01-00:19:41
Holmes: Well I wanted to ask you, in looking at the high school years, you went to Cathedral High School which was, as you were saying, college prep. Was that uncommon for—we're looking at the 1950s—to have Mexican Americans thinking about college? Was that something that, even at that school, they were saying, "You should aim for that"?

01-00:20:08
García: Yes, because I think, again, if you got a parochial Catholic education, you got a better education, in my opinion, than the public schools. There was no, as far as I could tell, overt racism in the parochial schools. And keep in mind, who could afford to send their children to the parochial schools? You had to be a little bit more middle class. Now was my family middle class? My father struggled, but he owned his own business, and he did the best he could. But, on top of that, my mother, coming from a well-to-do family out of the Mexican Revolution, while they may not have had a lot of capital in a monetary sense after they fled, they still, they had a sense of being socially prominent. They had a sense of being what my grandmother always used to say, "*Somos gente decente*," "We are kind of a cultured people," see, and that carries over in terms of your socialization, that you're—well, I don't know that you could say that you're better than other people, but it was a sense of promoting a sense I guess of mobility, and I think that carried over into a lot of these families sending their kids to the Catholic schools.

Also, the Catholic schools, both at elementary and high schools, we had kids there from Juárez and they came from the well-to-do families. They came from the elite families in Juárez, so the parochial schools were clearly more middle class, in orientation and in the families who were involved in sending their children, and I think that also made sure that the quality education was as good as it could be. But having said that, like, my mother never went to college. My father, well, he went to that agricultural school, but my father wasn't altogether that so much immersed in our education. It was really my

mother, because she had gone to the schools in El Paso. She could, because of her effectiveness in English, she would meet with the nuns, and she—talk about leadership, influence, my mother was a leader in the sense, as much as a woman could be a leader in those times, and she expressed that leadership in PTAs, and being one of the parents who supported the athletic teams. That was both in elementary school and in high school. My mother was quite active in that sense, and I think that transferred to again a sense of leadership for us.

And so, I don't remember—there was one incident that I remember of racism, but not in El Paso, that affected me directly while I was in school. We were on a football trip to Del Rio, Texas. We went all the way down to Del Rio. It was a long trip. We had our own school bus. And so, we were going to play Del Rio High School, and so we arrived there. I guess that game was on a Friday, because most of the games were on Friday, and we got there on a Thursday. And so the coach said, "Well, you guys can go out on the town for a while, but you have to be back to the hotel at such and such a time." So some of us went and we found what, at that time, were referred to as teen canteens, and they were like discos for high school kids.

So we walked in there, but let me back up a little bit, because again, I went to integrated Catholic schools. Probably the majority at both Saint Patrick's and Cathedral were Mexican Americans, but we had a good number of non-Mexican Americans, and we would have social dances with Loretto Academy, which was the Catholic high school for the girls. That was also mixed Mexican American and Anglo-Americans. Most of the girls there were also from middle-class families in El Paso, and then young girls from the elite families in Juárez. So we would go over and we would have dances, and it was no big deal. You danced with Mexican American girls, or Anglo-American girls, and that's just the way it was.

So we run to this teen canteen in Del Rio and walk right in, never—I don't think I even was cognizant that it was all Anglo-Americans in there. So I remember going over to a table and asked an Anglo-American girl if she wanted to dance, and, she turned around and she looked at me, and she said, "I don't dance with fellows like you." And I had a sense that, all of a sudden, I kind of had a sense of what she meant by that, that I was of Mexican background. I mean, it was a shock! Never happened to me! Never happened to me in El Paso. And so, we realized this was hostile territory. We got out of there. Unfortunately, we lost the game though. [laughter] We could've beat the hell out of that team.

But the thing was, El Paso, unlike a lot of other cities in Texas, you didn't find a lot of overt racism. Why? Well, first of all, they had a big Mexican American population. The businesses would've been crazy to discriminate. Theaters were integrated; restaurants were integrated. Now, depending on your income, obviously you couldn't go to some of the better places like restaurants and so forth, but all the department stores were integrated. You

had Mexican American clerks, people purchased there, and the elite from Juárez and the elite from Chihuahua would often come to El Paso to buy things. So you couldn't openly discriminate against Mexicans.

01-00:26:20
Holmes: Was it a kind of borderlands dynamic within the town?

01-00:26:25
García: Probably so, but even on a bigger scale because I think the other border communities down river, just south, I think that the discrimination there was much more overt, in a way. So, but in a larger city like El Paso, it was financially detrimental to have any kind of open race system. That doesn't mean that racism didn't exist. I mean, I think I was even cognizant in high school, asking how come all the big businessmen are all Anglos, chamber of commerce were all Anglos? We would have the big Sun Bowl Carnival at the end of the year, January 1—the Sun Bowl Parade. How come all the queens are always Anglos? How come all the princes are always Anglos? I think I was cognizant of that. And how come the only Mexican princess is a representative from Juárez? You know. I think even then, I was a little bit aware of that, that the elite were white, but again, there wasn't a lot of overt racism.

Then, in 1957—and of course I would write about this later—there was a pioneering, groundbreaking election, the election of Raymond Telles as the first Mexican American elected to any major Southwestern or even any major American city. A groundbreaking election, as I say, that I would later study, and we can talk about that later, but that was important, 1957, and here we were. I mean, you couldn't help but know that you were Mexican in El Paso, of course. Look at my family: a Spanish-speaking grandmother, a Spanish-speaking aunt; my father was a Mexican immigrant. Of course, we all knew we're Mexican, of Mexican background, but then to be aware that the mayor of your city, and here I'm in high school, is a Mexican American. On top of that, Raymond Telles was a graduate of Cathedral High School, so he was one of us! He was an alum, and he's the mayor of our city.

So, you had a sense of pride in that, and I didn't know all the background, how he was able to win this incredible election as I would later when I wrote his biography, but all of that is there, and I think that helped to ameliorate or to kind of tamper down any sense of really growing up with a lot of racial tension and racial discrimination. What I think it did, it gave us a sense that, of course we could have mobility, we could go on and achieve certain things. And so, going on to college was something that I expected to do, and plus, one of my older brothers, Richard, he was already in college there at what would become—well, it was called Texas Western College there in El Paso, later would be UTEP, University of Texas, El Paso. He was a pioneer in the family of going on to college, and I followed in his footsteps. I had gotten a scholarship to go to Saint Edwards University in Austin, and when I

graduated, and I graduated number four in my class, although admittedly, there was only eighty students, but still, number four is not bad. [laughs]

01-00:29:47
Holmes: Four out of eighty is still good.

01-00:29:49
García: But the scholarship was so limited, maybe a thousand dollars. I forget what it was. I think it was less than that. And there was no way my family could make up the difference—I mean, I could've gone with loans, but in the end I decided not to, and I kind of regret that. I would have liked to have gone to a four-year Catholic university, but I stayed home, and I went to Texas Western College.

I'd always been interested in history and in politics. I never liked my science classes in high school. I liked history; I liked social science; I liked literature. And so when I started at Texas Western College, my intent was to major in political science. But, I found myself already taking a lot of history classes, so within a year or so, I just shifted, and majored in history and minored in political science. But also, I was interested in history. I remember even in elementary school when, every Friday, we would get a chance to borrow a book—each classroom had a little library—and I always gravitated to borrowing biographies: Sam Houston, Davy Crockett, [laughs] things like that.

So I always had that interest, but I was also all interested in politics. I remember watching the conventions, the presidential nominating conventions. 1956, Eisenhower is re-nominated for the Republicans, and then of course, Adlai Stevenson for the Democrats. More importantly, I remember the young JFK, John F. Kennedy. Senator Kennedy was very prominent in the 1956 election; it was the push to get him on the ticket and so forth, and here you had this young senator with all that hair and all of that. But, I remember just being wedded to the television. Of course, this was all black and white. And so I was always quite interested in politics.

01-00:31:58
Holmes: Was your family interested in politics? Was politics discussed in the house?

01-00:32:02
García: Not really. No, I don't recall that. I'm sure my mother, of course, went out and voted for Raymond Telles in 1957. My dad never became a citizen, so he couldn't vote. But I don't remember a lot of discussion of politics. And I'm sure my mother voted for JFK in the 1960 election, and of course, I was still in high school at the time, so we were aware of the election of course. And because we were in a Catholic school, we were aware that JFK was Catholic, although I do remember kind of maybe leaning towards Nixon, because I was caught up in all of the anti-Communist stuff, because we were in a Catholic school, but the Cold War also affected the kind of anti-Communism that was also part of, at that time, a Catholic education. [laughter] But then I got caught

up with the JFK fever too, as a young person. I remember watching his inaugural, and listening to that fantastic speech, his inaugural speech, of a new frontier—

01-00:33:19
Holmes: And he was Catholic!

01-00:33:20
García: And he was Catholic, of course! I don't think I was aware of the strong Mexican American involvement in that election, the Viva Kennedy clubs. I would, of course, much later on, become aware of it as I began to study Chicano history. I don't remember that, but I think all of us as young people, certainly as young, Mexican American Catholics, were caught up in that Kennedy fever, and in support of him, and I remember trying to keep up with what was going on already in his administration. My mother at that time was working at a Catholic hospital, and she would bring home like *Time* magazine and *Newsweek*. I would read that religiously, fascinated by the Kennedy administration. And then of course, his assassination was a tremendous blow to, well, so many Americans, but certainly we felt it at home, and we spent the next two or three days again just glued to the television watching all of the events.

01-00:34:25
Holmes: Well, and it happened in Texas, there in the state.

01-00:34:28
García: Yeah, it was—I remember very distinctly. You see, '63, it was, in the fall of '63, November 22, when he was assassinated. I was starting my sophomore year at Texas Western College, and Texas Western College, as it still is today as UTEP, was a commuter school, so all my classes were in the morning, because a lot of the kids would work. I wasn't working, but most of the classes were clustered in the mornings unless you had a lab. So, I would come home around noontime, and my grandmother and aunt had a nice *comida*, a nice lunch for me, and my brother Richard too. He had a car and we would drive to and fro on the campus. Although on that day, November 22—what was that, like a Thursday, I think? I think it was a Thursday—

01-00:35:26
Holmes: It was a Friday.

01-00:35:27
García: Oh, it was a Friday when he was assassinated. So, we would have lunch in the dining room, and I would watch television. It was on, and then my grandmother, I should say, around one o'clock—no, around noon. I forget the time, but real close around noon, she had a favorite soap opera that she used to like. What was it? *The Edge of Night*, I think. And she didn't know much English, so she liked me to sit with her and kind of help interpret things. So there we were watching this soap opera and then all of a sudden Walter Cronkite comes on: "Flash, Dallas, Texas, president has been shot. We don't

know the extent." And then Cronkite comes on again, holding the little paper. You can see the tears behind his glasses, and he announces to the country that "Kennedy, it's been confirmed that he's been killed. He's dead." Oh man. And so that really sent a shock wave through all of us, and we were just glued to the television for the next two or three days, as we watched all of the events in Dallas, the shooting of Lee Harvey Oswald, and then the funeral back in Washington, and Jackie Kennedy, and little John-John saluting the casket of his dad.

So, yeah, that was a big blow, but I was very interested in politics, and I don't know that I would've gone to make a career—you know, well, I think here the influence of Telles is important because, not only was he the mayor of our city, but as you know, he served two terms, but he supported Kennedy in the '60 election, and in '61, President Kennedy offered Telles to be his ambassador to Costa Rica. He would be the first Mexican American ambassador, ever. And Telles, in the end, accepted, and to me, that was very appealing. I was very attracted to that, and I thought, "Well gee, maybe I should go into the diplomatic service. Maybe I could become an ambassador someday." And people later on have said, "Well, you look like an ambassador; maybe you should." [laughter] But, no, I didn't pursue that, but yeah, history and politics already, in high school, out of high school into college, were very integral to me, and that's kind of the way that I structured my college education, in history and political science.

01-00:38:21
Holmes: You mentioned the Cold War influence during this time, which during your high school and even your time in college, this time period is what was considered the height of the Cold War. Did civil rights also emerge on your political radar as well? Especially in light of what's happening there in Texas, and places in the South, and then, building out from that?

01-00:38:45
García: Well, yes. Again, there wasn't a lot of overt racism, but of course, we were aware, I certainly was aware of the Civil Rights Movement, because it was on television, and this was a television age. And so we watched the Civil Rights Movement unfolding in the South, of course. I had had that incidence in Del Rio, the first overt racist experience that I ever had, so I was aware of that.

And I remember, on another basketball trip when I was a junior, also the same time I was a junior in high school, we went to the Texas State Catholic Basketball Tournament in San Antonio, and I think we were all Mexican Americans on the team except for one African American. There was just a small handful of African Americans at Cathedral High School, but he was on the basketball team, and again, the coach let us out to walk around town, and grab a bite of lunch or dinner, whatever we want. We went to some hamburger joint, and I remember the guy was an Anglo guy, and he said, "Well," turning to us, the Mexican Americans, he said, "we'll serve you, but we won't serve

him," the African American basketball player. And I won't repeat on the camera what we said to the owner in response, as we got quite upset and angry with him, and so we left. We were not going to allow that—our friend on the basketball team and fellow player was going to go without. They said, "We'll serve him in the back." Well, we weren't going to allow that to happen. We left and went somewhere else.

So yeah, I was aware of racism to that extent, but then also seeing it, the civil rights demonstrations, the sit-ins and so forth, and of course, in 1963, at Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech in Washington, watching that on television was incredible. It became part of my memory. So yes, and I was very supportive of the civil rights struggles, as far as I was aware of them. So that was there, and so yeah, I had kind of an orientation, even though in El Paso, I don't recall that there was much per se civil rights activity. Again, we had a very small African American population there. And, of course, Mexican Americans, as I would later look back on it, they were involved in civil rights struggles too, but it wasn't as overt that I was aware of it happening in the city.

01-00:41:39
Holmes: Back to you majoring in history there at UT El Paso, can you discuss a little bit about the curriculum in the classroom. How was history taught? And tell us about your first exposure to Mexican American history?

01-00:41:56
García: Okay. Well, I took a lot of the basic, you know, Intro to US History and Western Civilization, but in my sophomore year—maybe because Telles had been appointed ambassador to Costa Rica—I became quite interested in Latin American history, and knowing about Latin America, maybe because of my position on the border. I would gravitate to anything in the newspapers, and *Time* magazine, *Newsweek* about Latin America. I knew, of course, about the Alliance for Progress. And so, the very first upper-division course I took was history of Brazil, and I've never been to Brazil but I always wanted to go to Brazil after I took that course. Then subsequently I would take a course on history of Mexico or in general Latin American history. I took some poli sci courses on Latin American politics, international politics.

So that was kind of the way I was oriented, and then in my junior year, I took some very good upper-division US history courses, especially twentieth-century US history courses. I took Civil War history as well. So, I had a good grounding both in Latin American history, Mexican history, and in US history, and I think that would serve me well later on as I gravitated doing Chicano history. I took a History of the West, and a couple of courses on US diplomatic history, and I do recall especially in the US diplomatic history course, there was a discussion of the US-Mexico War, and I'm sure that was impressive to me, because of course, we were there on the border. And maybe in the History of the West, maybe the professor talked a little bit about the US-Mexico War, but there wasn't much of what we would later call Chicano

history. I mean, there wasn't any discussion at all. First, because a lot of research hadn't been yet done, but second, even had it been done I don't think my professors were necessarily oriented toward kind of integrating that history. They could've done some of that, because Carey McWilliams's classic, *North From Mexico,* was published in 1948?

01-00:44:39
Holmes: Yes.

01-00:44:40
García: They could've dipped into that, but they probably didn't even know about McWilliams's *North From Mexico* book. Some of Ernesto Galarza's early works were there in the early sixties or mid-sixties, so some of that could've been integrated on the Bracero Program. I don't remember any discussion of the Bracero Program in any of these US history courses. As I look back on it, my taking courses on Mexican history and Latin American history in some ways was kind of a substitute for Chicano history because it gave me that Mexican background. It gave me my dad's history from Mexico, and I think that was important to me.

And so, I carried that forward. I graduated in 1966, and already knew that I wanted to at least get my MA, so I had applied that year to be a graduate student in the MA program there at what now became UTEP in 1966, and I was accepted. I think I was the only Mexican American MA student at the time. And 1966, as I'm always reminded every time I go back to UTEP, is known not because I graduated in 1966. [laughter] Although, I have to say, I was honored just two years ago. I was one of three distinguished alums for the homecoming, and I felt very honored, and it also happened on the fiftieth anniversary of my graduation, 1966. That was two years ago, 2016.

But no, 1966 is embedded, at least in El Paso, in UTEP's memory; that's when, well, it was still Texas Western College, won the NCAA National Basketball Championship, the Miners, in the historic final game because UTEP—I should say Texas Western—had, all five starters were African Americans, and they defeated the University of Kentucky team of all white players, in '66 in the heart of the Civil Rights Movement, right? So that basketball championship had a lot more meaning that just the fact that this small school from West Texas upset a powerhouse like University of Kentucky, Adolph Rupp, and Pat Riley was the starter for Kentucky on that team, because he would go on to become a big Laker coach. So in 1966, I started that fall in my MA program.

01-00:47:48
Holmes: And you were saying that you were the only Mexican American in the MA program, at least for history.

01-00:47:54
García: Yeah, I was, actually.

01-00:47:56
Holmes: Which is interesting when we look at the demographics of UTEP. When you were going, was the student body 60 percent or 70 percent Mexican American? Is that correct?

01-00:48:08
García: I don't think it was that high, Todd, but close. So the school was small. I think it couldn't have been more than 10,000 when I was an undergraduate, maybe even a little less. I would say there were a lot of Mexican Americans, maybe at least 40 percent, and a lot of them were majoring like, I was impressed at how many were majoring in engineering and places like that in the sciences, and that's important in my memory because later on, I would realize how you would see a dearth of Chicanos and Latinos even here at UC Santa Barbara in the sciences and engineering. And I think there is a sense, "Well, they don't orient themselves. Somehow they're not attracted to the sciences. They don't do it." I said, "Well wait a minute. When I was an undergraduate there were tons of Chicanos in engineering, for example. So no, something must be wrong here."

In my MA program, I took mostly US history. I think I was oriented more to doing US history than Latin American history. But I remember when I first TAed, because I was also a TA [teaching assistant], that was my support, being a TA. And so I TAed in the first fall semester that I was a graduate student, an MA student, US history from the colonial to the Civil War, and my professor, Wayne Fuller, he would have the two of us, his two TAs, give one lecture, and he would assign us a lecture, as I recall. [laughs] He assigned me, I guess because I was Mexican American, he assigned me to do the US-Mexico War. So I had to kind of do a little bit of research, and so that was interesting that I did that lecture. I forget how I pitched it, how I oriented it, but that was interesting.

And I think that also, however, it led me to be interested, because I had always been interested in diplomatic history, so when I had to choose in my second year what would be my MA thesis, because we had to do an MA thesis, I decided to do an MA thesis in US diplomatic history, but, in connection with Mexico. So my MA thesis was a biography of Colonel Anthony Butler in the 1830s, who was President Andrew Jackson's ambassador to Mexico, and I had read somewhere a little bit about him. He was a real problem; he was kind of a thorn in the Mexican government's side. Well he was expressing already a kind of Jacksonian expansionism in some respects, and kind of early Manifest Destiny, and I don't know why I was interested in him. But anyway, I did my thesis on him, and I remember taking a research trip to UT Austin [The University of Texas at Austin]. I'd never been to Austin before. I had to take a Greyhound bus all the way from El Paso to Austin; that took a long time.

01-00:51:32
Holmes: That's a very long time.

01-00:51:33
García: And my mother helped arrange for me to stay at a hotel close to the campus, and because they had the colonel—it was Colonel Anthony Butler—they had his papers there. So I spent two or three days, I forget it was, and taking notes there, and I had also gotten stuff from US diplomatic records, at the National Archives, that they'd send me copies of some papers. I look back on it and I have a copy of my MA [laughs] thesis. It's okay, but it was maybe about a hundred pages, which I guess wasn't too bad for an MA thesis. But, I guess again that expressed my interest still in kind of US-Mexico relations and so forth, so, I always had that kind of connection. I think overall, it was a good training, my MA program. I never had a Mexican American professor, period, either as an undergraduate or as an MA student. And there were not many at Texas Western, or as it becomes known as UTEP in 1966.

One of the things that sticks in my memory—and this is a beginnings I guess or a furthering of my consciousness about issues of ethnicity, and maybe race too—so this Professor Fuller, who I TAed for my first year, he would do at least one visit to our discussion sections, and I think this was in the second semester. So he came to my discussion section, and I thought I'd done a pretty good job, getting the students to discuss, and he would want us to go over some of the material, and I thought I did a good job. And so after my section was over, we're walking down the hall towards his office, and the only thing he says to me, he said, "You don't have an accent; you don't have an accent." And I didn't know what to say. No one ever said that to me. But I think what bothered me even more was, he didn't say anything about my performance in that section. All he could say was, "You don't have an accent." I never thought about whether I had an accent or not, to be honest. I guess I probably didn't think I had an accent! What he was saying was, "How come you don't talk like Speedy Gonzales?"

This is a professor. I mean, I liked Professor Fuller; I think he was an influence on me. He was very good. He's a good lecturer. He was one of the best lecturers. And I'll come back to that, I'll relate a story, but that did bother me that all he could say was I didn't have an accent.

01-00:54:42
Holmes: Was he a faculty advisor for your MA thesis?

01-00:54:46
García: No, my advisor was Professor Timmons, because his main specialty was Mexico, colonial and nineteenth-century Mexico, but he also taught the courses on US diplomatic relations and I had taken his classes. So because the thesis was on US diplomatic relations with Mexico, he was my advisor. But I admired Fuller much more, because he was a very accomplished lecturer, very well-organized lectures, and I think I've carried kind of that with me as well, to try to organize my lectures very well, and be a good lecturer.

But, the latest story that I want to say with Professor Fuller is, I remember actually when I was still like a senior in college, and being in his class on early twentieth-century US history, and sitting in his lecture room. There couldn't have been more than thirty students. But I remember thinking to myself, as I'm witnessing him lecturing, thinking to myself, I think I can do that. I think I can do that. And so somewhere already, I had a sense that I could become a professor. And so I finished my thesis, and I got my MA in the spring of 1968.

What to do now? Well, guess I did want to be a professor of some sort, but I wasn't sure what to do. I'm not sure that I had applied to teach like at community college, and if I did, I never got anything anyway. So, and I was still living at home, and my grandmother and my aunt had already passed away, and my parents were divorced. My mother, actually, is the one who asked for the divorce. That marriage always had a lot of difficulty, and I think in part it may have had to do with the fact that my mother was a US-born Mexican American, my father was a Mexican immigrant, and I think there was some cultural divide there. But for whatever reason, it was my mother who initiated the divorce, and so they were divorced by the time I finished my MA in '68.

My father returned to Mexico, and he worked for a few years with the Mexican government in their agricultural department, given that he had that background. And in later years, he actually would come back to the US, because that job ended, and he would actually work in the fields. He would come here to California, worked in the fields. He would go sometimes to Arkansas and he'd work in the chicken factories, packing factories. He had a hard time later in his life. He died a poor man. He remarried a woman, an Afro-Mexican from Veracruz, had a couple of children from that, but when he died many years later, he was a relatively poor man. And when they divorced, my mother was already having to work—so I still lived at home when I finished in '68, and I remember I contributed to paying our rent.

So, UTEP History Department kept me on as a kind of glorified TA. They called me an associate, but I was still doing TA work, in classes. But then I felt I needed some more money to help my family. My mother was a single mother now, and my younger brother, Leonard, and my sister, Alma, were still at home. So I got a part-time job teaching at Holy Family Elementary School, related to Holy Family Church where my parents had gotten married, in that Sunset district where you had Porfirio Díaz Drive. So, every day I would drive on Porfirio Díaz Drive to get to the school, Holy Family. And, they had me teach the seventh and eighth grade, but only in the mornings, but they gave me seventh grade as my homeroom.

Wow, that was a challenge. I had thirty-five students which was already too much. Thirty of the thirty-five—and I don't say this in a sexist way—but thirty of thirty-five were thirteen-year-old girls. That was difficult. That was

difficult to deal with that, and then I taught US history in the eighth grade. The thing is, and I did later on tell my kids "we're not quitters," but after seven or eight months, I realized I couldn't do it. I mean, if I could keep that seventh grade—if I could just keep order, it was a successful morning. How much I was able to teach them, I don't know. It was hard. I clearly realized I wasn't cut out to be a teacher at that level, but I really admire teachers at the elementary level, and the middle school, because to me, that's real teaching. To be able to pass on knowledge and to teach young minds, that's real teaching. What we do in university is a form of teaching, but it's not the same thing as teaching a seventh-grade class. No, it's a different type, you know?

01-01:00:42
Holmes: Yeah, I could see the difficulty. Especially, if we think at that time you are maybe twenty-four years old? I mean, a twenty-four-year-old trying to keep seventh-grade boys and girls in order—

01-01:00:57
García: That was difficult. What saved me was the fact that, in the afternoons, I would go back to UTEP, and I would be a TA, a graduate TA. I would have my sections, and that was a whole different experience, and that experience I could really get into. So I did that into that next year. We're talking here '68, '69, but what to do then? They weren't going to keep me on. I already, after seven months, I quit that Holy Family teaching job. I knew that I didn't want to do that. Couldn't stay on as a glorified TA for another year probably. What to do?

I do remember sending out inquiries to different community colleges all over the place. I remember Florida, Colorado. But I didn't get any offers, and what turned my life, and this was one of those key moments that we all have: in spring of 1969, the history department invited Professor Ramón Eduardo Ruiz, then a professor of Latin American history at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, to come lecture on campus. He was friends with Fuller, Professor Fuller, and another professor, Ken Shover, who taught Civil War history, and I was his TA in my second year. They knew each other because they were all graduate students together at UC Berkeley [University of California, Berkeley], in the 1950s. And they, [laughs] when they invited, they went out of their way to introduce me to him, I guess to showcase me as their only, at that time, Chicano graduate student, and impress upon him, [laughter] that on Ruiz.

But that was a game changer, because I met Ruiz. He later, when he wrote his autobiography, and I would write later an essay about that, in part, about his autobiography, but he writes when he came to give that lecture at UTEP the history department faculty took him to lunch at a very nice place, and I do remember that, because they invited me as well, and he writes, "and they invited a graduate student to lunch, a Mexican American graduate student to the lunch," and he writes, "and all he did during that lunch was to stare at me."

And after he wrote his autobiography, I talked with him, and we became very good friends, I said, "Ramón, I'm sorry, but that's not true. I remember that lunch, and I did not just stare at you. And first of all, I wasn't trained to stare at people." And in my mind is my grandmother saying, "We're *gente decente*; we're cultured people," in that you don't stare at someone across a table.

But for whatever reason, he had that impression, because then he said, "and it's a graduate student; all he did during lunch was stare at me," and then he says, he writes, "and that was Mario García," which I guess was sort of a tribute. I don't know what it was. [laughter] Although I didn't like the first part of it. But, over the course of those two days, I got a chance to meet with Ruiz. And we met, and actually, I should back up a little here because just prior to his coming to the lecture, I had noticed on the bulletin board of our union center, the student union, there was an announcement that there were going to be a couple of representatives from San Jose State College, and they wanted to interview people who were finishing their MAs or had finished their MAs for possible positions at San Jose State. I said, "Okay, what do I have to lose?" and I signed up.

I think I was their only interview, and that was a big break, because it turned out there were two history faculty members from San Jose State: one of them was the chair of the history department, Brett Melendy, and the other was Feliciano Rivera, one of the early professors who taught early courses in Chicano history. Rivera had gotten a PhD in Latin American history from USC, and then he got hired at San Jose State. This might've been his second or third year, but he had already taught a course on Chicano history. So I interviewed with them, and I don't know, a month later maybe, I got a letter and they offered me a position, a one-year position as an instructor of US history at San Jose State to teach Intro to US History. So by the time Ruiz came, I'm sure I already had accepted it, because I had nothing else, and I'd never been to California.

So, Ruiz and I, we talked about that, and also, they had already asked me, would I be willing to also teach a course on Chicano history, which I knew not a lot of how I would even do that. One of the things Ruiz said about that, he said, "You've got to read McWilliams. I mean, that will give you something there." I guess then he also maybe mentioned Galarza, George Sánchez, not the young George Sánchez today at USC, but George I. Sánchez at UT Austin, at that time. But we talked about how, if I was really interested in being a university professor, I had to get my PhD, and Ruiz said to me, "Look, I'm leaving Smith, and I'm taking a new position at UC San Diego, and that history department is just really beginning to be formed. Think about coming to do your PhD with me at UC San Diego."

So, we developed already a relationship; he knew that I was going to go to San Jose State and of course, I did, and we can talk about that, but that connection with Ruiz is crucial, because Ruiz would then later, into that next

academic year, '69, '70, would have me come down to San Diego, and he was already there. He showed me the campus. He introduced me to other faculty members. I agreed to come, and he arranged a very nice financial package for me, and that just cemented it. But he was the one who gave me the break.

He gave me the break, and I tell my students, my graduate students today, "Not a single of my Anglo-American professors—Professor Shover, Professor Fuller, Professor Timmons—ever said to me, 'You know, you are one of our better graduate students. Have you ever thought of going on for a PhD?' Not a single one of them ever said that to me. It took someone of my own background, Ramón Ruiz, who said, 'Come and work with me on your PhD.'" That was a game changer, and I owe everything to him. If that hadn't happened, I don't know, maybe I would've gone community college, maybe eventually I would've gone into a PhD program. It's hard to say. I don't know, but I do know what happened and that was that Ruiz paved the way. He gave me that opportunity.

01-01:09:06
Holmes: Well, and encouragement and guidance, too—

01-01:09:08
García: Absolutely, absolutely. So that was a big turning point in my life, in my career.

01-01:09:22
Holmes: Well I'd like to talk about your experience there at San Diego. Before we get there, maybe talk a little bit about your experience at San Jose State, because coming from El Paso, Texas, to San Jose, California, there is a big change in environment there.

01-01:09:43
García: You better believe there was!

01-01:09:45
Holmes: [laughs] So discuss that a little bit, and also your introduction to teaching Chicano history.

01-01:09:50
García: Absolutely. Well let's take it chronologically. So that summer, they assigned me to teach some Intro to US History classes, and that was okay because I had all my lecture notes from Professor Fuller, and for all the people that I had been a TA, I took copious notes of their lectures so I could use them. That was the basis of how I would present my courses on Intro. But the Chicano history one was of course a big challenge for me, so of course I read McWilliams—I could not have taught that course in the fall on Chicano history without McWilliams. He gave me the framework but he also gave me the information that I could use: the Zoot Suit Riots, some of the nineteenth-century experience, the US-Mexico War. He gave me that. Of course, I could bring my own, having studied the US-Mexico War, having done that thesis that

related to US-Mexico diplomatic, having taken Mexican History. Of course all of that I could utilize; that was part of my background.

01-01:10:54
Holmes: What about *Factories in the Field*?

01-01:10:56
García: Yes, I read all that. I read those early texts that were available: Galarza; McWilliams, *Factories in the Fields*, some of other McWilliams's books on race; Galarza, of course, in the classic *Merchants of Labor*; George I. Sánchez's *Forgotten People*. All of that was very helpful to try to put some—but McWilliams was my bible, as indeed it would be for the first generation of professional historians, Chicano historians. That was our bible, whether people acknowledge it or not, but I acknowledge it, and every time that I teach my Chicano historiography class, I begin with McWilliams, and I tell my graduate students, "McWilliams is the godfather of Chicano historiography." Without McWilliams's text *North From Mexico*, I don't know where I and others like [Al] Camarillo and [Pedro] Castillo and Ricardo Romo and the others who come out of that generation, guys who would begin to teach, even who were graduate students, teach a course on Chicano history, how we could've done it without McWilliams. It's the only kind of text that gave us some chronology, some periodization. We would reformulate it later on as we got to do our own research, but he gave us a structure.

So that summer, I spent a lot of time trying to put together that course, and then it came time to leave, because of course, this was toward shortly after Labor Day. So, my older brother Richard who was still working, he was working on an MA in political science at UTEP. He and I—and I invited my younger brother, Leonard, who was still an undergraduate, I invited him to come along, and I wasn't sure whether he would stay in San Jose, but it turned out he did stay with me, and so I had company with my younger brother, Leonard—and we all drove in my car all the way to San Jose. I remember leaving like midnight in El Paso, driving all night through the desert. I forget, somewhere about Paso Robles, we finally just had to stop and rest up, and then finally came into San Jose, stayed at some dumpy hotel downtown till we could find me a dumpy [laughter] apartment close to the campus so I could just walk. Actually, we drove in my car, a car that I had.

So I started in the fall of 1969 as an instructor at San Jose State. I had three Intro to US History classes and then I had the one Chicano history class that I would teach both in the fall and the spring semester. And actually, that Chicano history class, that I taught in the fall, because I had to teach I think five classes. I taught one during the day, and then I had one in the evening that met once a week. So, I thought I did the best I could, and one of the challenges as well was how to get together a reading list. You couldn't really use McWilliams's; McWilliams had not been reprinted yet. It would be one year later. In fact, I didn't want to use McWilliams because if I used

McWilliams the students would realize that all my lectures were coming from McWilliams.

01-01:14:27
Holmes: [laughs] Well that's the old trick, right: there's the book you lecture from, and then the book you have them read.

01-01:14:30
García: That's right! So I was fortunate in that sense, but a year later, Greenwood Press would come out with a republished *North From Mexico*. So there went those lectures, [laughter] in a way. But it was hard to put together a reading list because there was so little, so I had to fall back on some awful social science stuff. I think I knew enough now and my sensitivity was enough now that I knew that it was bad stuff, but I remember using Celia Heller's *Mexican American Youth at the Crossroads*, awful stuff about gangs and so forth; William Madsen's book on Mexican Americans in South Texas, that argues Mexican Americans don't have much mobility because they possess a—what do you call the traditional culture which was backward looking, and was really not fit for a progressive society like the United States? So it was a culture that held back Mexican Americans—awful stuff. Well, I felt, at least I could bounce off of it.

So I wound up using John Steinbeck's *Tortilla Flat* because well, I had not read it, but I said, "Well, it's got 'tortilla' in the title; it must have to do something with Mexican Americans, and it's in Monterey." I know someone who said, "Well he's really writing about Portuguese." I don't know; it maybe had something to do with Mexican Americans. So I used *Tortilla Flat*, and when I got to San Jose State, I saw in the bookstore a book by Raymond Barrio called *The Plum Plum Pickers*, and I read it, and I said, "Hey, it's good because it's about Mexican Americans there in San Jose, in Santa Clara Valley, as farm workers." It was a self-published novel. And so I asked the bookstore and they got it for me to use, and I actually would wind up inviting Raymond Barrio, who lived there in Santa Clara, to come speak to my class about his novel. It's not a bad novel!

But it was a challenge, and I tell my graduate students, "Compare today, the challenge is, what do I use, because there's so much that has been produced since I first had to deal with that challenge in the fall of 1969." Well, so I taught those, and it was not the first course, as I mentioned earlier, on Chicano history at San Jose State because Rivera had taught one, but that kind of oriented me already to thinking of myself as a Chicano historian, and that was the way I wanted to go eventually when I would do my PhD. And so, I enjoyed it. It was a challenge teaching, because I mean, they were my own classes, and the responsibility I felt, and so many classes I had to teach: five classes I think, per semester.

01-01:17:33
Holmes: With no TAs.

01-01:17:34
García: With no TAs! And then, there was cultural shock, because it was the first I had ever been to California. I came to look over the campus in June that summer of '69, and I had a friend who had been a graduate student also at UTEP, and she and her husband had moved to San Jose. In June of '69 I went, because I went to look at the campus before I came out permanently. So I flew out and I stayed with my friends, and they took me that evening to dinner in San Francisco, and I would realize later that Mark Twain's famous quote was true, that here I was coming from ninety-degree-plus June in El Paso—the hottest month in El Paso in the summers is June—and actually probably closer to a hundred. So here they take me to dinner in San Francisco and it's freezing, and I have just a light sport coat. It's just freezing. So later when I learned about Mark Twain's saying that the coldest winter he ever spent was a summer in San Francisco, he was right! I froze to death. Well, my God, to see San Francisco, even though it was already toward the evening time, was just fantastic.

But later, when I came, and for the year to teach there, was a mindblower, because not just of the different setting, geographic setting and all of that, but what was happening. The Chicano movement, the Black Power movement, second-wave feminist movement, the environmental movement, all these things were happening, and the farm workers' strike and the struggle. These were all mindblowers, Todd. This wasn't happening in El Paso. The sixties had not yet reached, in the fall of '69, had not yet reached us in El Paso. We were aware of the sixties, because we saw it on television, and about the hippies, and all of that, but you didn't see much of that yet, that kind of countercultural influence and so forth. The Chicano movement, a little bit on the farm workers and Cesar I think had spoken. I don't remember him speaking at UTEP, but he may have spoken in the community.

01-01:20:11
Holmes: He had certainly been down there at Austin, and other parts of Texas.

01-01:20:15
García: Yes, and there had been some activity in '66, in actually '67. The fall of '67, there was that White House meeting on Mexican Americans that met at UTEP, and that's where you had a walkout of some of the Mexican Americans attending it, because they were protesting the fact that the Johnson administration then was really not serious about issues relating to Mexican Americans, and they had not invited Cesar [Chavez]. They had not invited Corky Gonzales. They hadn't invited [Reies] Tijerina. And so there was a walkout of some of the already becoming a little bit more radical community leaders, and they held their own counter conference in South El Paso.

I was aware of it. I wasn't part of that, but I was aware of it. I was aware of what was happening in Northern New Mexico with Tijerina because we read about it, it was on television, because I was aware of the farm workers' strike and so forth. I remember receiving, by then I subscribed to *Time* magazine

and behold, July 4, 1969, *Time* magazine had Cesar's image on the cover. Later I would learn that the image was done by Manuel Acosta, an artist in El Paso.

01-01:21:46
Holmes: Oh wow.

01-01:21:47
García: Yeah, I still have that. I show my students. I have still that 1969, July 4, magazine of *Time*. But still, the movement really hadn't hit El Paso in many ways. So coming to San Jose State and all of this was happening, the reason I found out later that they had that recruiting visit, not only to UTEP, but [Bret] Melendy and [Feliciano] Rivera had gone to various other Texas institutions, because they were being pressured already by the Chicano student movement at San Jose State: "We want Chicano faculty. We want a program." And when I got there in the fall of 1969, there was the beginning of what was called MAGS, the Mexican American Graduate Studies, which was an MA program, not a BA program. They pushed and got an MA program initially before they got a BA program. They said, "Let's start at that level, then we'll work our way down." And I think it goes back; I think it was the spring of '68, at the San Jose State commencement, there had been a walkout of the few Chicano students who were there, and out of that came the demand for Chicano studies and for Chicano faculty, administrators. So, when I got there in the fall, I was one of a cohort of new faculty being hired in other departments as well, plus it was the beginnings of the Mexican American Graduate Studies with their own faculty.

01-01:23:20
Holmes: Oh wow, yeah.

01-01:23:22
García: So that was important to me because I gravitated to that faculty, and I would go to meetings of the MAGS program, the Mexican American Graduate Studies program. I wasn't part of that faculty, but my courses I think were cross listed. So that became kind of, it gave me a sense of community, and it also increased my own political consciousness.

01-01:23:53
Holmes: Because right around that time, on campuses throughout California, we have like the El Plan of Santa Barbara that happens in April of 1969.

01-01:24:02
García: That's right, and I wasn't aware of that, and I'm not sure how much I was aware of the beginnings of the Chicano Youth Liberation conferences in Denver hosted by Corky Gonzales because of course, in April of '69, or March of '69, they have that conference that leads to the *Plan de Aztlán* in '69. Well, I might have been aware because already, when I was preparing for my course in that summer of '69 in El Paso, I began to subscribe to some of the early publications like *El Grito*, which was important to me, the early essays by

Octavio Romano, but I also subscribed to some of the newspaper like *El Gallo* from Denver, so I must have been already aware of *Plan de Aztlán*.

But again, it was a mindblower, all these things happening, and that year, I would say, '69, '70 year, I became Chicano. I became Chicano. Previous to that, if asked, when I was an undergraduate and certainly when I was an MA student at UTEP, if asked, I would have said, "I'm Mexican American." Not that I wasn't aware of the term "Chicano." At Cathedral, the kids who went to Cathedral from South El Paso, who had gone to Catholic schools in South El Paso—Sacred Heart, Saint Ignatius, Guardian Angel—some of them were great athletes, but who were in Cathedral, I remember they used the term "Chicano," not in a politicized way, but they used it as a term of ethnic pride, that they were Chicanos. Some people have said that the term "Chicano" is always used as a derogatory way. Well, maybe some used it, but certainly not the kids that I was aware of, and we know now, by looking back, in the 1940s especially, with the Pachucos and the Zoot Suiter, they used the term "Chicano," and they used it obviously not in a derogatory way. It was a way of expressing their sense of who they were.

That term was there. We had, growing up in the 1950s, there was a lot of gang problems in El Paso, especially in South El Paso. They used the term "Chicano." I was aware of the term because those kids from South El Paso and Cathedral, they used the term "Chicano," and they had their ducktail—as much as the Christian Brothers would allow them to have that ducktail. I liked their swagger. I admired the swagger of some of these kids from South El Paso, and I really admired their version of the ducktail, which I've tried to emulate, but you know that my cowlicks one time, the back wouldn't allow it. I couldn't get that beautiful shape, ducktail—

01-01:27:01
Holmes: To come together, yeah.

01-01:27:01
García: —oh! Some of them just had—I mean, as much as the Brothers would allow. They wouldn't allow really extreme, but some could still, very smooth, you know, just beautiful. And so I was aware of the term "Chicano." I did not use it myself, and I guess I don't even know that I would use the term "Mexican American" when I was in high school, but as I went on to college, and later on as a graduate student, and in between, yeah, I would use the term "Mexican American," and I was aware that Mexican Americans were coming together and so forth for the reasons that we've talked about before. But that year at San Jose State, that's where I would say that I clearly became Chicano. I used the term. I use it now to identify myself, and as I evolved in my political consciousness.

I want to go back and say about the influence of Octavio Romano, and the publication *El Grito*, which was the first so-called Mexican American journal

of—what was it called—Mexican American intellectual thought, out of Berkeley—

01-01:28:04
Holmes: Yeah, it started in 1967—

01-01:28:07
García: And I subscribe to the back issues, and I got those, and Romano's seminal and groundbreaking essays about the intellectual and cultural origins of Mexican Americans, I forget the actual titles, but he had two or three very important essays. In one, he takes on the social scientists and how they had depicted Mexican Americans, in a very negative way—again people like Madsen and Heller, whose books I was using because I didn't have anything else to use, that was very important. It gave me that kind of critique of what had already been done on Mexican Americans, but what I like about Romano's essays: if McWilliams was giving me some basic information on what we could call Chicano, Mexican American history, Romano was giving me a certain kind of a spirit, a kind of a soul, that I could implement a sense of the fact that, as he would write, that Mexican Americans, Chicanos, had had a history, and they had a history of struggling and taking on racism and so forth, but they had an intellectual heritage that went back to Mexico and carried on.

So, those seminal essays by Octavio Romano were very important, because it gave me a certain contemporary orientation that I obviously could not get from a 1948 text. Romano gave me a contemporary Chicano movement orientation. And so, that was very important in my ability to try to begin to conceptualize Chicano history. And so between McWilliams and Romano, those were very important.

01-01:29:51
Holmes: Well, and we can see too that this time when you're there at San Jose State is also this opening of intellectual space, for what would become known as Chicano studies, right? I mean, we have *Aztlán: The Chicano Journal of Social Sciences and Arts,* published out of UCLA, as well as UC Santa Barbara publishing the very first *Journal of Mexican American History*.

01-01:30:15
García: That's true. That's right, that's right. Yeah, all of these things were happening. They were bubbling. It was a true kind of—well, I wouldn't call it a renaissance, but it was a blooming already, and of course, the movement of was going hot and heavy in California, and I was swept up in it. I was swept up in it, and I began to attend things in support of the farm workers. And in the spring of 1970, I was very much influenced by the demonstrations as a result of the US invasion into Cambodia, the Nixon move into Cambodia, and there was walkouts for the classes. Like throughout the country, San Jose State, students were demonstrating against this escalation of the war in Vietnam. A number of students, Chicano students at San Jose State, I realize

were returning vets; they had been in Vietnam and they were now coming to San Jose to get degrees and so forth, and that was impressive.

So, I was caught up also in going to the demonstrations against Nixon's invasion of Cambodia, but what also affected me was the fact that, even though I supported the Mexican American Graduate Studies that was going on there, and some of the students were in some of my classes, but to its discredit, the Mexican American Graduate Studies took the position during the demonstrations on Cambodia—their faculty—that this was a setup. If the Chicano students went out on strike too, that if the police intervened, they were the ones who were going to get caught up in that.

Whether rightfully or wrongly—well, I think wrongly—they then took the position that MAGS was not going to support the student strike, but they insisted on carrying on "business as usual," as they put it. Their students had to attend their classes. The fact they didn't realize: their students were already out too. They had no classes. And I think what it impressed upon me is that, well, maybe they did generally feel that it was a setup, that it was an attempt by maybe the white students and others to get the Chicano students out and then they would be cut off, maybe that was part of it. But I guess in some ways it impressed upon me that yeah, it was important to have a Chicano studies program, but that institutionally, maybe there could be some difficulties along the way in the sense of not wanting to injure the program by not wanting to be too far out there politically in order to protect the program. Maybe that was part of their thinking. So, it's not that I would become anti-Chicano studies—quite the contrary—but that bothered me that their faculty in that program weren't with their students. They should've been out there as well demonstrating.

But that was a tremendous year. That was a very formative year for me, because I was introduced to California, I was introduced to all of this politics that was going on that I had not experienced in El Paso, and according to my own consciousness, really, really began to be more and more oriented towards the movement, the Chicano movement, seeing myself as part of the movement and seeing myself identifying as Chicano, and wanting to go on to do Chicano history. That's when, going back to what I'd said much earlier, when I was having some discussion with an EOP administrator—he wasn't a professor—and he said his main goal in life was to make $25,000 a year, which I guess in 1969, '70, was a pretty big salary, maybe equivalent of a hundred thousand or more today. And I do remember, I think I said to him, "I want to be the best Chicano historian," and so I set my sights somewhat already in that.

In the course of that year, I went down and I visited with Ramón Ruiz. As I said, he introduced me to the faculty and so forth, got me that good financial package. So, in the fall of 1970 is when I went to UC San Diego.

01-01:35:47
Holmes: Yes, to start your PhD studies. Now were you one of the first Chicano students, graduate students, UC San Diego, or was the graduate student body already beginning to diversify, particularly with Ramón Ruiz there?

01-01:36:06
García: There were other Chicanos who were beginning their graduate programs as well. There was a young woman there, Latina; she was of Chilean background. She was starting there so I guess she and I were the only two Latinos in the history graduate program, PhD program. But in other disciplines, especially in the humanities and social sciences, there were some who had been recruited as graduate students, and UC San Diego, like the other UC campuses, already had developed and were developing attractive financial scholarships, and fellowships, and packages to diversify at the graduate level, and they were beginning to diversify faculty as well.

So, I wasn't isolated in that sense, and part of my financial package was that I was assigned to also be a TA in what was just simply referred to as the Third College, because UC San Diego was organized around the college system. So they had already two colleges. One was a little bit more science oriented; one was a little bit more humanities, social science. The Third College was the result of earlier demonstrations in '68, '69, by minority students at UC San Diego, led by no less than Angela Davis—who was a philosophy graduate student under Marcuse, Herbert Marcuse, the major Marxist philosopher, intellectual—and a small number of minority students, African American, Chicano, some Asian American, and some Native Americans. They wanted a Third-World College. They wanted a college that would relate to Third-World Studies, and the experience of the Third World, which would include minorities in the United States, but also in the Third World: Africa, Asia, Latin America. And the result of that was that they did organize. UC San Diego did organize a college, and the students wanted that college to be named Lumumba-Zapata College, Lumumba being Patrice Lumumba, the leader of the revolutionary movement in the Congo, and Zapata, of course, the great revolutionary out of the Mexican Revolution of 1910.

Well, UC San Diego, the administrators and so forth, they were pushed to develop a third-world studies college, but they didn't want to go so far to call it Lumumba-Zapata. There was already growing criticism in the La Jolla community about what became, at least initially, referred to as a Third College, and I remember in that fall of 1970 when I started there, there was a scathing article in the *National Review*, William Buckley's right-wing *National Review*, against the Third College at San Diego, that this was a Marxist, this creeping Marxism there in La Jolla.

01-01:39:40
Holmes: Yeah. Well I know Ronald Reagan, who was governor at this time, already had his sights set on disrupting the career of Marcuse, and trying to get him kicked out.

01-01:39:50
García: Yes, and to silence him and so forth. Then of course, Angela Davis—I think she eventually would finish, and then she went on, I guess, to teach at UCLA—there was a lot of controversy about her as well. There was an attempt, by Reagan also, to silence her, to force her off the faculty. So all of that was happening. These were incredible years. The politics was everywhere. The movements were everywhere. Your head was spinning all the time. But that also added to our learning, because it made what we were learning very exciting because it was related to the political movements.

So here I was. I was assigned to be a TA to the so-called Third College, which wasn't bad because just the term "Third" already kind of linked it with Third-World Studies, and most of us as graduate TAs were minority students. So that got me in a circle of people from literature, from the social sciences. We were the TAs, and then the professors were largely minority faculty, some who had already been there or somewhat just literally been recruited. Mario Barrera came around that time, Arturo Madrid. Rosaura Sánchez would come a year or two later.

Carlos Blanco was very important in the Third College. He was already a senior professor. Now his parents had fled Spain as a result of the Spanish Civil War in 1930s then went to Mexico, and that's where—I think Blanco had been born in Spain but he was already like a young boy. So he really grew up more Mexican than Spanish. And he married a Mexican woman, and he studied in the US, and he had got a PhD at Harvard, taught at Ohio State, then he was recruited in the mid-sixties to the Department of Languages at UCSD, and he became one of the senior professors who helped to organize the Third College, the curriculum and so forth. And he was a Marxist, very supportive of Third-World Studies, and he played a very prominent role.

One of the first courses in the Third College was Introduction to Third-World Studies, and of course, this was the first cohort of undergraduates coming into Third College, many of them, maybe the majority were minority students, especially African American and Chicano. And so that course, I think maybe there had been a hundred students in that class, of that initial cohort. So, it was taught by the different faculty. People would lecture on this, and so there'd be Chicanos lecturing faculty on some aspects of either Mexican history but also into Chicano history as well, as much as they could do it; African American professors would talk about African American. So they kind of brought it up, and I think—I guess we did—it was organized chronologically in some respects as it moved up the years.

And so there we were as TAs. The reading assignments, maybe we were reading [Frantz] Fanon, or other Third-World writers were integrated into the reading, so they tried to select readings of African American writers, on African Americans, on Chicanos, on Native Americans, Asian Americans. So it really was, for me certainly and for all of us, a real introduction to Third-

World Studies, because that had not been my orientation. And I have to say, already then, my political and intellectual conscious was and also continued to evolve because in a way, I also became a kind of "Third-Worlder," if that's the correct term. In other words, yes, I was Chicano and I supported the Chicano movement, and I was influenced by the cultural nationalism of the movement in terms of being proud of being Chicano, and knowing how important it was to be of Mexican and Mexican American background, but it also got me in touch with these other minority and ethnic experiences not only in this country but again in the Third World.

So my orientation was much, much broader, and then there was Marx's influence there at the Third College with Blanco and others, and I began to read Marx. I began to read Lenin and Trotsky and so forth, and so that was part of my political conscious as well. So the five years that I was there was very important in terms of my formation, my intellectual, political formation, but that initial year was very important because this Third College was just getting off the ground, I was TAing there, and so there was a cohort of so-called minority, Third-World students, and—

01-01:45:16
Holmes: Well it seems like a really vibrant environment, particularly as a young Chicano scholar—more so than perhaps if you went to just a Chicano studies or similarly focused program. And I think you actually see this in your work, taking a broad look at ethnicity.

01-01:45:36
García: And there wasn't any in Chicano studies because there the formation was a Third-World College, and later there would be specific classes in Chicano studies, because later on they hired, the history department, after they were confronted about hiring someone to teach Chicano history, they hired Ricardo Romo, who was just finishing his PhD at UCLA and he began to offer courses in Chicano history. The same thing in the other departments, Chicano literature, and so forth and so on—political science, that's when about Mario Barrera was brought in. See, they were appointed in the traditional departments, but then they were assigned into the Third College. Their courses would be cross listed with like poly-sci or Third-World College curriculum. So they had those connections like that. So, yeah, it did broaden me a lot.

In the history department, I enjoyed my seminars with Professor Ruiz, with Ramón Ruiz. I was taking a seminar on the Mexican Revolution of 1910, but I have to say, I wasn't that excited about my other history seminars. There was still a small faculty, and I remember just taking seminars in US economic history, and I didn't like that. The professors didn't really make it very exciting. It was so drab. And, I had some difficulties with him. He had me rewrite a paper several times, and then I don't know why I kept him on later on, as on my committee, he gave me a hard time later on, and we can talk

about that toward the end of my five years there. But I wasn't that excited about my history seminars I have to say, but I enjoyed my experiences at the Third College. I also was teaching. Beginning that first year, I taught a course on Chicano history out of the Department of Chicano studies at San Diego State.

01-01:47:52
Holmes: Yeah, I was going to ask you about that.

01-01:47:53
García: So I had a broader connection, and my brother, Richard, had finished his MA in political science at UTEP, and was hired to be an assistant professor in Chicano studies at San Diego State. So we had a reunion, my brother and I, and so he was there just for one year. And so I taught an evening class on Chicano history that academic year, and I would continue to do that for at least the next four years or so, and that brought me into contact with those people at San Diego State who had already established a Chicano studies department, and it was a fairly large one. I think they had at least fifteen lines, and Alurista was teaching there, the poet; Carlos Velez; and various other people, including my brother. And so I got to know them. Of course, I had mostly Chicano students, not completely, but I had more Chicano students so I taught there as well.

So, I had a much larger experience, and I would go to some of the MEChA meetings there at San Diego State. I would go to MEChA meetings as well at UC San Diego, so I would go back and forth in a way, and got involved in some of the Chicano student politics, conferences that were being held. I remember going to conferences, Chicano studies conferences, student conferences and Chicano studies conferences at like, Cal State Northridge, and getting to meet Rudy Acuña, of course, who had developed Chicano studies there.

So, we were all kind of finding each other in a way in those early years. I remember meeting Romo, and I remember meeting [Richard Griswold del] Castillo, and Barrera, and Carlos Muñoz, because there was a meeting that fall when I first started in the fall of 1970, at UC San Diego, of some of the Chicano studies faculty already in the UC system. And because I and another graduate student who was in sociology, we were invited to kind of just sit in on it, but that's where I met Jesús Chavarria, Juan Gómez-Quiñones. So we began to kind of link, have these linkages. o—

01-01:50:15
Holmes: Well I know UCLA also used to, at least from my understanding, had established kind of a relationship with UT Austin, in hosting various conferences and things, but as you're discussing, that UCLA was just, it was beginning to expand beyond that to include conferences at UC San Diego, and were you seeing this community begin to grow between the colleges?

01-01:50:43
García: Yeah, because there was conferences of one kind or another—some of them were student conferences but faculty would also attend and participate in the discussions. Graduate students would attend. So, yes, these linkages were developing, and yeah, I remember when I was already working on my dissertation, attending a conference at UC Irvine, a kind of precursor to the NACCS conferences, which would start, I think the first one like in '74, '75. The people were there. I don't know that papers were being presented but we had discussions among various topics, I'm sure over Chicano studies and other things.

So yeah, linkages were being made, and that was important. It broadened us, and we realized that we all had similar interests. And so, that's where I found a lot of fulfillment in the Third College, teaching at San Diego State, going to some of these meetings in both campuses, or the MEChAs, going to these conferences. My experience in the history department was not the best. My seminars with Ruiz, when I took that seminar with Ruiz, in the summer of '71, I visited Ruiz in Mexico City. He was doing research on what would become his big book on the Mexican Revolution of 1910, and he had me come down because he wanted to introduce me into doing archival research there at the National Archives, in Mexico City, there at the National Palace. They've subsequently moved them, but they used to be there. And he was doing his research on the Mexican Revolution of 1910 for his big book.

I would go with him, and he was looking at some of the papers of Francisco Madero, and he said, "Why don't you look at some of these papers? They have more to do with labor, and maybe that's something of interest." So yeah, there was the actual, the authentic papers, and they'd been in these boxes. Maybe they were in files until you were touching the papers. Of course, you could only take handwritten notes. And that was important because the next year, he offered his two-quarter research seminar on the Mexican Revolution of 1910, and I would write my paper based on some of that research that I did on Madero, after he became president after they overthrew Díaz, about his labor policy. But I hadn't quite finished the research that summer, so in the research quarter, where we had to do the research and then write the paper, I actually, on my own, flew back to Mexico City for about a week and finished the research, and then I wrote the paper on Madero's labor policy. But that introduced me to Mexico City, which I hadn't been there before, and then to actually doing this kind of archival research.

But other than that, I did not have a particularly good experience with other history faculty because I was becoming more political. My brother had joined the Young Socialist Alliance, the YSA, Trotskyist, and the SWP, the Socialist Workers Party, Trotskyist. And, he kind of moved me in that direction, and I also joined. So, again, that broadened me even more! Because this was now more Marxism, Trotsky style. [laughter] I began to distinguish between the

so-called Trotskyist and the so-called Stalinist. But, later on, I would actually become much more an admirer of the CP than I would have the SWP.

So, I was in my second year. I was becoming even more politically involved and engaged because I'd gone through these experiences; I was involved with the YSA and all that. So, I think into winter, spring of that second year, Professor Ruiz, Ramón Ruiz, brought me into his office—by then he was the chair of the department—and he said to me, "You know, some of your other history professors are beginning to wonder or to question your commitment to your PhD program." He didn't have to say another word. I knew where this was heading. I could see the writing on the wall. And I remember, and I pass it on to my graduate students saying, "I had to confront myself. What do I want? What do I want? Do I want to be a political activist—what do I want? And I said, 'I want my PhD, because I still want to be a university professor.'" And that meant I had to compromise. I had to reign myself in, discipline myself, and it wasn't that I was giving up my political ideals and my political commitments, but I was thinking long range. How best will I be able to implement my political idealism, ideological idealism? And for me, it would be best when I became a full-fledged university professor, and in my research as well.

So I did. The handwriting was on the wall. "Either you reign yourself in," Ruiz was saying, "or you may not be allowed to continue." And I tell my grad students, "He didn't need to do that." He was chair of the department. He obviously was getting some heat from some of these professors whose seminars I was taking. He didn't have to do that. He could have said, "Well, maybe I made a mistake. Maybe he wasn't the kind of student that I thought he might become. Maybe it's time for me to cut my losses here." He didn't have to—but no, he was a good friend; he was a good advisor; he was a good mentor. He warned me. He warned me, and I'll never forget that, and that's again, that was the second juncture where again, I owe my career to him, because my career could've ended right there.

But these were heady days, as they say. These were heady days, and if you had any kind of political commitment to social justice issues and civil rights and so forth, and liberation politics, I mean, they were heady days because it was there. You couldn't just be divorced from this, and I didn't divorce myself, at least in terms of my beliefs and so forth, because I knew that I would apply it in my teaching, and I knew I would apply it in the work that I knew now I wanted to do in Chicano history. So I pass it on to my graduate students: "You can't be everything, and you've got to ask yourself, what do you really want? If you really want your PhD, that's got to be your focus. It doesn't mean that you're sacrificing your politics, but you're thinking long range. This is like a marathon in a sense. It's not a hundred-yard race."

So I survived, of course. [laughs] I survived. But I learned a lot those five years. I was there 1970 to 1975. I knew I wanted to do a dissertation on

Chicano history, but you know, at the time that I took my exams, in '73, I wasn't really sure what I was going to do, because our program, unlike today's programs where you're expected to—you show up on campus and supposedly you already know what you're going to write on your dissertation. How can anyone really know? Maybe that's okay, but we didn't know, I didn't know, and we didn't have to have a dissertation prospectus for our exams. Well actually let me back up. You did have to have something, at least, something, a two-page something.

So I eventually thought, well, okay, what do I want to do? I was interested in immigration, things like that. So I said, "Well maybe I'll do a comparative study of Mexican immigrants to San Diego," because here I am in San Diego, and I had done a little bit of work on I guess what we could then still call Chicano history. The seminar that I took on economic history, I eventually did a paper on, of the 1850s in San Diego, and the role—what was the economics that we're developing there in that first decade after the US-Mexico War? So I looked at the ranchero class, and then I also looked at the Anglo merchants as they were coming in to San Diego, and so I did a paper on that. That was one of my initial publications called "Merchants and Dons," and I forget what the subtitle was. That was published in the *San Diego Historical Society*, and then a spin-off of that was, one of the first articles that I published in *Aztlán* was on the Californios in San Diego in the 1850s, and I forget the title to that, but you can find that. [Mario T. García, "Merchants and Dons: San Diego's Attempt at Modernization, 1850-1860," Journal of San Diego History, 21 (Winter 1975): 71; "The Californios of San Diego and the Politics of Accommodation," Aztlán 6:1 (Spring 1975): 69-81.]

So I thought, well, maybe I'll do a study, a comparative study of Mexican immigrants in El Paso, also both in San Diego and El Paso in the early twentieth century, when the beginnings of mass immigration began from Mexico, in the early twentieth century. So maybe I'll start there. So that's what I put down as what was going to be my dissertation topic. So that summer, after I took my orals, we're talking 1973, I started looking first at census material, published census material. It didn't take me very long to realize, I can't do this comparative study. Yeah, I could see how the Mexican populations based on the censuses were significantly increasing between 1900 and 1930, but in San Diego, that wasn't the case. There were not many Mexicans coming through San Diego. We couldn't do that comparative study. That migration would go, would be post-World War II.

But that was okay because then I said, "Well, I'll just focus on El Paso. After all, that's my hometown." A lot of what we write, there's various kind of autobiographical linkages. Well this was an obvious one! [laughter] I was going to go back and do the history of my hometown, and in some ways kind of a family history, because my mother's side, as I said, that's when they came, in the early twentieth century, as refugees from the Mexican Revolution. So that summer then I decided, well, I'm just going to study the beginnings of

mass immigration from Mexico into El Paso, and that became my dissertation topic. I researched it for a year, and then it took me a year to write it. Should we break here for lunch? We have reservations—

01-02:03:37
Holmes: Okay. Yeah, this is a good place to stop and we can pick it up from here after lunch.

01-02:03:39
García: Yeah, that sounds good.

Interview 2: February 26, 2018

02-00:00:03
Holmes: All right, this is Todd Holmes with the Oral History Center at UC Berkeley. We are starting our second session with Mario T. García, for the Chicana/o Studies Oral History Project. Today's date is still February 26, 2018, and we are here at UC Santa Barbara. Mario, thank you for lunch. [laughter] Before we broke for lunch, we were talking about your graduate experience and your dissertation. I wanted to start off this session along those lines, because we have a lot of your work and scholarship to discuss in this session, and I think it might be good to start with some of your earliest articles, and we can talk about the dissertation, turning that into your first monograph.

02-00:00:55
García: Okay. Well, the first piece I got published in a more professional way was an essay that I wrote for *El Grito* that I submitted myself. And as I was preparing to come to San Jose to teach the very first course I taught on Chicano history, I was reading some on José Vasconcelos, and so I wrote a short essay called "Vasconcelos and La Raza," and I tried to somehow link Vasconcelos's discussion of a cosmic race to the whole concept of *la raza* [the race] as was being articulated in the Chicano movement from what I could tell by reading some of the movement newspapers and so forth. And so, I wrote that essay linking it with Vasconcelos. It was a short essay, but I was proud that it was my first real publication as a scholar.

And so, I later did a book review for them on my own that I submitted. It was a book by Manuel Servin, a professor of Latin American history at USC who actually did a book, an edited volume of Mexican American history with some of his students there at USC. I remember there was one or two pieces on the Zoot Suit Riots and so forth, so I did a review of that.

So, I enjoyed having done that as having kind of the beginnings of my published career, and then as I mentioned, I was able to publish a couple of articles in Aztlán, which I was very proud of as well, based on that research that I did in one of my seminars about San Diego in the 1850s, and what happened to the Californios in San Diego. I later, as I began to teach Chicano history more and conceptualize it, I would refer to those people like the Californios in San Diego, in the post-Mexican War period, as what I call the Conquered Generation. And as I began to develop my generational approach to Chicano history, I suggested that the first historical generation in Chicano history was that post-Mexican war generation, like the Californios, and others, because their experiences now post-1848 was the American conquest, as we know, in terms of loss of land, political subordination, cultural subordination.

So as I look back on it, I didn't use that term when I wrote these two pieces for Aztlán based on my graduate research of San Diego in the 1850s, but I would later conceptualize that era as the period of the Conquered Generation up to

the end of the nineteenth at the beginning of mass immigration from Mexico. So these were early publications, and I felt good about it. I felt proud about it, and you know, it's nice to see your name in print.

02-00:04:02
Holmes: Yes indeed.

02-00:04:04
García: I don't have a problem with that. So those were early pieces, and of course, moving on to my dissertation, as I had said earlier, I did one year of research and one year of writing. And I tell my graduate students, "For a dissertation, that should be the formula: one of research, one year of writing." I don't like the idea of graduate students spending three, four, sometimes five years—no, this is not the book manuscript. It's expected that you're going to revise, expand your dissertation, but you shouldn't spend more than two years: one year of research, one year of writing. That's what I did; that's kind of how we were coached in the way to do.

And I thought that was good. I mean it was fine, and so like I said, I started first with the idea that I would do that comparative study of immigrants in San Diego in the early twentieth century, immigrants in El Paso in the early twentieth century, and I realized that not that many immigrants were coming through Tijuana, San Diego, at that time. They were coming through El Paso because El Paso was the logical entryway into the United States. Why? Because of the Mexican Central Railroad, which was an extension of the Santa Fe Railroad coming down through New Mexico, into El Paso, and then going into Mexico all the way to Mexico City. So a lot of those immigrants and political refugees came on the Central, Mexican Central Railroad.

And so, I set out to study those early Mexican immigrants into El Paso, and again, this was kind of autobiographical and family history, because that's when my family came on my mother's side, that's where I grew up, and I didn't know much of that history myself. There was no such Mexican American history that existed of El Paso, right? And I remember hearing things here and there from my grandmother and aunt about their memories of the Mexican Revolution. My aunt, for example, knew Pancho Villa, had met him and so forth. But beyond that, I didn't know much about the contours of that history, so, I set out to do that research.

But interestingly, and I tell this story: In the back of my mind was something that one of my UTEP professors had told me that summer of '69 when I was preparing to do that first Chicano history class that I would teach at San Jose State. This was Doctor John McNeely, who was one of the Mexicanists that I mentioned. So one evening I was there in my office taking copious notes from *North From Mexico* or whatever other texts, and Professor McNeely stopped by. They let me use a little office there that summer, and he was teaching an evening class, and so he popped his head in, and he said, in a kind of Texas

drawl—he was from South Texas—he said, "Well, I understand you're going to be doing a course on Chicano history," and he said, "Well I don't think there's much history there because there are no documents." What could I say? I didn't know, but that was in the back of my mind when I thought of doing a dissertation in Chicano history and being a Chicano historian.

So when I made the decision to do that study of Mexican immigrants in El Paso, McNeely's words still haunted me, "but there's no documents." Well, he was wrong, and he should've known better, because he was a historian of Mexico. He should at least have known a little bit of the fact that there was something called Mexican American, Chicano history. And he was married to a Mexican American! Did she not have a history? Did her family not have a history? [laughs] So did half of the city if not more of El Paso, they didn't have a history? So, no, he was wrong.

And so like I said earlier, I started with census material, census documents, and I could see the demographic growth and so forth. This was the era where, as you know, in American history, in the revising of American history: New Left history; so-called revisionist history; history from the bottom up. There was a lot of emphasis on what was called the new social history. But the new social history meant dealing with people whose stories often were not told, working-class people in particular, minority communities. But how do you access that history, the new social history? Well, you got to go into the numbers. You got to go into quantitative history, look at the demographics through census, city records, other kinds of stuff. So I pursued that.

02-00:08:59
Holmes: A community reconstruction, in a lot of respects.

02-00:09:01
García: Yeah, reconstructing communities. So I went into that kind of quantitative material, such as city directories, and trying to get a sense of what jobs people were getting as immigrants and so forth. So that was useful, but a very important source was the Spanish-language newspapers that had been published during that period in El Paso, and I was able to find some remnants of that in places like, well, primarily at the Chicano studies Library at Berkeley. Some of these newspapers had been earlier microfilmed, and so I think other libraries had them too. But I first encountered them at UC Berkeley and I remember going up one summer, and I found some of the ones that had been published in El Paso: *El Monitor*, and several others whose names I don't remember now. So that was important because it gave me more information on the development of an immigrant and a refugee community, and of a business sector, because they would have ads, for the Mexican stores that had begun to pop up there, in the early twentieth century in El Paso on the south side.

But another very, very important, and indeed a key source, was the English-language newspapers themselves, because thousands and thousands of immigrants were coming across the border. The *El Paso Times*, the *El Paso Herald-Post*, the two main newspapers, they had to cover it; it was affecting the city. The city was being filled with immigrants and refugees. In addition, this was the time of the Mexican Revolution, so they were covering all of that. And so the English-language newspapers were a significant source of materials as they covered stories about the immigrants coming in, conditions in South El Paso, sometimes because they were making their own homes out of jacales, so-called jacales, almost like adobe, or whatever they could get to build their own homes, with no sanitation, no paved streets, no streetlights, and all that. There would often be fires that would destroy the homes and people would be killed, or floods from the Rio Grande destroyed homes.

They would cover those things, and so there was a lot of material there. They covered political activities because, as more immigrants came in, the political organizations, primarily the Democratic Parties—as Texas was a Democratic state, really no Republican Party—but the Democratic Party, or at least factions of Democratic Party began to utilize the so-called Mexican vote. And what they did, they would bring on US-born Mexican Americans who were already there, or some who came from the down-river communities like Ysleta and San Elizario, the older communities, and there you had some generation of US-born Mexican Americans. So they would integrate them into their political organizations, but they would be the contacts between the Democratic Party organizations and the Mexican immigrant community, out of which some of these Democrats wanted to literally purchase a Mexican vote.

So through these intermediaries, because they were bilingual, they would literally round up the Mexican immigrants at election time, for city and county elections. And they would, I mean, they'd literally round them up. They didn't wine and dine them, but they beered and dined them. They would provide beer the evening before the election. Sometimes they actually kept them in a particular location, and they would pay them maybe, I think a dollar or so, two dollars, which for a working-class immigrant who got paid at best a dollar a day for their labor, that wasn't bad. And so on election day, they were literally taken to the polls. Why didn't anyone complain? Because the Democratic organizations controlled the polls anyway, so they literally voted, the Mexicans. So the Mexicans now participate in politics.

And I say that because I remember taking a course as an undergraduate on Texas politics, and the textbook had a little section on Mexican Americans in Texas politics, but it was basically almost arguing that Mexican Americans didn't really participate in politics. They didn't participate in electoral politics. They didn't vote and so forth. Almost like suggesting it was part of their culture that they didn't; maybe it was even in their genes or blood. They had an aversion to political participation, which was nonsense and even racist. But

here you have, yeah well, their votes were bought, but they still participated in American politics, right? They were voting, even though their votes were being bought.

So, the *El Paso Times* was often critical of the Democratic organizations that did that so they would have stories in the paper, so that was important information about political organization, political activity. But also, they would reference, during the period of the Mexican Revolution, various revolutionary organizations that established themselves in El Paso, because that was a key point of the Revolution, because of the railroads, and it was a place where different factions could purchase armaments, munitions, and then get them into their factions of the Mexican Revolution. Of course, it was the Battle of Juárez in 1910 or '11, and of course, that was covered by the newspapers, English-language newspapers, because the Revolution was spilling over across the border, and we would have gun battles, and the bullets would fly across the border, right?

And so, all of that was covered, and so, no, Doctor McNeely, that's not true. There wasn't a dearth of documents. There was a lot of documents, and by then also, as I'd mentioned, I found in that Institute of Oral History already there had been some oral histories done of some of these old-timers coming in during that period of time.

02-00:16:01
Holmes: And this is at UTEP.

02-00:16:02
García: At UTEP, yeah, the Institute of Oral History. I didn't do much oral history for this, the dissertation, quite frankly, and even for the later published book. I had had no oral history training and I was a stranger to doing oral history, so I probably was intimated by it. But these oral histories at the Institute there at UTEP kind of substituted for that. I think I did a couple on my own, but I wouldn't blossom as an oral historian until much later.

So, there was a variety of documents. For example, the professor of economics at UC San Diego, who gave me a rough time sometimes, said to me, in doing the dissertation, he said, "You need to go to Georgia." "Georgia, why?" "Because the federal records deposit"—I forget the actual title—"Federal Deposit Center at Georgia, has all the World War I draft records." He said, "I think you'll find stuff there." And sure enough, I did. I found a lot of records—they were literally like cards—because even if you weren't drafted, you had to sign up for the draft. Even if you were an immigrant, you had to sign up for the draft, so you found names, Spanish surnames, addresses, occupations, age. Well, that was part of that new social history, [laughs] quantitative history I was able to incorporate. And on that trip, I also went to DC, because there then I went specifically to look at the microfilms again of the 1900 census where they do the actual enumeration, and then you could see

all these Spanish surnames in South El Paso, and then in a few other pockets, and so there I'm doing my quantitative study of it as best as I could.

So, anyway, there was a lot of material there. I did my dissertation research in one year, and I wrote it in one year. The dissertation was first entitled "Obreros," or workers, "Obreros, the Mexicans of El Paso, 1900 to 1920." Later when I revised it for book publication in 1981, the periodization went back to 1880, so it was 1880, 1920, and then I changed the title to *Desert Immigrants: the Mexicans of El Paso, 1880 to 1920*.

02-00:19:04
Holmes: And by going back to the nineteenth century, you were also breaking new ground, because it was a ripe area for the first generation of Chicano historians to begin to explore and incorporate the nineteenth century into the new field—

02-00:19:19
García: Yeah, yeah. And of course, now I already had done those 1850 studies in San Diego, so that really got me in the nineteenth century, and then, I had actually researched those earlier twenty years, 1880 to 1920, but one of the members of my dissertation committee felt that the dissertation was more heavily focused on 1900 to 1920. So he made an issue of it, and I had to revise the title of my dissertation, which originally was "1880 to 1920." I was forced to put "1900 to 1920." So then, for the book of course, I had a lot of that material and I did add some more material, so it was 1880 to 1920 in the book itself. And I thought it was a clever title, *Desert Immigrants*, because it suggested of course that here was one American immigrant group, and we usually think of immigrants coming to United States over oceans, right? But these immigrants are coming south to north over deserts, and so I thought it was a cute title, interesting title, although some people joke that it's actually *Dessert Immigrants*. No, it's not *Dessert Immigrants*; it's *Desert Immigrants*. [laughter]

And so that was the origins, that was my dissertation, and there's an interesting story about that as well. I had to defend my dissertation. That isn't done as much anymore, about defending dissertations. And this one professor that I took that economic course, he gave me a hard time, not only on the date, but I forget what else, to the point that he didn't want to sign off after I defended it. And here's, now that I think about this, another third juncture with Professor Ruiz, in my career. He later told me after—you know, you're asked to leave the room so that the faculty committee can discuss your defense—

02-00:21:22
Holmes: Discuss your fate, in many respects—

02-00:21:23
García: Yes, and this one professor said he didn't feel he needed to sign it; I still needed to do some more work or whatever. And Professor Ruiz, who later

told me, he said to him, "Blank blank, you need to sign it." And remember, Ruiz is the chair of the department, too. He said, "You need to sign it," and he did. And so here again, Ruiz came to my assistance, and so I'm again, thankful for him for that intervention as well in my career.

So I finished, and I had already been recruited here to UC Santa Barbara. I came here in 1975. I was still finishing the writing of the dissertation. They wanted me to start in the fall, and I said, "No, I need at least another quarter." And so I came here at the beginning of winter quarter in 1975, and within that quarter, I finished whatever I needed to do in terms of getting the dissertation finalized, and then I had it typed here. We didn't have laptops and computers then. I had to pay a professional typist to do the final draft.

02-00:22:40
Holmes: So it was all handwritten.

02-00:22:43
García: Yes it was, yes it was, and to be honest, Todd, a lot of my earlier book manuscripts were handwritten. It's been only more recently, in the last ten years or so, that I actually go from notes to typing on my computer. Before that, I did handwrite. I felt, I don't know—I started when we didn't have computers, and I didn't feel comfortable; I mean, we had typewriters, but it wasn't comfortable, just, I had to feel closer to the material. People fail to realize, if you're not a historian, how much material we have to deal with, notes, documents, copies of this and that, and so you literally need a big space to put all these things together. We have to manipulate a lot of material. And so I always felt more comfortable manipulating material and then writing it out, based on the notes for particular sections of chapters, and so forth.

So, I defended the dissertation. I already had started my position here, and when you come without a finished dissertation, your position is acting assistant professor, but then I was regularized into the next academic year. And I was hired as a Chicano historian, someone to do Chicano history. There had been an announcement for that and I applied, but it was a position both in history and Chicano studies; it was a joint appointment. So, I was hired as the joint appointment. I had an office both in history and Chicano studies, and I had that for many years, but my principal responsibility was to develop and do courses in Chicano history, which I had no problems with; that's how I saw myself. And now that I'd done the dissertation, as I started teaching my Chicano history courses, I could add a lot more based on that research that I was doing.

And of course, later, I would conceptualize this period as a period of the Immigrant Generation, from 1900 to 1930, and people would say, "Well wait a minute, but aren't Mexican immigrants coming in even the rest of the twentieth century?" Yeah, they do, but the reason I called this period the period of the Immigrant Generation, when over a million immigrants had

come, is that at no other later point, for the most part, would immigrants dominate the Mexican-origin communities in the United States. It's the immigrants and the refugees who come who overwhelm, with the exception of Northern New Mexico, and maybe some areas of South Texas, but they overwhelm the nineteenth-century communities. And, you can see that like here in Santa Barbara, you can certainly see it in Los Angeles, where the remnants of the nineteenth-century Californios or Mexican Americans, or what I call the Conquered Generation, well, they're overwhelmed.

Take LA for example. It goes from a nineteenth-century Californio community to an immigrant community in the early twentieth century because so many immigrants and political refugees come. That's the ballgame now. And so, at that period of time then, it's the immigrants and refugees, again with those two exceptions, that really dominate Mexican life in the United States, and even into the Midwest as they go to Chicago and Detroit. It's the immigrants. They dominate economically based on the work that they do, coming in to work on the railroads.

This was part of my El Paso study too. I realized that, what were they doing? Well, many of them were hired on the railroads, and they would then be siphoned off to other areas to work on the railroad, but not necessarily to build the railroads, but to maintain the lines, which is pretty dirty work. But many there in El Paso were kept to work in the big railroad yards, because this was a railroad hub. You had railroads from all directions. You had the Santa Fe coming into El Paso, connecting to the Mexican Central from the south. You had the—what was the one from California?

02-00:27:12
Holmes: The Southern Pacific.

02-00:27:13
García: Yes, the Southern Pacific. And then you had the Texas and Pacific, I think it was called, coming in from the east. So railroad hubs had big railroad yards, and then of course, they worked at the big smelter, because El Paso was a mining center. A lot of the ores, zinc and silver and other kinds of ores that were used for the industrial processing assays were coming in from Northern Mexico, from Arizona. And they came to the ASARCO Smelter there in El Paso, and they hired thousands of Mexican workers, and that's even dirtier jobs, dirtier work, and they lived there in what became Smeltertown, the company town. And of course, they worked construction. They built a lot of the buildings, and homes, and streets, even though they couldn't afford to live in them; women working as domestics in the laundries and in the homes and so forth. So, they were the workforce.

02-00:28:13
Holmes: Well and many people, years later, look at this book as not just a social history that's reconstructing El Paso through this time period, but also underscoring

the number of contributions that this immigrant community made to this burgeoning industrial city.

02-00:28:35
García: Yeah, and it's not only El Paso. They really became the labor base for many areas of the Southwest, because you could have capital coming in from the East, the Rockefellers and others, and you could have technology, and you could have some skilled labor, but who was going to do the real work? Obviously, in agriculture, they were the ones who were going to do the work in the fields. But in the urban areas, again the railroad yards or even in the outlying areas maintaining railroads, and the smelters, in construction—they were the economic labor force. They were providing all this wealth for the United States even though they weren't reaping the full fruits of their own labor because they were hired into what were literally called Mexican jobs, which were the lowest-classified types of jobs doing basically manually labor, right? And then they were paid what were literally called Mexican wages.

Again, stuff like this I found in the newspapers. There was the 1911, so-called *Dillingham Report* that the US Senate did on labor conditions or immigrant conditions in the West; that had a lot of material that I was able to utilize for El Paso, and just kind of put it in a larger, Southwestern context. So-called Mexican wages, the lowest wages in these industries, even sometimes where they worked alongside other immigrants, a few other immigrants that found themselves all the way to places like Arizona in the mines, the Italian immigrant workers working the mines. But even if they did the same kind of unskilled work, those immigrants were paid still higher wages than the Mexicans, hence the term "Mexican wage."

I just want to add also that I found, in my El Paso study—because later in doing the book, I included a chapter on the so-called Mexican schools. I had some of that information, but then I added more, and I looked at some of the public school records for the Southside public schools. Some people have had a sense that the public schools, that the problem with the public schools, and groups like Mexican Americans, is that the public schools have historically ignored the Mexican American community, and that's not true at all. I found very quickly, no, of course they didn't ignore them. As these immigrants began to come in, the public schools established themselves, in South El Paso, for example.

The problem wasn't that they neglected them; the problem was the nature of these so-called Mexican schools, and they were literally called Mexican schools. They were segregated schools to begin with, and they were inferior schools. Even in urban areas like El Paso, at best, you could get a sixth-grade education, whereas on the Anglo side of town, people were already going to high school, in the early twentieth century. And they had fewer resources, fewer supplies. They were overcrowded. They began the whole history of the tracking system, where they emphasized a lot more learning with their hands.

After all, they looked down on the Mexican American children; many of them were born in the United States, and they didn't feel that they were mentally capable of really a more rigorous education.

And so at best, you can teach them English and something about American history and so forth to make them ultimately be accepting of their—be thankful for their condition, but you're going to try to teach the boys something to work with tools, and you're going to teach the girls how to best use their hands for cooking, or for sewing, because ultimately, all these young children are going to be circulated right back into the cheap labor force. Because after all, what was the greatest attraction for these immigrants that came to work and to find jobs that are very difficult to find in Mexico because a lack of economic opportunity? The great attraction that still is today is that they represented huge pools of cheap labor. It's that cheap labor that attracted the employers, so why would they want to educate the kids, and lose that potential cheap labor pool?

In fact, you find quotes—looking at Paul Taylor's work on agricultural labor in the United States that were published in the thirties, where he interviewed some of the growers in South Texas. They said, "These kids, we're not going to give them any schools, or provide an education for them. We need them in the fields." He said, "If you give the kids some education, you're going to lose them as potential field workers." So that said it all.

So, the point here is that, I mean, the reason that the Immigrant Generation, as I refer to it, is because, at no other later period will immigrants, with the exception into like Northern New Mexico, will so thoroughly dominate the Mexican-origin communities economically. They dominate because of their labor and their work. Politically, the development of the organizations that were leading to the Mexican Revolution began to spring up, and so there's a form of immigrant politics that's linked to the Mexican Revolution of 1910. That's politically what's happening, put aside the fact that many of the immigrants were paid to vote. But in terms of their own more authentic political involvement, it was organizing around the different factions of the Mexican Revolution.

Then culturally, it's the immigrants who are dominating as well. They bring their religious traditions. They bring their feast days, like Our Lady of Guadalupe. They bring their mutual benefit societies, the *mutualistas*, their self-help, insurance type of organizations, the ones that then began to put together celebrations of September 16th, Mexican Independence Day. They're dominating; immigrants are dominating Mexican communities. After 1930, and into the later years, immigrants, although they will continue to come, although the thirties is a difficult period as you know, because of mass deportations of Mexicans, and because of the Great Depression, but certainly after 1940, immigrants, even though they continued to come as they even continue to come today, they now have to coexist with the US born, their kids,

what I would later call the Mexican American Generation of the thirties and forties.

That generation, they had to coexist with that, and the 1940 census indicates, if we believe the numbers, that 1940, it's the US-born Mexican Americans who now outnumber the immigrants. So after 1940, the US born are the majority population, and that's why I argue that. I use the term Immigrant Generation for that first third of the twentieth century, because immigrants are really the dominate force in Mexican life in the United States, with that exception of Northern New Mexican. That immigrant wave didn't quite go to Northern New Mexico; it would go later.

So, my dissertation and then the book, *Desert Immigrants*, is kind of, as I look back on it, contextualized within that kind of situation. Ultimately, my first book, published in 1981, the revised dissertation—by the way, the revision included not only the chapter on the Mexican schools, it included a chapter on the Mexican Revolution, which had not been in the dissertation. I added that on. And I included other material that I integrated in all of the chapters. For example, I had not had the opportunity to do research in Mexico City in the foreign relations archives, so I went there and I looked at the Consulate records for El Paso, the Mexican Consulate records in El Paso. So I found material there that I was able to integrate in my chapters on immigration and so forth.

But I did do a chapter on the Mexican Revolution which, interestingly enough, when the book was sent out for review by Yale, one of the reviewers suggested that maybe the chapter on the Mexican Revolution should not be included, that it seemed to kind of detract maybe from the main part of the story of the immigrants coming in. But I argued back. I said, "No, you can't talk about El Paso in the early twentieth century with the immigrants and refugees coming in without talking about the Mexican Revolution of 1910. That Revolution was important to the city and to the immigrants and refugees."

02-00:37:29
Holmes: And for many, the catalyst, the reason why they—

02-00:37:32
García: Well yeah, and so Yale had published it, of course, as agreed, but it was interesting that this other Chicano historian felt that somehow the Revolution was a little bit—somehow didn't fit in. [laughter]

02-00:37:50
Holmes: So needless to say that by the time you arrived at UC Santa Barbara, to teach and put together curriculum and classes on Chicano history, you had a lot more wealth of material, literature, and other resources to bring to the classroom, than say, when you arrived in 1969 at San Jose State, right?

02-00:38:10
García: It was really different, but also, I had access now to other dissertations that were being done, like Al Camarillo's and Ricardo Romo's and Griswold del Castillo's. In fact, some of them published their books ahead of me. Camarillo published his in '79, with Harvard, and I published mine at Yale in '81. So I had more that I could integrate into my courses on Chicano history.

Later on, I forget where I wrote it, I wrote an essay and I referred to the first wave of professionally trained Chicanos, because we shouldn't forget there were some earlier, but they were scattered and very few, and we mentioned, for example, [Ernesto] Galarza. He started publishing his work on the braceros. He was one of the early Chicano scholars, publishing some of his major work in the sixties and seventies. And you had Carlos Eduardo Castañeda, the historian librarian at UT Austin for many years beginning in 1930s, who wrote about Mexican Americans in Texas from the colonial period through the nineteenth century, but from a very Catholic perspective, focusing more on the Mexican Catholic role in Texas during the colonial era, and leading up to the Texas Revolution.

And of course, you had the educational historian George I. Sánchez, also at Austin, who wrote his classic, *Forgotten People*, about Mexican Americans in New Mexico. And what was interesting about Sánchez, in that classic *Forgotten People,* published in 1940, he uses what later the Chicano movement and [Rudy] Acuña, specifically, would use, the internal colonial model, to explain Chicano history, in other words, that it was a history of a colonized people, a conquered people, going back to the US-Mexico War. But Sánchez had already introduced that in 1940 in *Forgotten People*. He talks about the fact that Mexican Americans represented a conquered people, and that explains their lack of mobility, and economically, educationally.

And so there were these earlier what we could call Chicano predecessors, precursors, in Chicano history, but very few, very few. And later I would write about some of them in my Mexican American book. Castañeda, and George Sánchez, I would write on them as well, but there were very few. And so I've written earlier on that, out of the cohort into the 1970s. I referred to the generation of '75, because a few of us got our dissertations done, if not in '75, very close to '75. Camarillo, Castillo, Romo, myself, some of the others, Griswold Castillo, but I think a year earlier in '74, but we're all around the mid-seventies, and we really do represent a cohort, a historical generation of the first wave of professionally trained historians that come out of, well, really come out of the movement, because the movement created us. Without the movement, we wouldn't be around. It created Chicano studies and it created those of us in different disciplines, including the field of Chicano history.

But I'll give you another anecdote on those and immigrants when I was here. When I first started my first full year at UCSB, one of my colleagues, Professor Elliot Brownlee, an economic historian, said to me one day, he said,

"Well, a good friend of mine who's one of the chief editors at Yale is coming by to visit, and you might want to talk with him about revising your dissertation." And I said, "That would be good," although I was thinking, already, that I would send it to University of Texas Press, because it seemed like a natural fit, right? El Paso, University of Texas Press. So I was kind of orienting myself to do that. But I met with the editor, and his name I can't remember right now, and I told him about the project, about my dissertation and what my revised manuscript was all about and there in El Paso, and I said, "Well, but do you really do Chicano history? Are you interested in doing a book on Chicano history?" And he said, "Well, but what you're telling me, really it's also not just Chicano history; it's immigrant history, and we do immigrant history." So, he encouraged me to send him the manuscript. I said, "Well yes, of course." And of course, they then formally accepted, so it's interesting.

Very early on, we had these breakthroughs, when you think about it. Camarillo's book on Santa Barbara and Southern California was published in '79, by Harvard. That was big deal, and then my book comes out two years later by Yale. So you got Harvard, Yale there already in the early years. Those are big breakthroughs, because at best, some of the earlier ones had been published at University of Texas, the more regional presses. And now getting two books published by Harvard and Yale, the elite of the elite at Ivy schools, those were big breakthroughs as we look back on it.

02-00:44:17
Holmes: Well, and when we even think of the build up to that, in the years prior we have *El Grito* at Berkeley, and the different kind of academic publications that is actually recognizing the field. The *Pacific Historical Review*, for example, does a special issue in '73, right?

02-00:44:34
García: That's right, in '73, yeah. So that was important, yeah, of course, to bring attention.

02-00:44:39
Holmes: But then yeah, to have these two works, published at the Ivy League presses as you're pointing out—

02-00:44:43
García: Because I think, none of us earlier on as we were working on it thought we would be able to get some of our books, certainly our first books, published by Ivy League presses. And not only the history of Al Camarillo's history going to Harvard, and you probably know it better than I do having interviewed him, but for me, it was this kind of like, another little kind of good luck opportunity. One of my colleagues here introduced me to the editor. I probably, on my own, would have never sent it to Yale. I was all ready to send it to Austin, so that was a big breakthrough to get a book published, my first book published, at Yale. So that was important.

02-00:45:31
Holmes: Coming back to your experience of arriving at Santa Barbara, were there any other jobs that you were in the running for when out on the job market? Especially as young scholars today probably reading this transcript, the job market weighs heavy on their mind in today's environment.

02-00:46:01
García: Well, I had also applied to the Stanford job, that ultimately Al Camarillo had, and Al had applied to this job as well. In fact, Al had taught here for a year on a, I think a part-time basis when he was finishing at UCLA. And they ultimately hired Al at Stanford, and then they offered me the job here.

02-00:46:29
Holmes: Were there other positions besides those two coming out that year?

02-00:46:33
García: Within a year, I started here winter quarter of '75, but that fall in '74, I applied, I forget how it happened, but I was interviewed at University of Texas at Austin. They were looking for a Chicano historian. And I went there and they interviewed, and they offered me the job at Austin, but actually they didn't offer it until after I'd already arrived here. I think I interviewed in December of '74, and then I came here winter quarter, January of '75. Somewhere into that initial quarter, I believe, they offered me the job at Austin. Should I stay here? Should I go to Austin? Well, Austin was attractive too, because the major university. I wasn't sure that I was ready to leave California, so I finally decided, no, I would stay at UCSB. They subsequently then hired Ricardo Romo there, and later, David Montejano.

So, I did have that other opportunity, but I was hired as a joint appointment. History department was big, maybe forty-five faculty. Chicano studies was still developing. It started offering classes in 1970, and a BA program. And they originally had hired people, faculty, who also had joint appointments. Amado Padilla was here, I think was one of the first chairs, and several others, but by the time that I arrived, they had gone elsewhere. Padilla eventually wound up at Stanford, and other people had gone I guess elsewhere. There was Jesús Chavarria, but people often link Chavarria with the department of Chicano studies, and Chavarria was never in the department of Chicano studies. He had been hired in the late sixties in the history department as a Latin Americanist, from UCLA. He worked on Peru. But he was an early champion of Chicano history and of Chicano studies—

02-00:49:10
Holmes: And he participated in the 1969 *El Plan de Santa Bárbara* Conference.

02-00:49:16
García: Yes he did. Yes, you're right. He was here already, that's right. So he was supportive of Chicano studies, but he never had a joint appointment with Chicano studies. But where he was very important, he was the first director of our research center, the Chicano studies Research Center, which we now call

the Chicano studies Institution, or CSI. So Jesús played a very prominent role here; the Plan of Santa Barbara, because it was done here in Santa Barbara at UCSB; and in laying the foundation for Chicano studies. I don't know his full history but he clearly must have been very much involved in setting up the actual development of the Department of Chicano studies, the teaching unit, but also linking it with the research center, which he would direct.

And they were all housed together in a barracks building that's still there. It's called Building 406, and that's a historic building because that's where it all started in terms of Chicano studies—the department was housed there, faculty were housed there, the research center was housed there, and the Chicano studies library collection, such as it was then, was also housed there, and actually there was a fourth unit, was with the Chicano EOP program, the educational opportunities program which helped a lot of incoming Chicano students. So we were all housed together in this barracks building because this location where UCSB developed was a former Marine base, and so some of these barrack buildings were kept on as, in between new buildings going up, these barrack buildings were utilized for either classrooms or for offices.

But when I started in '75, all of the faculty were all advanced graduate students here, people like Jorge Huerta in drama, Salvador Rodriguez in Spanish, Fernando Padilla in political science, and one or two others. It was a small faculty, maybe five, and I was the only one from the outside. And some of them hadn't finished their PhDs, and I was within a quarter. I said, "I've finished my PhD here." So, it was still a very young, developing department, and in fact, the chair of the department was Carlos Ornelas, who himself was full-time in political science but was borrowed to become departmental chair for a year or two, and he was a one who was also very much involved in recruiting me, to take the position here.

02-00:52:02
Holmes: Was there a sense that, when we think of job opportunities, that coming to Santa Barbara, there was already, even by '75, as young as the department and small as the department was, that there really was a legacy devoted to the development of Chicano studies here? Like the Chicano Research Institute here at Santa Barbara was, outside of UCLA, the only research center devoted to that, and authorized through the UC system. The same thing with departments as they were beginning to develop in various universities in California that, Santa Barbara, from the *El Plan de Santa Barbara*, the university, had a strong devotion to the development of this field.

02-00:52:55
García: Yeah, and I think the Department of Chicano studies here, I think, if I'm not mistaken, was the first department of Chicano studies in the UC system, because UCLA didn't start with a department. They started with a research center, strong research center, and they published the journal *Aztlán*, of course, but they didn't have a department. That would come later in the 1990s,

as a result of student demonstrations. Yes, and of course, *El Plan de Santa Barbara* was here and so forth, which encouraged the development of Chicano studies throughout California institutions of higher education, not just the UC, but the Cal States, and some of the Cal States were already ahead. As I mentioned, San Diego State already had a Chicano studies department when I got there in 1970. Rudy Acuña was already developing an extensive Chicano studies department at Northridge which would become the largest one, and still is probably the largest department, nationwide, of Chicano studies.

But of course, we shouldn't forget that the catalyst for this, as I tell my students, it wasn't that the chancellor all of a sudden woke up one morning and said, "Oh, it would be great to have Chicano studies, would be great to have more Chicano studies." No, no. That came as a result of protest and demonstrations, black students along with Chicano students. They took over the computer center, in the very classroom where I'm teaching my Chicano movement course right now, North Hall, and that's where the computer center was. And it was initiated largely by African American students, although Chicano students were in support, and so they were demonstrating for Ethnic Studies on campus.

So it was that push by students, as it was happening in other parts of the country as well, in terms of Ethnic Studies. That's what was the catalyst, for finally they said, "Okay, well let's have the Ethnic Studies." [laughter] But always with the attempt—I mean, it's always been that kind of situation. Yes, the opportunity to develop something, but at the same time, the powers that be on the campuses and the university administration, is how do we contain, how do we still control it? What do we give them so that we don't have the students out there protesting? And it's always been that kind of situation—

02-00:55:09
Holmes: Back and forth, yeah.

02-00:55:10
García: Yes, yes, and, well, Ethnic Studies, Chicano studies, begins as political institutions, both good and bad. They are political animals, and they are looked upon as political animals, certainly by administrations. And I've always argued to administrators, from deans to chancellors to vice chancellors, to treat us no different than any other academic department. "Don't treat us just out of politics, but treat us as any other academic department and hold us to the same academic standards."

Do they listen? Here and there. But I think anything that comes, have any issue that relates to Ethnic Studies and maybe also to departments like feminist studies, but certainly ethnic studies, I think most administrators first react politically. "What's it going to cost us, politically? How do we best deal with the issue politically?" Not academically, but politically, and that's an issue that's been there for fifty years, and it's still there, and I don't think that

helps build the kind of solid, academic units that we need because we're not being treated as academic units. We're being treated as political units, even though I've argued for years and years and years.

Does that mean that we've not developed this academic here? Yeah, we've developed some academic units and we can talk more about that, but what it means is that I think it helps, in some ways, to explain why, over the years, fifty years and so forth, there's been still a lot of ups and downs, and Chicano studies, certainly here, I know less well about others, but I suspect, I know that you find ups and downs too because again, they're looked upon significantly as political institutions, and that affects how they develop or not develop over time.

So I came into a situation where, right off the bat, the Chicano studies faculty were beginning to help, they were putting together a lawsuit against the administration for I guess lack of resources or whatever it was, and maybe Ruiz's caution to me back when I was still a graduate student was still in my ear. I remember going to my very first faculty meeting, departmental meeting for Chicano studies, and they had the drafts of the lawsuit and so forth, and they wanted me to sign off on it right there. I said, "Well wait a minute! I just got here. I don't even know all the issues and so forth." I said, "I'm not going to sign it right now." That may have not sat well with some, but I just didn't feel that I wanted, right off the bat, to start with that situation, you know?

So, yeah, it was still developing, struggling to develop, and one of the first things that I got involved with in the Chicano studies department is that existing faculty of finishing PhD students could not continue to sustain; we needed faculty to be hired from the outside, just as I had been hired from the outside. And the next big challenge was to hire a new departmental chair, because other chairs were borrowed from other departments; it needed a permanent chair. And so, into my first full year, I was part of a search committee to hire a new departmental chair, and so I was very engaged with that, involved with that, with the students, the faculty, with the dean, and so forth, and we did hire.

We had a good group of candidates and we ultimately hired Eugene García, in education, educational psychology, and he agreed to come to chair, and he chaired through the latter part of the seventies into the early eighties, and then he was recruited from us. I think he went, I think first to Santa Cruz, and then later went to Arizona State. Later, he became the undersecretary for bilingual education in the [President Bill] Clinton Administration, in the first Clinton Administration. And then, I think he came back to Arizona State to finish his career. I think he's retired; I'm not sure. But, so I was very engaged with that. It wasn't easy, handling a joint appointment, to be honest.

02-00:59:57
Holmes: Yeah, I was about ready to ask you about that.

02-01:00:01
García: Yeah, I mean, there are lots of these going on in Chicano studies, and then, of course, Chicano history was obviously inherently linked with Chicano studies. I was involved in that. But history was also important because I met other colleagues from other fields, of US, of American history and European, and third-world history, but to be honest, it was also a kind of a recluse. Is that the right term, recluse? I could kind of get away from the [laughs] more active Chicano studies scene. I could go to a much quieter office to kind of catch my breath a little bit. So it was difficult to balance a joint appointment, but I think I got advantages with both departments, and learned a lot. It was like having to deal with two masters in a sense; you had to be reviewed independently by both departments. But, I had that for many, many years, but once we got Eugene García, I think, kind of settled a little bit. When I first came, literally, those first two quarters in '75, and I was finishing my dissertation, I had a meeting, or the dean had called me in at that time, and he offered *me* to become the chair of the department, and I said, "Oh, I just got here!" And I remember talking to Ruiz about it and he said, "Don't you dare agree to become chair of Chicano studies. That will stifle your research, and it's just too difficult given the situation there with a joint appointment, Chicano studies still trying to find itself and so forth."

02-01:01:50
Holmes: Well especially as a young scholar who needs to think about tenure come six to eight years down the road—

02-01:01:55
García: I mean I could have done it. And you know in a way, during the year that Gene was now chair, and then later on as we were in between departmental chairs, in reality, I really was playing the role of chair in some ways, because it was the deans who would—I could make suggestions here and there and they would generally tend to abide by it and so forth. So, I was a little bit kind of behind the scenes, but it wasn't that I had upfront all the responsibilities of a departmental chair. At one point the dean was actually our chair. He was the interim; he took it upon himself because we were in between things. I think this was, I guess the year that we were trying to hire Gene García.

So these were difficult years, but I wanted to still focus significantly on my research. I was revising the *Desert Immigrants*. I was able to finish the revision of *Desert Immigrants*. I won a fellowship at the Behavioral Studies Institute at Stanford. It has a more formal name, but Behavioral Studies Institute. Beautiful, it was nice. It was almost like being in a camp, and you had social scientists from everywhere, and I was one of one, two, or three historians, but that gave me the time and the space and the support to finish off my book. I began to conceptualize the second project and so forth. In the early eighties and after that, I got a Ford Postdoctoral Fellowship, and later on I got a fellowship for the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington where I spent eight months.

So, that early part of my career was helped a lot by getting these kinds of fellowships, especially at these research centers, or like the Ford Postdoctoral gave me an opportunity in the early eighties to really begin to move forward on my second book that would become the *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity, 1930 to 1960*.

02-01:04:07
Holmes: Well I definitely want to get to that here in a minute, but before we leave your early years here at UCSB, I wanted to ask about the Center for Chicano Research. Again, this is founded in 1969 and it's the only what they would call organized research units, the ORUs, in the UC system devoted to that specialty outside of UCLA—what was your role? Did you ever play a role or interact with that center?

02-01:04:46
García: Well I did, because as I mentioned, we were all housed together. When I got there, I think Chavarria was moving out of that position as director, because he was still an untenured assistant professor, and he was doing all this work to create Chicano studies, both department, the research center, and so forth. He had taken on this big job of doing some kind of this system-wide survey regarding Chicanos and Latinos in the UC system, and they ultimately wrote a fairly big report. So he was being in a way siphoned off from what he should've been doing, which was revising his dissertation on the Peruvian Marxist philosopher [José Carlos] Mariátegui. So he was kind of trying to remove himself a little bit knowing that the tenure clock was running out.

So, he did finish whatever he did to revise his dissertation, but the thing is, Jesús had already made a lot of political enemies on campus, because he was pushing for resources for Chicano studies, and so forth and so on. The dean at the time, which was like a super dean over everything—science, engineering, social science, humanities—he was a rather difficult guy. What was his background? He was a scientist, I think, a chemist, yeah, Bruce Rickborn, and he and Chavarria did clash. They clashed a lot, and Jesús, I know, had clashed also at that time with the chancellor, Vernon Cheadle, out of which our administration building is named, Cheadle Hall. And he made political enemies in the history department as well, because he was much more radical, in that sense, than some of the other Latin Americanists.

Especially, the senior Latin Americanist was a historian of Mexico by the name of Philip Powell. He was a real right-winger, and he would downgrade, for example, the history of indigenous people in Mexico. He favored more the European side of Mexico. I'm sure he was not very critical of the Spanish Conquest at all, and some of my Chicano students would take his class on Mexican history, and would tell me horror stories about how he downgraded indigenous history. And so, he and Chavarria also clashed within the Latin Americanist group, because Jesús had a very different view of that history.

His political enemies were just waiting for him, for tenure, and he didn't help himself because he published his book in Italy by an Italian press and published in Italian, so they translated it into Italian. That was used against him in the history department, saying he needed to have published his book in the United States by an American press, and in English. So they held that against him; they denied him tenure. And, he filed a lawsuit, you know, saying that it was racism. He didn't win the lawsuit, unfortunately for him, and he left academia. He went on to publish *Hispanic Business* here in Santa Barbara which, for a while in the eighties, did quite well, and into the nineties. Fortunately, he was married to a relatively rich woman, but he did leave academia, and unfortunately, because he's a very talented guy, very talented guy. But he left very, very alienated from his university career here, and never really had much to do with UCSB.

So, the research center suffered as a result, so that for several years, they had an acting director, which was the assistant director, who was not an academic. And so he reoriented the research center more in terms of service, the students and the community, but not so much in terms of research. Did they have small research projects? Maybe they did. I don't remember much of that. But the research center became more of a service-oriented center, to the point where I began to advocate among the administration that you could not have a research center not directed by an academic! And so that finally forced, in part, the university to engage in a search for a new director, and so they did. For a period of time, there was a wonderful, wonderful man and professor and intellectual by the name of Luis Leal, Professor Luis Leal, a prominent scholar of Mexican and Latin American literature, and he had taught for many years at the University of Illinois, and they had forced retirement at sixty-five. He lived to 102. [laughter]

So he came and retired here in Santa Barbara, and as soon as we began to realize who he was and how prominent he was, we began to integrate him in teaching courses on Chicano literature, and he had been an early champion of Chicano literature. So, in the—

02-01:10:43
Holmes: And very influential, which you published a *testimonio* with him.

02-01:10:47
García: Yes I did, yes I did later on. And so he was asked by the university, by the administration, if he would fill in as the acting director of the center, and Professor Leal, Don Luis as we called him, did for three, four years until finally a new outside director was hired, Juan Palerm, in anthropology, and then he was director for several years. And so under more academic leadership, the research center began to do more research activities, conferences, and things like that.

In my opinion, it's never really reached its full fruition. If you compare our research center to the UCLA one over time, and what the UCLA research center is doing right now, it's just mind boggling what that research center does: publications, the journal *Aztlán*, of course; conferences. They bring in a lot of outside money. It's so impressive and I always, when I go, I say, "Why can't we have a research center like that?" Ours remains still small, and one of the downsides, in my opinion, is that whoever has been the academic director basically shapes the center with respect to their own research.

So Palerm directed the research center for several years, but directed it to his anthropological research, doing interviews and good work, interviewing farm workers and things like that; that was what he did. Then we had an in-house director, Denise Segura. Well, she actually didn't do too much, but she did some work in the community. Our current director is from the School of Education, and she gets big grants, but it's all around her research. So it becomes almost kind of your own fiefdom. It doesn't reach out like UCLA. That's not to say that Chon Noriega at UCLA doesn't fund a lot of his own research in there, but there's a lot of other things that come as a result of the research center at UCLA.

02-01:12:51
Holmes: Well, in comparing the two, I think one of the things that you hit on is the stability of the directorship, the stability of guiding and moving the center along. And when we think of the role of Juan Gómez-Quiñones, not just in establishing the center at UCLA, being one of the founders of that, but also being there for decades guiding the center and having a vision for it, there's something to be said of that. And perhaps in the sense of, not having to also fight the internal battles with the administration that could also hamper that.

02-01:13:29
García: Well I'm sure there are many battles as well, and I know at one point—Juan was the director for so many years—at a certain point, I think other faculty felt, well, it's time to move on. And my understanding of it, and you can pursue that with Juan if he's willing to talk about it, I think there were some pretty difficult situations there in terms of his leaving as director, because in a way, it also was his fiefdom, and I think Chon's been a much more successful academic politician, to not be so identified with the center that it's like his center.

But see, we've had that situation, that every director kind of shapes whatever research is going basically in terms of what their research is. It's not to say that they don't have some research, small research grants. Yes they do. But the other thing about our research center that doesn't do very much, over the time, I don't know, under Professor Leal a bit, but, we could be much more visible on campus. When you look at again, UCLA, they do a lot of conferences. They link themselves with other units, departments. We've done much less of that. I think our research center, now called the Chicano studies Institute,

really has never reached the level of development that I think it should have had.

So, as these things evolved into the eighties and so forth—even though I was paying a lot of attention to my own research—I couldn't help but of course be affected by that, the conditions in the department, new leadership in the departments, still searching for new chairs, and then also, the situation with the research center, and I was on that search committee for getting an academic director. And so, I began to develop my own little political battles as well, and you almost can't avoid that. And in 1984, this is when I was at the Wilson Center, we had had an interim department chair for a couple of years, Manuel Carlos from anthropology, and that ran into some rough spots as well. The dean wanted to move forward, and so then the faculty was supportive of my coming back, after my stint at the Wilson Center—I was still associate professor—to be the new chair of the department. And given the situation, I felt that I had to do it.

So I agreed to become chair in the beginning of the fall of 1984, and then I was chair throughout the rest of the eighties. And that was a new challenge, but I never felt that I wanted to put aside my research to do this type of administrative work. I always left a space that I would do my research, so I wasn't an eight-hour-a-day chair. Some people think that they should be eight hours a day, chair. No, I don't think you have to be an eight-hour-a-day chair, because I think you should be an intellectual leader as well, not just an administration leader. You have to show the way to the other faculty, especially younger faculty, that they need to be productive and focus on their research.

So I continued to do my research on what would become my second book, *The Mexican American Generation*. Some of that research I already started, even when I was at the Behavioral Studies Center, and then getting the Ford Postdoctoral Grant and at the Wilson Center, that just kind of moved me along. So I already had done a good deal of my research; really, I was already beginning to write it. Well I guess being chair also maybe delayed a little bit of my writing. Although the book came in '89, which means I submitted it probably a year and a half before, so, within that time span, I was able to finish my second book.

What I enjoyed being as a departmental chair was largely in terms of recruiting new faculty, and in that period when I was chair, we were able to recruit, I think, four or five new faculty. To me, that was the most interesting thing, not the day-to-day kind of stuff, but to try to bring in new people. Did I make some good choices? Not in all cases. It's always hard to tell when you're recruiting a new faculty member how they're going to turn out. Are they going to continue to be good scholars and productive scholars? And then of course, also, are they going to be good colleagues? And, I think I made some mistakes, but we did grow the department, and we brought in some new

people, and I also tried to steer the department to be engaged on the campus, as it was a time of a lot of concern over the US policies in Central America, and I helped to organize some conferences.

We had a big conference here like in, I think it was in the mid-eighties. I put together—well, I really helped put it together—a conference that brought together the issues of South Africa, and the whole issue of apartheid, and ending investments in South Africa, with the political crisis in Central America. So we put together a one-day conference and we brought scholars and speakers that addressed both issues. I wouldn't say that it was completely comparative, but at least it brought these two main political issues that were facing us in the eighties, the issues of South Africa, this investment there and the ending of apartheid, and then also the Central American issues, and the coming of the refugees, and the death squads in Central America that Reagan was supporting, and then the sanctuary movement, which later on would lead to my next forthcoming book with Father Olivares and the sanctuary movement.

So, I liked that, supporting these types of issues on campus, and using my departmental resources the best I can to help fund as best I could, bringing in speakers like that, and we started a course on Central America. I hired a young graduate student out of UCLA I believe, and he came, offered courses on Central America, which I think were really needed. We didn't have anyone, really, so I integrated that into Chicano studies, and broadened our definition of Chicano studies.

So, there were ups and downs, because you had to deal with different personalities, but I always felt that I needed to maintain momentum in my research. I tell my graduate students and others, my philosophy has always been that every little bit helps. If I can even just carve out an hour a day on a busy day, even now, okay, that's fine, because it all builds up. It all builds up. I've never bought into the philosophy, well, and we're just going to focus on my teaching, during the academic year, and I'll get back to my research during this summer. No, not at a research institution in the UC system.

First of all, we don't have anywhere near as much teaching like the Cal State system where they still teach four or five courses. And so you have to maintain your research even during the course of your teaching, because first of all, we don't teach as much, and you don't want to lose momentum. You can't just wait until the summer to all of a sudden go back to whatever research or writing you were doing last summer. That's not going to cut it. It's going to affect your productivity over time.

And so, I was able to do that, I think, and in 1989, Yale came out with my second book, my Mexican American book, and by then I was already conceptualizing again still another. That book really began to cement what

would become something that I guess I'm known for, which is my generational approach to Chicano history.

02-01:21:53
Holmes: Now you talked about the early formation of that, of cementing your ideas about the Immigrant Generation, as you would call it. This, as the title suggests, was really looking at what you call the Mexican American Generation, that experience from 1930 to 1960—*Mexican Americans: Leadership, Identity, and Ideology, 1930-1960.* What was the genesis of this? Because in many respects, you lived through the tail end of this—if we look at from high school going into college, you're at that cusp of transitioning between those two generations, from Mexican American to Chicano, right?

02-01:22:32
García: Right, yeah, although I'm really much more situated in the Chicano generation. That's my generation. As a historical, political generation, that's my generation, even though I was obviously born in the forties.

02-01:22:47
Holmes: So what was the genesis of thinking about this period?

02-01:22:51
García: I think a couple of things. When I was at the Behavioral Studies Center, Al Camarillo was beginning to bring in some new collections to the Stanford Graduate Library Archives. One of them was the Manuel Ruiz Jr. papers, and he told me about that, and I was intrigued by it, so I started going down there from the Behavioral Studies Center, not necessarily every day, but some afternoons. I began to go through that material, and that was about Mexican American political activity in Los Angeles in the 1930s and 1940s, civil rights activities, different organizations that were being developed, and this Manuel Ruiz was an attorney, was one of the few Mexican American attorneys. He got his degree at USC, and he was at the forefront of dealing with civil rights in the schools; the segregation in the Mexican schools; police violence; police profiling, especially around the Pachucos and the Zoot Suiters of the forties; the issue of access to new federal employment during the war, in the wartime industries, having Mexican Americans access those new jobs. So, there was that kind of activity going on there among Mexican American leaders like Manuel Ruiz in Los Angeles in that period into the forties.

So that intrigued me, and I began to be intrigued about Ruiz's generation, Manuel Ruiz's, the attorney, and began to think of maybe expanding it to a bigger project. Ironically, I never published, in my *Mexican American* book, I did not publish anything on Manuel Ruiz. I published later a subsequent article, but I didn't include it because then I found other topics that I could integrate in that book.

And then too, my brother Richard, whom I had mentioned, had come to San Diego State, was MA, political science. He then later got his PhD in history at

UC Irvine, and he did a dissertation that was later published as a book by Texas A&M Press. And he was working on Mexican immigrants and also Mexican Americans in San Antonio in the 1930s, and it was that bridge between the earlier immigrant refugee leadership, and new, developing Mexican American leadership like those in LULAC. He was bridging that, and I think that was an influence too, because in a way, he was already moving towards conceptualizing that generation as well, and I remember we had many, many conversations over that.

And so I think finding that, and looking at that Ruiz collection, getting to have a better sense of what was going on in that period, and then my brother Richard's work on San Antonio that also brought in what we would call the Mexican American Generation in San Antonio, with the LULACers, I think those two things influenced me. And so, by the time I left the Behavioral Studies Center in the summer of 1979, I think I had pretty well decided that this was going to be my next book project, the study of this generation.

The term "Mexican American Generation," I didn't coin, nor did my brother Richard. There was an article, I think in Aztlán, by a sociologist by the name of Rudy Alvarez, who did a kind of a political history survey of Chicano history, and he used the term, "the Mexican American Generation." It wasn't my original term, but I'm the one that began to fully apply it more, as I then developed my broader generational approach.

And so then I began to look for other sources that would feed in. Of course, I knew that this was going to be a book about leadership, new leadership in this period of time, and so, I knew that I needed a chapter on LULAC, because that expressed that new generational leadership, and which I ultimately did, and that LULAC collection at UT Austin was very important. And then I ran into other things. Al Camarillo had also gotten the, not papers so much, but there was a Mexican American civil rights leader in Southern California—I'm blanking on his name right now—who was the publisher of a newspaper, *El Espectador*, out of like Pomona, Ontario, in that part of Southern California. And that became the basis of one of my chapters, because in that newspaper, he documented all the civil rights activities in that part of Southern California, east of LA, the Inland Empire, around Riverside and so forth. And Ignacio Lopez was the editor-publisher.

And so I did a chapter on Ignacio Lopez and *El Espectador* using that, terms of document, because that paper went from the 1930s, forties, fifties, and I think it ended around 1960. So it documented all this stuff, a lot of civil rights, taking on not only schools, but segregated swimming pools, segregated theaters; promoting, after World War II, a lot of the veterans to run for political office, city councils, school boards, and some of them getting elected; developing new organizations like one called Unity Leagues, that I think was a Saul Alinksy group as well. And, so anyway, that became a chapter. And

then, always in the back of my head, was Raymond Telles. Well I'm going to do a chapter on his election in '57 as part of this generation.

So, when I had the Ford Postdoctoral Fellowship, I spent several months back at UTEP, and they gave me an office there and so forth, and there, I researched the election of Raymond Telles, and started doing interviews with him, and I did many other interviews with people around that incredible election, where Mexican Americans felt that their time had come. Here they were more than 50 percent of the city; they had never really had effective political representation, and they felt, especially the veterans coming after World War II and Korea, the time had come. They needed effective political representation, and Telles had been elected in '48 as a county clerk, so that was their first effort at a countywide election. That laid the foundation for the campaign for mayor in '57, and they were similar, but the key, of course, was getting the Mexican American vote out. But also, the sense that you could not run an openly ethnic campaign because the pushback would have been too significant. It was an interesting election, because openly, for both campaigns, you couldn't run an open ethnic campaign, but underneath, you did.

So Telles ran in '57. He ran, of course, and he honestly believed that he would be mayor of all El Pasoans, and he had to put, because they ran at that time in tickets, he had to put together a ticket, and he found it very difficult to get Anglo-Americans to run on his ticket, but he eventually found four to run on his ticket, and he, of course, was at the head of the ticket. And so, on the surface, it was not an ethnic campaign, because they also knew, the Telles people knew, they had to cut somewhere into the white vote, especially, obviously, the liberal vote. They needed some percentage of that vote to complement what they hoped would be an overwhelming vote in the Mexican districts, especially South El Paso. By 1957, the downriver communities, Ysleta, San Elizario, had been incorporated in the city with large numbers of Mexican Americans, those were key, the Lower Valley.

They needed, on the surface, a non-ethnic campaign, but underneath, especially led by his younger brother Richard—someone called him a Mexican American LBJ. This guy was political savvy to the max. He knew organization. He knew how to put together a campaign. He had led the campaign, the subrosa campaign in '48, to elect his brother as county clerk. He had done it, and they got Mexican Americans out in large numbers, but of course, running for mayor was a bigger challenge. But Richard did it again. He put together that vote in the Mexican districts. You had to pay a poll tax in 1957 in Texas, and my students don't understand, and of course, it was ridiculous to pay for a basic constitutional right, a $1.75 to vote. Well, a lot of Mexican Americans were still relatively poor community.

Well what did Richard do? Well Richard went around, hit up the Mexican American business people, "Come on guys, you got to help out in this campaign." He would go across to Juárez. The mayor of Juárez, René

Mascareñas, had gone to Cathedral with Raymond Telles. He hit up the Mexican business in Juárez to contribute to his brother's campaign. He gathered that money, and then he would pursue what I call a cantina strategy, and he owned a lot, he owned several cantinas himself, Richard Telles did, and serviced the jukeboxes as well.

So in these cantinas, he would parcel out money for them to pay the poll tax. In one of my interviews, I said, "Well Richard, wasn't that illegal?" He said, "No, they did it on the other side too, but," he said, "after all, if I gave a guy a dollar seventy-five, for all I knew he was going to go out and buy a couple of beers for his buddies." Well, no, no. He knew and they knew this was to go and buy your poll tax. And, oh, he was ingenious. They didn't have enough money for radio ads, much less for TV ads, in '57, so Richard went over to the Juárez stations, bought cheaper political ads for his brother. Well, radio waves don't know a border. Talk about border culture—shoo, right across the river.

02-01:34:45
Holmes: That's brilliant, yeah.

02-01:34:46
García: And, he joked, that they used so many radio ads, in Spanish, I think, but no, some in English too out of the Juárez stations, that some of the people in Juárez thought that Raymond was actually running for mayor of Juárez. But it was an ingenious campaign that he put together. He put together mock voting machines, because in the '57 election, the city decided to use electronic voting machines that the Telles people felt was a direct challenge to the Telles campaign, because they knew that many Mexican Americans were going to be voting for the first time, and that clearly this was an attempt to intimidate the voters. To go into a voting booth, I mean, what's going to happen in this voting booth, I'm going to have radiation?

And so, Richard went to furniture stores in the south side run by Mexican Americans, used their discarded refrigerator boxes, and literally made them into facsimiles of the voting booth. Before election and even on election day, they stationed them right outside the voting precincts, and they socialized the voters of what that voting machine was going to look like, even with the names of the candidates. And then, Richard, knowing that while many Mexican voters were voting for the first time, some of them were still not—Spanish was still in some ways their still dominant language, but some of them, and they would recognize they needed to vote for the whole ticket, so they needed to know the names of the other aldermanic city council candidates running under Telles's ticket.

So Richard, for example, would parcel out a string with little beads on them, give them out to the voters, and when they actually went into the official voting booths and closed that curtain, all they needed to do was put the string along where the names were, and where those beads were, click, click, that's

where they needed to vote. Obviously they saw the name Telles, click, but they didn't know Ralph Seitsinger, click; Ted Bender, click; Jack White, click; and that's how they got people socialized to vote, and they voted in huge numbers. Some precincts went 90 percent. One precinct, Bowie High School, went 100 percent for Telles. So Telles won with a fairly good margin, I think, about four percentage points, and he did cut about 20 percent of the north side, which meant obviously the white and probably the more liberal Democrats.

So it was an incredible election, a groundbreaking election. It's still not well known. It was one of the reasons why I'm republishing the book under Arizona, was first published by Texas Western Press, and it was too small a press; it didn't get as much attention at UTEP. But now Arizona's going to come out with a new expanded edition, and hopefully bring attention to this groundbreaking historic election, which I will go, "This is the beginnings of more contemporary Latino political power. This election showed that it could be done, because they did it in El Paso." And many years later, when the mass media celebrated the election of Henry Cisneros as mayor of San Antonio, Federico Peña as mayor of Denver, these groundbreaking elections, it did not impress the old-timers in El Paso. They said, "We did it in '57, with every Anglo institution totally against us except for the more liberal *El Paso Herald-Post*."

Raymond Telles told me a story that, out of courtesy, he went to tell the president of one of the big banks in El Paso, one of the so-called king makers in El Paso politics, that he was thinking of running for mayor. "And this guy, the head of the bank," Raymond says, "he almost had a heart attack right there at his desk, and he told me, ‘In my lifetime, no Mexican will ever be elected mayor of this city.'" So they did it against all of this opposition. Cisneros didn't have that kind; in fact, he was endorsed by a lot of white, Anglo leaders. Anyway, so that became a chapter that I wanted to do.

02-01:39:14
Holmes: That then later you expanded, obviously, into the book, on Raymond Telles.

02-01:39:18
García: Yeah, then I did his biography and it's now coming out in an expanded edition. And then, so the first section of that book was called "The Middle Class," so it had the LULAC chapter, the Ignacio López chapter, and the Raymond Telles, and I think one other dealing with Eleuterio Escobar and the School Improvement League of San Antonio. But then I did a middle section called "Labor and the Left," and so I had a chapter under the rubric of the Mexican American Generation, so I dealt with labor leaders who were part of the Mexican American generation. And I did a case study of the Mine and Mill Union in El Paso, workers at the smelter and at the refining, the Phelps Dodge Refinery, almost primarily Mexican Americans, the more unskilled, semiskilled laborer, and how they struggled to get a union, a CIO union, the

Mine Mill Union. And so, I added that chapter to that section on Labor and the Left.

Just by chance at the El Paso Public Library, I ran into these documents that were documents related to a leftist Mexican American organization in the fifties, referred to by its acronym as ANMA, the Asociación Nacional Mexico-Americana, which was an offshoot of the Mine Mill Union, but it was like their political arm into the Mexican American communities, civil rights, and so forth, but leftists, because a lot of the Mine Mill Union was one of the most leftist unions in the CIO. And so I put together that chapter, and then, I was going through newspapers like *La Opinión* in Los Angeles, in that period of time, 1930s, '40s, '50s, and I came across what in English was referred to as the Spanish-Speaking Congress.

This was a very leftist-oriented, working-class oriented organization that was developed in LA. That was the national chapter; they hoped to spread through other parts of the country and would include other Latinos like Puerto Ricans. It never reached that point, but it was a very important organization in the late thirties and into the war years, so-called Spanish-Speaking Congress in English. Bert Corona was part of it. And so I wrote a chapter on that in the Mexican American book, and focused on the key leader which was an incredible woman by the name of Josefina Fierro de Bright, because she was married to John Bright, one of the Hollywood Ten writers. And so, he's one of the blackballed Hollywood writers.

And so I did a chapter on the Spanish-Speaking Congress, and then I wanted to do something on the early Mexican American intellectuals as part of that Mexican American generation. So I did Castañeda, Carlos Castañeda from UT Austin, who wrote about the early Mexicans in Texas; and George Sánchez, and his work on education; and Arthur Campa, who was a folklorist out of the University of New Mexico, and how he wrote about kind of folk culture, or popular culture, among Mexican Americans in New Mexico and other parts of the Southwest.

So I put three chapters together, kind of intellectual histories of each three. So, that became my Mexican American book, and it was like an edited volume, in a sense that they had distinct sections and distinct chapters, but I brought them together again under the umbrella of this Mexican American Generation, and it was like an anthology except that I wrote every single piece. But, so they were all case studies, is what I'm saying, and that became my Mexican American book.

02-01:43:15

Holmes: Now in many respects, one of your aims here was to, in a sense, challenge and revise the accommodationists characterization that many had ascribed to this generation.

02-01:43:32
García: Absolutely, absolutely, a challenge, and that's why it did disturb some of my colleagues in Chicano studies, not just here, but in the field. Many could not get through that LULAC chapter, like it stuck in their throats. "Is this Chicano history? LULAC, wasn't that a sellout organization, and you're writing about LULAC?" Well, even putting that aside, did they not read the middle section on Labor and the Left? See, the problem is that too many of my other colleagues in Chicano history and in Chicano studies, speaking as a field, they couldn't quite get over that LULAC chapter, because that was seen as heresy.

Chicano history is not writing about middle-class Mexican Americans. It's mostly writing about working class and radicals, and I challenge that. I say, "Wait a minute. This is part of Chicano history, and not only is it Chicano history but it's not assimilationist history. You guys are wrong. It's not accommodation history." People felt that because that was the politics of the Chicano movement, and the Chicano movement came down on the LULACers, and that earlier group of earlier organizations. They saw them, because they knew nothing about that history because that history hadn't been written. They just simply wrote them off as sellouts, as accommodationists, Tío Tacos, and so forth. And I dare to challenge that by my documentation.

Well look, LULAC was an early pioneer in civil rights struggles, you know, and they did not see themselves as just wanting to assimilate. If they wanted to assimilate, why did they even use the term "Latin American"? Why didn't they just use the generic "American"? Doesn't "Latin American" tell you something about how they saw themselves, at least ethnically? How is it that that generation, when they started organizing LULAC in Texas, in South Texas of all places, they organized in Spanish, sometimes they'd publish their documents in English and in Spanish? They weren't ashamed of their Mexican ancestry, quite to the contrary. But the thing is, the Chicano movement, the Chicano Generation, knew nothing or very little about that previous generation. So it was easy to just dismiss them as being sellouts and accommodationists, in order to kind of promote the Chicano generation as the ultimate real historical generation.

One scholar—you should ask about that—Professor Mario Barrera, in one of his articles, writes that "Chicano history, begins with the Chicano movement." And I reference that in my introduction to my *Mexican American* book. I mean, that's a ridiculous statement. What do you mean, "history begins in the Chicano movement," so that nothing happened before? Because there was a sense that that earlier period was kind of a dark age, nothing was happening, but my book says a lot was happening. There was a lot of civil rights activity, and groups like LULAC. I didn't have a chapter on the GI Forum, but that was heavily involved in civil rights. Were they ashamed of their background? Absolutely not. The difference was that they believed in integration; the Chicano movement would shun integration.

And they were saying, for some reason, they would say, "They're never going to integrate us. What we need to move is towards community empowerment, to control our own resources, and so forth." And I understood that. I supported that. But even though the fact that that Mexican American Generation, one of their key themes was integration, but integration meant breaking down barriers to equal mobility; it was not assimilation. That term "assimilation," "accommodation," and it's still used by some scholars, is a vicious condemnation which is not based on historical reality.

What do you mean by accommodation, that you're accommodating to racism? Accommodating to second-class citizenship? Was that what these people did—absolutely not. If they were, why were they leading civil rights struggles? If you're an accommodation, you don't lead civil rights struggles. You don't take on the segregated schools. 1946, the *Mendez* case, was that accommodationist? That was an attempt to break down segregation and inferior education for Mexican American children. Oh no. Was the Raymond Telles election in '57 accommodationist? Well no, that was to try to get effective political representation, and it showed the muscle of Mexican Americans when organized.

So no, my book was revisionist, it was challenging, but it was not accepted by everyone, especially because they couldn't get over that first section. It's like they didn't read the second section on Labor and the Left, which would've been obviously much more conducive to their political orientation, but they could not, after that LULAC one especially. They said that that's not Chicano history but I challenge that. I remember at one of the NACCS, National Association for Chicana and Chicano studies, conferences in Albuquerque, right at the time that, shortly after the book came out, there was a panel on recently published books in Chicano history. And my book was one of the ones being discussed. The guy who was going to discuss it was Professor Alfredo Mirandé, who was not even a historian, a sociologist, and I went to the session because I was curious to see what he was going to say.

The first thing out of his mouth was, he said, "Well, I started looking at the book on my flight from LA," and I'm saying, "Alfredo—that's an hour, an hour and a half at best, and you're just looking at the book then, and you're supposed to report on it and to discuss it? I mean, unless you're a speedy reader, come on." And then he adds to that. He said, "Well, you know, this book by Mario García, the *Mexican Americans*, of that period," he said, "I think it's a contribution, I guess," he said, "to Western history, or to Southwestern history, or maybe to American history, but," he said, "it's not a contribution to Chicano history." And what he meant was, you don't write about middle-class people, because obviously in that short flight he probably only read the LULAC chapter, the section called "The Middle Class," and for him, Chicano history is not a history of middle-class people, even though he's a university professor and middle class himself. But those are not our proper historical subjects.

And so, I see that term "accommodation" still attached to that generation, and I say, "Well, have they not read my book or maybe others, Ignacio García's wonderful biography of Doctor Héctor García, the head of the GI Forum? Have they not read these studies? Do they really believe that these people were accommodation sellouts, that vicious term; Tío Tacos, even more vicious? Come on. We need to complicate our history, the Chicano history, and we have to take into consideration the whole range of historical subjects. You may not like some of these historical subjects, depending on your politics or whatever, but you cannot deny their subjectivity. They're part of Chicano history because of their own background and the community. We had to deal with that. And if there are assimilationists, we've got to deal with them too! And someone should write their history. If they're really real assimilationists or sellouts, well, okay, we can't just throw them out. But these were not sellouts, the generation of leadership that I wrote in that book. So, it was clearly revisionist and challenging, and I guess in some ways still remains so.

02-01:51:51
Holmes: Now I wanted to ask, which you already gave a lot of good detail on this, *The Making of A Mexican American Mayor: Raymond L. Telles of El Paso.* As you mentioned, an expanded version is coming out. This book obviously is an outgrowth of the Mexican American book and that chapter, and also, another very detailed case study of the argument you just discussed about this generation. When these books are coming out, so we're talking here late 1980s into the 1990s, the field of Chicano studies, broadly speaking, is beginning to mature. And that maturation of the field, I think, was also seen in, not just that Yale published the Mexican American book, as well as your first book, but that you also began to entertain the offer of leaving Santa Barbara and going to Yale. Can you talk a little bit about that experience?

02-01:52:59
García: Well, yes. Part of it had to relate to a complex family situation. I had met my wife, Ellen McCracken, Professor Ellen McCracken, when we were both graduate students at UC San Diego. We were subsequently married in 1979. As a matter of fact, our honeymoon, such as it was, was a trip to Cuba, because when I was at the Behavioral Studies Center, there were some faculty and graduate students at Stanford and Berkeley who were putting together a group to go on a cultural tour of Cuba that summer. So, we got married in June of '79, and I had arranged for the two of us to go on that cultural tour.

And so a week later or so, here we go, off to Cuba, [laughter] and that really was our honeymoon, and the Cubans were so delighted, because people say, "Oh, you know, these two came here; this is their honeymoon." Oh, God! They were so gracious and so welcoming. But then I would tell my colleagues later at the Behavioral Studies, because I would come and they said, "Oh where did you guys, where did you go to on your honeymoon?" And they expect me to say Hawaii, right? Or something. I said, "No, we went to Cuba." "Oh"—they turned to another subject. [laughter]

But, I came to UCSB in '75. My wife finished a couple of years later, in comparative literature, and she was fortunate. There weren't a lot of jobs in comparative literature, but she got a tenured-track position at University of Massachusetts, Amherst, all the way across the country in New England. So here we were married, and we have a cross-country marital relationship. Okay, well, we went back and forth when we could and so forth; we were together summers. Okay, but then the question of family, and so, my daughter is the first born in '86, and a year and a half later in '87, my son is born, and we still are bicoastal.

So, when I was at the Wilson Center, I had met, I'm forgetting his name, a guy who was in American studies at Yale, and I think he later must've broached my name. In the spring of 1988, I was contacted by Yale, would I be interested in a visiting year at Yale? They had had earlier people who taught—well, Pedro Castillo had taught a little while, Chicano history at Yale, but that was never going to be a tenured-track position anyway. So they were interested, would I come for a year, and given my family situation, and the fact that we had the two kids already, babies, I said, "Well yeah, of course, yes," I would come, and I made arrangements. I was departmental chair of Chicano studies, so I took a leave of absence as departmental chair to go spend the year at Yale.

And I enjoyed that. It was really great. The students were great, as you know, and new colleagues, new setting. I commuted. We had bought a house that year, an older house in Amherst, we would subsequently buy a new house, but I would commute every week from Amherst to New Haven, bus, train, and in that year that I spent, '88, '89, at Yale, there were also other openings, like for example, for a director of Ethnic Studies at Cornell, for a director of Ethnic Studies at Brown, and, I applied to both or I was encouraged. I remember going to give a lecture at Brown, and after I gave my lecture and had a little dinner or reception, people were saying, "Well, we have a search going for a director of Ethnic Studies," and I said, "Well, you're probably going to want an African American, in this case, in the East." And so, "No, no, no, no, we're open to a Latino, of course." So I applied for that.

So, they offered me the position at Cornell, they offered me the position at Brown, and then Yale moved to offer me a permanent position with tenure, as a full professor. I was already a full professor because my Mexican American book was just coming out; it had already been accepted, by Yale, and it came out in '89. So I had three offers. Cornell was too distant, and cold—

02-01:58:11
Holmes: Yeah, Ithaca.

02-01:58:12
García: Brown was interesting. I had a good time interviewing there and so forth, but ultimately I took the Yale offer because I already knew Yale, and I already

had developed relationships there. I was comfortable there, and the commute from Amherst was okay; it was doable. So I accepted that. However, I talked to the administrators here, and I covered my bases because they said, "Well why don't you just take a two-year leave from us here, and then see how you feel about it?" So, I went. I spent two years at Yale. I enjoyed it very much, great students, great graduate students, as you know, undergraduates, good colleagues. The commuting got a little bit hard and so forth—

02-01:59:11
Holmes: Especially in the snow, and the winter.

02-01:59:13
García: Yeah, and oh, the long winters, long winters. But UCSB ultimately realized that to really bring me back, they needed to do a spousal hire with my wife, Ellen. So they moved to do that, and they offered her—we didn't have a comp-lit department, but because she does Latin American literature and US Latino literature, they created a position for her in the Spanish Portuguese department. And, you know, we were also faced with the decision: Well, where do we want to raise our kids? We both have families in California. And, what environment do we want to raise them in? And so ultimately, we said, "We can't pass up this opportunity when they're offering us at UCSB this kind of arrangement. It may never happen again." And so for family reasons, largely, we agreed, we'd come back to UCSB.

And the thing is, with all the prestige of Yale, the infrastructure—you remember—had a lot to be desired. I would freeze in my office! The heating system was awful in those little buildings and so forth, and you can't live on prestige on a day-to-day basis. [laughs]

02-02:00:46
Holmes: Prestige doesn't keep you warm.

02-02:00:47
García: You have to, at least, you have some good infrastructure. But that was less the issue. I think really, in terms of, where do we want to raise our kids? We both have family out here, and then again, that opportunity of having appointments at the same campus may never happen again, so, I think we made the right decision. So that's why I returned. I came back but did not resume being chair of the department of Chicano studies. When I agreed to take the appointment at Yale, no longer visiting, it was with tenure, a full professor, but I still kept my position here. But I was no longer departmental chair. Someone else had been chosen from within the faculty. But I came back still with my joint appointment, in Chicano studies and history. But into the nineties, the department began to have difficulties, personal animosities, factionalism, and so forth—

02-02:02:14
Holmes: The history department, or—

02-02:02:15
García: No, Chicano studies. And so those were not easy years. The chair at that time was a very difficult and contentious leader of sorts, and she finally did leave. She got an offer to go to Arizona State—no, University of Arizona. I never became department chair again, nor did I really want to be. But anyway, the important thing was me coming back, and this is an interesting juncture in my career, because with two young kids growing up, and sharing responsibility obviously with my wife, and she's got her own academic career, of course, not only in terms of her research, but also her teaching, I had a logistical issue to deal with, as you well know. I didn't feel that I would have as much time to do a lot of research at different archives for another big project, or field research and so forth, I knew that I was going to be constrained given the family situation, with young kids.

So, I had already started interviewing Bert Corona, but with the intent of doing a biography of Bert Corona. And, I had a good amount of interviewing already that year that I came back from Yale, '89 into '90, but still with an idea that I was going to do a biography. But then I realized, a biography of Bert Corona is a big project, a lot of people to interview, and who knows, archives all over the place because of involvement with the labor movement and so forth, and I said, "No, I'm going to turn it into an oral history," and so, in his words, which, I felt, well, it might be more powerful this way. So I began to write it. Even when I was at Yale, I began to write the narrative, based on my interviews and the transcripts, and began to write it as a testimonio, in his voice, even though I wrote it. But that in part was because logistically, I knew I would be constrained in doing a full biography. So in a fortuitous way, that limitation did lead me on to begin to produce some of my testimonios, beginning with the Bert Corona book.

02-02:05:12
Holmes: This is certainly a juncture, because as you were saying, this opened up a whole other avenue of scholarship that you really brought back to the discipline, in many respects, at least the field of Chicano studies. I know in Latin American scholarship, the testimonio had been percolating for a number of years. A lot of people have discussed the genesis of this, and of course, your family situation, which I don't think many people actually know the history of that. How do you see testimonio versus oral history? In comparing and contrasting, do you see them as together, or do you see them as separate forms?

02-02:05:57
García: Well, yeah, they're interlinked. They're interlinked because testimonio is based on oral history. But it's different from the oral histories that I'd already done—like in the Mexican American book, I really began to do a lot of oral history, and I integrated a lot of oral history into my second book. I became comfortable with it. I enjoy doing it, but that type of oral history was more limited oral history, more with a specific intent of adding supplemental material to my archival-based research, whereas, a testimonio is all oral

history for the most part. And the other difference is that a testimonio, at least what I've done, is, they're full. I mean, they're books in themselves. They're book-length narratives. You're telling the whole story.

02-02:06:55
Holmes: Their life histories.

02-02:06:56
García: Yes, their life histories, their life stories, that's right, and, as I began to read more about the testimonio coming out of Latin America and apply it to my oral history testimonios, I began to see that what I was beginning to produce, beginning with the Bert Corona book, fit in with the ideology, in a sense, of the testimonio, which is a narrative that was coming out of Latin America already in the sixties and seventies, and was a collaboration between a scholar or a journalist, and an activist, a political activist, and even revolutionaries.

And so the testimonio is not just a narrative and a text in and of itself; it's not just an academic exercise. It's not just that alone. It really is to try to influence people to carry on the struggle. So you read it, you think about it, you reflect on the story, and then very significantly, a testimonio is hopefully, you're going to act on it. How am I going to carry Bert Corona's legacy on, working with immigrants, with working-class people and so forth? How can I assist that or at least support it, and so forth? So, there's that kind of intent of a testimonio to get people to not just read it, but think about it, but also influence people's politics, I guess, to get them engaged and involved, and so forth.

So I liken that to what I've done, and it's beginning with the Bert Corona book. And of course, Bert was a great subject, because he was such a wonderful guy, great story, community leader, labor leader; in many ways, he was almost the urban equivalent of Cesar Chavez. If Cesar was the first to successfully organize farm workers, Bert, in his later years, or the last quarter of his years maybe, successfully organized undocumented immigrant workers. They organized them for their self-protection, but also developed leadership out of the undocumented workers. They would have caravans to Sacramento, to Washington, to push for immigrant reform, and so forth and so on.

So, I became very comfortable in doing that, and I really began to feel, as I was writing the book that this is powerful. In his own voice, there's a lot of power there that I could not possibly emulate in a third-person narrative.

02-02:09:48
Holmes: So in many respects, as you kind of emphasizing there, a testimonio really presents a form that one could never really capture in biography.

02-02:10:00
García: Yeah. It's not to say that biography is not powerful too, but it is mediated by the biographer. Of course, testimonios are also mediated, because I write it up,

I'm the one asking the questions, so I'm there. But, when you're reading the story through Bert's voice, there's an attachment there to the reader that I, as a biographer, could not possibly convey. So, that became very attractive to me to do, and so that was the beginning of my various testimonios. But again, part of it [laughs] was simply logistical—I think maybe after I did the Bert Corona book, maybe it wasn't so much logistical, it's just that I began to understand the power of the testimonio.

02-02:10:49
Holmes: Well let's talk about a few of these, as we make our way [laughter] through your prolific scholarship. Then you did, your next testimonio was co-written with Frances Esquibel Tywoniak.

02-02:11:10
García: *Migrant Daughter*.

02-02:11:11
Holmes: Yes, *Migrant Daughter: The Coming of Age of a Mexican American Woman*. A very powerful story. First of all, how did you become acquainted with Fran?

02-02:11:21
García: Well, I tell the story, it just fell in my lap, this incredible story, because like, when I teach my course on twentieth-century Chicano history, I have the students as their term project do oral histories, and I emphasize that they should do oral histories with Mexican Americans aged forty and above. So a lot of the Chicanos, that means either their grandparents or their parents, and if they're not Chicanos, at least they can try to find maybe teachers, and others that they know, and so forth that are aged forty and above and get their stories down.

So, one of my Chicana students, Marliese Esquibel, did her oral history of her aunt. That turned out to be Fran Esquibel Tywoniak, and I read that short paper, I don't know, ten, fifteen pages, and I thought, 'Oh my God, what a story.' A young girl born in Eastern New Mexico in the early 1930s, her father's an immigrant but the mother is a several-generations New Mexican. So, her parents linked two major experiences in Chicano history, right? The older Mexican Americans, those who, like in New Mexico, can trace their ancestry all the way back to the Spanish Colonial era, or others to the nineteenth century, or Mexican Americans of the earlier twentieth century—well, in her case it was in the thirties, so it wasn't that earlier. So that's one strand in Chicano history, but then there's the immigrant strand, very powerful strand, and her father represents that, so the parents represented those two links.

But then, they're ranchers there and they lose everything in the Depression, so they come and they do a migratory cycle into California. They become migrant workers, and so Fran is part of that. She's born in New Mexico, but

already as a young child, she's working in the fields, I think at like ten, eleven, twelve, and her teenage years. And then the family finally settles in Visalia, and that is where the story really becomes fascinating, because she applies herself a lot to her academics. She beats the tracking system. She went to a so-called, a mixed middle school and high school in Visalia, because there was no separate Mexican school, at least not middle and high school. But a lot of the Mexican American kids were being channeled into the vocational tracks, but they still had to have some Mexican Americans, a few, anyway, into the academic tracks.

Well, Fran became one of those who applied herself, because already she had a sense, as she told her story to me, yeah, she loved her parents, but she didn't want to be still another farm worker. She felt that there was more opportunities in life and so forth, so she applied it to her education, and so she does get put in the academic track, and she does very well, and then when she graduates in the late forties, I think '49, she gets a scholarship to UC Berkeley! That's when the story becomes amazing. A young Mexican American, a young Mexican American female, getting a scholarship to UC Berkeley? I don't think the children of the growers went to Berkeley. They might've gone to Fresno State, but you didn't go to Berkeley!

And so Fran goes to Berkeley, and her parents see that it's an extension of her education so they supported. But to go to Berkeley was to go to another planet for her! Imagine going from Visalia, in the forties, to the Bay Area. What do they call it, Babylon by the Sea, I think? It was an incredible experience for her. But she adjusted, and she did well. And then an incredible part of her story, and that was not only going to Berkeley and adjusting to Berkeley and doing well at UC Berkeley, but then, she marries an older World War II veteran, some twenty years older than her, and they get married in her junior year and she has her first child in her senior year. So here she's got all these experiences that she's entering, but she's still doing well, and she graduates well academically, and then she goes on to a very successful teaching and administrative career in the San Francisco School District.

But for me, what was attractive was the years up and through Berkeley. That was an amazing coming-of-age story, and I knew, very early on, that's the story I wanted to capture. And people have said, "Well why didn't you do the rest?" And I said, "Because to me, what was so special was those early years, how you can see this young girl's aspiring to go beyond the farm worker experience, and to make something more of herself." And she was able to do it, and crossing all these different borders: getting married, and her husband is of Polish American background so that's an adjustment, and having her first child, before she's even graduated, and so forth. And so people ask, "Well are you ever going to do a sequel?" And I said, "No, I'm never going to do a sequel, but if Fran wants to do her own sequel, that's up to her."

But that was a testimonio; that was a lot of hours of oral history. After I had read the paper done by her niece, through her niece, Marlese, I got in contact with Fran, because I knew that this deserved a bigger project. Especially having done the Bert Corona, I knew I could do a bigger project. So I invited her down. We spent about a week, or at least five days here at UCSB and we began, and then the following summer I did the same. And then, we would fill it in, different periods. But what was interesting about this testimonio, it was a collaborative process even more so than the Bert Corona one, because unlike Bert, who just basically, ultimately read the final manuscript and approved it, especially for any corrections, but he wasn't involved in the stage of writing it and organizing it and all of that. I did that.

But Fran, although I did organize the chapters and so forth, she wanted to see, or I encouraged her to go through the transcripts. So as I was getting the tapes transcribed, I would send her the raw transcripts, and that was so important because her memory would be rekindled, things that she didn't tell me, and so she would write down additional things there on the transcript. And then as I finished a chapter, I would send it to her, and she would remember still other things, and pen them in, and then, as she'd tell my students, as a good English teacher, she would also correct even my own writing. [laughter]

So she was a collaborator all through the process, that's why I decided, because she's the subject, and she collaborated, I would put her name first and then my name came second, although I was the producer, in a sense. But it's a great story, and I use it a lot in my classes. I just finished using it in the fall in our big Introduction to Chicano studies with 500 students. The students love it. They love her story. A lot of our students, of whatever ethnic background, can identify with her coming-of-age stories, her aspirations.

There's a part of the story that's very poignant. Her boyfriend, when she's in middle school, her boyfriend Peter, who was in high school, and I think never finished high school, they had a very strong relation, a love relationship, but a respectful relationship, and Fran always has said that Peter was the love of her life. But, as she told me and I wrote in the book, in her words, that she knew that that relationship could not continue, because that relationship would ultimately lead to them getting married. He probably would not go much beyond high school, maybe would be a farm worker, I'm sure, like his father. She didn't want that. She wanted more in life. So, even as a young teenager, she was thinking already ahead, so she breaks the relationship with Peter. But she will always maintain, even after her marriage to Ed Tywoniak, that Peter was still always the love of her life.

And that's very moving, and the students, you know, react to that. And so, I play a little bit of devil's advocate sometimes in the class like I did in the fall, and I spent a little time seeing what questions they have about *Migrant Daughter*. And then I said, "What do you guys think about her relationship with Peter?" And that always elicits some interesting responses, somewhat

gendered responses, because the young women in class, some of them of a different ethnic background, will say, "Well," she said, "I had a relationship like that in high school, and I broke it off as well because I knew my boyfriend wasn't going to go to college and so forth." So it's almost some of them sympathize and identify with Fran.

Some of the guys will say, sometimes they'll say, "Well, I think Fran should've given Peter more of a chance, and maybe he would've gone to college or she might've convinced him to go to college." So they, some of the guys, are a little bit more feeling that that relation should have stayed, so. But it's very poignant—and I maintain that if there's any kind of more of a literary quality to it, it was really to Fran's intervention. She really worked that manuscript and gave it a higher literary quality, I believe, so that was a co-testimonio in the best sense of the word.

02-02:22:00

Holmes: Well, and of course, we're happy to announce that those tapes are now, I think, gifted or will be gifted and housed at the Bancroft Library. Your next testimonio was actually, to bring it back here to UCSB, with Luis Leal, and this was as you titled it, an auto/biography—

02-02:22:25

García: Well, yes, I did that, and Professor Leal, of course, as I mentioned, we got to meet him when he came to retire here in the mid-seventies, wonderful man. He was a real mentor to all of us, as young Chicano intellectuals, because he had already been an accomplished intellectual, and he was a Mexican immigrant, but he had gone to college here in the country, in the US. He went to Northwestern, and then got his PhD at the University of Chicago. He became an American citizen when he married his wife of Polish American background, and as he said, "When I became an American citizen, with all the consequences, I was drafted into World War II in the military." And he saw service in the Philippines, and in the re-taking of the Philippines, and then came back, finished his PhD at University of Chicago, taught for a little bit of a time at Mississippi, remembers seeing William Faulkner walking the streets of Oxford, and he taught for a while at Emory in Atlanta. But his main years were at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, as he became a major specialist in both Mexican and Latin American literature.

Early on, already into the late sixties, he was beginning to champion Chicano literature, and that there was something called Chicano literature, and he would trace it all the way back to the Spanish Colonial period of the Southwest. Those documents left by those Spanish settlers, that's as much American literature as the same kind of documents left by the English and others in the Thirteen Colonies. And so that needs to be integrated; that's American literature also, even though it's in Spanish. So, he was a wonderful mentor to all of us, and for a few years, as I mentioned, he filled in as director of the research center.

And so, I after having done these testimonios—Bert Corona and *Migrant Daughter*—I approached him about doing his oral history. But I had a sense early on that this was going to be a slightly different testimonio because I had a sense that he didn't really want to talk too much about his personal life, his family, much, so I geared it more to a kind of academic testimonio, an intellectual testimonio. And I also differentiate, because I decided strategically to do it as a dialogue between me and Professor Leal, so that it really was an interview-format testimonio, where you saw it literally: my questions, and even some cases my own commentary, and then his responses.

So, strategically, it was a different form of a testimonio. In a way, it revealed what a testimonio is, where you have the interlocutor asking questions and making comments, and you have the subject responding, but in a classic testimonio, you don't see the interlocutor. It's behind the scenes, but here, it's all there, and you see how a testimonio is produced, in the raw form, in a sense. And so that's how I did it, because I knew this was going to be more talking about his academic career, and his own intellectual evolution over his many works and writings that incorporated Mexican literature, Latin American literature, and then his work in Chicano literature.

So that's how we did it, and that was published by University of Texas Press, and I spent many, many wonderful hours at his home, not too far from here, interviewing. We did it in English, even though Spanish was his primary language, because I knew I obviously was going to publish it in English. I wanted it in English, because I didn't want to have to spend the time then having to translate it and spending more time. But his English was good; it was effective. So we did it in English, and I enjoyed doing his story, because I felt that this was a good contribution to I guess what we call Chicano intellectual history, the story of an academic, an intellectual. But it was a different style of testimonio.

02-02:26:45
Holmes: Well, in particular, a Chicano intellectual from really the early years, right?

02-02:26:53
García: Yeah. He really is part of that Mexican American generation, absolutely, yeah. Bert Corona was really the Mexican American generation too, but he was like Cesar, kind of—he bridged generations. So, he really was part of the Mexican American political and historical generation, and biologically he was situated there, but he crossed over into the Chicano political generation. He became Chicano too, and there are those instances where you see this bridging of political and historical generations, even though biologically, a Bert Corona is not part of the biological Chicano generation, but politically and historically, he bridges over into the next generation, and Professor Leal, in some ways, represents the same, yeah.

02-02:27:56
Holmes: Well, speaking of Bert Corona, you went from starting off doing testimonios with a major political figure, within both the community and also, laying the groundwork later on, of the movement itself. You then come back to that again in the book *Blowout! Sal Castro and the Chicano Struggle for Educational Justice*, which was published in 2011, co-authoring with Sal. Here you again tell the story of another prominent and very powerful figure. How did you get in contact with Sal?

02-02:28:34
García: Well, I knew who Sal Castro was, and I knew, of course, about the walkouts, the blowouts, and in the late 1990s, I put together my course on the history of the Chicano movement, and in one of those early courses, I reached out and contacted Sal Castro, and he agreed to come speak to my class. And, I think it was at that moment, if you will, as I was observing him and so forth, that I felt that his story needed to be told, the same thing that happened with the Bert Corona. Bert Corona came to a Cinco de Mayo event here. He spoke to the students here by our campus center, and I remember thinking to myself, his story needs to be told, and that's why I approached him that day. "Bert, maybe we should"—I mean at first, I thought I was going to do a biography, remember, but at least, I wanted to maybe do something on Bert Corona, and he was very supportive.

The same thing with Sal. He came to my class, and after the class, I said, "Sal, maybe we should work on your story," and told him about the Bert Corona—he knew about it—and we literally went over still to Building 406. Did I have my office there? I'm not sure that I had my office there anymore, but I think the research center was still there, so, we actually started doing some at least general interviewing, and then we did it much more systematically. And we did it mostly here at UCSB because subsequent to that first time that he came to guest lecture, I would keep inviting him, either to my History of Chicano movement, my Twentieth-Century Chicano History, or when I taught the bigger Introduction to Chicano studies. So on all these visits, we would then spend the rest of the day doing interviews. There was one occasion in one summer where I actually put him up at our older faculty club, and we worked for five straight days so we got a lot of work done.

But it was wonderful, because he had great stories, a great storyteller, very funny, very humorous guy. And so, after I don't know, forty, fifty hours of interviews, transcribing, I began to write it when I took sabbatical, I think in 2006 maybe, when I was on sabbatical in Santa Fe, and I began to put together his book, his story. Sal is bigger than life. He fills a room. He sucks the energy out of the room. He's just charismatic. Bert Corona's charismatic; Sal Castro was very charismatic too, and I could see how he inspired those students to walk out. I tell a story that, you know, it's like seeing him lecturing in my class, especially my big classes, so articulate, so charismatic, so committed, so emotional, so, you know, just in the way that he would talk about the

walkouts, I always said to myself, "Gee, I'd walk out with him right now! I don't care what the—I'll walk out right now with him."

So, incredible person, but I wanted to make sure that I got his voice, translated his voice onto the page. So, as I would write each chapter or certainly sections of a chapter, I would go over my tape recordings and follow along in the transcript, either filling in, but just getting his voice into my head, and then I'd start. Was I handwriting then? I think I was now doing computer, I think, but his voice was in my head, and people have said to me, "You've captured his voice!" And to me, that's a great compliment, because that's what I set out to do. He's very emotional, and he's very funny and great humor. He'd tell a lot of funny jokes and so forth, but he used humor to teach as well, and I could see what a great teacher he was. But, it was similar to the Bert Corona book in that I did all the writing, Sal maybe saw some of it along the way. He certainly went through the final draft and he was okay with it, he supported it, and all that.

When you're doing these testimonios, and especially, I remember, with Sal, and even with Fran, you have to remind them, "This is a long process. This book is not going to just be out in a month or two. It's a long process of interviewing, transcribing, writings," and I always had to counsel, like in the case of Sal, because he would ask me every time he'd come, "When is the book coming out?" I said, "Well Sal, we're heading there, but you've got to be a little bit patient." But it worked out very well, but this was again, this is still a third version, in a way, of a testimonio on my part.

Sal always would tell me during the interviews, "I don't want to come out as somehow being at the center of everything, especially with respect to the blowouts." In my estimation, he was at the center. I don't think the blowouts would have occurred without his inspiration. He gave courage and inspiration to those kids to have one of their teachers, one of the few Chicano teachers, who encouraged them, who loved them, who gave everything to them, who was teaching them about Chicano history as much as he could in his classes to make them feel good about themselves. He said, "These kids in these high schools in East LA, they felt like strangers in their own schools. There was nothing in those schools that spoke to their experiences, and the teachers would talk down to their parents, treat them like children and so forth, and I tried to build them up, give them a sense of self-esteem, because," he said "it's Psychology 101. If a student, kid doesn't feel good about themselves, they're going to fail. They're going to drop out, and I didn't want that to happen, and I wanted them to think about that they were going to go to college." He kept drumming into their heads, "You're going to college. You're going to college." He tried to do whatever he could to change the nature of the legacy of the Mexican schools, still alive into the 1960s, maybe now called inner-city schools, but there were still the old Mexican schools, inferior, segregated, maybe de facto segregated, but still with the inferiority tacked to that segregated condition.

So maybe because of what Sal was saying, he didn't want to be seen as a centerpiece, so I decided to do interviews with some of the former students, and I interviewed them, not as any way as extensively, and so then I began; I then strategically incorporated some of their voice within Sal's narrative. And that gave it a little bit more of a collective voice, but it was different, so it's a different form of testimonio. I also integrated some newspaper statements about the walkouts and so forth. And so, it came out as a different form of testimonio, where you hear other voices, and then I integrate some newspaper stuff, and statements and all that. In a way, it's a more innovative testimonio, maybe more creative in a way as well. Certainly, by integrating these voices, especially around the blowouts, the walkouts, it does create like a little bit more of a sense of collectivity.

But like I said earlier, or repeat what I said earlier off camera, I approached North Carolina to see whether they'd be interested, and the first thing that Chuck Grench, my editor, said: "Well, but who's Sal Castro?" I said, "Well that's why you've got to publish this story!" That book has done very well. It has sold a lot, both in cloth and now in paper. And then not only did they do an electronic version, they did an enhanced electronic book, which I worked a lot on one summer, enhanced meaning that you can access it electronically but it has films; it has film video. Some of my audio interview is integrated there. You have a lot of other stuff that's integrated, so it's a really different text, very different text. But it's been very successful.

So it came out 2011, and Sal died in 2013, so, the book came out at a time when he could enjoy it, and he and I spoke at different campuses, bookstores, and we had a lot of fun doing that. I used to say, "Sal and I are like a Las Vegas act: I'm the so-called teaser, and he's the big cheese." He's the big act, because he's, again, he's bigger than life. He's bigger than life, and he'd have people in the palm of his hands and then with his humor, he would just have them rolling in laughter. And I talked about doing it, how I did it, and sometimes I would read some choice sections, but then he came in. Oh, he just overwhelmed. So, that was a lot of fun, and of course he died in 2013. Last time I saw Sal was when I taught a class that summer, summer of 2012, and then he was diagnosed with thyroid cancer—I don't think Sal ever went to a doctor, I don't think he took good care of himself—and stage four, metastasized. I never saw him again, because outside of his immediate family, he did not want anyone else to see him as he deteriorated. He wanted us to remember him the way he came to my class, and how we saw him in the films of the walkouts.

And so he died later in the spring of 2013, and he had the time, and the forethought, to plan out his entire funeral. He wanted it at the big cathedral in L.A., not that he didn't have his criticism of the institutional church, but he felt he deserved a funeral in the cathedral, especially for the people to come and so forth. But he then chose the people who would give eulogies, and some of them were his former students, like Paula Crisostomo and others, and of

course, his wife Charlotte. But then he asked me, indirectly via Charlotte, to be one of the people who would eulogize him, but to put him in historical perspective. That was an incredible opportunity, and I was very, very honored.

And so here was a packed, the downtown cathedral, recently built. There must have been over a thousand people there. It was like a reunion and so forth, a lot of his former students and other people from the Chicano movement in LA, community people. A lot of contemporary politicians were there; some of them were running for office right there, that very same time. And some of the Brown Berets were there, with their uniforms. And so I did what I did in about ten minutes, and I worked very hard on it. The other eulogies, of course, were more personal, about what the former students remembered about Sal as a teacher, and so forth, but I put it in political, historical terms. And the people that were there, they were very appreciative of the more personal statements, but a lot of them were old veterans of the movement and so forth, and they wanted some red meat, and I gave them that red meat, as I talked about Sal and his role in the walkouts and so forth.

And I went through this almost like it was a litany, almost like a chant, and I said, "And Wilson walked out. And then Lincoln walked out. And then Garfield." And by then, people are clapping. They're yelling, "Chicano power, viva Sal Castro!" People were standing, applauding, as I went through that litany. And like, as I look back on the tape, on my eulogy, that it was at least three or four, at least four times during my ten-minute speech eulogy that people clapped, and you don't see that in a Catholic Mass. People are not active like that. And I knew that they weren't clapping for me. They were clapping for Sal, and it was very moving.

I had to kind of catch myself, because it was very moving for me as well, but I said, "No, this is for Sal." And there must have been a couple of standing ovations as I went through some of this history, but the last one, I finished by saying that "Sal Castro," something to the effect, "Sal Castro, he's not only a giant in Chicano history, but he's a giant, as he always said"—because he always said, "We are American history"—and I said, "he's a giant in American history." The entire congregation stood up in a standing ovation that lasted, I don't know, two or three minutes. Even the little priest was clapping.

But again, it wasn't for me, it was for Sal. And that's what he wanted. He wanted someone who would talk about him in terms of what he had done politically, I guess, and he had planned it all. There was a Mariachi Mass, you know, with the caravan to the cemetery in East LA. The mariachis were there. And one of the last things I had asked him in doing the interviews, I said, "Sal, what do you want your legacy to be? What do you want to be remembered"—he said, "I just want on my tombstone to read something like "Sal Castro, teacher." And that's what's on his tombstone, "Sal Castro, teacher." So, that was very moving, and I was very sad not to have Sal around anymore.

02-02:44:03
Holmes: I want to move on to your next big monograph, but before we do, I'd like to actually take the opportunity to point out that these testimonios, along with your other work, your use of oral history was recognized in 2016 for the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Oral History Association, in recognition of your contribution to the field, as well as contribution to expanding oral history. Indeed, I think your testimonios are testimony to that.

02-02:44:34
García: Well, thanks for saying that. I was very moved and honored when I was informed that the Oral History Association, which is a national organization, was giving me this award in oral history, but it's their award in oral history linked to social justice, and that made it even more special, because I feel that so much of my work, if not all my work, has been geared toward the issues of social justice. And certainly, the testimonios have certainly been connected with issues of social justice: Bert Corona, Sal Castro, and the others.

So, I was very honored by that, and it just kind of made it all worthwhile. And by then, it wasn't so much that I was constrained logistically anymore, but that I felt that now, not only the power of the testimonio, but that these were kind of original contributions to Chicano historiography. And so, it's not that I wasn't doing other books. Like for example, before the Sal Castro book, I did my monograph on Chicano Catholic history.

02-02:45:59
Holmes: Yes, that is where I wanted to head next.

02-02:46:02
García: So I kind of brokered another field, in a way, because very little had been done on Chicano Catholic history, and I guess my own Catholic background, probably, in a way, was part of orienting me in that way. I decided to do a monograph on Chicano Catholic history, and again, it was similar in organization to my Mexican American generation book because there were a series of case studies of Chicano Catholic history, of individuals or groups or leaders, although I have some chapters that deal more with Chicano Catholic culture. It had a lot of diversity in it, but it did break new grounds, because we didn't really have much in the area of Chicano historiography specifically on religious history. So, I enjoyed doing that, and it, because it's something that I've since then continued in terms that like, my forthcoming book on Father Luis Olivares, that we need to integrate religious history into the field of Chicano history, because we need to; it's an important theme.

What's been interesting, as I see Chicano studies curriculum, Latino Studies curriculum develop, is that there's a huge gap in that curriculum. Most of these programs have nothing, no classes on religion. How can you study an ethnic group like this or any ethnic group without paying some attention to the role of religion, for good or bad? But that's an important element in people's culture. So, I think I was hopeful that book on Chicano Catholic history,

called *Católicos: Resistance and Affirmation in Chicano Catholic History*, would help to influence more development, and it has to some degree. I think we're seeing a field developing in terms of Chicano/Latino religious studies, if you will, and so hopefully the work that I've done—and in some ways continue to do—helps to influence that.

02-02:48:36
Holmes: Was there a personal aspect to this? I mean there's, in every book, there's a personal link to a topic that an author is writing, but in thinking of the book on investigating the liberation theology in the Catholic Church within the Chicano community, was there a personal tie, or a budding relationship between you and the Catholic Church as well? Was there a personal dynamic there, or no?

02-02:49:07
García: Well, I knew about liberation theology, and was attracted to it. Certainly, I think by the 1980s, maybe, I was beginning to delve more into reading on liberation theology, and some of that is applied in my *Católicos* book. As a matter of fact, in that book I have a chapter on Father Olivares in the sanctuary movement, which laid the foundation for the book that'll be out in the fall. And of course, Father Olivares was a liberationist, and he was a devotee, if that's the right term, of liberation theology, reminding people that the Church has to prioritize the poor and the oppressed—and of course, that came out of Latin America given the element of poverty and oppression in Latin America, and elements within the Catholic Church in the 1960s, as it began to promote what ultimately is referred to as liberation theology, and that had some influence on this side of the border.

In my *Católicos* book, I have a chapter on a group in LA during the period of the Chicano movement, that called themselves "Católicos Por La Raza," Catholics for the People. That was an organization in 1969 in LA, in Los Angeles, and they organized to take on the institutional Catholic Church for not doing enough with helping in the East LA community, in the barrios, and again, also focusing on the fact that the Church, which was a powerful and rich church in the LA archdiocese, should be using its resources to deal with issues of poverty and oppression in communities like East LA. So they challenged the Church, and demonstrated against the Church, and out of that came some changes within the institutional Church there to begin to do a bit more along those lines, but they were influenced directly, indirectly, by liberation theology.

So, to me, that was very attractive. I was raised a Catholic, and I went to Catholic schools as we mentioned, both elementary and high school, and that's certainly part of my background and my cultural background and socialization. But for me, now, to be a Catholic, and I call myself a Catholic, but to be a Catholic is to be, for me, to be a liberationist. To me, that's the only relevant way of being a Catholic, if you are a liberationist, meaning that you

apply or accept liberation theology, not in an abstract way, but at least that you support causes that deal with issues of poverty and oppression, and that that has to be prioritized. A priest to me is more attractive politically if they are liberationist.

It's very boring if I go to Mass and I hear a priest giving their homilies and sermons and they're only talking about personal salvation and personal sin, it's all right up to a point, but it's not what I'd like to hear, in contrast to Father Olivares who, by all accounts, as a liberationist, always linked his homilies, his reading of the Bible, his interpretation of the biblical message to liberationist themes: the social issues, the plight of immigrants, the plight of the refugees coming in from Central America in the eighties and so forth. He always linked the two, and to me, that's great. That's what I would like to hear a lot more [laughter] in our churches. You don't hear enough of that.

And so, that's why I ultimately decided to do the biography of Father Olivares, and so yeah, so doing that book on Católicos moved me in that new direction as well, so that was also a kind of way of revising. Some have written, as I look back on Chicano historiography, and they try to group things very neatly. Like here, you have that first senior, that initial group of which I'm lumped into, and then you have a middle group, and a later group, in a sense that as you move up generationally, this is where you see the progress in Chicano historiography. And I'm sitting there—"Well wait a minute. So what am I, kind of chopped liver? I mean, what am I, I'm just sitting still? I'm not dead yet!"

But in a way, I've pioneered a lot of these fields, and I might not be linked to the middle group like in Vicki Ruiz's group in a sense, or more recent Chicano historians, but I have to say, I think I've led in all of these different periods, and I haven't stood still, and I don't repeat myself. I mean, yeah, I've done several testimonios, but many of them are different types of testimonios, and I promote biographical studies because we need biographies. We need the stories of a lot of our key leaders. And so, my testimonios, like with Bert Corona, Sal Castro, in some ways are part of leadership studies, and I think that's important, not from an elitist perspective, but the importance that our students and others have to realize, that we have produced, in Chicano/Latino history, a lot of great leaders, civil rights and political leaders, such as Raymond Telles being elected mayor in '57 of El Paso, a huge break. And that gives, I think, our students a sense, "Hey, we have made American history." As Sal Castro said, "We are American history," and we made it. We've not just been victims of that history. We have actually produced that history, and fought against oppression and poverty and so forth.

So, yeah, I promote leadership studies because I think we need them, but it's like, we're still waiting for that big biography of Dolores Huerta. Who's going to do the big biography of Dolores Huerta? I don't know that I ever thought about doing a biography of Dolores Huerta, not that she is not deserving, but

I've had so many other projects. But as I began teaching my course on the history of the Chicano movement, there was a lot of books that I could use on Cesar, and a lot more, as you know, that have come out, but almost nothing on Dolores. There are books on Dolores, but they're aimed more for a middle-school level, I think, and so there's, as far as I could see, there was nothing that one could really use at the university and college level.

So I said, "Well, okay, I can't commit myself to a biography of Dolores Huerta," which—that's going to be [laughs] a lot of work. When you think of Dolores's career, and all of the different archives, and the range of people that one would have to interview, I couldn't because I already was committed to other projects as well. So I put together, as you know, an edited volume on Dolores, where I brought together articles on her, journalistic pieces, magazine pieces; interviews with Dolores, including two that I did for that anthology; statements of her appearing before state legislature in Sacramento, or speeches that she gave at universities and things like that that had been recorded and then written up [Mario T. García, ed., *A Dolores Huerta Reader* (University of New Mexico Press, 2008)].

So I brought all of that together, so at least that we would have an anthology that could be used at the university level. I think that's a contribution, this book on Dolores Huerta, and really, when you think about it, it's the only thing that's useful still on Dolores Huerta at the university and college level. There's nothing else, because we're still waiting for that big biography. I tell my graduate students, "Whoever does that big biography of Dolores Huerta, it's going to skyrocket their academic career." But we're still waiting for it.

02-02:58:12

Holmes: Absolutely. I'm sure there are some in the works, but a big project indeed. Mario, I wanted to transition a little bit to recent works that came out in 2014 and 2015, respectively, and those in a sense kind of seem to bring together your generational and testimonio approaches. The first book *The Latino Generation: Voices of the New America*.

02-02:58:43

García: Yeah, because again, now having developed kind of a generational approach that people seem to recognize—that doesn't mean that they all accept it, but at least, the important thing about using this generational approach, as I've often said, is that it gives us a sense of periodization, evolving history and so forth. So we've gone way beyond McWilliams, and to me, looking at historical political generations is a way of seeing how history changes, how history is made, and I'm interested in seeing the evolution in the case of the Chicano experience over time. So to me, looking at historical political generations gives me that sense of change: new issues, new struggles, new communities.

So having worked, as I reflected back, on the Immigrant Generation in the early part of the twentieth century, what I then subsequently classified that

period, and then much more consciously dealing with the Mexican American Generation of the thirties, forties, and fifties, and certainly, with the Sal Castro book, bridging what's basically the walkouts into the Chicano Generation, I wanted to look further beyond that, into the more contemporary period. How can we characterize the experiences in the late twentieth century and bridging that into the new millennium? Is there a way to kind of capture that? Well, I don't know that I've completely done that, but I decided to try, and so I wanted to get a sense of what I then called the Latino Generation, which is the Millennials, Chicano style.

So I started approaching that by interviewing a lot of my students, contemporary students. I started that project in the 2000s, and they were all Millennials, were born, mostly, in the eighties, and so they're coming of age into the new millennium. And I did a number of interviews over a period of a few years with some of my own students in my own classes, and I would just kind of choose them randomly, as I observed them in class. So, I did close to about twenty interviews, and then began to write them up again, as oral histories, as life stories, but within one narrative, so they were like mini testimonios. And they were life stories as much as one could do a life story with someone still in college, and so they're kind of coming-of-age narratives.

And, I was very struck by the experiences that they related about what they knew about their immigrant parents. So they talked about conditions in Mexico, there were two or three from Central America so they talked about those experiences, and then what they knew about their families resettling in the United States, and of course, their own early memories about their early education, elementary school, and then going on to the middle, high schools. I asked them a lot also about family life, and cultural life, like the girls, the women, that they have *quinceañeras* and so forth and so on; what were cultural influences as they became bilingual, bicultural; and you could see that relationship. They said, "Well, we liked the American movies, but we also watched Mexican soap operas, especially with our parents and sometimes, because they were watching them, we watched them alongside with them."

So, they were very fascinating, I thought, life stories, coming-of-age stories. So I put them together, and I approached again, North Carolina. We got it done, the Sal Castro book, and Chuck Grench, my editor, expressed interest in it, and so I sent him the manuscript. In the end, we narrowed it down, I think, to about eleven or twelve stories, and that became *The Latino Generation*: *Voices of the New America*. And so that's how I kind of introduced these mini testimonios, that these were the voices of a new generation of Latinos, some Mexican Americans, some Central Americans, but who now for different reasons were at least politically or socially or culturally identified at a larger level as Latinos, and coming together, at least at that political, cultural, social level as Latinos, which is not to say that they didn't see themselves as Mexican or Salvadorian. But, they were now in a situation where they could

now conceptualize themselves beyond their immediate ethnic identity. They could now see themselves or reinvent themselves as Latinos.

I mean, you now have communities, let's take Los Angeles as an example, where you have Central Americans, in many cases, living alongside Mexican Americans; you have intermarriages between these different groups. I've met a number of my students who, one parent is Mexican, one parent is Salvadoran, and that was also true in the stories that I was doing. We know that they're being discussed as Latinos, right? Commercials and businesses, they don't market to Mexicans or Salvadorians or Puerto Ricans; they market to Latinos, right?

02-03:05:12
Holmes: Yeah, absolutely.

02-03:05:14
García: And we have an extensive mass media network, Spanish-speaking network, both television and radios, and they're not pitching to specific ethnic niches; they're pitching to a larger, inventive Latino community. And so, for a lot of reasons, this new generation, Millennials, are motivated to conceptualize themselves as a Latino generation, as Latinos, not just as Mexican or Salvadorian. That's very different from the earlier generations. You didn't have that influence to kind of see yourself at a broader level. Closest that we came to was that Spanish-Speaking Congress in the late 1930s that I mentioned, led by Josefina Fierro. They were trying to see themselves hopefully as a larger organization of, as they called them, Spanish speaking, that would include Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. Well, they never fully developed that, but now I think there's a lot of other factors involved that orient the new generation, my students today, the Millennials, to identify at a broader level as Latinos.

So in a way, my own work in Chicano history has now bridged into a new millennium. So I've gone from, well, if you go back to that early work that I did as a graduate student on the Californios of San Diego in the 1850s, I bridged a portion of the nineteenth century; and then my dissertation was published, first book on *Desert Immigrants* does go back to connect with the late nineteenth century; and then my subsequent work has carried me pretty much through the twentieth century: Immigrant Generation, Mexican American Generation, Chicano Generation; and now I've broached into the new century. So, my work has covered all that period. In part, it's because when I finished my book on *Desert Immigrants*, and you know, people began to see themselves in certain periods—so, we have historians of the American Revolution, and we have historians of the Civil War, and we have historians of the Progressive era. We have historians of the New Deal, et cetera. Everyone finds a niche, right? And this is how all of their work, subsequent, are all within that period.

And I think I recognized early on, I can't afford to be, in that sense, a niche historian. [laughter] I just invented that term, by the way. I didn't want to be a niche historian, because there's so much in Chicano history that we needed to know, and I needed to know. I couldn't just focus on that period, that *Desert Immigrants*, late nineteenth, early twentieth, because what about the rest? I mean, how much of us were doing work about the rest of the twentieth century, and if I didn't do it, who would? And I'm glad that I did because I moved into new periods. I could see how Chicano history was evolving and changing by going from generation to generation.

And of course, needless to say, it made me a better teacher, because as I moved on forward, I was bringing all this new material to my classes, that I could speak with some authority about certainly the beginning of the twentieth century in terms of the Immigrant Generation, then moving forward to the rest of the twentieth century, I was bringing a lot of my own research. I wasn't indebted, having stayed in a niche field, to other historians to give me information about later periods, because I wasn't sure that they were going to do that work. Who was going to do that work?

And maybe that's somewhat selfish or egotistical, but, I think it also relates to what we said earlier, and that goes back to my athletic background. I've always been very competitive, in a sense, I hope in a positive sense, that I want to break new grounds, I want to break into new fields, and so forth and so on, and I think I've kind of done that. I don't want to be seen, as I said earlier, as someone kind of whose time has past. How is that possible? I'm coming out with still a big biography on Father Olivares which continues to break into new fields of faith politics, that we need to integrate into our understanding of the Chicano Latino experience.

So, yeah, I developed and conceptualized *The Latino Generation*, and hopefully that gives us kind of again, a periodization. And then my book on the Chicano Generation [*The Chicano Generation: Testimonios of the Movement*] was kind of going back a little bit more. Of course, that's my generation, as we've talked already, that's when I come of political age. That's, in a sense, when I come of intellectual age as well, and so, I've always been fascinated by the Chicano movement. Bert Corona took me, in part, into that Chicano movement because of his own cross-generational bridge. His work on immigrants, organizing undocumented immigrants takes place during the period of the movement. The issue of the undocumented immigrant becomes an issue that the Chicano movement also incorporates. Well that's heavily indebted to Bert Corona's work. And then of course, the Sal Castro book was another one who bridges generations, but of course, best known for the walkouts, the blowouts, and that's central to the movement.

02-03:11:32
Holmes: Yeah, absolutely—in 1968

02-03:11:35
García: But, conceptualizing *The Chicano Generation* was clearly a book where the subjects that I chose were clearly and central in the Chicano Generation. They were the Chicano Generation. And that's a book that has a long history to it, and I began conceptualizing that even when I was working on the Bert Corona book. That Chicano Generation book, in conceptualizing and beginning to do the oral histories that would feed into it, actually began in the early nineties.

02-03:12:15
Holmes: Oh wow.

02-03:12:17
García: I had taken on other projects as we talked about, but I never abandoned it, and then into the 2000s, I began to write it, at the same time that I was dealing with these other projects, that included Sal's book and the *Católicos* book, and then eventually put it together. And so that's a book, that again, it's still another different form of testimonio, because it is three testimonios in one. True, the Latino Generation book, of course, has several testimonios, but here, you have three very well-developed testimonios, because these are not coming of age. This takes them through much of their life history, but centered on their activism in the Chicano movement.

So, I knew very quickly, as I began to conceptualize that project, that Raul Ruiz would be one of them, and I knew I would do it in LA because it was manageable. I could do the interviews in LA, and LA, of course, was, well, some have said that it, in many ways, was the political capital of the Chicano movement, not only because of the size of the Chicano population, but every major activity of the movement was manifested in Los Angeles, from student politics to La Raza Unida to the antiwar movement. You name it, it was all there. Raul Ruiz was one of those subjects I knew very early on. I knew Raul. He was a colleague in Chicano studies at Northridge but I knew his work, somewhat in the movement, and of course, he was best known as the publisher and editor of *La Raza* magazine, which was in many ways the foremost Chicano movement publication, not only in LA but throughout.

So I knew I wanted Raul, and in doing his story, I learned a great deal. I call him a Renaissance man, because Raul was engaged in all the different activities of the movement. He's involved as a college student in helping Sal Castro organize the high school students. He's already publishing a newspaper called *Chicano Student Movement*, which wrote a lot about the issues in the schools. He's involved in Católicos Por La Raza that I mentioned. He's involved in the Chicano antiwar movement. He documents the Chicano antiwar movement, and his classic pictures of the shooting at the Silver Dollar Café that led to the killing of Ruben Salazar, the most prominent Chicano/Latino journalists of his time, that came in the aftermath of the police violence against the moratorium there in East LA on August 29, 1970 that literally broke up that demonstration of maybe as many as 20,000. Just, an army of county sheriffs backed up by LAPD destroyed it, because, in my

estimation, and others, they were not going to allow even for one single day for Chicanos to rule the streets of East LA. Uh-uh. It was the police that ruled the streets. They weren't going to allow the Chicanos to have their day.

02-03:15:54
Holmes: A person I interviewed who was involved with that, he likes to label it "The Police Riots."

02-03:15:59
García: Oh, absolutely, it was a police riot. It was a nonviolent demonstration and march. There were older people there. There were families, there were kids there at the park which is now Ruben Salazar Park, and the police used the pretext that some Chicanos had gone into a nearby liquor store and stole some stuff, and so they then chased them into the park. And I tell my students, "Okay, fair enough, let's even assume that that's true, and it's not clear that it's true, but you need a whole army of county sheriffs backed up by LAPD to go after two or three guys, who just maybe stole a six pack? Do you need a whole army? What was that whole army doing? Waiting for those guys to do something in that liquor store? Uh-uh, they were there for some other reason. They were there to destroy the moratorium."

And then of course, one of the victims—three people killed that day, one of them was Ruben Salazar, who had been writing for the *LA Times* covering the Chicano movement. And he was writing a very important column on Chicanos in the *LA Times*, but then he also was a news director, had taken on a new job as news director of KMEX, Channel 34, at that time, the only Spanish-language TV station, and he was covering the moratorium for the TV station.

And so after the riot, the police riot, they went back down on Whittier Boulevard, which had been the main artery of the march, and they went to that bar called the Silver Dollar Café, and shortly thereafter, a squad car of county sheriffs shows up, and Raul Ruiz just happened to be right across the street. He had also come up, back on Whittier, and he noticed the police arriving there outside the Silver Dollar, and he said, "Well, something's going on." He starts, click, click, click with his camera, because he's covering the moratorium for *La Raza*. And he sees a cop, for example. Some people come out and he takes a picture. They're forcing these people to go back into the café, and he doesn't actually capture when the county sheriff shoots at least two tear gas projectiles that go right into the café.

One of them, according to the autopsy, struck Salazar in the head, probably instantly killing him. And I guess, I remember reading about the autopsy, but I guess they couldn't have like either glazed his head enough or it went through part of his head. It didn't destroy the head because at the funeral, there's an open casket and you can see, there's a Ruben Salazar head there. However, it struck him, it killed him, and he became an instant martyr of the Chicano movement of course, even though he didn't see himself as a movement activist

or as a movement writer. But this death, it elevated him to a kind of sainthood in the movement.

But Raul was there taking pictures. He was a candidate of La Raza Unida Party in East LA in the early seventies. So he was kind of a Renaissance type in the sense that he was all over the place. So he was a natural for this book. I eventually decided that another natural was Rosalio Muñoz, because he was the key organizer of the Chicano antiwar movement. And with the National Moratorium taking place on August 29, 1970, Rosalio was a key figure in the Chicano movement in LA. I knew I wanted to have the story of a female activist, and I think it was Rosalio who said, "Why don't you interview Gloria Arellanes?" I hadn't heard of Gloria Arellanes. Well who's Gloria Arellanes? Well, she was involved with the Brown Berets in LA which was the national chapter of the Brown Berets, and she was the only female so-called minister, because the Berets was a hierarchical organization, patterned after the Black Panther Party. And so they had a prime minister, David Sanchez, and they had different minister, and Gloria, of the females who were part of the Brown Berets, she was selected as the minister of finance and communications.

So I approached Gloria and she was very supportive. Great, powerful story, the stories that she told of her role in the Brown Berets. It was a lot of tensions between the men and the women, and there was sexism, and gender discrimination, but the women held in there and they played very important roles. The Brown Berets published a newspaper called *La Causa*; the women did almost all the work. They did, putting the paper together. They wrote up some of the stories. Gloria wrote some of the stories.

I think, the most important contribution that the Brown Berets did in terms of the East LA community, they started a health clinic, a free clinic, and it was Gloria and the women who put it all together. They got the doctors and the nurses to volunteer. They started a pharmacy there. They gave out free medicine. They arranged for people to come in for checkups, for examinations, in terms of like TB exams and things like that, tuberculosis. They had birth control. If some women came in to talk or concerned about, they wanted to talk about abortion, they would recommend that they go like to Planned Parenthood or to other clinics. And for over a year and a half that the clinic operated as a Brown Beret free clinic, the women, to their credit, they did all the work. But the guys took the credit, because "here, we have a free clinic here." The women were doing all the work.

The guys would show up, according to Gloria, in the evenings, and party in the clinic, and mess it up, and expect the women to pick up afterwards. And it got to the point where Gloria told David Sanchez, the prime minister, she said, "This can't go on anymore. You've got to get your guys together. This can't go on. You can't be coming in like this anymore." David couldn't do it, and Gloria said, "You don't do it, I'm out of here. Not only out of the clinic, I'm out of the Berets and I'm taking the women with me." That's exactly what she

did. She then later was shortly thereafter linked with Rosalio Muñoz and became involved with putting together the National Antiwar Moratorium. She then later established her own free clinic in East LA, for a short period of time. But her story was powerful, and it's an incredible story of courage and dedication, and standing up to a lot of internal oppression within the movement, especially within the Brown Berets. But it's also a powerful story because it brings in the role of women in the movement. So, that's how I put it together.

02-03:23:30
Holmes: How did you decide on just those three? Did you feel pressure to do more testimonios on such a huge topic—maybe five, or—

02-03:23:36
García: Because I thought, I'm sure I thought that five would've been too much, and I wanted to do three very complete stories, and even then I had to cut. This was probably the University of California Press and my editor was saying, "It's too much. You got to cut it down more and more." And so I did leave various things out, but in the end it's still a good-sized book, and it's well-developed testimonios, because they're testimonios, first-person life stories. I do spend time about, who were these people, what was their early history like, because people don't just become activists out of thin air. There's a background there, there's a family socialization, there's earlier influences, and I could see that in listening to their early stories before they became activists, and I wanted to make sure that I got that, and I think I did get it.

And then, why did they become an activist and what'd they do in the movement, and how did the movement change them, and then of course, after the heydays of the movement, what happened? Well, they all remained as activists. Raul continued to work, teach. Well, he became a professor of Chicano studies at Northridge, did his graduate work at Harvard in education, but he remained very active in the Chicano movement and the alternative press, and he was involved in the protest against the US policies in Central America, and on immigration issues. He does a lot of work now on educational scholarships for kids, for college.

Rosalio has always remained committed. He later joined the Communist Party, left, returned. I think he left. I don't know where he is now, but he's always been engaged in the community, again on similar issues, immigration and labor, and he's doing a lot of retrospective things: putting together exhibits, places like Cal State LA, on the Chicano movement. He had a photo exhibit two or three years ago at Cal State LA on the Chicano movement, and he's doing other things like that.

And Gloria Arellanes, after the moratorium, and she was involved in it and what happened there, that violence just really affected her, and she just began to kind of stray away, specifically from Chicano movement activities, but she

rediscovered her indigenous background, of Native American community there of Southern California on her mother's side. And so, for several decades now she's been involved, as she's gotten older, as an elder in her Native American community there in Southern California. So she's active with that community, socially, culturally.

And so they've all remained in many ways committed, and Gloria, she even though she had some difficult times, especially with the Brown Berets and what happened with the moratorium, but she understands that she was part of the Chicano movement. She doesn't disown it. And after the book came out, we've spoken at different venues, and there's going to be, at Cal State LA, later this spring, a conference on fifty years of Chicano studies at Cal State LA, and they're going to do a panel on my *Chicano Generation* book, and all three of them, Raul, Rosalio, and Gloria, will all be on that panel to talk about their stories again, or bounce off the book itself.

So, this book on the Chicano Generation really, in a very concrete way, brought me into the Chicano Generation. The others led into it, certainly the walkouts with the Sal, but these were people who were clearly, biologically, politically, historically in that generation, which again was my generation, so I was, in a way, kind of learning about myself too. Yeah, so, yeah, it's a good collection of very important, powerful stories.

02-03:28:02
Holmes: Well Mario, we're kind of here at the end of our time. We've discussed a lot of your contributions, a lot of the development and experiences you've had, not just intellectually, but also as a prominent and important scholar within these formative years of development for Chicano studies. Now the field started with interdisciplinary roots, and your first book, *Desert Immigrant*s, that incorporation of the new social history, saw that. Your latest book, if we could talk about one more work of yours, *Literature as History*—discuss, in a sense, how you've seen the methodology of Chicano studies expand or change over your career.

02-03:28:56
García: Well, this book came out just a couple of years ago, *Literature as History*. Well, part of it was that I started going to conferences on Chicano literature in Spain, and people encouraged me to go, but well, how do I segue? I'm a historian. Well, because I did oral history, I did testimonios, I saw that well, I can analyze some oral history texts. I can analyze even novels, autobiographies, not as literary texts, because I'm not trained to deal with them as literary texts, but I can deal with them as historical texts. In other words, how do literary texts serve as historical documents for us as historians?

And so that's what I do in my book. I do historical reading and analysis of three genres: the autobiography, Chicano/Latino autobiography; Chicano/Latino testimonios, not mine so much, but others; and the novel, the

Chicano/Latino novel. But I use them as historical documents that we as historians can benefit from, in part because what this type of literature does, it gives us kind of the underside of history, the more personal side of history. It gives us a sense of people in a certain period of time and the emotions, for example, a novelist or someone writing their own autobiography, that they can bring into a text that a historian might not be as trained to do or be not in a situation where you could get into those kinds of feelings.

So, that's part of the argument, that we can use literary texts as historical documents, and so again, these are different case studies that show that we can do Chicano history from an interdisciplinary perspective, including using literary texts as part of that interdisciplinary, besides maybe social science, as you mentioned. Oral history, of course, is another way of kind of bridging disciplines. The testimonio as you know, is perceived as a literary text, and certainly in literary areas, the testimonio is seen more as literature than a history. Well it's both, so again, that's bridging disciplines. By doing the testimonios that I've done, it's bridging kind of a literary field with a historical field.

And so, yeah, I think that, consciously or unconsciously, I've kind of bridged some disciplines, and tried to suggest that this is in part how the field could develop on the Chicano movement and Chicano history. Because I began to do more and more work on the Chicano Generation, I have here at UCSB now done four biannual conferences on the Chicano movement, because I began to see how especially younger historians, graduate students, were beginning to rediscover the Chicano movement as a seminal and important period in American history. Yeah, it had its drawbacks—you had sexism, you had gender—but you cannot dismiss it as a major historical moment. It literally laid the foundation for contemporary Latino political power in this country. It opened up opportunities that had never been opened up. So many of us, a lot of opportunities that even now, our students are the result of the Chicano movement.

And so I wanted to bring attention to the emerging historiography of the Chicano movement, so I had my first conference 2012. We have now done four conferences, and we just finished this weekend, in 2018, my fourth one. And so I've brought in now probably at least a hundred people to present on exciting new work on the Chicano movement, and you can see interdisciplinary influence. Like, for example, at this recent one, we had people working in art history; we had people working in the area of communications, and rhetoric, exciting work. For example, one of our participants is doing a book, Stacey Sowards from the University of Texas, El Paso, a book that'll be out shortly on the rhetoric of Dolores Huerta, based on her speeches; some powerful stuff.

So, it was very interdisciplinary. We're seeing that applied to how we approach the Chicano movement. Of course it had problems. No social

movement doesn't have problems. But you can't use a litmus test, and I see some people applying the litmus test, even among some of my own colleagues. Was the movement sexist? In part, yes. Did the movement had gender discrimination? Yeah, in part. Well, some would say, "Well, then it's not important. If it was sexist and had gender discrimination, then it's not an important movement." Are you kidding me? You can't apply a litmus test like that, and you can't apply necessarily, much later, as political consciousness changes, and then just kind of stamp it on; that's what we as historians call presentism.

We can't avoid our present moment as we look at history, but we can't look at history like it would be today. You can't ask the Chicano movement to be like a movement today. But, if you're going to be truthful, you cannot, in my opinion, and beyond my opinion, you cannot deny the historical importance of the Chicano movement, and/or the Chicano Generation. That movement, for the first time, made Chicanos and by extension, Latinos, into national political actors, and it opened up the opportunities that had never been there before. The generation of which I'm a part of, I call the generation of '75, the first generation of professionally trained historians in Chicano history, is the result of the Chicano movement. And to deny that is to deny ourselves. And even those who come later, they may not have been part of the Chicano Generation, but they are where they are also directly, indirectly, because of the Chicano movement. It helped to empower the Chicano and Latino communities as they moved forward. And it's not to say that there weren't earlier civil rights movements as we've talked about, but the movement really made all of this into a much more national and maybe even international scope.

So, to me, looking back over the years in terms of being an early founder, I suppose, of Chicano studies, in different ways, not only institutionally but also in terms of the field, what's been amazing to me, Todd, is when we started, as I said, we knew so little. I'm still so indebted to McWilliams. And look where we are now, fifty years later: we know so much more about the Chicano/Latino experience. We have produced so much knowledge that is incredible, but there are still challenges, because a lot of this new knowledge, number one, at the university level, has still not been well integrated into other disciplines and fields, like for example in the teaching of American history. Here, even at UCSB, they still ignore a lot of important aspects of Chicano history that should be taught in US history courses. So that's still a challenge.

And the other challenge is that, even more so, the K-12 experience. A lot of this new knowledge has not seeped down, even though we have more Chicano teachers, Chicano principals and administrators and people on school boards, but all this new knowledge should be seeping down. They should know who a Sal Castro was. I get students coming from those East LA schools that walked out, they don't even know that those schools were involved in the blowouts. So there's still a lot of challenges, but the production of new knowledge has

been to me the most impressive thing about Chicano studies. Institution-wise, I think it's still a mixed field, a mixed story.

02-03:38:30
Holmes: I was going to ask you about that. Particularly when we think of, during your time, seeing the rise of Ethnic Studies departments, but also specifically Chicano studies departments, and then of course, you also had a joint appointment between Chicano studies and history. History is very traditional and orthodox in many respects. How do you see the relationship between the two? How has that relationship, say, between history and Chicano studies, evolved over time institutionally, and what do you see for the future?

02-03:39:06
García: Well, I think it goes to what I just said earlier. I had a joint appointment for many, many years. I left my joint appointment about ten years ago, because we were developing our PhD program in Chicano studies, and I felt I couldn't serve two masters anymore, and I wanted to focus more on our new graduate program, our PhD program. Looking back on it, I probably should've remained with that joint appointment, because I didn't realize we were headed into still difficult waters in Chicano studies, even though we were developing a PhD program.

And I can't fully explain it. Maybe, again, because Chicano studies, as you said earlier, began as a political animal, in a sense, but again, the relationship, I would say a lot of this knowledge that we've produced in Chicano history, that I've produced and others, I don't see it as visible in a traditional history department. It still needs to be much more integrated, and I hope that that is done, but that's another big challenge. But I can't speak with accuracy and expertise on the state of Chicano studies programs and departments all over the country, much less Latino studies programs that have proliferated in the East and Midwest, where there they're dealing more with Latinos because they have coming together of Mexicans, and Puerto Ricans, and Cubans, and Central Americans.

So, it's blossomed as a field, institutionally as a field as well, but here, I think we've had mixed stories of still too many ups and downs. Still issues of how do we evaluate our work, when you have people of different disciplines, and to be honest, how much do we demand of ourselves? If the institution as a whole, because they treat us as a political animal still in many ways, if maybe they may not be demanding in some cases in terms of our production, especially in research, does that mean that we still shouldn't have high standards for each other?

I've always held to high standards, and I've held myself to high standards. But holding myself to high standards and trying to hold up my own colleagues' high standards does not lead necessarily to a bed of roses. It can lead to some difficult moments, and we've had our share of that, and we continue to have

our share of that. I cannot accept that, if you're a faculty member in Chicano studies with a PhD program, and at a research institution—not a teaching institution but a research institution, which research is your main responsibility—and then see colleagues who are not being productive. Now is that just because they're in Chicano studies and focusing on the teaching that somehow, they're going to continue to be promoted and so forth, and maybe they will be. But I feel that at least I, and because I'm the senior-ranking member of the department, I have to hold them to high standards. Well that doesn't always go across well, and so we've had difficult moments.

And I would say from my vantage point, the great success of Chicano studies over fifty years, has been the production of tremendous new knowledge. That is the success, and that's where I see myself and that's where I feel that I've kind of helped. That's been very fulfilling to me to be part of that production over these fifty years. I think it's still a mixed story or bag of Chicano studies as an institution. What will be remembered will not be the institutions, the departments and the programs. It will be the knowledge that was produced. And I tell younger colleagues—it's not that I see myself as necessarily a model for them, but I said, "You have to remain productive. There are too many one-book Chicano historians, and that's unacceptable. That's not why we were given the opportunity to be in major institutions of research, to be one-book historians. Uh-uh. That's unacceptable. There's so much that you can do, you can't just rest on your laurels. We can't afford to rest on our laurels. There's so much new knowledge and histories that we need to explore."

And we're still relatively a small group in some ways. We are producing more students and some of that, but I try to tell my students, "Now you've got to continue to produce. You've got to produce one book, two books, three books. You have to continue; you can't just stop at a certain point, not if you're having appointment at a research institution, whether it's at UC system or it's Stanford, or it's the Ivy Leagues, or it's the Big Ten schools. These are big research institutions, and that's your responsibility, and it's not only a function of these institutions, it's to your students, and in some ways, it goes back to the legacy of the Chicano movement. It gave us those opportunities. We've got to give back, our talents and our training, in this case as historians, by continuing our productivity. If we don't do that, we're not fulfilling the legacy of those who in some cases literally put their lives on the line to give us those opportunities." But that doesn't always endear me to others.

So [laughs] I say this even in the context of my own department, I'm being very frank here, but that's why I tell these younger people, "No one's going to remember if you were the chair of a department. No one's going to remember even if you were a dean. Well, maybe if you become a chancellor—maybe they'll remember you for that. But they're going to remember those books you left behind. That's your legacy." I hope that's my legacy, and I think they should think about that too. That's going to be what's going to be remembered over time, not these other things.

02-03:46:00
Holmes: You had mentioned how many administrations see Chicano studies as a political animal; that activism, as you were just saying, the Chicano movement really proved a seedbed for what became known as Chicano studies. How do you see activism still continuing to play a role and influence in the field?

02-03:46:23
García: Well, I think we talked about it at my conference, my fourth Chicano movement conference this past weekend, I think that our studies, our research, should, as *El Plan de Santa Barbara* in '69 suggested, always still be relevant in the sense that the work that we do is not just esoteric, it's not just abstract, but has concrete applications to our students and to the communities, even though those communities have become very heterogeneous, very varied, working-class communities, middle-class communities, composed of different Latino groups and so forth. But that its research that will continue to help empower people.

So at a time when our democracy, I believe, is in danger, and we have threats against immigrants and against Latinos and other minority peoples, and there's been a resurgence of more overt racism in this country, we need to know that people have historically struggled, and that they have pushed the further democratization of the United States. But that that story is still not ended, and we're now challenged, perhaps even more so right now, under this new administration of Trump; that we need to understand that, I guess in some ways, that history is on our side, because we've seen that history evolve and where our communities have struggled and have overcome not everything, but they have overcome because they have felt empowered that they can make changes, that they're not victims, but they are actors, and they are making history.

And the work that we do has to empower people to the same extent. Yes, they did it in the sixties, yes they even did it in the thirties, and even those immigrants in the early twentieth century, they were organizing in some ways for their rights also, and that kind of history I think then becomes very relevant to the present. It's a living history. It's a relevant history, and I think that's the kind of work that we always need to be cognizant of, rather than engaging in something that will be much less relevant and more esoteric. In a way, as historians, we're a little bit more safeguarded against that, because we are dealing with very concrete stories of people's lives and so forth. In other fields, they can maybe move into more esoteric things. But I think that the history that we produce, for example, should always be aimed at helping to empower our students, and indirectly maybe into our communities, and then some of this hopefully will seep into that K-12 space. We'll continue to make our Chicano/Latino students realize that they're part of American history, they made American history, and they need to continue to struggle to make American history.

02-03:49:56
Holmes: I wanted to ask, in thinking about the future of the field, which I know as historians, we're always told we shouldn't be doing that, but in thinking here of the next fifty years of Chicano studies, what are some of your thoughts on where the field might go, and maybe what things that are exciting now that you would like to see continued?

02-03:50:25
García: Well, that's a big question, Todd, of course, [laughter] and I continue to do whatever I can in the time still remaining to me, but, well, there's still so many things that have to be done to our communities, our Chicano/Latino communities, whose histories still need to be done. We started early, I guess, community histories, like in El Paso and so forth, but there're still many community studies that need to be done. I said earlier about the issues of biography, there are so many biographies that are dying to be done of much lesser known people in local communities. We need to know those stories, again, to empower our students, empower our communities, other struggles that are less well known to us in the Chicano community. My conferences have helped to reveal how the Chicano movement played itself out in other communities that were less even aware that the movement took place. I've had papers on communities—like in Seattle and others in Ohio and so forth—of movement activities that we didn't even know about.

There's so many areas that I think still need to be mined and I'm sure they will be mined, about the greater role of women, and who were the women activists and so forth, and we need those stories. We need, again, the role of religion, as I mentioned earlier—there's a whole field there that needs to still be developed. And, just using again techniques like oral history and so forth. There's so many areas that we still need to develop, and I'm sure will be. Intellectual history, we still need a lot of work, and I think as we move on in time, and this is why your project is so important because it laid the basis for enterprising graduate students in the future of saying, "Well hey, I want to do a biography of Al Camarillo" or God forbid, "or Mario García." Well this is going to be important to them, because it will kind of lay the foundation for their projects, but we need who our intellectuals have been, especially as we've begun to develop cohorts of professionally trained intellectuals.

So, all kinds of other areas of cultural history, of popular culture, and so forth—music, for example, the study of the evolution of Chicano/Latino music. So I think it's still so open ended. That's why I say, "We can't rest on our laurels."

02-03:53:17
Holmes: Yes indeed. In these interviews, I've asked many narrators if there are those who have influenced them, scholars who may have passed and they'd like to recognize. Are there any who come to mind that you would like to mention?

02-03:53:42
García: Well, fortunately a lot of my cohort, of my generation, they're still alive. We haven't kicked the can yet. But I'm thinking as we talked about certainly my mentor, Professor Ramón Ruiz. He was a Mexican American and he made important contributions, certainly his work on the Mexican Revolution. Of course, he passed away a few years ago. Even before that, giants like Ernesto Galarza, and people of that ilk, Feliciano Rivera, who I mentioned. Feliciano did teach early Chicano history courses, and he and Matt Meier published at the very same time as Acuña's much more influential *Occupied America* came out, but they published their own history text that was useful on Chicano, Mexican American history.

So Feliciano passed on. Matt Meier himself was very important, even though he wasn't Chicano, but he did that textbook, and he later did a new edition of *North From Mexico*, to keep *North From Mexico* alive as a classic text in Chicano historiography. So people like that. Américo Paredes, a great folklorist at UT Austin who passed away in the last twenty years or so, he was a great, early Chicano studies scholar in a way.

So, I think people like that are people that we need to pay tribute to. We have to take the long view. People talk about the long view of civil rights, the long civil rights history. Well, in a way, we have to take the long view of what we mean by Chicano studies, and some of these people didn't see themselves in Chicano studies, maybe didn't use the term "Chicano," but they're part of our legacy, and we need to kind of reconnect them. They began early on to lay some foundation. People like Paul Taylor, who died many, many years ago, but those were groundbreaking studies of Mexican agricultural labor and even urban labor in the Midwest. The Mexican anthropologist Manuel Gamio, who in the 1930s did those groundbreaking oral histories, life stories of Mexican immigrants. There is a pedigree there, and talk about building on giants, they were giants in their own time, and we need to acknowledge that and build on them as well. Those are the names that kind of come to mind now. Probably later, I'll remember others, but those come kind of immediately to mind, yeah.

02-03:56:49
Holmes: Well Mario, it has been great. Any final thoughts?

02-03:56:52
García: No, I just want to thank you for selecting me to do one of these oral history, videotaped histories, and I hope it'll be important for graduate students and others, and gives them a—outside of writing my own autobiography, which maybe I will at some point, but at least this gives them some insight into who I am, how I changed, how I evolved, certainly in terms of my work, my career, why I chose certain topics and so forth. And certainly, again, to hope encourage and motivate others to become historians, work on Chicano/Latino history, and to realize that we're not anywhere near done, and this is still, in many ways, still part of the beginning.

02-03:57:47
Holmes: Well thanks so much for your contributions and time today.

02-03:57:50
García: Thank you, Todd.

[End of Interview]