

An Oral History on Frances "Pancha" Palacios, A Student  
during the Chicano Movement.

By

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Submitted to

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## Oral History: Frances Palacios

### Statement of the problem:

The purpose of this project is to conduct an oral history on a person who was involved in the Chicano Movement of the 60's in San Jose, California. Much of the history of the Chicano Movement in San Jose has not been documented or given proper credit. For these reasons, oral histories have been conducted this semester by me and other students to show the impact the Chicano movement made during the 60's in San Jose as well as how the movement has affected present times.

### Description of the Research Procedures:

I conducted interviews with Frances Palacios, who was a student in the 60's at San Jose City College and later at San Jose State University. Frances was active in the Chicano student movement at San Jose City College and involved in the community organizations during the Chicano Movement.

I met with Frances five times. The first session was the initial contact where we got to meet one another and go over the agreement form. I tape recorded our next four sessions. Our interview sessions took place at her place of employment, elementary schools. At the time of our series of interviews, she was working for the San Jose Unified School District. Interview sessions usually lasted about an hour, with the exception of the last session, which lasted an hour and a half. I would start the sessions off by letting her know what topics I would like to discuss. During the recording, I would ask questions and she would respond to my questions. After the tape recording, we would discuss some of the topics briefly and verify spelling of names, places and organizations.

Later, before the next session, I would listen to the tapes and review the contents. I would look for topics to expand on for the next session.

### Description of the Results:

In the interview sessions, Frances Palacios tells of her involvement in the Chicano Movement in the 60's and how it affected her life. I will start off with a brief background on Frances' life. Next, I will include some topics of importance and series of questions and answers verbatim that deal with these topics.

### Background:

Frances was born and raised in San Jose, California. Her parents were from Phoenix, Arizona. She was born in

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a shack on a prune orchard. Four years later, the family moved to apartments on St. John and First streets. These apartments were located above a Mexican drug store, which no longer exist.

Frances has nine other brothers and sisters. She is fourth oldest. Frances and her brothers and sisters attended Grant Elementary School, Roosevelt Jr. High and San Jose High School. She is the only one from her family to get a college degree, a Master's. She attended San Jose City College and later San Jose State University.

Frances Palacios is presently a school counselor for San Jose Unified and Eastside Union High School District. She has been married for 15 years and has 3 children aged 12, 11, and 4. Her husband presently works as a roofer in San Mateo and is taking classes in electronics.

Do you remember why your family moved from where you were born?

There were no bathrooms! No running water! Everything came in from outside. The toilet was outside. It was time to move on. It was time to get out of the fields actually, out of the prunes.

What impact did the move have on your family?

It was a move for the better. From an orchard to the inner city, actually right downtown.

What do they do for a living now?

I have a sister that's a housewife in Hawaii. I have a sister that has been in electronics for twenty years. I have a brother that's a painting contractor. Another brother that is in production management of Del Monte. Let's see, I have two sisters that are housewives. I have a brother that is an accountant. And I have another sister that works for the Post Office, and another that works for a retail store.

What did your parents do while you were growing up?  
How did they make a living?

My mother was, well she had a second husband, so she was a housewife. But we worked the fields every summer to get our school clothes and get the things that we needed. Plus our sacks of beans and rice and stuff for the whole summer. My stepfather was a roofer.

So, when your mother worked out in the fields, who looked after the children?

We all went. Actually, the ones that were under five,



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stayed with an aunt, who lived with us.

So did you go two years to San Jose City College and then transfer over?

No, I went on and off, on and off, on and off, because I always worked part time and I really couldn't handle it. Then, I got disinterested in school. I kept on going back and forth. It took me quite a few years to get my Bachelor's. After that, I went for a Master's in Family Relations and completed the coursework but the program died. When I went back to complete, it was already 3 or 4 years later, and the department had already dissolved. So, I lost my two years there. So then, I went on to another program, Social Work. I finished my MSW there.

Around when did you start at San Jose City College?

I think it was the summer of 1968, or rather was it 67. It may have been 67.

What was it that really inspired you to go on to San Jose City College?

Well, I had graduated from high school. I worked in the cannery, right after that, in fact a couple of years. I didn't want electronics, that was the new trend, brand new thing at the time. I didn't really want to be locked up in buildings without windows. That was my perception, I just didn't want to be there and not see people. But in here, there's so much diversity going on back and forth. Fresh air as fresh as can possibly get, put it that way. I was prepped for the typing and clerical skills, so I went into those things. I was typing like 74 on a manual, not electric, because I didn't know how to work on electric at that time. They were there, but there were still a lot of manuals that were common. So, here I was typing 74 and shorthand was about 100-110, I don't recall but it wasn't bad. The typing was excellent. They would give me typing tests where ever I would go. The kind of crap that they would come up with is that I was too qualified. I knew that was hogwash. And they knew I was only 18, they might have wanted an older more seasoned person. If I would have been told I was too young, that's a different story, because they could tell you that then. People may not have batted an eye like they do now. I always lied about my age. I always gave myself a couple of more years, to try and get a job, so they never told me I was too young. I was just too qualified. Where ever I went and I was sent by the employment thing here, none of the jobs panned out. Maybe I was too shy, not assertive enough. Which is one of the drawbacks of the employment, it has to prep people for interviews.

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Then I worked for a cosmetics firm and she was screwing me over. The checks were bouncing left and right. She was taking advantage of me, but I needed the job so it was okay. I didn't want to go into electronics or sales, which is what my friends all took off to. And so I was working here and there, odd jobs, very temporary things for a year. Some of my friends, minority friends, were saying "go to City, they have a special program. It's neat. You'll like it." And of course it wasn't for me. "What am I going to do there?" See, I was kind of programmed that Mexicans didn't go on to school. All these things were ingrained in me already. And I was very wise. You just didn't go. So, finally, she talked me into it and I went. My mother was not very pleased. She thought I should be working.

I went and I met this beautiful man named Mark Marcus, a Jewish person. I think he's over at Canada College now, I'm not sure. Wonderful, wonderful person that I feel, if it hadn't really been for him, what he did..., he was a psychologist/counselor. I think it was called CLP-Cooperative Learning Program. He interviewed me and thought I was a likely candidate. I had been out for a year. They started us out in classes, usually you had to take a test, to give you placement. He didn't give me a placement test, he just put me straight into some of the classes. Everything was kind of a rush rush thing. They had a room where we could meet each other. It was neat, really neat and I bought it fast. Some where mid-term, we took a test. They realized that I didn't belong in those classes. I belonged in more advanced classes. I didn't think that I had wasted any time though, because it was a nice time to bond and get to know the program, really draw a lot of interest.

He tried to talk me into taking a variety of classes. But no, I wanted more typing, I wanted more filing, and I wanted more shorthand. And, so that's what I took. Marcus got me a job helping the secretaries at the school. The following semester, he says "I'm pulling you out of this job". I said "I won't be able to stay if I don't have a job. That's ok, I can probably find a job someplace else." But I was going to stay in school, I had already decided. He says "I'm going to get you to supervise the tutors". I told him "I can't do that." He said "yes, you can. You got the ability, your short changing yourself." He said "not only that, you can go into counseling, you can do this, you can do that. I don't know why you're taking these clerical skills. Don't get me wrong, I don't have anything against secretaries, that's fine. But your skills are beyond that." Those were not the exact words he used at the time, he may have used abilities. And so, I took a risk. I said "maybe he's right". He believed in me. He's the one that opened up my eyes. So, I went into a psychology program. I wanted to go into counseling. It took years and years to

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finish school because I kept dropping out of school. There was a lot of financial need at home.

Did you find any kind of financial support for your education?

Very minimal. From San Jose State I got some loans. Most of the time, I worked part time. I usually had two part time jobs holding me through. There was no way I could ever go to school without working. It just wasn't an easy thing to do. When most of us grew up, and there was just the younger kids left at home, it was easy to support them to go to school, but not the first ones. It was very very difficult. That would have been so ideal, for me to not have to work, just really concentrate. It never happened. Aside from that, when I went on to State(SJS) I dropped out of classes left and right. I just wasn't disciplined. I would take a semester here and a semester there, and then I would drop classes. I wasn't gearing towards any particular program. The EOP failed me, I thought. I never said it loudly or told anyone, because when you cite faults within what I call "la familia" you keep it either to yourself, or don't take it out. Besides, I didn't realize that they had guidance counselors to gear you towards academic programs that led to your Bachelor's. Man, did I waste my time. See, I was not bonded to the EOP program. I really wasn't. I was really turned off.

What kind of part time jobs did you have?

I worked for a medical clinic. I worked for E.S.O. (Equal Services Organizaton) I worked as a translator, reader, at the Spanish department for City (SJCC). Babysitting. And I also worked during the summer in the fields, in tomatoes or whatever. Good money at that time.

You mentioned that as you were going to school, that a lot of times you became disinterested in school, that a lot of times you had to drop out of classes, because of work. At a point you became disinterested in school. What were some of the reasons?

I didn't really get guidance initially when I moved on to State. I didn't realize that we had counselors to guide you towards that. I was really, I guess, out in left field. I thought I was just following a meaningless course, meaningless direction. So I had to question myself a few times. "What am I really doing here?" I was really turned off with a lot of the students' insincerity. Students that I knew had money, that were capping off the EOP. It used to

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burn me, it really annoyed me. I had to work, always holding at least 2 part time jobs to sustain myself. Seeing these spoiled brats that would just party with their money, so I really got turned off and disillusioned. We set the pavement for these people? So, I was pissed. I was almost rebelling but I never came out with that statement. I kind of sat on that one for a long, long time. But it really use to annoy me very, very much.

What were you doing in 1965?

I was a junior in high school.

What were your main concerns at that time?

At that time, I had no aspirations, no ambitions. I remember Lino (Lopez) from MAYO (Mexican American Youth Organization) had come to see where we were headed. At that time, I told him I wanted to become a nurse. That's a thought that had come to my mind. I thought that was a neat profession. But, we were not geared towards that. In high school, we were channeled to take clerical. When we went to meet with our counselors and we told him what we wanted to take, when I did, he told me I didn't have the brains for it and would probably fall through, to continue taking typing and filing. So, I did.

So, you didn't take any college prep courses?

I didn't take any college prep courses, because he(the counselor) felt I was incapable. He still works for the district. He is in the guidance department.

Were you active in any social or political groups in the early 60's?

In the late 60's, I was. In the early 60's, it was mainly service groups like the American Red Cross. But in the late 60's, I was active with, let me think because it's been a long time. I was active with U.P.A. United People Arriba. I was about 18 at the time. I was active with...let's see, what was our Mexican organization? God, I can't even think of the groups we had at City (SJCC) and at State (SJS). MASC, I guess it was.

What does MASC stand for?

Mexican American Student Confederation, I guess. I don't recall it that well. There was also the big one where all the raza got together from all over the county. (La Confederacion de la Raza Unida)

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So, you were involved in the MASC organization?

Yes, that was at City(SJCC). That was based at City and pretty much dealt with Chicano student issues. Issues that affected, Chicano issues, that is, equal access, getting a Chicano studies department there, bilingual or Chicano faculty to represent students and then also to address the students that couldn't stay in school, that would come in and would leave before completing semesters.

United People Arriba, what kind of people were in that organization?

Leaders from the community, people that lived around "Little Egypt". "Little Egypt" was an area by Oakland and San Antonio streets. I don't recall exactly why they called it that. But, residents from around the Guadalupe Church, were pretty much involved in social issues and community issues that affected raza. They seen it as mostly for the advancement of our people. Issues that they could get into. A lot of it was civil rights things and social issues.

One of the groups you were involved in was La Confederacion de la Raza Unida. Who were some of the members of that group?

Pretty much the same names that I have given you prior. There's another person that comes to mind, Ray Montijo. I don't know what ever became of him. But that was another person.

How long were you active in that group?

Until it died, a couple of years.

How about the rest of your family, were they involved?

Nele! (no) I was the radical one in this family. I've always been very mellow towards the family, in terms that you don't talk about politics and you maintain a good relationship. Simply because, they felt I was a disgrace. There was just a lot of pressure to be involved because the family didn't believe in it. They thought I should be a nice kid, get married and do what ever. I thought that was cool later on but not then. So, there was just a lot of real pressure coming from my family and from my friends. There was a lot of social pressure because they weren't into this. I've always been a rebel, in terms of, if I felt something was not just, I take action or try to do something about it, my own way. I don't follow a mass or a goal unless I believe in the cause. That's something that



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I always felt. If I like someone, they have a real reason, I may not physically support it if its not in my heart. I won't and I don't pressure myself into stuff like that. Like today, issues that affect our little Chicanitos, Oh Yeah! I'm out there. I'm here advocating for them, for a social change that will impact for them. I remember what I went through.

Do you presently have children?

I have 3 children. Twelve, my son will be eleven in a few weeks, and then a four year old.

What educational institutions do they attend?

My son is at Grant. My daughter is at Steinbach Middle School. And my husband roofs in San Mateo, but has evening classes four times a week.

What type of classes is he taking?

He's going back to electronics. That's what he did when he first got out of high school. He went to City (SJCC) then he worked in electronics. He got drafted, then he was a musician in between. He came back continued to be a musician, went back to electronics, went into insurance sales, couldn't handle it, and now he is on the roof.

How long was your husband in the military?

I don't recall if it was less than a year. He was wounded, so he came back on a stretcher.

Did he serve in Vietnam?

Yes. He's still disabled. Mildly, you can't even tell. Yes, he served there and got a medical discharge.

Do you have scrapbooks, photos, or news clippings from the late 60's?

I might have something. If I do I'll certainly pull them out. I had a lot of things that I know I thinned out. I don't recall who asked me for some things and never returned them, that was several years ago. I gave them what ever I had. It was somebody that was trying to write a book. I don't remember who it was.

Do you recall any of the walkouts at Roosevelt Jr. High?

Sure do! That was during the grape boycott days. I remember the kids were served grapes tainted red like cherries. The kids became angry and threw them out. I

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don't remember anymore of the exact details of the walkout. That's been over twenty years ago, but it was beautiful. I may have some pictures of that still.

Where were you at that time?

I may have been at City College at that time. I think a lot of our things began, and I don't see it acknowledged a lot, at City (SJCC). A lot of our actions and movements began at City (SJCC) because we had established there a program prior to the one at San Jose State, prior to the EOP program. A lot of things evolved out of City. Out of that a core group moved on to San Jose State as things got bigger. But there were just a lot of things, the demonstrations, the walkouts, the picketing, the taking over of the administration, yeah! That was all junior college! A lot of this happened way before San Jose State woke up. San Jose State, for a long time was very conservative. You really didn't have your typical Chicano, whatever that was at the time, attending. The Raza began to find themselves and really relate to their own identity. I think City (SJCC) had it together way before San Jose State.

So, what lead up the walkouts was the grape boycott issue?

It may have been. I don't recall exactly. It may have been some of the deception, how they were trying to deceive. Roosevelt was really impacted. It was mainly Chicano kids that were going there to begin with. But it may have been some of the dissent from the deception. Hey, your not being served these things and the kids knew otherwise. Plus a lot of other things, where they saw disparities, where they really saw the unfairness, the educational system, what they were involved in. And of course, they had a leader like Jose (Carrasco) that went a long with the kids.

What was he (Jose Carrasco) doing at that time?

He was a teacher at Roosevelt, and walked right on out with them. He gave the students a lot of support. He was radical at that time.

You mentioned a lot of the actions and movements started at San Jose City College, and a lot of times it is not recognized, they give credit to San Jose State. You mention a core group, who were these people?

It consisted of maybe 3 groups: the educators, the students, and the community. The community involved

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Rudy Coronado, Anthony Soto, Sophie Mendoza, Sid Sandoval. Herrera, I forget his first name...Richard Herrera, he was another guy that was involved in some of these things. Richard, he was a student at the time. And then you had McIntee, James McIntee was another guy that was pretty much involved. He's a director of human relations now. Then we had the educators.

Who were they?

Those... this is even before, I don't know if you've ever heard of Feliciano Rivera, oh! of course you have, what am I thinking of. This was even before his time, because we're the ones, we really brought him in. Lou Carranza, he was somewhat involved. He was kind of in and out, not a key-key figure at the time. There was Jose (Carrasco). There was...Paul Sanchez was to an extent. I don't remember exactly what his involvement was. There was Randolph Jimenez. He was teaching at San Jose State at the time. Some lady, Concha Barozzi, was kind of involved at the time. Rudy Cordova and Hector his brother. We were even there before they were. Jose Carrasco was very much a part of the City College life in terms of he was a teacher already, in terms of helping to mobilize and guide and provide his expertise. Fred Hirsch was kind of a part. We use to call him "our commie". Quien mas, Rudy, of course was always there. Sal Gascon, Ed Flores, Alex Esparza, she was on the faculty there for a long time. There was quite a few, quite a few people.

So the students were there before the faculty?

Yes, and that was part of the movement that brought them in.

You mentioned a core group of students that started at San Jose City, then moved on to San Jose State.

I moved on to State. I didn't become as involved in San Jose State, the campus issues. I just maintained the community involvement, because I really didn't care for the directions the students were going. I felt they were on a different kind of trip. The kids from City, the people from City, a lot of us were just raised here and went to that college, not by choice. A lot of the kids that started State were imports, from other areas.

From what areas?

Well, whether they came from Fresno or whether they came from other parts of California, Los Angeles, Riverside, whatever. They came in slightly different oriented. There's just a slight difference. I can't really

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as far as I can perceive, really tell you what. To me, they came into a foundation that was already set for them. And that's how they were recruited, as EOP students. The way I felt is that we had to build a foundation, get something started because there was nothing for us.

You were aware of the existence of EOP at San Jose State?

Well, San Jose State didn't even have one at the time. That was very, very new.

What were your feelings about the EOP program?

I don't feel it had any sound or concrete direction. I thought that it was really moving very fast. But I don't feel it was guided toward any sound direction. I think the leadership kind of suffered. Oh, I forgot to mention Humberto Garza. He was one of the original people from City, then went on to State. The names will come up as we go on. Jess Reyna was another one.

Cooperative Learning Program, can you explain about it more?

That was at City(SJCC). That was something Marc Marcus had started. That's where he got his small group of students and just kind of piloted it by giving them all the same classes, grounding them, and bonding them to a learning center. It was kind of neat. It was really a smaller and condensed version of what would later be the big EOP at San Jose State. The grants were not, I mean there wasn't the kind of stifles that you give. But there was work study. He supplied tutoring and a lot of guidance.

Was the program aimed at minorities?

Minorities- Black and Brown. Yes, we were together with the Black students. You see, when we got to San Jose State, there were two separate programs. That was always like a kind of tug of war. Fighting for the same hueso (bone). But at City, we worked together in one program. And, there was just a lot of bonding with the Black students that were there. A lot of mutual support for one another. They supported a lot of our issues and vice a versa.

Were some of the issues similar?

Oh yeah. In terms of police brutality, in terms of unfairness, disparity. Yes. See when you got to the San Jose State level, there was a bigger cut of the pie.

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Everyone was fighting for the bigger piece of the bone. Separate entities. It was ok, they were a separate group altogether. The concept I really enjoyed at City was that we were kind of united and bonded. They supported us at the rallies. They were really supportive.

Did they have any rallies?

Yes, because Watts was alive and well. Oh yeah! But when issues were angred and directed at Anglos, they weren't angry at us. We were still okay with them. We were still working together.

What actually stemmed the organizations to start?

Just an awarress of need. We weren't keeping our people in. Just look at the issues. Getting the raza together had a lot of gratifications because we began to experience and feel other issues. And, we became community oriented and involved with the community, as well as the community involved with us. So pretty much of their issues were our's and our's were their's. We'd have our rallies and Steli Skillicorn, I don't know if you've heard of him, Dr Skillicorn. He would come in support of us in the quads, when we had our rallies. I don't know if you've heard of Harry Edwards. He's a consultant now to the San Francisco 49ers and also a professor at Berkeley. A couple of times, he came out, this was before he was a big person. But he was big enough for us at the time.

What other friends do you have that were involved during that time?

At that time, there was Sal Gascon, I don't know if you've ever heard of him. And there was Sophie Mendoza, I don't know if you've heard of her. There was Lucy Ramirez at that time. There was Tino Esparza, Alex Esparza. There was all kinds of people. Soto, Anthony Soto, from San Jose State, the professor, well he's retired now. Feliciano Rivera, now we got to interview him for his position. He came from another county. We brought him in to City (SJCC) before he started San Jose State. So, he had his roots there. A lot of people just moved on, they're no longer here. But, they're still active. A lot of them are educators now.

Do you recall the Fiesta de las Rosas? Were you there?

I sure do! I sure was! We were involved in months and months of planning, that the idea was to demonstrate our point as peaceful as possible.

What was your point?

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You have a Mexican theme-Fiesta de las Rosas, the planners were not necessarily minorities. The grand marshal was as White as Lorne Green, and that's who it was at that time. I kind of felt sorry for him, but from that point on I hated him for not boycotting it. It was just the whole idea that all these monies that are being pumped into something that for us was a brownwash. Anyways, we were involved in months and months of strategies. I guess the biggest mindblower that I had was that-we didn't realize it at the time- but we had undercover cops that were grooving in like everybody else, enjoying the get togethers, the interaction, the menudo that we would have. Yet, all the time they were really spying. What got my goat the most, is that they knew all along we really strategized to make it as peaceful as possible, but yet they had the riot squad on us. I don't feel there was any need for all the violence that took place that day, because the violence came from the city, from the police. A policeman threw me. I'll never forget that, it was really frightening. But then again, I was already angry because we already had had, at City (SJCC) what they termed as a riot, what really wasn't. The riot was really the police again. They're the ones who came in storming with their clubs out. We were not armed.

The Fiesta de las Rosas, I remember people getting clubbed and hit. Some were just taking pictures and their cameras were destroyed and stomped on. Fred Ramirez was another one that was hurt. He was clubbed over the head. He was hospitalized. He was chained to his bed. Adam Escoto, he's working for the district. He's our parent liason, the coordinator. He was pulled into the van for being a nuisance. He went in one piece and came out bloody, where they beat him. They (police) stopped along the way. They beat him. When they took him out, he was not the same guy they had put in. You know, you don't forget those things.

Anyways, I guess it sparked more anger, because the news really painted us as really violent rioters. What did they call us? What was that stupid word?

MILITANTS. Which, we weren't. I think that really angered us because you had people that were in there, from the beginning, listening to the planning. We had no weapons. We didn't yell out slurs, verbal slurs or anything. We were just quietly going to come on in at a certain point, which we did.

Toni Castillo. I was there when a motorcyclist came by and clubbed her. Somehow, I guess, he hit her with his bike. Anyways, he clubbed her and knocked her out. It was kind of bad news. McIntee (James) was there too. I don't remember if Poggi (James) was there or not. There was quite a few people. The names come in and out.



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Linda, what's her last name?(Peralta) Sophie (Mendoza) wasn't there. She didn't show up that day, I remember. I don't remember if Sal (Gascon) was there or not. That was a real fiasco, as we later termed it--Fiasco de las Rosas.

Do you remember the date of the Fiesta de las Rosas?

I might have the date at home. I don't remember exactly. I use to. MAPA (Mexican American Political Association) was pretty involved in that too. La Confederacion de la Raza Unida, that's the one I was thinking of. That's the one I was pretty active in. It was a neat thing. Its sad that it died. Everyone's doing their own little thing, clicker, whatever.

Getting back to Fiesta de las Rosas, you mentioned a SJCC riot happened before. Having gone through that, did you anticipate that it would get that bad at the Fiesta?

No, for me it was a real surprise. I don't know if I was being naive. But I knew we had planters all over the place. You would see these guys with their "hippy" look, long hair, their green army jackets. They would be singing and chatting along with you. And then, to see them later pull out walkie-talkies. It was just a real mind blower to me, that it wasn't suppose to be this way. It was kind of scary, I remember that day, even before the police came out, I remember getting knots in my stomach. "I'm never gonna do this." I wasn't brought up to be disruptive, and I'm already gonna violate the values anyways. But at least it will be a peaceful disruptiveness, whatever that means. So, you have to sell it to yourself. And certainly I bought it. But when the police and their riot gear came out--that was scary! The idea that kept impacted on my mind was keep walking, keep walking. When they gave that shove, did I really want to keep walking? That hurt! That hurt, those guys know how to shove. Then I saw some of them coming around, swinging their clubs and I saw some of our people hitting back. It was funny because the people I saw hitting cops, they were not arrested and they were not charged with anything. And I couldn't figure that one out. It was the ones that didn't resist, that didn't hit that got beaten and thrown in the slammer. I remember right in front of one of the shoe stores, a Chicano beating the shit out of a cop. To me it was so ugly to see that because basically even though I confront situations, I've never been a physically violent person. Nor was I ever raised that way. Even though I'll stand my ground, I'm a firm believer in what I need to do. Some of my friends, they got clubbed and beaten and dragged into the patty wagons. I couldn't understand that. Fred Ramirez was one. Adam Escoto was

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another.

You refer to it now as the Fiasco de las Rosas. Do you think any accomplishments were made that day?

Yeah, oh yeah. I think they began to evolve. See the whole thing was centered among minorities, but the planners were majority people, you know gabachos. That was a lot of what the whole issue had to do with. Here's another reason to exploit Raza, have a party at our expense. Subsequent years there have been involved a balance of planners. So it did. It did prove something. And then also it was an insult to have a grand marshal not be a minority. And that's that, big deal. But it was mainly the planning. That they are saying what is going to happen. "We're gonna have mariachis, we're gonna have this, and this kind of floats, these kind of booths, and this kind of activity going on later." Were our people consulted, or were our people planning? To us it was a whitewash stereotype. Yes, it did prove.

How exactly did the violence start?

Well, there was a parade. As soon as, I forget what detail of the parade, went in, we came in as observers and marched right in with them. And as we marched right in with them, the riot squad came, riding and pushing and shoving. Scary! When you see a huge person charging at you, a person with a gun. Not that the gun was drawn, but with their batons, nightsticks. OH NO! I thought, I can really chicken out now and melt on the ground or keep doing what I'm doing. It was frightening. Well, for me it was.

Were you involved in the Chicano student movement at City (SJCC) and at State (SJS)?

Yes. More at City. A lot more at City. At San Jose State, I use to filter in and out. I was more involved with La Confederacion then I was with MECHA.

What was your role at La Confederacion de la Raza Unida?

Participant, basically a participant.

How often did they use to meet?

God, I don't recall if it was weekly or whatever. Sometimes we would have conferences, which I thought were kind of neat. Retreats. I remember one at St

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Joseph's, where we would get ourselves together and read our needs? I would like to see that activated.

Did you have a religious upbringing? Did you come from a Catholic Background?

I came from a hypocritical background, where your parents brought you up religiously, but they didn't participate in it. They would send you to church. You know, this is the Holy Cross (church), right here. I had real mixed feelings about that because, I learned what discrimination was at a very early age. This Catholic church, had a lot to do with teaching me about discrimination. For Example: It was a predominantly Italian Church. Mexicans lived in the community. I was a very sharp, bright kid, they didn't have your GATE classes at that time. We would go through our lesson plans, little lesson books, and I would always be the one to finish first. I would just sit there, because you had to go to catechism anyways, and I would never get my lessons read because I would go through them in one day.

One day, the sister came up to me and said "I've noticed you haven't had your lessons read for some time now. It's been a few weeks. Aren't you studying your lessons?" And I told her I had finished. She said "well how can that be?" She mentioned some Italian girls that were my friends, because we all grew up together. We were a very stable community at that time. "Diane hasn't finished her's. Elaine hasn't finished hers. If they haven't finished, surely you couldn't have finished yours." And I said "but I did". I use to carry my book back and forth. She said "Let me see your book" so, I showed her my book. And she said "Where did you get the star?" You know, how they use to star your lessons. "Did you take one of our stars?" She was really making insinuations. I felt so hurt, that she had questioned my honesty, my integrity. She asked "who did these for you?" And I told her, that all the parents would volunteer. So she took me over to the parent. I was a 2nd or 3rd grader at that time. She asked that parent, it was an Italian parent, I remember. "Did you hear Frances' lessons?" And the parent said "Oh yes, she finished her book a long time ago". "Oh, so you did."

I felt she really needed to apologize to me. The gut level feeling I had- and this is as a little girl- is that because I'm not Italian, she picked on me. She didn't believe me, she didn't feel I was capable. They always induced those feelings with their little practices. Made you feel like you were worthless, if you were not White, Anglo. At that time I didn't know the difference between White and Italian. At that time they weren't different. But, if you weren't Italian, you weren't worthy. You were not a worthwhile person. It's funny how those things get

ingrained in you from a very early age.

It also had a real negative impact because basically I was a real good kid. It would even get to the point where, we had to go to confession every Saturday, and I would have to make up what I would say. Little white lies that I would say were okay, just to give the priest a confession. I had nothing really to tell him. They were forcing us to go. So, in a sense, they were forcing us to produce lies to please the priest. I would come up with things like, I lied to my mom. "What was the lie?" Oh God! then I had to think of something else, and I couldn't think fast enough. "I stole from her". "What did you steal from her?" "I stole a penny." Anyways, my thinking wasn't broad in terms of dishonesty. The following week, I would have to think of new lies to give a confession. When basically you were a good kid, and were taught to be a good kid, you were taught if you weren't the devil had ways of paying you back. Yet, they put pressure on you to have sins and if you had them it was a double whammy. It was always an ugly feeling coming out of there. At Saturday confession, was another time I had to tell that I had bad feelings about my mother. I had bad thoughts of her I told him. She was a terrible, horrible mother. You weren't suppose to have these feelings, and I didn't have these feelings, I was lying to him. So the church really had a negative impact.

I started sending my kids because I wanted them to grow with some values, but as I started attending some of the services here with a particular priest, I didn't like him. I didn't like what he was teaching my kids. I pulled them out. Now and then we go to the Guadalupe church. I'm not impressed with some of their sermons. They are so rigid. It's a real violation of my belief to go towards another belief, another church. So, I'm really caught between the values I was brought up with and what the hell they are teaching my kids now. So, we go once in a while, to keep up. Up until last year, we were going pretty steadily, every week. I thought this is meaningless because I never know when the priest is going to give a real neat service. I mean these priests are off the wall half the time. They're saying that "you, parents, are cruel. You're not doing this for your family." Your families are trying their darndest to raise their kids. Getting back to the priest, the church and the sermons, the parents rather than getting support were being offended by the church. Depending on the priest, depending on his day.

You mentioned that you had some Italian friends, what happened to them?

[Tape 1 side 2]

We see each other at functions every now and then. The thing with that community, in being raised in that particular community at that date and time, was that pretty much, you entered kinder with the same kids and

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you left 6th grade with the same group of kids. Give or take a few that fluctuate in and out through out the years. But, basically, you have the same core of kids that stream in with you in the beginning and follow you. When you get to Middle School, this is in those days, half of us would be separated, because we would be between two middle schools, or jr. high schools. Then, we would be rejoined in high school.

Which junior high schools were those?

Burnett and Roosevelt. But then we saw each other at the high school level. A lot of these kids that I grew up with, their parents are still there. They are old. Once in a while, I go back to that church, to attend a service. It's real heartwarming to see the parents that I knew when I was a little kid, to be old people now. A lot of the parents are there. The kids have just moved on to other communities, better communities, or newer communities. But the old Italians, their roots are still there. When I was small in that community, there was a lot of older people. It is the homes of these older people where we have a lot of families moving in and out now, because these people have since died. The investors are taking over their homes, so we have a high transency there. Kids moving in and out all the time. That's now.

At your high school, was there a mixed enrollment?

At San Jose High, oh yes. There were a lot of Chinese, Japanese students because Japantown right there. You don't have them a lot now because it's the same thing like the Italians. Where the school was, it was sandwiched in between Japanese and Chinese communities, Filipino, Black, and Italian. And then, other Whites and Mexicans were infiltrated around. So a lot of the kids we grew up with were Chinese, Japanese. It was really very enriched, I felt real enriched when I was growing up. Not that they taught us anything at the school, but just the exposure to the different kids. It was neat. And these are kids that we still see. They're professionals and I'll see them some place and we have our greetings. Not that we're friends, your friends as you grow up, then you sever that. Most of the Asian kids went to Peter Burnett, because that is where the cutoff was on 9th or 10th streets. At San Jose High, we were reunited. It was a well mix. A lot of Raza too. I don't remember what the percentages were, but it wasn't predominantly White or Mexican. It was very, very mixed. It was beautiful in those days. The school was referred to as San Jose Slum by other high schools.

Because of the mixed enrollment?

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Because it was located close to the east side. I remember going to a few functions, I didn't go out a lot in high school, outside of the school functions. But the few times that I did, I remember the guys from Lincoln or Willow Glen, "What school do you go to?" "What year are you in?" trying to pick up on you or date you. "What school? Oh, San Jose slum!" I caught on to it so I started saying I go to San Jose, so they thought they were associating with someone from San Jose City College. So, I was pulling one over on them tambien (also).

When you started getting involved in the movement, did it have an impact on your friendships?

By that time, we had become acquaintances. There were no real close close ties. The kids that I grew up with, of course, they all moved on to other things. I guess I detached all my relationships by the time I graduated from high school. I developed friendships and ties when I entered college level, that were a lot different, that I found I really enjoyed. The other kids were just like kids you just grew up with, that you know. There just a part of your roots. We bonded in a way, but not in a way that here we exchanged political differences or views. It wasn't that kind of thing. It was more just school stuff. It wasn't even home association. It was church and school.

You mentioned, your husband attended San Jose City College for a short time... Did you meet him there? Was he involved in the student movement?

No, I met him when he was going to San Jose State. And no, he wasn't really involved in anything. It wasn't his cup of tea or interest. He doesn't get involved in anything whether its political or otherwise. I still do to an extent, and sometimes he may join me, if its not too radical for him. And I won't rock that boat with him. I respect his views. He doesn't really get excited about a lot of my involvements. But, I'm very selective, so that when I choose to get involved in something, I have to strongly, strongly believe in it and he won't object to it, he won't interfere.

You mentioned to me about a so called "riot" at San Jose City College. Can you expand on that?

We were trying to establish, I believe it was, getting teachers, minority teachers representative of the students that were there at that time. And, probably a Mexican American Studies Department. I'm not sure, I'd have to go back and think about that question. But, at that time, we were looking out for our own identity. Looking



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for teachers, because we were tired of others teaching us about our culture, teach us about our history, our ancestry. We wanted to hear it from our own Raza.

So was there some classes (MAS)?

They were being developed. This whole political issue that we were involved in were developing these classes, getting a department (MAS) there, and getting personnel there, that we felt were suited to that department. We went through months and months of negotiation. In fact your professor (Jose Carrasco) was involved in that too. A lot of community people were involved. Professors from San Jose State were involved. Not a lot from San Jose City because there wasn't any, we might of had one. We were able to get some counselors in the first year. The second year, it took a little more action to open their eyes. What we did was demonstrate by doing some sit ins, having rallies, we held several rallies, unfair practices things.

One day in particular, we were having our rally and they had plainclothes policemen all over the parking lot. When the students were marching to the administration building to talk to the president (Dr. Otto Roemmich) the riot squad came in. They were there and they came charging. It was really interesting. A lot of the demonstrations were just sitting on the lawn and not budging. There was no way we were gonna strike someone with a gun and a club. Besides, that wasn't our belief. There was a broken window. I, myself, was hurt in terms that I received a very large bruise on my leg. I went to the doctor to have it examined to make sure there were no clots or anything involved. Another person took its picture, a picture of this bruise. Mike Conda, he's a trustee from the San Jose Board of Education now. He was a student at that time, I believe or a student adviser at State (SJS). So, he took my picture.

What followed as a result, was a complaint to the city of San Jose, regarding the police department brutal tactics. We demonstrated with a march, I forget from what point to the Council, during one of their sessions, and filed a complaint. The newspapers really played us up. MILITANT CHICANOS, that type of thing, which was really strong and radical in those days, in terms of your parents. "What are you doing?" "What an embarrassment!" That type of thing. For me, there was just a lot of familial pressures, of getting involved versus my personal convictions that we're setting up a foundation for later. I'm not going to benefit out of this, and I didn't. I wasn't going to benefit out of any of that. It was something to do, I didn't have attachments. I wasn't married and I had no kids. But I came from a large family that you just didn't do that kind of thing. You would be

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obedient. And I was, until I developed my own mind. In this thing at the city council, I remember addressing the council people, letting them know that, yes, there was a window that was broken over at City (SJCC). My thing was that, no window was worth the life of any student or harming or injuring any student. A window could easily be replaced, but a human being could not. So, anyways, those were kind of neat days.

Was the window broken on purpose by a student or was it a result of the confrontation with the police?

It was a student but I don't remember what lead to the breaking of this window. I know who the student was, but I don't remember the circumstances. That was a big issue, that they came out with. It was during the confrontation. But, I don't know if the student was banged against it or if he just broke it. I think that was the only damage that was ever done out of everything.

You mentioned that you worked for ESO (Equal Services Organization). Can you tell me more about that?

I was going to City (SJCC). I was working there after school. They called a strike around the third week that I was working there. I didn't know any of these people and I didn't know the issues at that time.

What were the issues?

I guess it was unfair practices, maybe they weren't pleased with the program. I don't recall exactly. But, I didn't want to cross the line, so I didn't cross their line and I was fired the following week. I was part of the union too and I was unsupportive. I wasn't part of the picketing. I wasn't part of the yelling, I wasn't part of anything, I just didn't cross the line. So, they fired me.

You also mentioned that you were involved with UPA (United People Arriba). Who are some of the people affiliated with that group?

Some of the people there were Fred Hirsch, Sophie Mendoza, Leo, Rudy Coronado, Sid Sandoval, Linda (Peralta) I think her last name was Gonzalez, I'm not sure. Rudy Madrid was involved a lot, a heck of a lot in everything. He just did a lot, provided a lot of musical entertainment, when we would do our thing. Lucy Ramirez and others that I can see but I don't remember their names right now.

What were some of the goals and objectives of that group?

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The goals and objectives were pretty much I guess the civil rights of Raza. That's what it really boiled down to. It was affirmative action, that type of thing. It was amicable police tactics towards Raza, because there was a lot of brutality, unnecessary brutality, that really zeroed in a lot on our Chicanos at that time. Housing was another issue. Discrimination was a biggie, just fair practices for our people.

During what time were you involved there?

I think it was 1968-69. I think I have the date on my card. I saw it over the weekend. The kids took it out, they wanted to see what it was. They went through all my cards. Some of them I said, "just throw those away, but don't throw that one, I'm not ready to part with that one yet." There's certain things that are just "junk" that you just keep, and that was one of them. It must of been 68-69, I don't really remember.

You mentioned that in high school Lino Lopez from MAYO (Mexican American Youth Organization) came and spoke to you. What type of an organization is that?

I don't even remember. I remember him coming to the high school. He singled out every Mexican kid in the school to ask them what their goals and their plans were. I don't remember if I was a junior or senior. I remember telling him that I would be a nurse, I thought that was really exciting. He was kind of mellow, low key person, but very radical for those days. He was extremely mellow, but in comparison to the action that was "not" happening, he was, I think, one of the first initiators of the student movements for Chicanos--too strong for him-- Mexican American kids, whatever they were. I didn't appreciate him at the time because it was all something that was all thrown together. The thing that I kind of didn't believe in, being singled out of the classroom, really made me mad. I remember I wasn't sure why myself and a couple of other kids were pulled out of our social studies class. Some of the other kids were making remarks. "How come just the Mexican kids are being pulled out?" I found that real offensive at the time. I couldn't understand then why it offended me so much. I think, giving it later thought, that just being called a Mexican. And, I was a Mexican, and I always felt in my blood, in my roots, and in my heart, very proud to be. But, it was always used so derogatorily, that I couldn't handle them saying that they pulled out the Mexican kids, although I was just as American as they were, with Mexican. I wish I would have been prepped for what was coming up and what they were doing through a rally to rev us. But, he pulled me out cold and I had never heard of him before and it was something so radical, so

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new at the time. Now, kids would be pleased to be pulled out for that kind of thing. But it was new, it was very novel then.

Do you recall any of the local newsletters or newspapers that were published during that time?

In terms of the city newspaper, there was a lot of very bias stuff that was put out. The community newsletters' articles that came out, La Palabra was one that I remember vaguely.

Were you involved in that?

No, and I don't even know if I have any copies. There were some other newspapers that used to print articles in support of our endeavors.

Are you familiar with MAPA?

Mexican American Political Association, not any more, but yeah then. That was Leo's (Rivera) baby. He was really involved in that. There's some other faces that flash through my mind, I just don't recall the names.

What about the Mexican American Community Services Association?

MACSA, yes I use to work for MACSA.

How were they founded?

I think it was Lino Lopez. I believe he was the founder and director. I think our of MACSA stemmed MAYO. I worked as a counselor at Roosevelt, while going to school, and then at San Jose High. That's where CASA LEGAL evolved out of.

What is CASA LEGAL?

CASA LEGAL is on 20th and Santa Clara. But it evolved out of that agency, worked out of that agency. What it did basically was help law students, that it supported, that were helping people with their legal issues in terms of directness and guidance. CASA LEGAL spun out of that, moved on and became its own entity.

At the time you were active, was there any paranoia about government surveillance?

Dr Ralph Poblano was another guy from San Jose State, he was the neatest man. Yes, Feliciano Rivera and Carranza were always coming out with "the CIA is watching you"

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and "they have a thick one on you" "they're planted everywhere". I wasn't paranoid about it because, quite frankly, I didn't feel I was doing anything to chide or overturn our government, but what I thought was within our civil rights. So, I don't think I was as paranoid as they were at that time. But yes, there was a lot of talk.

Did you know of any individuals that were being watched?

Not for a fact.

You mentioned a march against police brutality to San Jose City Council. Did that help the issues any?

What evolved out of all this, is that it alerted the city that, no more would we tolerate the actions of their police. It also didn't sensitize. I think it made a lot of police angry, but it made them think twice because if they were going to strike or hit or hurt, it was not going to be suppressed or kept quiet anymore. It was going to be held and dealt with in the open. There was so much of it, so much of it, going on prior to these movements, and it began to dwindle down. You hear it now. It's nothing like how it was then. And there is still a lot of racism. Not to say there's not a lot of good conscientious cops, but there are some that still have their attitudes, their slurs that they come up with. It did a lot of good. The march was a result of the tactics used at City College. That there was no need for them to incite those types of riots, to come in head-banging, which is what they did. Our students were pretty much peaceful and they complied. When the officers came out, they complied. There were no arrests or anything. There was no need to be hit or beat either, as far as we thought.

At that time, were there any minority cops?

Yes, there was some. They didn't stand out. There was not a lot of them. They didn't have a set quota. They didn't have the affirmative action type thing, where you had to hire so many. All of these things evolved after, after everything we did, that we worked hard to accomplish.

Were some of the minority cops used as undercover cops, for example at Fiesta de las Rosas?

Oh yeah. There was one. He was there (Fiesta). I wanted to kill him I remember. I know him, we went to school together. How the attitudes can change. It's really funny, that his brother is involved in the movement. He was just weird. When you put on that uniform and that badge, you turn... just such different mentality.

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Your presently working at Grant school, you mentioned you went to school here. Do you see any changes?

I see a lot of changes at that school. I think when I was going, things were a lot different. There was a lot of community support. Things were a lot different in terms of education. There is a lot better access and things going on today. It is not being received. Where there's better opportunity today, it's not being rendered as well as it was then. And then, there wasn't programs of support. There wasn't the extras, the classroom aides. None of this was in existence. But yet, they were turning out readers. Kids that could read, and had the basic foundations of math. Now, you got a lot of kids, and the new term for that is dyslexia, they can't read. They are turning into adults, high school students, middle school. These are kids that can't read with all these programs going on. I would say that teacher efficacy has a lot to do with it. Some teachers are really putting in time. There are some that are really powerful, powerful educators.

Were you ever involved in the Farm Worker's movement?

To an extent, in terms of closing down Safeways, picketing on Saturdays, distributing leaflets. I was a faithful picketer.

Did you attend any meetings of the Migrant Ministry?

A few. I was very involved in meeting on the weekends to picket and closing stores down. Also, giving out leaflets. There was so many things going, that was not my number one on the list. It was among the tops of my heart, but physically getting involved in everything...that was one of the things I highly supported but only when they needed the manpower.

Have you heard of Model Cities, Inc. ?

Yes, we use to have a daycare program partly funded by Model Cities in 1971.

What kind of goals were they looking for?

They had targeted a certain area in San Jose, an older incorporated area that encompassed several neighborhoods. The Mayfair community, Olinder community, Gardener community, I guess it was basically those three. Basically it was for improvement in services into those communities. Services, in terms of health needs, child-caring needs. They had task forces for just about everything, employment, housing, housing



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improvement, to rebuild the communities. They also provided a lot of seed money for many of these areas. The aging, was another area they got into, social service programs.

Who were some of the key people involved in that?

I remember Bob Martinez, was the director. Jose Lopez may have something to do with it. I remember some of the the people that sat on the board. Catalina Fernandez, an old-timer, not an old-timer in terms of age. OH! Tropicana was another part of the Model Cities. Basically like about four older established communities. Tropicana, is not that old, but it went down hill fast because of how it was set up. The people it attracted couldn't afford it. It wasn't the homeowners, I guess, it was the renters afterwards. There were renters everywhere. There were key people...I don't remember, my mind is at a blank right now. But, that's where 4 C's came out of also.

What is 4 C's?

4 C's is Community Child Care Council Inc. of Santa Clara County.

Is it still in progress?

Yes. St Mark day care, the Gardener community day care, came out of that. Los Pequenitos, which is now defunct, came out of that. It found about four basic child care agencies, I think, and then some health care like the Gardener Health Clinic, also evolved out of that, which has moved out of the Gardener area and is now downtown. You had to live in Model Cities to have one of the jobs offered and financed, at the time.

What was the role of the Chicana in the 60's movement? Were there any female leaders?

I think there were some, but it depended on who they were working with and how objective that person was, whether there would be a successful venture or not. Or if it would be one with harmony or not. The women were strong, strong in the sense, I'm not talking about personality, but movers and doers. Some of the males were more threatened by it. There were some males that were very objective and really enjoyed the participation, provided equal respect for their knowledge and skills. I didn't see that real often though. I think the women were very much of a threat, in terms of the rules. At that time, we would be at meetings and they would ask the girls to take notes.

I was involved in a lot of planning, carrying out in a lot

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of meetings with administration. I was contacted a lot by mail and by telephone by the administrators. "We're going to have a series of interviews" or "We're going to have a panel on this" or "We need a committee for whatever". They were always including me, as one of the key people. This was at City(SJCC). Which I really enjoyed, because it was just kind of neat to be recognized for your skills, or was it fear...what was it at that time? I don't know. I was out front, not militant in the sense where there was violence, but militant in the sense where hey, if I said something, or ran after some action, you better believe there's going to be some follow through. And I'm not talking about anything physical or violent. If I say I'm gonna complain, I'm gonna do it, or if I say I'm going to attend, or pursue it, I will pursue it. That's one of the things, that I always followed through.

One of the things also that I had difficulty with, is the way that some of my male colleagues perceived my activity. I was a real threat to them, to a lot of them. To some, not. I didn't go around hitting the sack with them, because I was in there for political reasons, and that is really where I drew the line. I know a lot of my friends didn't care, they did their own thing. There was not a lot of people that I admired personally, in terms of there was an attraction. There really wasn't for me at that time. The couple that I did, that's all it was, basically admiration of them.

Also with the role of the mujer (woman) there was also the thing that girls had a complex with some of the guys because they were married to white women. Girls felt that the guys went after white women because the Mexicans were beneath them, or they were embarrassed, or that was the only way to succeed. That was a thought, at the time. I'm not saying that's still not prevailing, in terms of today. I know some of my colleagues still feel that way. Me, I think it just depends on the individual. I happen to know some people that deny their culture, their heritage-Blacks, Mexicans, that went after white girls to compensate for their feelings.

The other part, we're talking about, we were too much competition for the male. The other part we didn't get enough respect in terms of status. If I didn't get it from my colleagues, I did get it from the administrators. And I don't know if it was unfair. I found it complimentary, that I was involved. I did a lot of growing in those years.

The other part was the family, your own upbringing. One of the things now that I look back, there was just such a difference between some of the students that came here to study, how they got involved and us. They didn't take as much of a risk as we did. Their parents were some place else and were not going to see. They didn't have to go home to them every night. Where, we did. We

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were limited because we were tied to those values. The movement, it was for me a real difficult thing for me because what my heart wanted to do was a real split decision. I really wanted to get involved and help create change. And at the same time, I was under a lot of pressure from my own family that didn't believe in any of this.

I don't know if that answers your question about the Chicana. You have to look at it from different perspectives. One, in terms of your colleagues or peers, equals. Also, in terms of the men's perspective. Were you really an equal or were you an easy object or convenient person for them? Did they gear you towards traditional roles? The third, for yourself. How you perceived it, what it did for you and what you did for it. And your reasons for being in it. Fourth, of course, the impact and influence of the family. I could have overcome all of them, but the initial bonding of, with that of the family. That's the hardest one to hurt or to violate. When you know things are not well and they're holding you back and they don't want you to get involved, and you do it anyways. It was very difficult for me. Very, very difficult.