

TAPE SIX

Jose Villa - Oral History

Question: Is there anything you would like to say about yourself?

Jose: I came to San Jose State about 1969; it's about twenty years since I've been here. I've had a hell of a good experience here I feel very satisfied, not only since coming here, but, very satisfied with my background, my experiences, what I've been able to develop in myself that I've been able to share here. I've been successful because I think I have identified very strongly with the Chicano community. I've been there with a lot of people and many issues and many things; many joys, many sorrows. I've grown from it and very appreciative because whatever I am and whatever I've become it's because of the people I've associated with and they encouraged me and supported me, to help me fight the good fight and who have sustained me and some ???? were lost. Aside from my family, there have been a lot of outstanding people that not only have reached out a helping hand, but, have been there to said, It's OK, Jose. You can't win every battle; you can't be discouraged by some setbacks. You just keep on going; we're here. And so, I would like to say, is that I ... whatever I am, good or bad from

??? is totally as a result of how I've been able to work with our people and there support and reciprocal love and respect we have for each other.

Question: Could you give me a list of five names or persons that were instrumentally involved in the activities of this period?

Jose: Aside from my wife, other than family; the people who have really been there that have been very significant in my life, 1) would have to be Jack R??, another one would have to be Jose Carrasco, another one would have to be Sophia Mendoza. Another one that was very important in my life is, I think, Mario ??? has been very influential in my life. And let's see, who else, there have been a lot of people, it's hard for me to get down to three or four names of who comes next sort of thing...

Question: Could you tell me a little bit about each one? And what they did?

Jose: Jack Rico was worked very directly me with at San Jose Unified School District and was my Associate Director. He was really ????, MACRA, but, he was very... he also made ?? a lot of the issues and things that we all worked on. Jose Carrasco, of course, was the Chairman of the Mexican-American Affairs Committee that hired me here at San Jose State and he's been a friend of my, very close friend through many things Sophia Mendoza was, for instance, one of the people on the executive

committee of the ????? and has been an organizer ?? closely with her on quite a few issues. Mario?? ?? , I've been associated with the last fifteen years and has been the Executive Director of County Services and he always been ??? helped me. One of the people that I was almost forgetting and that was a very supportive person to help me look critically at things was Mr. Valarza. So Ernesto was the kind of person that I worked with closely when I was Chairman of Mexican-American Studies and later helped develop a bilingual studio laboratory idea at San Jose Unified School District and Jose Carrasco was involved with myself and the bilingual studio lab and training the teachers so. ????? professionally, but a guy like Ernesto, Ernesto, I think was a mentor to many of us and I certainly whenever I had any real sticky problems that I needed to talk to somebody objectively, help me look at things a little more objectively, it was Ernesto that I would go see. Because he was not involved in the heat of conflict. Although he was ??? public hearings on ????? He pretty much was a valued friend and advisor, but more in the professional sense, someone who could critically assess what was happening and could ask questions about this and that. So Mr. Valarza was very important figure in my life. Someone I could turn to for bouncing things off and checking with him on what I was doing right or wrong. Why. A very keen, critical objective person.

Question: Was there anything in my questions that I may have missed? That was not brought out that you feel was important?

Jose: I think you were pretty thorough. I can't think of anything. I had a role. It's part of my resume. Being an expert consultant on Mexican-American Affairs in Washington, D.C., back in 1966. But, I think what's important in my development because in that consultant role I hoped to look at projects and programs or development or planning throughout the Southwest. So that experience helped me to get a broad picture of what was happening not only here in San Jose but in ????, New Mexico and Tucson, Arizona and Denver, Colorado and San Antonio, Texas and things like that. I've also been involved in some... I got involved with the G.I. Forum and developed manpower programs for Leon. In the MAPA programs. More in a consultative way that I helped develop programs and proposals and later on in Washington, D.C., it was valuable because I was able to how various groups at that time were to do things that could be duplicated or transported to other parts of the Southwest. Jack ?? started something in San Antonio like the High School of 400??? or in Texas. That was an idea that had a lot of viability and transportability to other parts of the Southwest. I think it's important to know that some of us that served on national and regional kinds of things, like on a regional basis... I was a consultant from Phoenix to San Francisco for the whole region 9 of Health, Education, Welfare and Labor Department to look at developing youth programs for like the Neighborhood Youth Corps and things like that which applied to the whole region, the whole Western Region. Some of us made contacts at higher

levels and with got to understand how the bureaucracy worked on a national level, on a regional level and state level and that was all very important for a lot of the work that some of us do locally because if there is anything to learn from Urnesto Valarza, it was don't leave your community, stay close to the people and... I was offered jobs, high paying jobs in Washington, D.C. and state offices, things like that, I was asked to run for public office. But being mindful of Urnesto's advice, some of chose to take knowledge and experiences we had from a very broad basis and focused on local issues and local needs. And I think the most important thing about that is whatever we learn and whatever we know if we share it with people in such a way that they can grab on to it, that they can take hold of it, that it's in their language and their interest, that it's... it appeals to their understanding... that they can take complex issues and complex ??? and research questions and learn from what we have to share from our experiences and our knowledge at a local basis, to the community, to the family. And I think that that's kind of what I am trying to do here at this University now. That I'm trying to make better sense out of what my experiences have been, what I know. And then to get the people to understand that they can avail themselves of some of the things that we can share and we can apply them to doing what we need to do. I don't know if that's new or otherwise, but, the other thing I want to say that I haven't said is that a lot of my friends here have wondered how I've been able to work with the gringos, a ??? establishment... a lot of people probably

wondered why lately for instance, I've joined the San Jose Cleveland Ballet Group. That's a very elite group, a lot of rich people, all gringos, ????, but, I do think like that because I'm always wondering what it is, I can tap by way of resources or where we can find, at least one or two social minded people that want to better understand the needs of our community and contribute what little they can to it. So, I'm always looking for some of those folks. And you're not going to find any, if you don't go look for them where they are. So, that's part of the reason I keep getting mixed up I guess with these other gringos at these higher levels. It's my continuing hope that their our people of good conscience and of good will who will share what it is they know and what they've got with us to some degree. Even as simple as sponsoring Chicanas to go to the ballet or for them to understand that we have our ??? protocol that's important to us. Or helping sponsoring raise scholarships, helping our kids then... that have artistic bents, talents to come into those things and to know how to work with the people on those levels. That's why I do it. I do enjoy doing it too and it can be enjoyable. It's possible to set aside one's anger and one's frustration and Zalinsky?? says to try at least to have humor and get some enjoyment in whatever actions we get into. So I guess a word of encouragement to Chicanos that don't want to be seen as sell-outs. Cause I've been called that a ban??? for being seen in the company of some of those groups. But, sometimes it's not so much being a ???, seeking out and sniffing out other resources and being willing to feel secure and not to

be among the wolves if you will, in sheep's clothing or whatever. But that somebody needs to do it. Maybe folks that are not willing or afraid to do it, it's OK. But, it should also be equally OK for some of us that are willing to do it. And we shouldn't be seen as CIA agents or ???, it's just that some of us need to be given the space to also do what we want to do. And I wanted to do those things because some of my background and training has been from the Church, from the establishment types and we need that too.

Question: How would you like to conclude our interview?

Jose: Well, I think with the idea again that whichever of us decides to go ahead and get involved in helping the community at whatever level, I know that we need to test each other out, find out how serious we are about our commitment and this and that, but, that shouldn't be mixed up with some of our personal preferences and for instance, I lead community singing in the Church, I've been ??? , my wife does the organ and in all that the Church has been an oppressive force to ??? our people. After all, we given our blood. We've built the church ????? Latinas. But, I go to sing with the Church because I enjoy it. I like to do it. And I think people should be understanding of some of our personal likes. It's not a selfish motivation or a religious.. or out of religious fervor. It's something, sometimes some of us like to do somethings out of sheer enjoyment, personal enjoyment. By playing the violin or even writing poetry or going

biking or walking or whatever. A lot of us need our own private space and we ought to respect that in each other. It's personal and we should respect personal and private lives of those that are involved in the movement to whatever degree but on the other hand are involved in their own lives. I think it's needed. It's needed for survival. It's needed for energy. It's needed to keep a perspective of what each of us, individually and personally values the most. It's a way of keeping ones bounds, ones mental health. Ones ability to look at things as objectively as possible but, also as passionately as possible. So I think that a passion for the movement should not be mixed up with ones own passion for life. I think that ones passion for life should reflect ones effectiveness in the movement and that has to be understood and respected.

Question: I'd like to thank you very much.