

EDUCATION

Can you please tell me about your experiences in the school system?

I was great in school. I went to a segregated school at Casa Blanca. I was bright, and so I had a lot of privileges. Some of them were that I didn't have to sit in class, or that I could go and answer phones in the principal's office, or I could go in another room and paint. What can I say, I felt like I had a lot of privileges and I am sure I did. I used to be a real sickly kid. It was very hot down there, and if they made me go out on the playground, a lot of times I would faint. And so, I had a lot of excuses for not having to do a lot of physical things. The fact that I excelled in school made it easier for them to make allowances. Well you don't have to sit in there, or you don't have to do that, so I wasn't popular with the kids. I remember one time they made me hall monitor (a big position) I was very small and the kids wanted to come in so badly. I could say who came in and who didn't. I was just really being horrible, and I thought I am not letting anyone in. Since they don't like me, I am going to show them. I was tilting my seat back, and the chair gave out from under me. I went spiat on the floor, and you never saw so many Mexican kids laughing. I never had really close friends other than the three that I mentioned.

What subjects were taught to you?

I am going to be very honest with you. I was absent not from school, but from the classroom, so many times that I don't even remember. I remember what I liked. I liked English. I liked reading. I liked spelling. I hated math. I hated it. Because they didn't make me do anything that I didn't want to do, I didn't learn math. I hate it, I'm not going to do it. Fine! No problem. So that was really foolish on their part and on mine, but I was just a kid. Art, I loved Art, and I loved to write.

Did you have a favorite teacher?

I had a lot of favorite teachers. One that stands out is Mrs. Easternling, a very kindly, grandmotherly lady. They used to teach us crazy things. Since I lived with grandma, we never had utensils. We just used tortillas, and had beans and tortillas. I grew up on beans and tortillas (My favorite food). In school they would give us a sheet of paper, and they would say, "Pretend this is your bread, and you have to cut it in four pieces and butter one piece at a time." We never even seen bread, but let me tell you I used to do it perfectly. I thought someday if I ever get to a restaurant, this is how I am going to butter it. It made an impression on me.

So they introduced bread and butter to you.

Yes, I liked it. I liked it very much, and then I grew up and did it just like she said. Even though it didn't make much sense at the time. You know who I was really close to was the principal. The principal had been there when my mother was there in that same school. He had a lot of authority cause when it was time for me to get my tonsils out, he is the one that decided it was time, and then he took me to the hospital and brought me home. Not my own mother.

How did he treat the other Mexican children that weren't as bright as you? Did you see a difference in his treatment?

Oral History: Linda Peralta Conway

I don't know. No, I don't think so. He seemed to like everyone. He lived there. He liked the people, and he liked to feel, I think, like the godfather or something similar

A protector, maybe?

Right. And I think that is why he had so much authority. He was sort of everybody's good guy. The other thing was that there wasn't a single minority teacher. Nothing, not one. All of the people that were around us were Anglo. People in authority, I should say, and not people generally around us. People in authority were all white. He was not unkind to them. He was very good to them

Were your experiences different in junior high school?

Yes, because we were in contact with other races and that was something we did not know how to deal with. We had known a lot of Anglo people, but they were all teachers, or Sunday school teachers, police, or whatever, but they were not our friends. We were bused to our junior high. Next door to it was another school completely fenced in. It was for American Indians. We were taught to be real afraid of them. We were told not to go near the fence because the Indians lived there. I was really terrified of the American Indians. That is so stupid now that I think about it. But we were limited in our exposure. We didn't mix well with the Anglo students, from what I could see. We were fairly isolated. Again there were no minority teachers in junior high school. They were all Anglo. We did the best that we could to fit in. But I don't think we ever fit in.

Were you still doing well in school?

No, I did horrible. I don't know if I lost interest or what happened. I used to get really angry because I used to speak very well in Spanish. I could read it and write it because I learned it from my grandmother. When I went to elementary school, they used to hit you on the hand if you talked in Spanish to remind you not to do that. They didn't have to remind me because I wanted so much not to fit in, but to stand above. So I never used it. I spoke only in perfect English, as perfect as I could muster. Then in junior high, they turn around and try to teach us Spanish. I got really resentful because I already knew it, and yet the kids were not allowed to say it. Anyway, I didn't do well. I was really rebellious at that time. I did well maybe in Art and English, and that was it. Don't forget I had never learned math, either, because I didn't have to. Right! Well I didn't have those kinds of privileges in junior high. I got there way behind, at least in math.

How was High School?

Limited. I dropped out of high school very, very young. I was 16, almost 17. I dropped out of school and got married.

Did you ever wonder why there weren't Chicanos in higher positions? Did you blame them?

Did I ever notice it and make an opinion about it? I noticed it. At that time, the impression that was given to me was that if there were no Mexican Americans in positions of authority, it was because it was their fault.

Because they didn't work hard enough?

That's right. They didn't care. They didn't work at it, and they didn't want it. That kind of thing. I knew that I wanted it.

When did you first have the desire to go back to school?

Well, I was involved in school all the time because of my kids. But in terms of my going back to school, I never entertained the thought. It wasn't until I was involved with Jose, Joaquin, and some of the other ones that I saw the possibility to return back to school. But it had never been an option for me. I never dreamed about it. I had never met a Mexican American with any kind of an education - an adult Mexican American. As I said before, all the role models were white, white males and white females. It didn't dawn on me that I could do that - that I could go back to school, even after I was a lot older. I was scared when I did go back. I was very very scared.

What year did you start?

Sometime during the 60's. I don't recall what year I went to school at State through Carrasco's needing me, mostly.

Were you involved with the Chicano Student Movement at City? Or at San Jose State?

I used to go to the rallies and meetings and so forth, but not at City rather. I never attended City. Just at State. I was not your usual student. I wasn't a young person. So I would not necessarily be where all the young people were. I was much older when I was at State.

Did you graduate from College?

No. I dropped out after 2 years. I couldn't do it anymore. I was raising 5 kids by myself, working full time, and going to school. Something had to give. When I was really involved in the Chicano Movement, I was married and my husband, although he didn't like it, made it possible for me to be involved. I was gone a lot.

EMPLOYMENT

While applying for jobs, not having a degree ever pose a problem?

No, it was never a problem. I went from doing nursing to working for the first job I had in government. It was with the Redevelopment Agency when it was still separate from the city. From there I went to work as a Community Relations person for Job Corps. By this time I had met a lot of people, and had a lot of contacts in terms of job opportunities, so when they advertised for the 1st administrative assistant for city council, I applied for that. I received a position there. The city was afraid of putting anyone down. They went with what was called a rainbow selection. They got one Black, one Mexican American, and one white. So, I was working there at the time Norm Mineta was Mayor. Then he decided to run for Congress. When he won, he asked me to go with him. I was his first field rep. When he was in office, I went on to the Water District, which is a unit of government separate from the city and county.

You were the only Mexican American?

Yeah, I think at first they were just curious to see how I was going to do or what I was going to do. But I threw myself into the job, and I would insist on seeing different projects before I voted on them. I took a lot of more interest than the older men did. They felt they didn't have to because by God, they were men and they had been there forever. I felt like I did have to because I didn't know as much as they did.

Now you make commercials, is that correct?

Well right now, I am working on a film for the Electrical Workers Union, and last year I produced some commercials for them that were on channel 36 and channel 11. I work as their public relation consultant, so I am the one that buys T.V. time and radio time, so forth, and I design their annual report. I think that they are probably the only union in the country that puts out an annual report just like a corporation does, to all their members each year. It is a very progressive union and I enjoy it very much.

How long have you been doing that?

I have been with them six years. I work under contract and it is renewed every year. It can be rejected at any time, but it has been renewed.

Do you have any helpers or do you do it all yourself?

I do it all myself - when I am going out of town or if I am ill, I'll call a friend of mine that I met who used to be in the Chicano Film Institute. And his name is Richard Martinez, and he does P.R. also. He does it for Job Corps. I like to write and I am familiar with his writing. He takes over for me, if I am not going to be around. That was an interesting group too. I'll never forget the first time I hired him and there was a big guy, photographer, Ray Rodriguez and I needed some stuff done for redevelopment, and I remember I asked him how much he charged per hour. And he said, "\$50 an hour", and I said, "Hell! I can get a White person to do it for that." He said "Linda, the movement, remember the movimiento." But I did hire him and we became really good friends.

Earlier you mentioned the Chicano Film Institute - What kind of organization was that?

The Chicano Film Institute had an office downtown, what was then the redevelopment area. It was creative artistic types, all Mexican American, calling themselves the Chicano Film Institute. And I think, the initial thrust was that they were going to produce materials, documentaries, photofiles of everything that was happening in the Chicano Movement at that time. I got to know some of the members, and I know some still. I see very few, anymore.

So who were some of the key members?

There was Teo Morales, who went on to edit a magazine called Lowrider Magazine, which is still in publication. Although he doesn't run it anymore, he and his wife Irene. Ray Rodriguez, an excellent black and white photographer, was someone I knew well from the institute. Richard Martinez is someone that I'm always in touch with. He takes over when I am become ill, or have to leave my job for any reason. He comes in and

pinch hits for me, he's a P.R. man. And the other guy, Oh God!, what was his name, Dennis, it was Dennis. There was Roger. There was Antonio Peralez. There were so many, but some I only knew by name.

How long did that organization survive?

I don't know how long it existed, because they were in existence before I utilized them for any of the work I needed done. They were in existence before that.

CHICANO MOVEMENT

How did you meet Carrasco?

I'm trying to think. I think he came to my house. We had organized a group of parents to confront the School Board. I think Jose wound up coming to my house for a meeting. They were spouting all this Chicano Business. And I thought, What is this shit? Who is this jerk? Get him out of here. Oh God, and then someone said he was a teacher or something, and I thought, I have never heard of a Mexican teacher. This can't be real. Who is this guy, but the more I got to know him, the more impressed I was.

When you first met Dr. Carrasco, what was your first impression?

The first time I met him was... he was not alone. He was with I believe Joaquin Brito and later I met Dr. Elio Carranza. When I first met Carrasco, I was impressed, but not in a favorable manner. I thought he was very negative and I wondered who the hell he thought he was, spouting off the way he did. He was kind of quiet, then he would spout off something, and then I would kind of look at him, and he was throwing this word "Chicano" around. He didn't sit well with me. I remember I called my mother later and she said, "That's such a low class term, he must be from Texas." You know my mother's response is if they are from Texas, it's bad. So I was very resisitant to most of what he said. What I was impressed by was that he appeared to be smart, and I had never met someone that I considered to be a smart Mexican. I mean I thought my uncles were intelligent, but I had never met a teacher who was Mexican or professor or a nothing. So, I was impressed with that, and of course, I got to know him better later. I don't agree with everything about Jose, but I have some healthy respect for him.

At the time you met Jose, did you consider yourself Chicana? Or what did you consider yourself?

American. That is what I considered myself. I had talked to my mother. I asked her what is this business. What does the word Chicano mean? She said, "It is a very low class word", and she gave me her opinions on it. She has her own prejudices. "Well, who are these people and are they from Texas", she would ask. "If they are from Texas, don't listen to anything they have to say. There is only one thing worse than a Mexican, and that is being a Mexican from Texas." That's my mother, so then I didn't consider myself Chicana. It sounded so MILITANT.

When did you first consider yourself Chicana?

After I got mad, I started getting involved and seeing some things that

really upset me. I wanted to fight back. At that point, when I wanted to fight back is when I started thinking myself in that way. I think I was very very far to the right in my opinions and views. I just switched. I went completely left (too much) and now I am sort of in the middle. But at that time, I just really went to the extremes. I went from one extreme to the other. And then, if you didn't agree with me, then get out of my way cause I was going forward. My husband left, and you know, that's how it goes.

You said when you first met him, it was a parent organization meeting.

I had been involved in PTA. We were fighting the school district for some things, but how I met him, I believe, is during the PTA business. I forget what the issue was but we had to go before the school board, and we were getting some direction on what to do and where to go. After that, we started meeting with some police because there was a lot of police brutality at that time. And they had a group organized to sort of bird dog the police, record what was actually happening. The chief that we had then was not like the one we have now. And the police department used to pride itself in being brutal, I think. So we started meeting to try to overcome that. We thought we would use whatever vehicles we could whether it was the Human Relations Commission or something. We needed leverage, and we did do quite a bit. As a matter of fact, I think it is all in the album.

So you did accomplish something?

Something. At least we brought attention to it. A lot of attention to it. At the time, later on, when we were still involved in Norm Mineta becoming mayor and he was an ally, so we were making gains that way. And Garza got on the council. We were gaining a voice where we never had one before, that kind of thing. For me, going to city council was a totally alien thing and probably to a lot of people who were going there with Carrasco and his group. This was I mean, come on, we had never been in city hall. And at first it can be very intimidating. So I guess we got courage because we were in numbers.

So there was a large amount?

Yes, there used to be big, big crowds. I remember one night when we went down there, God there must have been over 500 people. The only thing I had against them was that they used to start the blasted marches out on the east side. Christ, by the time you got to city hall, your dead. But they use to put speakers outside, and people used to overflow out of the channels and onto the grounds of city hall. And these are people that would never had gone to city hall otherwise to complain about anything. The police department used to say that it was all the minorities fault and problem but believe me. I met some cops later that would say its true, we would say "Let's go out and kick some ass, Let's go out and get us some Mexicans tonight!" So that was very common, very common.

Did you know MAPA?

I was in MAPA for just a really, really short time. The group that I was in longer was MACSA, no not MACSA, the Confederacion de la Raza Unida—that was a long time ago, Jesus! that was a long time ago. And the group called United People Arriba. We used to, like I said, bird dog the police. Those are the two groups I was most familiar with.

How often would you meet?

It seemed like every night, something, you know, you are meeting for something. I was gone from home a lot and so were a lot of other women I knew. We gave a lot of time and a lot of commitment. And so did the men. I think some of the families fell apart because of that. So it wasn't all totally positive. It may have been positive in terms of the movement, but in terms of the family units, I think in some cases it was very disastrous.

How long were you part of the organizations?

Years, I don't remember how many years but it was years.

Do you remember now they were founded?

No, I came to the groups after they were already founded, I presume by people that were around Carrasco and Brito and so forth. I would think probably them. See, I was introduced to these groups and these people, but it was not people that I knew beforehand.

How many members were in these organizations?

It fluctuated. You could get large, large crowds if there was an issue that was particularly present. But on the day to day business of the confederation, there were a few workers. It was almost at times like a paper tiger. It was thought to be a large powerful organization by city hall, when in truth, most of the time, it wasn't. But there was that feeling there that there was a lot of support. What gave that any credence was that if we called a march to city hall, Jesus!, they came out from the wood works. So it gave the impression that this huge group was always meeting and always planning, plotting. And also, we got a ride on the civil rights bandwagon that the Black had. You have to consider that at that time, Blacks were very active and very violent. And I think that the administrators, whether it was city hall or school or anywhere, thought we were going to be the same way. They saw us as the same kind of threat. And I don't think we ever were. I don't think that was our way. You know we were very different from the Black experience, but I think they saw it as the same, they feared it as the same. Jesus, these people are going to burn up the town if we don't do something. When in truth, I don't think any of us would have burned down the town. I wouldn't.

What would you say was the ratio between men and women in most of the organizations?

More men than women.

Several more men?

Yeah, more men than women. There were a few women that stood out as really strong individuals, and I think, some of them paid dearly for it. There was a woman named Rachel, who gave herself heart and soul. She and her husband did. Eventually her husband became involved with a younger woman involved in the movement. Rachel suffered very badly from the experience, and so did her children. One of them wound up in Agnew. I think he had tried to kill himself, and the girl is another story. I was shocked one night, when the police called me and they said, "We have your daughter here. It's Valley Medical calling and the police." And I thought,

wait a minute cause my girls were very small, but I had two nieces who lived with me. I said, "You'd got to be mistaken." They said, "No, this girl says she wants her mother Linda Peralta, and Peralta is her mother." I thought what in the world, so I threw some clothes on, and went down to Valley Medical. I saw this young girl, and she was strapped into a wheel chair, and her hair was muddy and matted. She looked like an animal, and they had her tied to the wheelchair. They said, "She says she is your daughter." I kept staring at her, and I thought, I know this child. I know her from somewhere. She had been brutally raped in the football field of Andrew Hill high school. It was Rachel's daughter. So the families, I think, really suffered in that kind of way. Something has got to give Yolanda. You can't give yourself 100 percent to a movement, something has got to suffer, and I think a lot of families did suffer. Now Ernestina was at various things, and I don't know if she didn't have any young kids, or how she handled it. I never knew about her home life, but she inspired me. She was a simple, not well educated woman, but she had a lot of heart. You know what I'm saying, so I admired her. I admired Rachel because she was so strong and forceful, and Ernie because she was so damn dedicated, really dedicated. But like I said earlier, there were few woman, and the majority were men.

Were all the associations united or would you say there were conflicts between them?

I would say there was conflicts between the individuals. But they were all united cause we all sat on the same blasted groups. You know like I said, if you belonged to one, you generally belonged to 4 or 5 more. So at times, there were a lot of conflicts between the members themselves, like a kid talking back to mom and dad, or a sister getting in a fight with a brother. Like that, it was really quite like a family.

What were some of the causes of the conflicts, would you say it was due to different social classes - educated versus uneducated?

No. Never, Never. I never saw that. I thought it was really great that the professors at San Jose State, I remember Caranza coming out and talking about this group of students. I don't even think they were students there at State. They were kids, they all wore Black Baretts. I think, they were called the Black Baretts, I don't remember. And I remember Caranza wore one, and he gave a speech that I was very very touched by. I never saw any kind of conflict because I am educated and you are not. To the contrary, I think that the people that had the most education were out there trying to help the ones that didn't to come along and make it (let me help you). I felt like I was a recipient of that kind of encouragement, and I thank everyone for it. I do because today I say, "You did a hell of a favor for me." And they did for a lot of other people. No that would have not been a conflict. Conflicts arose when somebody did something, and somebody else thought it should have been a different way. Conflicts arose, if uh, I have a big mouth, and I had it bigger then. If I maybe said a terrible remark to somebody. Maybe, it wasn't so terrible, or maybe I didn't think it was so terrible, but somebody else did. At that time, I remember we had our so called friends in high places. There was a woman, her name was Leona Eglan, who was an Assembly person, and I think it was Ernie Abeytia. I don't know, anyway, I talked to her and I forgot what I said to her, but she felt insulted. So she called Ernie to tell him what I had done to her and what I had said to her. And it was not true, you know what she was saying. At a meeting, not even part of the business, he stands up really angry and says, "why did you insult so and so!" I was so mad, I said, "I'm so

mad because that's not what happened at all. She is a liar." That's the kinds of conflicts there were. I remember there was an attorney, Domicio Macedo, and he said, "I believe you, Linda." Jesus Christ! But the woman, I felt bad that she could call a brother of mine, and say look this is what she did to me, and he would not ask me in a descent manner - Why did you do that to her, without asking me first, you know that kind of thing. So there were conflicts of that type, but I guess they're personality conflicts, but not anything really any heavier than I could see.

Who were the Black Baretts?

The Black Baretts, I remember from San Jose State, were a group of Militants from what I knew, students and non-students, Militants in the Chicano Movement. The first professor that I saw that became affiliated with the Black Baretts was Elito Carranza, and he wore a Black Baret, in fact, when he addressed teachers from the various school districts at the Civic Auditorium.

Do you remember who the key members were?

No, I don't. I remember their faces, but I could not tell you their names right now.

What were some of their goals and objectives?

I didn't belong to the Black Baretts, but in some ways, it reminded me very much of the current Guardian Angels that we have that show up from time to time. I remember when there was a very big meeting of police officials from various areas, we had a Community Relations Rep, I think from the Justice Dept., and various police people. It was held in City Hall, and the Black Baretts showed up. I got the feeling that they were there just in case there was a problem, because they were lining up the walls on one side and down the other. By the same token, the police seemed nervous about that, and so they brought more police. So it was kind of a challenge.

Did they publish any newsletters, or things like that?

Not that I recall, not newsletters. They had more of a photo library - photo and film library.

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

The majority of the publications that I saw were socialists. There were a lot of socialists around people in the Chicano Movement. I'm told this is normally what happens with communists, socialists organizations. They see a group that they can tie in with, and they do. One of the earliest people that I remember that is a socialist is Fred Hursh. He was very, very involved with the Chicano community at the time. He and a guy named Frank, I forget his last name. They put out an awful lot of stuff, an awful lot. And some of the college students like MECHA, and those organizations also put out some newsletters. I used to have the ones that were put out by the socialists cause they were really doing the most, but I got rid of them after so many years. It just wasn't relevant to anything I was doing, and I was never involved with them.

CONFEDERACION DE LA RAZA UNIDA

You mentioned last time that you were involved in the Confederacion de la Raza Unica.

Yeah, with Ernestina Garcia. Do you know her?

No.

She is a colorful lady. You ought to be talking to her. She was the president for awhile. A lot of people had turns being president, but she was really a go getter, hustler, I liked her very much.

Have you talked to her recently?

I have not. I have not seen her in years. There was Sophie Mendoza and Ernestina, but Ernestina was really the fighter. I do hope someone is talking to her cause I think what she has to say is probably very valuable.

Do you know how that was founded?

La Confederacion? No, I came to it when it was already founded.

Do you know what year you joined it?

God Yolanda, don't you know that I am an elderly person. I can't remember all these years exactly. No I could not tell you.

How long were you a member?

Of the Confederacion, as long as it lived. I think I told you once before, that it was kind of a paper tiger. There were times when it had a lot of people, and then a lot of clout, and then there were times when it had no people, and it still had a lot of clout, cause people thought it had a lot of people there. It was an organization. For a while there, it seemed like all you did was belong to organizations, and go to meetings. Basically, that's all you did. There was no time for anything else. You were either in a meeting, or getting enraged about something, or setting off to do something else. I don't know how any marriages survived all that, come to think of it.

So at one time, would you be a member of several organizations?

Yes, and the people that I knew were also a part of several organizations. To tell you the truth, I don't know how we did it. We all had kids. We all had kids, sometimes they went with us, and sometimes they didn't. But I think, the need was there because we didn't have the luxury of having the masses of people that wanted to do things. So you had a few and those few got recycled. If there was another group forming, well you were going to belong because once you are experienced at doing something, they shuffle you along to whatever is being formed next. So all of us, all of us belonged to many things at one time.

What were some of the main goals of the Confederacion?

From what I remember, lets face it most of the goals of the various organizations were really very similar. UPA was involved with watching the police. MAPA was involved in trying to get politicians in the city

council or in the board of supervisors. And you know, just recently, we barely got one Ron Gonzales. Look how many years it has been. La Confederacion would deal with Mexican American issues. Basically it was probably not unlike the other ones, but it didn't have the limits, say that UPA did, say that MAPA did. Its goals were more broad. It was there for all the people.

What was one of their greatest accomplishments?

God, you really ought to ask Ernestina that. I think just the idea that the name existed, and the leaders of that time that existed on it that gave the impression that it was really a very powerful force. I think that in itself, was a hell of an accomplishment because you can't imagine the things that were done in the name of the Confederacion. You would throw the name out if you were in a meeting, and it was a group that the administration, the authorities, whoever that was in charge could respond to and react to. They saw it as a large body of Mexican American people that were working hard to do something. So just the fact that it existed, that it had the reputation that it did, and that it stuck its neck out on the various issues facing Mexican Americans. That alone I think was its most important aspect.

UNITED PEOPLE ARRIBA

Have you heard of United People Arriba?

Yes, I was in that UPA.

What actually was that organization?

United people fed up. That is what it was. That was the group that used to follow up on any police problem that there was, trying to document everything that was actually happening. So, that we would have our story and they would have their story and that hopefully we could appeal to somebody with our facts and figures. So we learned to ask for badge numbers, write down license plates, whatever it took. Did you read very recently about that cop that posed as an average guy riding in a neighborhood in L.A. and he was caught by another policeman, who shoved his head through the window. Okay that kind of thing. We were doing that kind of thing. You couldn't really call it undercover surveillance because they knew we were there, and we were just an irritant. But it helped they knew that we were there watching, listening, writing. It helped.

Police brutality was the main issue?

The police was a real problem. The police problem was a really sore, sore spot and it hung around for a long long time. That and adequate health care and decent housing, that was low enough so that you could afford to live in, and neighborhood clinics, you name it. I mean things were really sad, in sad shape.

MAPA

Am I correct in saying you were not involved in MAPA?

I was only minimally involved with MAPA.

What were some of their goals?

The politization of Mexican American people. We desperately needed people in politics. We needed them everywhere, let's face it. There weren't a lot of role models in industry or politics or education. Jose (Carrasco) and Eliu (Carranza) were in education. They were the first two professionals—"professionals", I had met. Joaquin was not. He was more of a grass roots kind of organizer. Very strong individual, a lot of charisma, a lot of forcefulness in what he said. The idea was to advance someone through the political system that we had and then of course, we did. We had Al Garza. People leaned on Norm Mineta. Norm Mineta had been appointed to the council as the first Japanese and when he became mayor, then people leaned on him to appoint the first Mexican and he did that. He did that with Garza.

Did people lean on him because he was a minority?

I think people leaned on him because he was a minority, also because he was a political kind of person, and he wanted the position very badly. He was a teacher and he didn't mind giving his time. It paid nothing. I mean it really paid nothing at that time. I think all he was earning was something like \$400 a month. And he had like 5 or 6 kids to support and his wife, and so forth, it wasn't for the money. Probably more for the glory of it. And then the idea that you could move from there into higher office.

MACSA

Am I correct in saying you were a member of MACSA?

Yeah, MACSA was under the direction when I was most involved there. I wasn't part of say, your executive board, or anything like that. I was doing other things. But an awful lot of things happened at MACSA physically. Joaquin (Brito) was there as a director. And if there were issues to be discussed, there were Mexican American issues, and they were discussed there. It was the place to go to meet other involved people.

Do you know how it was founded?

No, I don't.

What year did you join?

Oh Christ! I don't know, late 60's, early 70's, probably.

How long were you involved with them?

For years, as long as I was involved with the "community". I was at MACSA for various reasons.

What were some of their goals?

They seemed to be a catalyst for the community. If you had a problem, you could go there and expect to get some help. No matter what kind of problem it was. We had a young woman, whose child had been kidnapped by the ex-husband, who was Mexican American. And he had stolen the child and taken her to Mexico. Her name was Georgia Rios and she came to MACSA for help. And I think people did the best they could to help her. They addressed any issue it seemed that was brought before them, that is, had any kind of validity. When they were upset with the Mercury News, Jose Villa, I think it was called a meeting, invited the editor, Larry Jinks, who had just come back in town, as a matter of fact. And I remember that meeting very very well because I think Jinks thought that, well, you know, I'm going to be at a meeting with the community, and they probably are going to be rapping on me or whatever. And I guess he thought he would put us in our place to begin with. So we were all assembled there. I was there because Jose Villa had called and asked me to be there. I did a little bit of research before I went. And the first thing Larry Jinks did was he sat at the head of the conference table, took off his watch and put it in front of him, to let everybody know that his time was limited. And that they better say what they had to say. That really angered me. It really angered me, and I remember telling him that my time was valuable too. My only question that day was that I wanted to know why the Mercury News articles were always so negative about Mexican Americans. He said that he didn't think they were, so I opened up the file folder that I had taken with 3 months worth of newspapers and cut out all the negative ads (all the negative stories) about Mexican Americans. In another folder, I had all the positive ones. And so, it was obviously really, really heavy on the negative side. He was kind of surprised in that, kind of taken aback. He called me after that, and we became friends. He would call me about various things that were happening, and ask for my opinion and my help, which was good I thought. He was in touch with people, but not initially. He learned to be that way.

So was he impressed by your research?

Probably. He was probably impressed that I had taken the time to bring something. But you see, they were so used to us sitting around and harassing them, that I really felt like we needed something concrete, or he would have just picked up his watch and left, and that would have been that. He wouldn't have given it another thought. As it was, he took the file of folders with him, and said, "You were right. This is what they have been doing. I am new here, and there will be some changes."

UNITED FARM WORKER'S UNION

Have you ever worked in the fields?

No. I was real sickly as a kid. Maybe that was a blessing. I did try when I think I was 15. I decided I was going to get wealthy and go and cut apricots. It was not like it is today, maybe hotter. I showed up with whoever I went with, and I remember looking at all those trays of cots, and I passed out. They fired me even before they hired me. They said get her out of here. So that was that. Another time, later, after that, I decided maybe I should cut green beans, but the first time I saw a spider, I ran from the fields, so I didn't make any money picking.

What was your involvement in the Farm Workers Union?

I didn't have an involvement in the Farm workers movement. I remember going to Delano with a guy from the Justice Department, that I was seeing. I really was never involved with the farm workers, other than when they would ask you to go and picket a grocery store or march here and there, anywhere. I always had really mixed feelings about the farm workers. Primarily because I didn't see this a rural area. I really thought that we had a heck of a lot of big city problems without introducing rural problems, and throwing them into the pot along with all the rest of the other ones. It was a noble fight in the beginning. Everyone got infected with the spirit of the farm worker's movement. It was really quite something, very impressive, and your sympathizers were there. But in terms of us dealing with it as an issue all of the time. I didn't think we should be. I really didn't. I thought we had enough problems of our own.

You said you did participate in some of the boycotts and strikes?

Oh sure, but lets face it, that's the easiest part, saying, "No, I won't eat grapes." The only time I took it farther was when I went to a civil rights conference in Hartford, Connecticut. At that time, nobody over there seemed to know about the Grape Boycott, and so when they served them on the table, I got up and left, and I wouldn't eat. The people at the table were talking about it, and the word spread through the auditorium. So the next day I wouldn't go eat again, and finally the third day, the directors of the conference came to talk to them. By this time, the press was talking to me to find out. At that point, I was able to say, "I am not eating the grapes because, and didn't you know" so that it was setting press for the farm worker issue back east. I was not an expert on the farm workers or any other causes. I was simply saying what I had heard said. It was really funny cause finally in the third day, I think it was, I went down to join everybody else in the dining room. It was a huge dining room. There were about 500 people. They stopped me at the door, and they said, "Wait! Wait!", and I said, "What's the matter?", and they said, "It's on the table, and we are trying to get rid of it." And you know what it was, it wasn't grapes. It was grapefruit. but they didn't know the difference. So I got a real kick out of that.

FIESTA DE LAS ROSAS

Can you elaborate more on the Fiesta de las Rosas?

Oh God, that was so long ago. That was the first time that I had ever seen anything like that. I mean confusion and chaos in the street. It was the first time I had seen police hitting anybody. I had always grown up thinking that police are there to protect you and help you. I always taught my kids that you never have any problems with the police because they are your friends, and they are there to take care of you. That day they were not there to take care of us. Well they were there to take care of us, but not in the way that we thought. I was on the Human Relations Commission at the time, which was a city commission. I think I was Chairman. I was their first woman chairman. My director, who was a tall Anglo named Mark Bihn, was downtown also. I remember they were beating on this friend. She is an older woman, and I am trying to think of her name, but I can't. She was a friend. We all belonged to MACSA, UPA (United People Arriba), and all that jazz. I forgot her name, but anyway, I was just shocked because they were beating her with a baton. My first instinct was just

norrer, you know, and then I thought, My God, I have to do something to help. I started towards the middle of the street, and all of a sudden a cop came towards me, you know with his arm stretched. Then Mark Bihn was suddenly there, and he said, "She is on the Human Relations Commission", and the cop drew back the batton. I was alright, but I felt so sick at the idea that it was okay to beat her, but not okay to beat me because there would be a problem. And that kind of thing. So it was really scary, really scary. I don't think I've ever been through anything like that again.

Were your children with you?

Leslie was there, the littlest girl. She is the one I say got in trouble at school later. She witnessed it. But I think we were just so shocked. It seemed unreal. It seemed rather unreal at the time. And then when reality hits you, you cry a lot. I have pictures of that upstairs.

How was it organized? Where did you meet?

We had met in a park. There were some funny aspect to it too. None of us knew what we were getting ourselves into. Well, maybe some did but I didn't. And I remember they were handing out phone numbers and someone said "What is that?" And another one said "It is dial a prayer, in case". I thought dial a prayer? But I wasn't afraid because I didn't know what to expect. You know I thought, well I thought we will join the parade, a peaceful demonstration, that's the way it is going to be, but it wasn't.

Did you have banners?

Yeah, well we had signs.

Do you remember what they said?

No because I wasn't carrying one. I had a movie camera. I was going to film the dog gone parade. So, I had a movie camera, not a sign.

Were you chanting anything?

At the time, as I think back what happened, was that we were in it such a short time. I mean you barely converged to join into the parade and all hell broke loose. So, I don't remember what was being said, often I just remember the chaos. That is really what stays with me. Just the violence and the chaos and then suddenly people are bleeding and screaming and down on the ground, and it was just too fast-too fast.

Do you know how many people were injured?

No, I don't.

I want to go back to Fiesta de las Rosas. What were some of the reasons for the boycott?

The way I understood it, the festival had been held previous to that, when we appeared on the scene. The emphasis was on the domination and subjugation of the Mexican peasant, the farmer, the farm worker, or whatever by the Spanish Conquistadores or under Spanish rule. And the feeling was that the city was advancing that kind of thinking and it was very hard for Mexican-American people, who were trying to make it, to have such a negative image of themselves. The whole movement was to

give pride to the Mexican-American, to show them in opposed to a subservient role.

Who were the main leaders?

Well, you know I think that changes depending on who me, the main leaders were Jose Carrasco, and Joaquin active at the time. And some of the other ones, Marco was. Some of the other names don't stay with me as were to me very definite leaders. People that I looked gave direction, particularly those two and Eliu Carrasco there at State. I saw them as very forceful kind of following because of them.

Is it true that plainclothes policemen would attend to

Probably so, I wouldn't doubt it, but I wouldn't know that actually took place. I probably would not have known

With all the police brutality going on at the time, did you discuss the probability of police harassment?

Oh sure. You mean us harassing the police?

No.

Yes, that was the prime reason for some of the people try to put an end to that kind of treatment. Yes, the suits being filed. And there was an awful lot of anti chief because we felt that under his direction, the people conducted themselves as they did. And I guess it was that was chief. He had no contact, no positive contact with the community at all. Very unlike the chief that we have is very visible and assessable.

Do you believe the Fiesta boycott was a success?

It was a success in terms of bringing people together like me, to see there really was some truth in what had never seen any kind of police brutality. But then myself in a situation where I might see it. If you were So in terms of that, I think it was good. It created Mexican American people and their supporters who priests, who weren't all Chicanos by the way, they were. These people mobilized in mass to march to city in strong. I don't think they could have done that without incident happening to La Raza people to motivate them. "We've had it, this is enough, already, Do something that I thought it was very effective.

In 1968, were you aware of the Economic Opportunity Act in Clara County?

The EEOC. Yes, but not in depth. I don't think I even EEOC. I was more familiar with the Model Cities program of that.

It was advertised. It got an awful lot of press. It got an awful lot of support from many factions. It was an interesting concept. I remember that some of them were really tongue and cheek, kind of things. How should I put this? I remember writing a poem one time, "Give us this day our federal funds and deliver us from community participation" something like that. I thought it was funny. Well, unfortunately, it got tacked on the bulletin board, and one day a reporter came in, and they printed it up like it was a serious thing. I thought, Oh my God! But it was just a gag, you know, but uh! When there is problems like that, I think, the press is looking for problems - looking for them. In some ways they are kind of built in because the director Bob, I think, had gone to school to the fourth grade or something, and here he was running this huge program. So you have built in problems, and maybe, it is done on purpose, I don't know.

But in general was the community pleased?

Yes, I think so. If nothing else, they learned a heck of a lot about where to go get help, and how to apply for things. Lets say the community got an education, and in terms like that, I thought it was very good.

GOVERNMENT SURVEILLANCE

Was there any paranoia about the government surveillance among the individuals involved?

Oh God yes! I think so. I don't think it was just paranoia either. I really don't.

Do you know of any persons that were investigated?

Sure I remember when we used to go to city hall, march on to city hall, there were times when people would photograph us as we stood at the microphone, and they weren't reporters from the Mercury News. We never saw the photos. Later there was a guy assigned to this area from the Justice Department Community Relations Services, and I became friends with him first, and then lovers with him later. I found out from him that most of us had docies in Washington (most of us). And so, he knew more about me and about all the people around me than I realized anybody knew. I would have never found out if I hadn't been close to him. So I wouldn't call it paranoia. It was real. It was real.

So what were some of the consequences of the investigations?

His purpose was to come in and fit in, and find out what people were doing. There was, I think, a lot of fear that there would be a disruption within the Mexican American community like there was with the Blacks. So there was a lot of fear that if they didn't know everything that was going on, something really bad could happen. There could be race riots or whatever. And so uh, he would attend at first. It was all so very innocent. He said he was here to help, and all this kind of stuff which I found out later, it wasn't true. But uh, the consequences, I don't know that there were any. I mean everyone was cautious. Besides what could you do if they were going to watch you. What difference did it make. I don't think we cared. I don't really think we gave a damn. If anything, we were probably more determined to do whatever we wanted to do, that kind of thing.

CHICANA RIGHTS

What were your feelings about the Women's Liberation Movement in the 60's?

Okay, I didn't feel a part of the Woman's Liberation Movement as such, and the other Chicanas that I knew didn't feel a part of it either. If I had attended say some of the meetings like of NOW, and some of the other women's rights groups, but I found that I didn't fit in. The kinds of things that they were talking about were foreign to me. These were basically Anglo women, very angry Anglo women who were fighting for what they considered their rights. I found that as I saw them, I thought, well you always had more rights than I had. As much as they felt they were lacking, I felt that we were lacking more. So I didn't feel a part of their movement at all, and I did not become involved in it. On the other hand, I used to feel very badly, and I used to get very angry that the women that I knew that were counted on to help in the movimiento, at the same time were belittled by some of the Chicano leaders themselves. Not so much the average guy, the average Chicano, but the ones that you worked with, and the ones that you fought with. We used to have a joke, the Chicanas that I ran around with. They used to say, "You know you don't know what to say! If you are asked out by a Chicano, and you say no, the word gets around that you are a lesbian. If you get asked out by a Chicano, and you say yes, the word gets out that you are a whore." So we felt like no matter what we did, we weren't going to come out on top anyway.

It was a no win situation.

That's right. It was a no win situation, and that used to make me feel badly. But more than badly. I think I felt angry, very angry. Now when I worked for Garza, Garza was a Chicano male, Right, and as long as I was working like a dog, which I did for him, everything was okay. If I did anything on my own, he got very upset. When I wrote as I like to write, straight from my heart, and publish things, he used to get upset. He would say, "I talked to the Chicanos in the community. They don't want you writing this shit. Don't be writing anymore!" And I said, "Wait one minute, since when do you rule my life, for Christ sakes!" People even used to tell me that he would go and complain to the Chicano leaders. The Chicano leaders used to say, "Can't you control her!! What's wrong with you!" He'd reply, "Well you know how she is" That kind of thing, so that I was billed as a royal bitch, no matter what. After a while, I felt like a royal bitch, and I acted like a royal bitch, and frankly, I didn't give a shit cause I was so pissed. I was not alone. Most of the women that I knew that went on to become professional women were the same way.

They felt the same way?

Yeah, same way. I think their aspirations for us were lower than their aspirations for themselves. I remember when I started in college, once again I have to say I was very grateful that Jose talked me into it, at that time, I really wanted to go to law school. I really would have liked to be an attorney, and I felt put down because he would say, "Linda, what you want to be is a secretary." And I'd say, "No, Jose. No, I don't." And he'd say, "Linda, what you want to be is a teacher." And I'd say, "Jose, I hate kids. I don't want to be a teacher." And he'd say, "Then a secretary. You get into these big offices, and that's where the power is!" And I thought

don't want to be a God damned secretary. I don't want to be that, fine for whoever wants to be that, but I don't want to do it. And I never did, and you know to this day, I learned then that if I allowed myself to do as they wanted me to, if I took secretarial courses, if I even learned to type, I would probably be stuck in that role forever. So to this day, I can't type, but Yolanda, let me tell you, I have jobs since then and I hope to always, where I am always given a secretary because not only I can't type, but I am not going to type. That's the way it is. I just felt put down. I really did, and it was a shame because I'd admire them so much. I mean, I'd idolize them when I first met them. And of course you know, they are not Gods. You cannot put them on a pedestal, or they're going to fall. I did put them on a pedestal, I think. I used to think, my God, smart Mexicans. You know, this is incredible. I had a great, great personal respect for them. I was in awe of them, I really was. But as time went on.....

Did they ever change?

No. No. I still think they are male chauvinist pigs. I do even today. I remember being at a pizza parlor or something, sometimes we would get together after meetings, and Lou Carranza was there. It was getting late, and I wasn't married any longer, and I don't know if the rest of them were married (Oh, Jack was married), but someone mentioned that his wife was always home alone, and he said, "She wanted to marry a Mexican. That's what she gets." And I thought, this is really incredible. This is the same man that could instill in me such a fervor to go out there and fight for rights. How could he be so double standard like that, as if just because you are married to a Mexican, then you are expected to suffer. Why? I don't understand, but I did recent.

Would you say that most did not remain married?

Of my friends, they did not.

Due to their involvement?

Right, but you know it was like getting religion. You threw yourself so heavily into it, that nothing else seemed to matter. I felt like I had got involved that way. I changed. My friends were all gone. My former friends because they couldn't understand this different person that was there. I made new friends, and I never, ever, I never even saw the other people again. I moved into a different group. But un, yeah, a lot of them lost families.

Did any Chicana organizations exist at that time?

No, not that I knew of. My friend Esther Ono formed one called Chicanas, not Chicanas, Women Who Care. But it didn't survive for very long. She worked for the city. In fact, she worked for the Human Relations Commission. That is how I got to know her.

So you weren't part of it?

Yeah, I was part of it. Yeah, absolutely, 21 Spanish surname women.

So you were a part of it. Do you remember when you joined it?

Well, it had to be in 73, since that is when the article came out. I don't really know how long it lasted, maybe a year at the very most.

How often did you meet?

Probably once a month, or maybe a little more often. I would have to check with her. We had a good cross section of women. The trouble was that a lot of times we would focus in on womens issues, and too often it looked like we were anti-Chicano. You know what I am saying. A lot of what we had to discuss were problems we had with the Chicancos in charge, and somehow it seemed detrimental to the movement as a whole for us to be meeting and discussing what we should do about this, that or the other. We had to keep it really light weight, so we wouldn't step on anyone's toes. And then at the same time, it seemed like what were we meeting for if we were that ineffective. Why bother? There was an awful lot to do. We weren't like the Anglo females in what we wanted. Oh they had a lot of silly things, what we saw as silly things. We felt we had a lot of heavy issues to face. We felt that with the men we were being discriminated against, and we were kept from holding descent positions in the community, whereas the Anglo women were not. We didn't see them suffering all the kinds of discrimination that we did, so we couldn't relate to them very well. In fact, we didn't feel sorry for them, to tell you the truth. But by the same token, when we zeroed in on our problems, too often they were in connection with Chicano males.

Did the Chicano males resent you for that?

I don't know. You know, I think they used to make fun of us. I don't think that they resented us so much, I think we were humorous to them. Mexican men have always made jokes about women. You know I had uncles, but not brothers, that were in that age bracket, and other men in the family, and I knew that they joked about women. Generally if you are a mother or a daughter, you know that you are sacred, or if you are a grandmother, but beyond that, you know Mexican people are very hard on women. I think the women as well as the men.

Due to the submissive stereotype of the woman?

Yeah, and yet it is a stereotype that I don't know why it exists, really because in my own family, and in a lot of the families that I have seen, I think that we are very matriarchal. I think my grandma ruled the roost, and I know my mother ruled the roost. When I was married to a Mexican male, I was in charge. So where do we get this business of being submissive. I don't see it. Maybe in some areas, but certainly not in running a home. No not there, I saw us as being in charge there. Where we couldn't seem to get ahead was when we tried to get into any kind of higher learning or higher positions in the community. It didn't matter whether it was an Anglo boss, or a Chicano boss. Their reaction was the same.

Prior to 1973, when that article came out, there wasn't any woman's organizations?

Not that I knew of. There were really strong woman at that time that were involved, really strong women. I saw them as really strong. I remember there was a time when there was a photo session of Mexican American woman. We all went to see it, and it was done by, I think, primarily males. We were shocked at our pictures because there wasn't a single woman who was smiling. We all looked really stubborn, hard, and determined. We didn't look soft, and feminine, not at all. And there was a

part of it that was really offensive. It was the first time that I had seen Chicanas without any clothes on, like in pornographic poses. And I was really turned off by it. I had never seen anything like that, and I was just really really turned off. And most of the women I knew were also. We were just used to seeing a White woman do that, but never for a Mexican American woman to pose like that, and husband and wife and child-all nude. It was a total shock

What do you think were their main goals?

They probably wanted to get ahead like everyone else. They probably wanted some respect. They probably wanted decent pay and a decent position that's probably all we wanted. Maybe if we had a list of a few things that we wanted we would like it very much if Mexican Americans or White males did not snicker if we came into the room, did not make comments at the fact that we had large breasts, and tried to control themselves from saying or feeling, that we were real hot blooded and wanting to get laid, just because we were Mexican American. And we faced a lot of stereotypes. We just wanted a little bit of respect like Rodney Dangerfield. Got No Respect.

Do you feel the Chicana has more power today than in the late 60's?

I think so, Of the women that were involved at that time that I am still in touch with, they went on, they used that experience to build on. They didn't just do this in the 60's and then walk away from it and go back. We never did go back. We didn't go back to the kitchen and raising kids, and that's all. And that's all we used to do before I got involved. None of us did that. We all moved on, moved up, I would hope moved up, earn better money, did something with ourselves. So, Yeah! I'm proud of what we've done.

Do you believe your success encouraged other women?

Sure, absolutely, because we bring other people along, younger people. At least I always have. If I saw someone that was trying to get ahead and she is Mexican American, even if she's not, and I could see there was promise there, I worked very very hard to include these people, teach them the ropes. It matters who you know. It matters how many people you know. It matters that you don't accept this kind of treatment. And if you don't accept it and make it well known from the beginning, then they are not going to treat you that way. Yeah! I definitely feel it has.
You know I got to tell you on tape, this is a very funny thing - The Woman Who Care. Esther is actually a distant cousin of mine. And she is about as Anglo as you can get. But, we were all trying to be very Mexican at the time. She formed this group and none of us, none of us in our group could really speak Spanish, very well. So we got this lady, what was her name? I don't remember. Now, we got this lady to travel around with us cause she spoke beautiful Spanish. So, we'd tell her what we wanted her to say, and then she'd say it, and it was great. Well, Esther got us on television, Channel 2, some newscast in Jack London Square. So, we take this lady with us and we are going to put her on television, right! She got terrified. We got her there and the woman couldn't talk. She got into shock and was shaking and the newscaster said, "You got to talk". I said, "We can't, we don't know how to speak Spanish good enough". He says, "You got to, this is live, you know". So I said, "You, Go!", On my God! So the two of us were there and we looked terrified, terrified. So they asked us what was it we wanted. And she said, "Necesitamos pollos". She was trying to say

necesitamos apollo. The guy looks at me then, and says, "Porque?" and I said, was trying to say we have a lot of pressure and I said, "Tenemos muchos prisionés." And so You know, I think they ran that newscast a couple of time. It was horrible. We never did that again. I didn't do that again. Esther got herself caught up one more time after that, cause she is real fun. They asked her would you come and interpret for these people at this meeting and she said sure. "Sure I'll go." She is like that. She shows up, and there's all this technical information she has got to say in Spanish. "Well, I could either sit there and make a fool of myself like when we went on television" she said, or I could faint. "So, I fainted."

The easy way out.

But aside from the funniness of it, she was genuine in wanting to do something for us. And if nothing else, this funny group, it gave us a collision, a feeling of collision. Hey, I'm not imagining things, they really do treat us like this. How are we going to deal with that. So it was a bunch of women with a common problem, sometimes, we ourselves, sometimes other people. But at least we could feel and share. Yeah, I am not alone in this mess. I am not imagining things, problems do exist, and this is how I handled them, what do you think about that and that kind of thing. So we were all in the same boat, a bunch of single mothers with a bunch of kids.

Most of the ladies were single?

Most of them and most had little kids that's the way it was when we were young, your age. You get out of high school and you get married and have kids. Nobody even asked you as or told you—that's the way it was. It was expected so we were all kind of on the same boat. But I am proud of the group cause we really have grown, we really have grown.

SKETCHES

While you were working for the HRC, you published sketches.

Okay, I never worked for them. No, what happened was I was appointed commissioner by Norm Mineta at the time he was on city council. And I guess he talked to the major, and they appointed me a commissioner. Esther, on the other hand, worked for the commission. It was a director and his staff. And then, we had this table of commissioners that met monthly to get policy and so forth.

Were any of your sketches ever censored?

No, not really. They talked about censoring not only my sketches but me period. And there was a time that, I thought, wait a minute there was cause after this whole blowout over the sketch. And the fact that I was saying minorities were treated differently, which was true, they did take some action and I had done a drawing of myself wearing a gag and that never got printed. That's true.

Which was your favorite sketch?

Probably the one that you saw in the article. It was of my ex-husband and at that time that I did it, there was a lot of sadness in the sketch. But

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that is how I felt inside, relative to what was happening to us. I felt a lot of sadness, a lot of anger too, an awful lot of anger. And the cartoons, I use to just have fun with those. That's all, just fun.

Do you feel your sketches had an impact?

Sure! anytime the police department goes and lobbies the council to do something with this woman. Yeah, it brought down attention. Don't forget we were trying to get that kind of information in front of the press. The press wasn't really going to print anything, but anytime there is a controversy, then it's a story. So there was a controversy and that was good. It brought it all forward, very good.

Which sketch caused the most uproar?

That one of that man, and I think the reason it did was because of the caption underneath. See, what really burned them up was that I was implying that they treated people badly, and they did. This one, let's see, "Human Beings in a Democracy cannot be divided into two classes, those who may safely be beaten and shot by police, and those who may not." See that's why they got so angry because you were implying that's what happened to Mexican Americans in this community, but in truth it was what was happening. You might have seen a few months ago down in Southern California, and there were some Blacks that posed as regular citizens and they were beaten by the police force. It was that kind of thing here, very much so. McNamara has created a lot of change, but the chief we had then, Murphy, was very very different. So it happened, I don't know why they denied it. What do you do stay up late and think up all these questions?

IMPACT OF MOVEMENT ON FAMILY/COMMUNITY

Your second husband was supportive?

Yes. If it hadn't been for that I don't think I could have gotten involved as deeply as I did. Because after all, he was there to care for the children, and to take care of things when I wasn't there. Lets face it, if you really get involved in something like the Movimiento, and you have a lot of commitment, it takes a lot of time. A lot of time and a lot of energy. I expended a lot of time and energy into it.

So he was very supportive?

He wasn't supportive. He just tolerated it. He hated it.

Because he wasn't involved, did he consider himself Mexican American?

Yes, one that doesn't make waves, doesn't cause problems. You know that kind, so he was not supportive. He was just tolerant, and later he wasn't even tolerant.

Did your children consider themselves American also?

The oldest one has grown up very confused about what he is. When I got involved in the Chicano Movement with Jose and everyone, I had kids that had never been anything but Anglo - the way they sounded, the way they

dressed, and the way they acted. When I got involved in the movement, I began bringing a lot of other perspectives home, and other view points, that they picked up on. It affected the oldest the most. He got very confused as to what he was. I remember, he got in a fight at school because he was saying that he was Mexican (and he looks Irish which is what he is half). He didn't look Mexican at all, and I remember the kids teasing him. "How do you know you are Mexican", they would ask him. He said, "I know because we eat tortillas and beans, that's how I know." But basically he got hurt by it. To this day, he seems confused to me. Later, not at the time, I thought it was very detrimental to him. I thought that it was good that they were learning at the time, but I did not realize what an impact my being involved was going to have on them, who had been brought up a totally different way. So what happened was that he tried to become what he thought as Mexican as possible. When there was a gang of kids that wouldn't go to school or were belligerent, he wanted to be like that. Everything that he had done up to that point was excellent, and then it just went up in pieces. I think he is still confused, and he is 33 years old.

What about your other children?

Holly is my second child. When she was five, we found out that she was mentally retarded. She had become ill when she was a small child, and had suffered brain damage, so she was not affected by what was happening. She looks alright, but she is a child in her own mind. The next one was James. He got very confused also, but differently from the other boy. He started having heroes that were Mexican. He always talked about Benito Juarez, which I guess was a president in Mexico. So it had more of a positive impact on him. He could see what I was doing getting involved in things, and he didn't want to get involved in it so much, but he took pride in it. Now there came Leslie. Leslie is a lot like me. She is a scrapper. She got in trouble. She really read everything that came to the house. She witnessed what was going on. These kids would go on marches with me. So you see, they were so involved in it even though they didn't really understand it. Leslie is very opinionated. She was about 7 at the time, and I remember that they punished her at school for her views, basically. She was with me when the Fiesta de las Rosas riot took place. After that she was in school and refused to salute the flag. The teacher wanted to know why, and she said, "Because there is no justice for all, I saw what happened." She really got into a lot of trouble.

What grade was she in at the time?

She was 7. I guess 1st or 2nd grade. When I found out what was happening to her, I went down to the school. The teacher had taken a very large box and put it around her, and said that none of the children could talk to her. You know it was scary, but I said, "Look she is entitled to her opinions, even if she is only a small child. I am sorry that it is upsetting you, but that is her opinion." So I took care of it, but she is still like that. She is very very strong. She called up this morning all concerned about the things that we won in the Civil Rights - the things that we won. She was talking about the Bush administration, so she is politically oriented.

Do they use the term Chicano?

No. I think that because the media changes it all the time. They grew up first thinking they were American. Then they took up Mexican American. Then they took up Chicano, and the next thing they knew it was Hispanic. So I think they wonder which one really fits. Maybe one fits for a

particular point in their life, and another one fits for another point in their life. I don't know. But I do know that it wasn't as prevalent as it once was - the term.

From your perception, what was the impact of the Chicano Movement on the local Chicano and Non Chicano community?

On the Non Chicano?

First of all on the local Chicano.

I thought it created a tremendous awareness of the fact that there was a very large Chicano population here. I think that before all this hit, the newspapers and there were groups that were shown on TV and there were protests and what have you. I don't think people realized they had that many Chicano neighbors. It was a quiet community, an unknown community. They use to talk about the sleeping giant that has awakened. And that was probably a good description for me, I became aware of all these Chicano people that existed. For me it was like opening up a whole new world. Somehow you tended to think, Chicanos were in the eastside. But we found that that wasn't true. We had Chicanos everywhere, Almaden, Berryessa, Milpitas, I mean there were Chicanos everywhere. And the fact that they could come together as a force was fabulous. You get this terrific sense of identity, a terrific sense of power and caring to. In one article that I wrote, I think it was called the "Barrio Experience", I talked about how my faith and hope for Chicanos was blind. And I knew that and I didn't care. I didn't care that it was blind faith. That's how much my heart was in it. But before that I never even knew that they existed. I really hadn't. So in terms of the local Chicanos, it had a tremendous impact. On the non Chicano community, I think initially it had a tremendous impact. Enough so that we could step in and start moving in. I think I told you once before that I thought they looked upon us like the militant Blacks, and within ourselves I don't think we ever saw ourselves that way. But we were willing to let them think that if that's what it took to create change. If it took threats or if it took fear then let it, you know cause we were way behind, and we needed to catch up so badly. So they at first were very much afraid of the Brown peril coming out at them. And later when they were not afraid anymore and they were used to our tactics, then we had to find a different way. We had already inched up, we had moved in some positions where we could say okay, here is a good foot hole, let's start, let's build on that. So, they saw us with fear, I guess, and I think eventually with some respect.

So you did win some respect?

I think so. I don't think I'd be doing what I am doing now if we hadn't. I mean I had never done anything out of the kitchen before, and I am making a film. Yeah! It made big changes.

CHICANO MOVEMENT

Why do you believe the Chicano movement has died down a bit?

I don't think it has died down, I think it has changed. I think it has changed a lot of the militants that you had at the time. They became intellectuals. A lot of the people that were very grass roots either became better

educated and moved up to some positions somewhere. And there was no longer a need to yell and scream and demand action. They had action, and they were now working at something different than what they started out to do. So, I don't see it as all gone. I see it as really very changed. I am still the same person that I was at that time. I still get angry. I still get sad. But I am not fighting the way I used to fight. There is no need to go down to city hall and scream. I can do much more the way I work now. Much more. My contacts are powerful. My life is different, but it doesn't mean that I am denying what I am. I am what I am. But I have moved away from having to scream at people. I don't have to say, "Hey, look at me, I'm qualified. I can do this." They already know that I am qualified and that I can do this. And they are paying me very handsomely for doing it.

You have proven yourself.

Yeah.

What was your most positive experience during the movement?

What was my most positive experience? I think that it would have to be finding myself, finding my own strengths, finding the self confidence that I found. Uh, that would be the finest thing.

And what was the most negative?

The most negative was the fact that, I think, I looked different to the Anglo males that I came in contact with. Once I had more education, once I had more experience, I became a different person than the person they had first met, the housewife they had first met, but in the eyes of the Chicano I don't think that I ever changed. I think they still saw me as a housewife, a Mexican American female. I never felt the respect, and the feeling of confidence on the part of the Chicano brothers, like I did the admiration of the Anglo male.

So the Anglo respected you more?

Yes, I always felt that that was the case. I would have to say that's still probably still true. And that is sad.

Is there anything you would have done differently?

Looking back, I don't think I would have been so in "aw" of the Mexican males that I had to come in contact with, the ones I worked with, the ones I marched with, the ones that gave me direction. If I hadn't been so in "aw" of them, I might have found myself sooner. I might have progressed a lot faster, but I spent a lot of time looking up to somebody as opposed to just getting up there and doing it myself. The one thing that I really, really would encourage any Mexican female, Mexican American, Hispanic, Chicana, or whatever they call themselves, the one thing that I feel really good about that I did, that I think other woman should do, is not be afraid of anything in terms of a challenge. Just because they say we need someone to do this in such, and you've never done it, is all the more reason why you should say, "Let me try it", because you never know how much you can grow. You never know how much you can make of yourself unless you take a chance, and get out there and try something new. Don't be afraid. Try anything. It doesn't matter if you make a fool of yourself. It doesn't matter if you fall down a couple of times, because you can really, really expand. I mean, the sky is the limit. The sky is the limit. So always, just

reach for more, always.

Would you do it all over again?

Most certainly not at this age. If I was.... Yeah! I would do it all over again.

Looking back you would?

Yeah! Yes! I would do it all.

Can you name the five most instrumental people in the movement?

For me?

Uh huh.

Uh, Carrasco is one, Jose Carrasco. Joaquin Brito, Ernestina Garcia, Sophie Mendoza, and Eliu Carranza.