The Sacramento Movimiento Chicano and Mexican American Education
Oral History Project

Lupe Trevizo Hernandez

Oral History Memoir

Interviewed by Senon Valadez
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Transcription by Linda Faviola, Madrigal Castañeda,
and Technitype Transcripts

Valadez Please state your full name.

[00:00:11]

Hernandez Lupe Trevizo Hernandez.

Valadez Date of birth?

[00:00:13]

Hernandez I was born in 1955.

Valadez Marital status?

[00:00:19]

Hernandez I've been married for forty years.

Valadez Children?

[00:00:25]

Hernandez Two. Ariana Marisol, she is thirty-nine and she has her higher-education degrees in criminal justice and business administration, her master's in business administration. Carlos, he's going to be thirty-five soon, and he's married with four children and he's very active in our community.

Valadez Oh, that's good. What's his name?

[00:00:59]

Hernandez Carlos Vicente.

Valadez Where were you born?

[00:01:03]

Hernandez I was born in Roseville, California.

Valadez Were you raised there?

[00:01:08]

Hernandez Yes, yes, born and raised there.

Valadez What did your parents do for a living?

[00:01:12]

Hernandez Well, my father came from a little town outside of El Paso, Texas. He was a Tegua del Sur Native American from Socorro, Texas, right outside of Ysleta, El Paso. He came to California after the war, World War II. He was in World War II and he came because of the railroad, and that's what he did all his life.

Valadez He was working in the railroads in Roseville?

[00:01:54]

Hernandez In Roseville, his whole life, yes.

Valadez Until he retired?

[00:01:58]

Hernandez Well, yes. He retired abruptly in 1973. The Southern Pacific decided that he was too disabled to continue working, so he worked twenty-nine and a half years as a pipe fitter, originally in the ice house. Coming from El Paso and then

having to be drafted into the Army, he was a farm boy and was put into the cavalry, 112th Cavalry Division, which actually had the horses during World War II. So he fought in the South Pacific. Once he was there, because of the different conditions, he came home with malaria, and so his doctor told him, "You have so many months to live, so why don't you go to warmer climate, go to a drier climate, go somewhere." So they told him to go to California, so he came to California in the mid-forties, and so that's where he stayed.

Valadez He found a good place?

[00:03:11]

Hernandez He found a good place in Roseville, found my mom. He worked as a pipe fitter and did that for twenty-nine years, but also was retired thirty years, so he got the last laugh, so to speak. [laughs]

Valadez Did you have brothers and sisters?

[00:03:34]

Hernandez Yes, yes, I had eight brothers and sisters. Two have gone on to heaven. I forgot to mention about my mother. My father's name is Leonardo Trevizo. My mother is Maria de los Angeles Trevizo, and she started out as a non-English-speaking housewife, and over the years, her neighbors helped her learn English, and also by reading newspapers.

As she became more informed, more educated, her lady friends encouraged her to go back to school, and she did. She challenged us kids. There was eight of us: Marry, Margie, Leonard, Tony, Albert, Isabel, and Olga, myself, of course. There's eight of us. But she challenged us kids in school and said that she

would go back to school, through Adult Ed, and graduate before one of us. She picked my year, 1973, and she did, she graduated a month before I did, because she was in Adult Education. She graduated in May and I graduated in June.

So from there when she was working in Head Start, different things evolved over time. She volunteered at the church, she volunteered in the PTA. The PTA, of course, made her den mother or—what do you call it—room mother, and so she baked lots of cupcakes. From there, she was recruited to do other things and eventually went to work as a cook with Head Start. In Head Start, they kept on pulling her out of the kitchen to interpret the classrooms for the children that were only Spanish-speaking.

So eventually, Head Start sent her to school, to college. So she went to Sierra College, to San Jose State, Chico State. She went all over the place. When you give anyone a taste of education, that's it. They don't stay home, they don't look back. That was my mother. So she went from cook to teacher and actually a community leader. In those days, it was not heard of for any group, only within the church, but not outside of the church, and my mother and her lady friends and a few other gentlemen that lived in the neighborhood that were friends of my family's, they recruited my mother. My mother didn't really have a strong opinion in terms of being verbal, being vocal, but being in these groups and being around these people gave her the energy, the voice, and also the encouragement to become, number one, opinionated, outspoken, but also to take to take charge of certain things. These people in Roseville eventually organized and created the first *concilio*, and it was the Placer

County Concilio in Roseville, and it was mainly women that organized this, and this was in the sixties.

Valadez Wow. About the mid-sixties, '65, '66?

[00:07:26]

Hernandez I would say, yeah, it was in the mid-sixties, because I remember I was in junior high and we were recruited to sort food for the food co-op and the Christmas baskets. I found myself going to meetings and being there to help babysit the children that other women took. And I paid attention. I wasn't really interested, but I paid attention. When you're recruited to do something, you really don't have a choice, especially if it's your mother and it's your mom's *comadre* and so forth, so in organizing not only food drives, but the food co-op.

I remember the food co-op, they would order cases and cases and cases of vegetables and dry milk and just all kinds of stuff that people could have in their pantry. In Mexican households, we don't see ourselves as having these luxuries, because that's what it is, and especially anything referred to as a pantry. You have *provición*, you have *una lata*, and that's about it.

This was actually also a carryover from my father. He grew up during the Depression, and so he would buy in bulk. I think some of these ideas kind of meshed together and they just kind of evolved also with the other individuals that were involved in the group, Isabel Bravo, a very strong leader in Roseville, Charlie Martinez, who was, sadly, killed in an auto accident. This was in the late sixties, early seventies. Oscar Mesa, Georgia Reese, Hope Porter. All these people were very, very

connected, very involved. And they gave each other rides, because back in those days, our family did not have a car. But it was the beginning.

Valadez Can you imagine not having a car and yet being as involved? Pull people together to carpool.

[00:09:48]

Hernandez It was interesting, yes. I think Latinos created the carpool. [laughter]

Valadez Yeah, for sure. The other brothers and sisters, did they follow the same example from the mother and father?

[00:10:04]

Hernandez Definitely, definitely. My brother Tony, *que en paz descanse*, he lived in San Francisco. During his time period, it was not fashionable, it wasn't popular, and it wasn't talked about, being gay. He did what others thought to do, and when he lost his partner, when he lost his friend, he inherited some money and put that money to use and created a hospice program referred to as the Godfather Service Fund. What they did with that money, what he would do is that he would hustle toiletries, bathrobes, toothbrushes, razors, because it was mainly men back in the eighties and early nineties that became infected with HIV and AIDS. So he saw so many of his friends die and go to the hospital without anything or anybody, so he organized with others and he put the money up to create this foundation, the Godfather Service Fund. His idea was to make sure that nobody went without. All of us created and contributed in similar fashion but in different areas of need.

Valadez If it's AIDS, can you imagine the impact of a large family like that?

[00:11:55]

Hernandez And he didn't really bring his work home with him at first. Because of all this, he wasn't welcome home. We'll talk about that a little bit later.

Valadez Can you describe a little bit more about your experiences growing up as a child, as a youth, and the nature of your neighborhood?

[00:12:24]

Hernandez Our neighborhood? Well, in Roseville, everybody lives on the other side of the tracks literally, figuratively, and physically. The way Roseville is laid out, the tracks run right through the city, so either you live on this side of the tracks or that side of the tracks, but either way, you're still living next to the tracks.

Our house was situated a half a block from the tracks, so listening to the whistles, the diesel engines running the refrigerated cars, the time schedule, we knew the time schedule of the workers because there was this big whistle that blew at five minutes to 4:00, five minutes to midnight. So you either had to run home because it was time for Dad to go home and you had to hurry home because Dad was going to come out. But we ran around doing our business according to the whistle.

But we also drove through town going over tracks and then also going to someone's house. Oh, on the other side of the town, next to the tracks, what street? So our house happened to be by the auction, which is Denio's Auction, so geographically our house was situated in—because Roseville's a railroad town and back in the sixties, you know, it's a really weird revelation or even just a light bulb that lights up, that, wow, everybody grew up poor, but we didn't know it. Nobody told us we grew up poor. [laughs]

It was a happy childhood. There were no schedules, there were no distractions. We had the sun to guide us. We had the neighbors that kept us in check. We had plenty of room to run, my father made sure. He bought two lots for the house, and one was where he planted his farm. Because he grew up on a farm, he wanted to have an area for a garden and then a yard in the back which was really deep, for us kids to roam around in and do our creative stuff, but yet we would find our way out of the yard and we'd end up hiking, hiking before it was popular to go hiking, because the fields in Roseville were wide open, vast, and no barriers, no fences, so to speak. So we did a lot of exploring as kids.

Valadez When we were growing up, it's a little town called Sanderson, Texas. Sanderson was divided. There was a river that when you think in terms of borders, there was a river that divided the Mexican side from the White side, White Texas side. We were poor, probably, but we didn't know it, like you were saying. We just didn't know it. But the interaction between the Mexican community and the Texan, Anglo Texan, was obviously not on an equal par. There had to have been some discrimination, because we would hear them talk about it *en secreto*, you know. It was always hush-hush. But it was in such a way that we became worried about it. Did that happen in Roseville? Did you have that experience or not?

[00:16:35]

Hernandez Well, I guess in Roseville we were all in the same boat, because everybody's dad worked in the railroad and also there was a lot of ladies that worked in the railroad as well. In my own research and my own curiosity, I found out that there was a lot of original families that came from Colorado, from El Paso, because of

the railroad, from Los Angeles and also from Arizona. Different areas of the Southwest, they ended up in Roseville and Sacramento because of the railroad. So, actually, there was a lot of Native American, but a lot of us didn't know we were Native American. So because we were brown, we were seen as Mexicans.

The people in our particular neighborhood, it was a mix of immigrants. It was Greeks, Italians, Portuguese, poor Whites, Mexicans. There were other areas that were predominantly *gueros*. We would walk through those neighborhoods on our way to church, but we just looked at the houses. We didn't dare explore any further than that. But one thing that I did notice is that the sense of community in our neighborhood, we all helped each other because we were all in the same situation of having a garden, having a lot of kids, not speaking English. and so we bartered vegetables, rides, taking care of each other's children, stuff like that, and so those are the things that really stand out in my mind.

Valadez That's good. Let's jump over to the question that says were you a Fellow, Felito, or involved in the Mexican American Education Project?

[00:19:05]

Hernandez No.

Valadez No, you were not involved in that. How did you develop a sense of culture, the idea of culture? Did it come from some classes you took or did it come from just your growing experience?

[00:19:22]

Hernandez Well, when I saw that question, I was kind of stumped, because I couldn't figure out where did I get my culture, but when I started thinking about it,

most of us can, should, and do get our culture at home. When I look at it in retrospect, we received our culture at home not only in our foods, but also in the music, in our dress, and in our dance, our traditions, *las posadas*. My mother taught us *ballet folklórico*. I think it's common with most Mexican families, everybody assumes that your kids know how to dance the Mexican Hat Dance. Nobody says, "Do you they know how to do the Jarabe Tapatío?" Nobody says that.

My mother had danced in Mexico when she was a child, and she lived in a boarding school. During that time period in the thirties and forties—she was born in Michoacán, and during that time period, my grandfather had been really involved in his earlier years, he had been involved with the *cursillistas* that had rebelled against the taxes that the church and the government, and how they were taking away the percentage that was being taken by the farmers and the *campesinos*. So he, with other men, would ride with their horses into the churches and they would lasso the statues and topple them.

So in order for my mom and her sister to be safe and not be close to that stuff and to have an education, he wanted them—because back in those days, the girls were taken advantage of. They were stolen; they were taken by force. And if my grandfather was busy doing his political stuff, he wanted them to be safe, so he put them in a boarding school in Morelia, and they were with nuns in a boarding school. The boarding school is now a government facility in Morelia. It's a government center.

But in that place, they taught them how to dance, and so she danced. She would always tell us with such pride how she danced *The Blue Danube* for the

President of Mexico. So she showed us her waltz and her dancing, but also her different styles of dance and the *ballet folklórico*, so she taught us to do that. Eventually we created our own Ballet Folklórico in Roseville.

Valadez What was that called?

[00:22:45]

Hernandez Well, it was just ragtag group of students, and it was students from Warren T. Eich and it was mainly friends and family. My sister was at UC Davis at the time, so she came to Roseville on weekends to teach us, because she had joined the Ballet Folklórico of UC Davis. She would come to Roseville and teach our group how to dance, our company.

We were asked to perform many times for the Placer County events in Roseville, different patriotic days. It was just friends and family, teenagers. We were just told what to do, to be honest with you, and we didn't join it by choice. My mom didn't ask us; she told us, "This is what we're going to do on weekends." You didn't have a choice. But either way, we liked what we were doing. As an adult, I carried on my dancing even into college at the university at Sacramento.

Valadez You went to high school in Roseville?

[00:24:11]

Hernandez In Roseville, yes.

Valadez Then from there you went to Sac State or to City?

[00:24:15]

Hernandez No, I knew I didn't want to go to City College and I knew I didn't want to go to a community college. When I went to Roseville High School, I knew

that I didn't want to stay close to home. Everybody went to Sierra College, and I didn't want to hang out with my fellow classmates anymore. I was tired of them.

The culture that we got, that we created for ourselves, I remember a group of us girls, we created our own Latino Club on campus. It was our senior year that we created that, and that was in 1972. The vice principal asked us, "Well, what are you going to do with this?"

And I said, "Well, we're going to get speakers and we're going to learn about culture." And we did that out of spite, because everybody else had their own club. I didn't know what the Chess Club was, I didn't know what the Photography Club or Ski Club—we didn't know what any of that was because we didn't ski, and chess, we didn't play chess, and so we created our own club.

So our agenda was to bring in speakers and, actually, that's how we met the RCAF. Juan Cervantes and Rudy Cuellar are actually Roseville High graduates. So this is how it all just goes full circle. Really, you know, when you see things in retrospect, somehow things are laid out for us and we don't even know it.

But I went to college when I was in high school. We were given the opportunity. I was ready to graduate when I was in high school as a junior, when I was sixteen years old, but they wouldn't let me out. There was no provision, there was no way for me to graduate as a junior, so I had to stay on campus. I had to stay a high school student.

So there was two other students that wanted to go to Sierra College and take some classes. And since I was already interested in law enforcement, by that time I had a job working after school, work experience at the local police department.

So I became very interested in codes, the Penal Code, the Welfare and Institutions Code, which applied in terms of the health codes in Roseville, and the different codes that applied in enforcement there in the city. So we took a class of law enforcement at Sierra College when I was a junior, and that was the beginning of my college education while I was in high school. But even then, that's when I understood that I didn't want to go to Sierra College, that I was going to go straight to Sac State.

Valadez So you transitioned to Sac State in what year?

[00:27:46]

Hernandez In 1973, about a week or two after I graduated from high school. I wasn't prepared. They didn't prepare us in high school for college, and I discovered this because my granddaughter told me. I knew we weren't prepared because we weren't called into any meetings. My sister, who was at UC Davis at the time, organized us and helped many of us fill out our applications for EOP, for admissions, and to help us select our classes that we were going to take at the university. I had a few friends that went to UC Davis, actually several that went to UC Davis. And then myself, I went to Sac State, and a couple of other friends went to Sierra College, but I went to Sac State under the EOP Program.

Valadez That's good. When you were at Sac State, you met the RCAF. Is that the way that you became involved or started to become involved with the Chicano Movement?

[00:29:18]

Hernandez Not really, not until much later. As a young student, I tried to stay on track. The summer that I started, the core was—I guess it was geography, English,

and math. That was during the summer, and that really got me going. Then in the fall, I had a full load. I started taking other classes, and eventually I took electives or classes that would also fulfill the requirements for graduation. That's how I ended up taking Chicano Poetry and Muralism in the Barrio with Esteban Villa.

I didn't know the RCAF per se when they came to visit at Roseville High in '72. When I was on campus, I would see different bulletins and stuff like that and I would go to the Quad and listen to the different speakers. Back in the day, we had so much exposure, we had so much within our reach today that the kids don't have. We are so blessed to have been exposed to different individuals that had so much more wisdom. And I did pay attention. Maya Angelou was one of the speakers on campus, and I remember her mannerisms and the delivery of her verse and her poetry.

Valadez Yeah, very powerful.

[00:31:09]

Hernandez Very powerful and very sing-songy. Her delivery was hypnotizing. It was very trance-like. I knew then that I wanted to be not like her, but I wanted to be like the person that she had become. I wanted to be someone that could deliver a message. Her message was powerful with her pauses and her voice and just the way she let it come out. It was very powerful. Julian Bond was another great individual, great politician, great speaker, a great person of the Movement that came on campus. I didn't know who he was until that day. Since then, of course, I have followed these people in life and see the growth, but also now I appreciate, now I understand, now I can hear what their message was. Back then, they were talking but I really wasn't

comprehending. I wasn't listening. I think many of us are that way when we're younger.

Valadez When you're starting out.

[00:32:39]

Hernandez Yeah, you're just starting out and you're there, you're in the audience, but are you really listening? Are you really paying attention? I was one of those that was just there, just like in awe of who these people were. But once you learn to understand, once you really pay attention, then you grasp what the message is.

Valadez Is that time the earliest times when you became aware of the Movement?

[00:33:12]

Hernandez Exactly. It's like a metamorphosis, because being in that place at that time, there was a lot of activity, there was a lot of, I would say, patriotism, but it just depends on how you look at it. We were patriotic in the sense that we were willing to stand up for a cause, whatever that cause was. I remember that the boycotts that were going on at the time, the grapes, the lettuce, the different boycotts, Safeway, we just knew, you know. It's like when you were a little kid, your mom tells you, "Don't eat that cake! It's for company." "Don't walk on my floor. I just polished it." But as a young developing student, we received these messages, "Don't eat grapes. Don't eat lettuce. Don't shop at Safeway."

I wasn't paying attention to the message. Again, I didn't know the whole concept of labor, of labor unions, boycotts. Why? Why was all this happening?

I just saw these flyers that said "Boycott" and the different elements of contribution, you know, "Everybody show up. We've got to boycott. Carry the sign."

But I think the educational process was slow, maybe because I'm a slow learner. I've always been that way in life and I have to ask a lot of questions. I'm a curious person and I have to keep on asking questions until I understand it. "But why?" And it's not that I'm questioning you as an individual; it's just that I have to understand why. And in the process, I started to listen. I started to understand. On campus, seeing the posters, seeing the announcements and "Let's get together and let's work on these posters," or, "Someone's coming and we're going to do a poetry reading." The poetry itself, too, also delivered a message.

Valadez *Chicano* you heard a lot on campus.

[00:36:02]

Hernandez Yes, yes.

Valadez *Chicano*, *Chicano*. How did that settle? How did that make sense?

[00:36:06]

Hernandez With me it didn't. With me it didn't. I did not identify with that, because I always grew up being a Mexican. I always grew up knowing that I was Mexican, and that's the only box I had ever checked. That's the only box that I had had ever identified with. And I don't think that box was even on the application. [laughter] When we filled out anything, you'd always have to put it in "Other."

But even then, to me Chicano is not who I am. I grew up in a Mexican household with a Native American father, Tegua del Sur, and that's who I am. That's

what I grew up. So to me, even though I was in the Movement and I was supportive of the Movement, to me, that's not who I was.

Valadez There were a lot of movements going on at that time.

[00:37:29]

Hernandez Oh, yeah, yeah.

Valadez And the Native American Movement was going on too.

[00:37:32]

Hernandez Yes, yes.

Valadez There was lot of blending of things—

[00:37:36]

Hernandez Exactly.

Valadez —and causes that were going on. Do you think that this involvement in what was going on there changed you personally? Do you think that it had an effect on you?

[00:37:50]

Hernandez Definitely, definitely. I wanted to learn more, and that's what I took Chicano Poetry. I wanted to explore more. I had started writing poetry when I was in high school and I had started exploring those areas of writing. Also in exploring those different areas, I took Muralism in the Barrio, and I helped in one particular mural that straddles Sacramento and Old Sacramento. So the tunnel, there's a mural on the inside of the tunnel, and I helped, I assisted in that particular mural with Esteban Villa. Being able to say I worked on that is pride.

Being able to say that I write poetry, I don't identify it as Chicano poetry, I just identify it as poetry that helps release either feelings to me—it's like therapy. It's therapy. It tells a story, it tells emotions, it tells events that we go through to help promote whatever we're going through, so that it helps others explain either the feelings or the misunderstanding. Maybe the situation that we're in, we can't really explain it in easy terms, but perhaps in poetry we can deliver that same message.

Valadez Women, young girls coming on campus, first time away from home, being involved in this massive picket signs and teachers and people inviting you to join boycotts and picketing and all of the things that were going on, what do you think became the role of women, and did that role change in time for the time that you were there, the time that you can reflect on? How did that impact girls, girls that were coming from homes where it was very different?

[00:40:31]

Hernandez It really was. I had an obligation. I had an obligation to stay on track, to go to classes, to go to my work-study, to go to my internships. Those were my focuses right there, and so I continued doing what I needed to do. On occasion I was distracted, but not very long, because I had to excuse myself to go do my obligations, but also at home, because I was still living at home as well. It was kind of a balancing act, trying to get involved but also maintaining the responsibility of going to school and trying to also earn my way and being able to do my internships that I was working in.

I was working in a counseling center, because that was the area that I wanted to go into. I wanted to go into social welfare and corrections, and boycotting might get me in trouble, getting a rap or getting involved in situations that might affect the area of responsibility that I was in. So it was like being split, being conflicted, wanting to be involved, but not being able to be too involved. So I found myself being involved at a distance. In my particular situation, I attended, I was there as an observer and I was there as a body to be counted, but as a contributor, I really wasn't there that much. But I was there to observe, in a strange way. [laughs]

Valadez Yeah. For many of us, that's the way we have to do it because we've got other things that have to be prioritized, and you've got to keep track.

[00:42:59]

Hernandez Exactly.

Valadez If you lose your way, there's no chance back. It throws you completely off.

[00:43:07]

Hernandez And I'm almost apologetic because I don't have a radical involvement. I'm almost apologetic because my involvement wasn't as dramatic as some of the others that were.

[00:43:24]

Valadez Yeah. But you'd be surprised how often the more dramatic it was does not necessarily say that it was substantial. It didn't have the substance that a lot of people walked away with who were the hard workers, who did the work, who kept their nose to the grind, who did what they needed to do, graduated, made something

out of their lives, and in that way contributed far, far more just because they did it that way.

[00:43:57]

Hernandez And that's what I kind of justify. Maybe it's a justification. Maybe it's a validation of when you choose a route, you're a young person and you choose a route, which way should I go? There's a fork in the road. I didn't want to be a disappointment, number one, to my brothers and sisters, the younger ones, but also to my parents especially, because they were counting on the older ones to get educated and to be an example for the younger ones. They were proud to say, "I have a daughter at UC Davis. I have another daughter that's at Sac State." We'd come home and mentor to the younger ones and help them, and we would also contribute financially to the house, in the sense that we would buy the clothes for the younger children. Those were our responsibilities.

Valadez Then we get to the question that talks about contributions. What did you personally initiate or help initiate in this Chicano Movement, or Movimiento Chicano? The reason why I became very interested in you as a participant in these oral history collections was because I saw your name in one of Olivia Castellano's classes and that she had put together a booklet and you had a couple of poems in there. Incidentally, Teresita Gabriela Gomez Villan, Teresita Gabriela Gomez Villan became my wife.

[00:45:51]

Hernandez Oh, wow.

Valadez She was in that class as well. She has some poetry there. Somewhere along the line, people made her feel like it wasn't Chicano enough—

[00:45:51]

Hernandez Exactly!

Valadez —so she ended up doing more writing, but stayed away from everybody else. She decided, "I have my own agenda."

[00:46:13]

Hernandez Exactly.

Valadez **"**This is what I want to do."

[00:46:15]

Hernandez Exactly. That's what I went through as well. That's the exact same thing.

Valadez So I became interested in seeing and inviting you in so that you could have a chance to read some of those poems or poems that you have written, since poetry, like you were trying to say earlier, is a way to be able to contribute and share your inner thoughts, what happened to you, whether it was out in the front lines or whether it was behind the scenes, but you were there and you were a part of something. It changed you and you changed it just by being there. So could you share some of those with us?

[00:47:06]

Hernandez One of the most recent pieces I wrote and, sad to say, some of my pieces come out when I've lost someone or someone dear to me. This particular piece I wrote almost a year ago. A friend of mine, a friend of ours, Juan Cervantes, we grew

up in the same neighborhood. Juan was like an older brother that I would visit from time to time. Growing up, we went to the same schools and he lived down the street from us, but our families didn't associate. Usually families associate because of religion, schools, *comadres*, *compadres*, the railroad. That's how the associations worked in Roseville. Juan's family had a different religion, so we really didn't associate that way, but it was in school that I was able to get to know Juan, but also later on in life as an artist.

I was always drawn to him because of his simplicity. He wasn't a complicated person, but yet his artwork was very intense, very beautiful. Juan left us with a lot of his creations. I was proud to name Juan as one of my friends. But also I felt like I needed to write something. I guess it's more of a eulogy, but capsulized as how our friendship evolved and how over the years and as we grew older.

So what I called this poem, it's a short poem and I called it "Friends of Times Past." Juan passed away October 7th and I wrote this on the 20th. Actually, I wrote it for his funeral.

Friends of Times Past

"Reminiscing, remembering, rethinking of times past, of our youth, the paths we chose, the road we traveled, still they circled. Many greetings, hugs, talks of yesterday, again reminiscing, remembering, recalling our youth, our times of many years. We greeted again and again. Who knew?

Yes, we talked of yesterday and today. We spoke of perhaps, what if. Yes, how sad. Again we remembered, we recalled, we laughed, we cried, and remembered of being friends of times past."

This came about because of a meeting I had with Juan on El Paso Boulevard not even three months before he passed away, and he had told me at that point that he was on dialysis and that his time was limited, and I was in disbelief. You know, when someone tells you, "My time is limited," I don't know, it's going to happen. You know, you hear your parents talk like that, you hear other older people talk like that, but when I heard Juan talking like that, I told him, "Well, isn't there something that can be done?"

And he goes, "Well, yeah, I guess I could find a kidney."

And here we all have our ailments, we all have our medical issues. You know, I have my medical issues. I have my disabilities. But then when you hear Juan talking of his situation, that it's anytime now, I just stood there in disbelief. And it struck me, very sad. And he says "No, no." He says, "I've had a good life. I'm at peace, I'm okay. It's all right."

I go, "Wow, that's really brave."

So it just tells us how fleeting, how quick life can change for anyone, because when I had seen Juan times before, he had transitioned; he had grown worse in his disabilities. Diabetes has a way of attacking a lot of us. We're high risk, Latinos, Native Americans, we're high risk, and that's what had happened with Juan. Having diabetes myself, I feel, wow, this could happen to any one of us.

So with Juan, I'm glad we had that chance to chat one last time, because we had come full circle. I was honored to have that last chat with him and to be able to hug him and be able to know that he was at peace. I could see how exhausting it had been for him, but he said he was at peace.

Valadez Poems are good that way. They permit us to be able to express in very short form, a very simple form, but some of our realizations, our way of making sense of things in a good way.

[00:55:25]

Hernandez Yeah, yeah. There's some other pieces, and this one piece I guess can explain my situation with my brother Tony. He was thirty-three when he passed away of AIDS. I had two children, young children at the time. Carlos was eight, nine, ten during this time period. It was really difficult because *nobody* knew, nobody knew, the country didn't know, nobody knew how AIDS was going to affect any of us, and these scare tactics that were put out there of how we could die by touching someone, by hugging someone, by breathing in the same room with someone that was infected with AIDS.

My brother was HIV-positive for a while. It was in 1987, 1988 when I became aware. The world was just being educated on this to begin with, anyway, and then for me to be thrown into this was like "This is what they're talking about in the news, and I'm supposed to understand this and this is how I'm supposed to get my education and then explain it to my husband, my children, my friends, my neighbors, my mom, my dad?" They didn't know, and that's the sadness of it.

So my brother was in his late twenties when all this came about. He'd call me. We'd always be in contact, and he'd call me and tell me the updates of what was going on. He and I were close, very close, and yet I was being conflicted again because of the scare of how this horrible disease could contaminate us, so visiting was not an option, and yet I needed to hold my brother and talk to him and let him know that I was there for him.

My younger brothers and sisters, they were involved in their thing. Some of my other siblings, they didn't want to talk about it. So my husband and I became the brave souls to reach out and we went to San Francisco and we visited with my brother. When we went, I asked as many questions as I could from a friend of mine. He was a doctor. I got as much information as I could, but the one stipulation that my husband gave me was that we were not to sit on the sofa, and to hug, but not to kiss.

So we visited. We went to the hospital one time where he was distributing care packages to the patients there, the AIDS patients at San Francisco General. St. Francis was also one of the other hospitals that had AIDS patients. So we would spend the day with him either at his apartment or we would go for a ride. We would go have dinner. I guess it was safe that way, like if we went out to dinner or something like that, but later on as it became more serious and his disease had transitioned to into AIDS, that's when it became more precarious, became a little bit more serious. And now what? So, having to liquidate his stuff, distribute it before he died, now, that was really a task.

By that time, my boy was ten; he was in sixth grade. My daughter was in junior high. Maybe she was a freshman in high school. I think that's what it was. My brother, he passed away when he was thirty-three years old, March 1992.

I was extremely ignorant to what AIDS was and how it was going to affect us. I hugged my brother and I kissed my brother, and nothing happened to any of us. [laughter] I think the only scariest thing that we had to deal with was maybe during a time period when he was being treated for tuberculosis. That could happen to anybody, you know, even on the bus visiting your aunt or uncle here in Sacramento. The closest scare we came to was being exposed to tuberculosis, which was nothing, really, because it's dormant in everybody that has ever traveled in a third world country, and it only surfaces when your immune system is suppressed, when your immune system is compromised. So we had to go through testing for tuberculosis, but that was about it.

But my brother died peacefully at home surrounded—no, didn't die at home. We brought him home, and eventually he died at the hospital in Citrus Heights, surrounded by family, nieces, nephews, my mom, my dad.

Valadez Everybody.

[01:02:06]

Hernandez Everybody, because that's the way it's supposed to be.

Valadez Full circle again.

[01:02:09]

Hernandez Again full circle.

So, this particular poem, I refer to it as "Older and Wiser." I wrote this because of what I went through with my brother.

"I once was young and ignorant. Now I'm older and innocent. AIDS and HIV was a crash course on compassion and responsibility. I was ignorant to tell my brother he should stop his silliness, come home, settle down, and get a wife.

AIDS taught me to speak up for the sick, be an ambassador for ones without a voice and a sister to my own. HIV taught me to ask and not wonder.

Alcoholism is a disease that robs you of reality and a brother. Demons can strike your mind and rob you of the moment without warning.

Make your pledge and remember your ties. Satisfaction guaranteed. Life is a lesson and I'm still learning."

Actually, this poem was for two of my brothers. It was for Tony and my brother Leonard. My brother Leonard died when he was forty-six. He suffered from alcoholism, and I didn't understand that either. I didn't understand that. He was a *mean* alcoholic. He was mean drunk, but he was mean for a reason and I didn't know why. I guess compassion on my part would have helped more than being angry, but also because of his actions, he died. He was in an auto accident, he suffered internal organ injuries, and he was on life support for three months.

So, coming to grips with him was an unusual awakening in the sense that he really loved me and I really loved him. It's just that we didn't know how to show it, and we were able to talk during those three months that he was awake. Off

and on, he was in a coma. Then we were able to talk and he told me things and I told him things. It was like—wow. And we were able to reconcile during those three months, reconcile in the sense that I was able to see him pass and me be at peace knowing that he and I were not angry anymore.

So a lot of these poems that I write are healing. They're very healing, but they're also therapy.

Valadez Do you have another one?

[01:06:27]

Hernandez Well, actually, it's a short story and I don't think we have time for that.

Valadez Oh, okay.

[01:06:32]

Hernandez But I do have one that kind of sums up my childhood and it kind of sums up some of the confusion a lot of us go through when we're growing up because we get a lot of direction from television, the commercials, the programs, and especially during the sixties, when we grew up. The fifties—now I'm aging myself—we grew up in a black-and-white time period. Literally everything was black-and-white, black *or* white. So when we started to see color, that's like a metamorphosis in a sense that we went from this era of black-and-white, and then we started to see color. It's like an awakening that, "Oh, is that the way it is?"

So I wrote this one piece years ago, and it's referred to as "I Remember."

"I remember when life was innocent and tomorrow would always be sunny. We would watch TV sitting on a blanket. We would enjoy black-and-white movies, *Lassie* and *The Lone Ranger*. I remember *Queen for the Day*, and we declared our mom the winner, because nobody came saying she had won a prize washer and dryer.

I remember big birthday parties with homemade cakes, with lots of kids running around our backyard that was a big park. I remember a wooden rocking horse that we all shared. Dresses, socks, underwear, pants, and shirts were all community property.

I remember the chicken coop and playing make-believe that it was our dollhouse. The boys tried to quiet the baby chicks until they didn't peep. Mama got mad. I remember Mary tying a towel around her neck, thinking she was Superman. Flying off the chicken coop wasn't a good idea. It hurt.

I remember Leonard getting in trouble. Daddy chased him around the house to spank him with the belt. Mamma begged Leonard to stand still, as Daddy would have a heart attack from too many rounds.

I remember Margie riding on the back of the bicycle's basket, only to end up in Emergency with a need for stiches. Daddy felt bad. He was the driver.

I remember Isabel smelling so bad that no bath would cure her odor, only to discover a bean was stuck in her nose growing off her snot.

I remember Tony being so handsome. All the girls became his future wife. There was Marshmallow, Sissy, Morfula, Pammy, and Terri, just to name a few.

I remember Albert used to be small. We would bundle him up and take him outside to replace our fake old dolls. I remember Olga, the queen of everybody, and she would cry if you didn't take her for a ride. I used to give her bad haircuts. I thought the Shag looked good on her. She believed me. I'm glad somebody did.

I remember our late afternoon hikes. We would walk out on Baseline Road, marching we would go until our legs said to return. The fields were our playground. We thought they were ours. I remember making play forts with freshly-mowed grass, to create walls and believe it was our domain that nobody could destroy.

I remember thinking if I stared long enough into the mirror, my hair would turn blonde and my skin fairer. TV has a way of making you think wrong.

I remember mess-hall meals Daddy had created. He served them in the army and thought of us as soldiers. I remember having to polish our shoes and lining them up against the wall. We had to be neat before school. One day Margie wore her housecoat over her dress, thinking it was normal.

I remember George, the neighbor, throwing a rock and then hitting Leonard over the eye. No big deal, just a few stitches, and they rewarded him with a truck.

I remember life that was connected by backyard gates. Visiting Despo and Maria didn't mean walking down the block, but out the back door.

I remember speaking Greek and understanding. Eating [unclear] and baklava wasn't a big deal, but the norm. I remember Gus, Tacia, Gertrude, Theodora,

and Olympia. They were not unusual names for our friends, as we lived on Grape Street and still do."

That was dedicated to the Grape Street Posse. There's a bunch of us kids that grew up on Grape Street in Roseville, so we refer to ourselves as the Grape Street Posse.

Valadez Can you imagine writing that years back and the title of the publication was *Recuerdos del Futuro*?

[01:13:49]

Hernandez Exactly! Oh, my god! That's it! That's it!

Valadez We are in the *futuro*, full circle all the way around. [laughs]

[01:14:01]

Hernandez Full circle, full circle. So my poems are all like that.

Valadez Fantastic, yeah. I'm so glad you brought that one to share with us. Obviously the question that follows that one says did the Movimiento Chicano raise your consciousness along social, cultural, political lines? Obviously. [laughs]

[01:14:27]

Hernandez Yes.

Valadez Obviously it did.

[01:14:28]

Hernandez Yes, it did. I wasn't a radical. I wasn't one of those. But I do have to mention, yes, it is full circle. Pedro, my husband Pedro Hernandez, is one of the RCAF visitor speakers that came to our class in 1972 to speak with our club, and they

snuck us out of school, they wrote some notes for us and snuck us out of school so that we could go to lunch. Juan was in that group, [unclear] Orozco, I believe. Rudy Cuellar was in that group, Pedro. I can't remember who else was in the group. Anyway, so we went to lunch. They invited us, mind you. So we went to a Mexican restaurant and so we had lunch. Then all of a sudden, these guys start passing the hat, so the hat came back and there was change in the hat. We were supposed to pay for lunch, and, actually, the lunch was less than $20.

Valadez Wow.

[01:15:44]

Hernandez My friend Frances and my friend Maria, Maria Bravo and Frances Lombach, we happened to have our checkbook with us for the club, because we collected dues. [laughs] We paid a dollar each time we met, or two dollars each time we met, and so our treasury had $20 in it.

Valadez Oh, no. [laughter]

[01:16:08]

Hernandez Yeah, and I think the lunch was like $18 or something, and then the guys said, "Oh, don't forget the tip!" So we wrote out a check for $20 and they said they were going to pay us back and they never did. Well, my husband Pedro—well, he's my husband now. But back in the day in 1972, we had to pay for our own lunch. Now fast-forward, I met him at Sac State in a poetry class, probably a different poetry class. I'm not sure. But anyway, we got together and the rest is history. We've been married forty years.

Valadez Now he's paying for the lunches. [laughter]

[01:16:52]

Hernandez I still pay for the lunches. [laughter] I do, I do, I really do, because I have the checkbook. [laughter] But we've been married forty years.

Valadez That's great.

[01:17:04]

Hernandez And he is an RCAF member. We stayed connected. We continued to contribute. My husband and I have lived in Rancho Cordova for almost all of those forty years. We moved there because of low-income housing. In our quest to make our mark but also to contribute to society, as we were told to do back in the day, Pedro and I have done quite a bit in Rancho, and it is also in the archives there. We created a program, a lunch program for the children. The money was there. Everybody knew the money was there, but nobody ever applied. So Pedro took it upon himself to create the lunch program in Rancho Cordova, and so to this day it's still continuing. It's the free lunch summer program. He put that together with volunteers and now they have paid staff that does that. I believe that was over twenty years ago.

We also created a memorial for a deputy sheriff that was killed in our neighborhood, the White Rock neighborhood in Rancho Cordova, Sergeant Richard Defner. He was the head SWAT team member. He was killed in the line of duty in January of 1989, I believe. There wasn't anything being done in the community for him, and he was killed in our neighborhood defending, protecting our homes. He was on the roof after a felon that was running loose for, gosh, ten hours or so, he was on

the roof and he got shot and died. So we created a memorial in his memory, and it is there in at the White Rock Park.

The following spring or, actually, that following fall, we created a community celebration and we called it Family Day Picnic in the Park or something like that. We bought all the chicken and we got the sodas donated. To this day, that celebration still continues, number one, because we took back our park from the gangs and the drug dealers; number two, we wanted to have a celebration but also to inform and educate the neighborhood that we don't have to stand for anybody coming into our neighborhood and taking what is not theirs. So we created a Kids Day that is now twenty-six years strong. Our main idea was to distribute resource and information for families, for children to have a fun day in the park and to be able to celebrate being a child without having to worry about stepping on a hypodermic needle.

Our involvement evolved in helping with the gang and drugs eradication in our particular neighborhood and we worked closely with the attorney general, Dan Lungren. At that time, Sheriff Glen Craig, our district attorney, who was District Attorney White—I forget his first name, but he's now a judge. We worked with all these people and we got quite a bit done, and also declared Rancho Cordova a drug-free zone. So we've—

Valadez You stayed active.

[01:21:09]

Hernandez We've stayed active, we've stayed active and we've got longevity there. We're not going anywhere, and we still contribute in fighting for education,

fighting for Spanish-speaking individuals. I've done a lot of translating. But I also helped create the Cordova Community Collaborative. I'm one of the founding members of that. We started out as a children and families organization, a spinoff from the Kids Day celebration, to not only educate parents, families, but also needy individuals and homeless children. So at this point what we do is that we help provide clothes, socks, shoes, backpacks. I buy gently-used shoes for the children and I take them to the schools. Pedro and I just do different things that we see that needs to be done and we just do it.

Valadez That's great. That's really, really good. Are there any issues that you would identify as needing serious attention, unresolved problems that continue to grow and not enough attention are being paid to them?

[01:22:31]

Hernandez I think more. More people, individuals need to take responsibility and speak up. Don't sit on your laurels. Don't sit on your hands. Don't complain. Don't talk to the television. Don't complain to your neighbor. Don't complain to your *comadre* and say, "If I was in charge." *Be* in charge. That's how we've been able to make change, get involved, contribute, organize, create, do what needs to be done, even the smallest thing.

Sometimes I see people struggling, and whether it be from a spiritual sense, that they don't have faith or that they don't have trust in God or they don't have that connection, they haven't gone back to church. Many of us haven't. We've had our hate/love relationship with the Church, the Catholic Church, and we still go back anyway.

So what I do is that I carry pamphlets in my purse, and I keep my faith that way. So if someone else needs some help understanding or reconnecting, but also to believe that *He* is going to help us in this journey. I talk to a lot of kids, a lot of students, a lot of high school students that are undecided, not sure. I encourage them, "Start off easy. Go to a community college. Just start somewhere. If you need help, put me down as a reference. I'll help you walk through this. If you want me to go to your parents' house and talk to them, I'll do that."

But I think that many of us need to volunteer in any given capacity, to speak up, to help, to volunteer, whatever capacity. My mother started out baking cupcakes. Even just talking over the fence with another *comrade*, the simplest things, sharing your children's clothes that they've outgrown and passing them on to a neighbor.

You know, when you start working with colors, they all blend. The color has no boundaries. Hate has no boundaries either. Volunteering, I don't care what ethnic, culture, tradition this individual may have, but I do ask, "Do you have a preference?" if I'm going to gift them something. But I think everybody needs to take a responsibility to help their neighbor, to help their community, volunteer, give back, contribute, and do something. Even being a grandparent now, we still contribute in the preschool level and at the elementary level. We *have* to. We have to do that, number one, because the parents that aren't going, they're not going for some reason. Either they're too busy or they don't know how to connect, they don't know how to volunteer. So if they see you volunteering or maybe they're just too busy or they don't have the time, that's okay. We have the time. We have the energy. Let's do that.

Valadez There are a lot of people that started out back in '65, the early years of the Chicano Movement, that have passed on. Are there any individuals that you feel had an impact on you or an impact on the Movement as a whole?

[01:26:31]

Hernandez Oh, my gosh. There's too many to list, too many to list. I know in the RCAF many of our colleagues, many of our friends have passed on. I know that José Montoya contributed quite a bit, and each individual has their own contribution. I really don't have one per se. Collectively, I see each as a contribution and how each has given, whether it be their art, their writings. I didn't appreciate and I didn't grasp the contributions that a lot of individuals did, and it's now that I'm starting to understand and to appreciate those contributions, because they've taught us so much. Now that I'm listening, it's now easier to understand. I didn't have confidence in what I was doing. So it took others to encourage, to give that push for me, for us, to continue on doing what we did.

I think, if anything, those leaders, those individuals, they did encourage us, they did encourage us, even Juan, being as quiet as he was, the quiet ones. Jenny Vaca, she fed the children. I can say she fed the children that were hungry. All of the individuals that went on—I remember my mom, and I remember back in the sixties, Kennedy did make a big impact for a lot of us, I remember, and even to this very day I have a tapestry of John Kennedy and Bobby Kennedy in my home. I have a commemorative plate with John and Bobby Kennedy and the Pope, and it's in my kitchen. I think a lot of these leaders helped us form, and it gave us the inspiration to become leaders. Joe Serna, Joe Serna. There's so many, and it's really

difficult to pick one. He was a great leader. Isabel Serna, Isabel Hernandez-Serna, she had her own way of motivating us.

Valadez Are there any last ideas, thoughts, concerns, issues that you have thought about since you got the call about participating that are your own personal statements about what you see happened as a consequence of the Movement or as a consequence of your own sort of evolution, your own full circle, something that's happened along the way?

[01:30:33]

Hernandez The group of us that attended Sac State at the time, and even UC Davis, the teachers, the students, the individuals that attended Sac State during that time period, I think we're the fabric in Sacramento and are elated to see each other when we meet in community functions and organizations. Sometimes we don't agree, sometimes we don't participate as much as we want to, but yet we contribute and yet we participate by taking our children, our grandchildren, and we've always been involved.

The one element that I see that brings and pulls us together, La Raza Bookstore has always done that for us, and whether it be the poetry, the art, the cultural aspect of it, it's like church. If you make an announcement, if you make a date, or if you have a program that's appealing to everyone, and especially if there's food, people will come, and that is one draw that has always brought us together. I'm always happy to see my friends, my colleagues, my peers that I attended school with over at Sac State, and having been part of La Raza Galería Posada. La Raza Bookstore, my husband Pedro was one of the cofounders of that bookstore that was

part of La Raza Galería Posada. The growth of that, we have to have our place in Sacramento somewhere, whether it be a museum. And I'm so glad this oral history is being done, because where else would we be able to put our thoughts and our ideas?

The Washington Neighborhood Center was another place, but some of these other places have closed as well, the Sacramento Concilio. I think sometimes we get caught up in the finances, the money, the fighting, the struggles, the disagreements, and that's what pulls us apart. So in understanding what the goal is, is to help others and to contribute and to help this continue is my hope, so that we can continue seeing each other forever, because we are going to see each other again.

Valadez Oh, yes, yes.

[01:33:43]

[End of recording sent to Technitype Transcripts]