

**Narrator: Benito Valez**

**Interviewer: Cinthia Agredano**

**Date: 1 May 2019**

**Location: Barrio Logan College Institute**

**Collection: Race and Oral History Course, Spring 2019**

**Length of Interview: 00:18:22**

### **Interview Part 1**

Cinthia: My name is Cinthia today is May 1st, 2019 and I am here at Barrio Logan College Institute to interview Benito for the Race and Oral History Project. Can you please state your full name, date of birth, and place of birth ?

Benito: My name is Benito Valez. My date of birth is 07/10/04. And I was born in San Diego

CA: So we are going to start with talking about the community you come from. How would you describe the community you come from?

BV: Well I grew up in Barrio Logan and I say the neighborhood is like in a way outspoken. Like everyone is always doing something and you know you mostly know who lives here if you go to a neighborhood school. I don't know. I have been living here all my life so it's just like... it's not really like... I can't really compare it to anything else because I have only been living here.

CA: Have there been any changes to the community ?

BV: Um well apparently there's like gentrification or whatever. It's just like compared to five years ago Barrio Logan has like changed a lot because everything in a way it's like rich now. The white people are coming here now it is all different.

CA: Tell me about what teenagers your age do in the community. Like is there places you all go?

BV: I guess some of us hangout at Chicano park or we go to memorial but like I don't know... we don't like... my friends we don't usually hangout around here. We usually go to other places.

CA: Why do you think you guys go to other places ?

BV: Well it's because my friends... well almost all my friends we've all grown up here so we already know where everything is at and there isn't much to do here because we have been living here like all of our lives. So we usually go to other places to hang out because we really haven't been there that much.

CA: Tell me about your experience growing up in Barrio Logan

BV: What do you mean like experience ?

CA: So how do you think it has been growing up here? Is rough or like ?

BV: I wouldn't say rough maybe like five years ago it was different because of how everything looked but like my experience here has been like I wouldn't want to live anywhere else because I feel like I belong here and it is where like... where I met a whole bunch of my friends and like where we have all known each other because we went to like the same neighborhood school and like we have all known each other since like preschool. And I wouldn't like want to grow up anywhere else because I rather have been growing up at Barrio Logan than at like Point Loma or La Jolla.

CA: So next I want to talk about your family. So describe your family for me.

BV: Like name them?

CA: Anything about them. Do you have siblings? Parents?

BV: I live with my mom, my older brother, and my older sister. My older brother is twenty one and my older sister is twenty three. And yeah I have been living with them all my life. My brother is going to school and so is my sister and my mom just like works.

CA: Describe your relationship with your siblings

BV: I'd say that our relationship is kinda like- well we all got like a sibling rivalry like we all try to better one another. Like I learn from the mistakes that my older brother and older sister have done and they also learn from my mistake because I make mistakes as well. We all try to better each other.

CA: So next I want to talk about your school. How would you describe your high school?

BV: My high school is different. I go to High Tech High Media Arts in Point Loma and I'd say it's like a project based public charter school and it is different for me because since I went to a neighborhood school here in Barrio Logan and like the change from going to school there to a high school in... a project based high school in Point Loma is like different because everyone there is different compared to me and it is a whole new environment that I am getting use to.

CA: What is your favorite thing about school?

BV: To be honest probably early release because we get out early.

CA: What is your least favorite thing about school ?

BV: I'd say... I don't know... the least favorite thing would probably be the schedule.

CA: The schedule okay. Are you involved with anything outside of school?

BV: Well BLCI (Barrio Logan College Institute)

CA: What is your best memory?

BV: Like childhood memory ? or like

CA: Anything

BV: I don't I don't know. I'm not really sure about that one.

CA: Okay. What are your interests ?

BV: Well I am inter- I can only come up with a little bit off the top of my head but I am interested in sports most likely soccer. I am also interested in music but more specifically Hip-Hop/ Rap and I guess I'm kinda interested in like food in a way because I watch all the MasterChief [laughed].

CA: How did you become interested in soccer?

BV: Well when my father was living with me he like watched a lot of soccer and I couldn't help but sit there and watch it as well and he was like watching the... the... the League in Mexico I didn't really like- it kinda sucks that whole League. But it's been with me since my childhood but like lately these past two years I have been more interested in like all the different leagues like Europe's top five league and like MLS [Major League Soccer] the league here in the United States.

CA: What effect do you think soccer has had on your life ?

BV: I'd say a positive effect because this year I stopped playing soccer because of like unfortunately I do not have enough time for it but I have been playing soccer since like I was in Kindergarten till like eighth grade. And it has helped me with staying fit or whatever and also I guess it like gave me more confidence in myself.

CA: Do you have a favorite soccer player?

BV: Yeah Zlatan Ibrahimović, he's a... he plays for LA Galaxy and he is like... he scored more than five hundred goals and I don't know he is kind of my idol because I respect how he plays and what he says of and on the pitch he is just like... I don't know I respect him and he is cool.

CA: Tell me about your interest in music. Why are you interested in Hip-Hop and Rap ?

BV: For me it is the best genre just cause of the different types of... different types of like music people can create with Hip-Hop and Rap. And I am into all types of Rap like the LA Rap that is coming out now to like 90s Rap like 2Pac [Tupac] and Biggie. Also like the current Rap right now I guess the mumble rappers they are alright. I have been into music because of my older brother. He brought me into it and ever since he did like in fifth grade I have been listening to more rap songs now and I am more into it.

CA: Tell me about your experience with BLCI.

BV: I have been in the program since fourth grade... fifth grade- I don't know. And my experience with BLCI has been... I haven't finished obviously but it has been good so far. I'd say in a way I wasn't really forced to come well I kinda was forced to come because my older brother and sister went here when they were in third grade. So it has been kind of a family

tradition to go to BLCI. But I have enjoyed it here because it has helped me be more confident and it has helped me with my school work in a way. And knowing the people here and the chances it gives me like doing this interview or like going to colleges I wouldn't normally go to and like having circulo de hombres [Circle of Men] things I normally wouldn't have if I wasn't here it gave me that.

CA: How did you learn about Barrio Logan College Institute?

BV: Well through my siblings but they knew about it through my mom.

CA: How has BLCI impacted your life ?

BV: It's impacted my life because it helped my older siblings get into college and if that impacts their life then it impacts my life and hopefully- I say it has impacted my life but it can still impact it more when I get to college if I get to college and graduate and then have a life on my own then it really would have an impact on my life. But it has it has.

CA: How do you think your life would be different if you were not part of BLCI ?

BV: Well I'd have more free time but [laughed] I'd say I would know less about college like I wouldn't know about as much- I wouldn't be as smart and like I wouldn't have the opportunities that I have now. So I am really grateful for them.

CA: Do you have any advice for any younger BLCI members ?

BV: I'd say just be yourself because not a lot of people here are themselves in a way and I'd say like just try your hardest even though sometimes your hardest may not be the best but like you can eventually- if you put your mind to something you can do it.

CA: What do you believe will be difficulties you will encounter going into college?

BV: Well the obvious one is paying for college because like I am not rich. So that will be an issue already. And also the study and doing the work... I am not really into doing homework and all that.

CA: What college are you interested in and why ?

BV: I've been interested in UCLA [University of California, Los Angeles] because honestly at first just because it was in LA [Los Angeles] but now I actually looked into the college and they have a good psychology program.

CA: What are you interested in studying ?

BV: I am interested in studying psychology or education and maybe a minor in Chicano Studies.

CA: Why are you interested in these areas of study ?

BV: Well psychology, I have always been into it just like the psychology questions or whatever but like I want to help others and just help people all over the world or whatever more specifically teenagers like me. I don't know that is always what I have wanted to do... is like to help others and get paid for doing it. And I feel like psychology or education are the two ways that I can do that.

CA: Where do you see yourself in ten years from now ?

BV: I'll be... I'm turning fifteen so I'll be twenty five or technically twenty four. Hopefully I'll be... I think I'll have my bachelor already so I'll be... I don't know I'm not sure if I'll still go for my masters because that is a lot of years but like I'll probably be out of college looking for a job

or I will be in college for my masters degree.

CA: Explain if and how you would like to give back to your community in the future ?

BV: Well I'd like to give back to my community just helping the people around my community- I'm not sure what I want to do as a job but I want to be maybe a therapist or a teacher so I can teach somewhere around the neighborhood that I grew up in- in Logan or just like help the people around here.

CA: So earlier we were talking about your community. I wanted to ask you if there was something you could change about your community what would it be?

BV: I'd say the... the homeless. There is a lot of homeless around San Diego especially around Logan. And I live across the street from downtown like two streets on twelve and imperial. And there is a lot of homeless around there because there is like a homeless shelter there like around twelve. There's just like... everyday I hear a homeless lady either she is on... there's a homeless person yelling or there is someone doing drugs outside and it is just like kind of annoying- I hate seeing that because sometimes I feel bad because just looking at someone sleep on the floor kind of sucks. I just hope the homeless population in San Diego can be better.

CA: Why do you think there is a lot of homeless people around this area ?

BV: [laughs] that's funny I just did a paper about that today. There is a lot of homeless in San Diego because there is housing going up and low income people who need to... who've been living here for years the rent goes up and they just can't afford it anymore and it is just like if they cannot afford it they are going to have to live outside or at a shelter and it just hard for some people to keep living in San Diego or California because of how expensive it is and... yeah also drug addiction and people being incarcerated and coming out and repeating that cycle.

CA: We also talked about your school earlier so how would you describe the students at your



school ?

BV: I'd say... I don't know for me they are kind of weird. A lot of them just act weird they do weird things and they just... I don't know they are really different from me because most of them grew up in Point Loma or rich areas or whatever and all of them act a certain way that I don't and it's just different. Yeah I mean I am getting use to it... like being in the school and having those people around me.

CA: We also talked about your family. So did your mom grow up around this area ?

BV: No she grew up in [laughed] grew up in Mexico.

CA: She grew up in Mexico ?

BV: Yeah.

CA: Is there anything that you would like to say to future generations or younger people ?

BV: I'd just say what I said before just be yourself like you are the only one who can change how your life is going to be. Doesn't matter how poor or rich you are. You are the only one that can change how your life is going to be. Being yourself and just putting your best effort in everything is a way to achieve your goals. So I would say just be yourself. If you want something have the mindset for it then you will most likely get it.

CA: Is there anything I didn't cover that you would like to talk about ?

BV: Currently no.

CA: So that concludes our interview thank you for your time Benito.

**Narrator: Benito Valez**

**Interviewer: Cinthia Agredano**

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### **Interview Part 2**

CA: My name is Cinthia Agredano today is May 9, 2019 and I am here at Barrio Logan College Institute to conduct a follow up interview with Benito for the Race and Oral History Project.

Benito please state your full name, date of birth, and place of birth ?

BV: My name is Benito Valez. My date of birth is 07/10/04. And I was born in San Diego

CA: In the prior interview you described Barrio Logan as outspoken. Could you describe how the community is outspoken

BV: Well in a way it is outspoken because everyone knows each other. If you are from the neighborhood you know where everyone lives and people know you and everyone... it's like a very strong community.

CA: Tell me about Chicano Park

BV: Chicano Park obviously there is a lot of history with Chicano Park and everyone there is very united in keeping the park clean and also like at first wanting to have a park in Barrio Logan. You can see especially when it is Chicano Park Day like everyone is there like it is packed every year especially this year it was... I go every year and this year was the most I had ever since like there was a lot of people there and with that alone you can see how much the park means to people.

CA: What are the race and ethnicities in the neighborhood?

BV: In Barrio Logan?

CA: Yeah

BV: Lately now there has been every race especially with the gentrification that has been going on. You know like Latinos, African Americans, White people like you see everyone here now.

CA: Are there any class differences in Barrio Logan ?

BV: In a way sort of. There's been a bunch of new houses being built and a bunch of like... in a way rich white people... or just rich people like coming in the neighborhood like you can tell that they weren't from here from the get go and you can tell that in a way they are upper class sort of so there is a bit of class difference or whatever but not really but there sort of is.

CA: What is your favorite shop or store in the neighborhood ?

BV: Probably northgate just because it is more convenient to go to because there is... because it is like a supermarket.

CA: What is the largest town or city you remember visiting when you were young? and what was your impression of it?

BV: ... I don't really... when I was younger, my parents didn't really take me out like that so I don't really... I don't even remember but I don't remember a place that I have been to like that when I was younger.

CA: You mentioned in the previous interview that if you could change anything in your community it would be homelessness, what do you think are possible ways to create change?

BV: Well ways to create change could be awareness like letting people in the neighborhood know that there is a homeless issue in Barrio Logan and San Diego. And just like letting people know that the homeless rates are increasing and increasing and people need to realize that it is an issue because there is a lot of homeless in San Diego. I just felt like that needs to change.

CA: Now I want to talk about your family a little bit more. Describe your relationship with your parents ?

BV: My relationship with my... I'll start of with my mom. My relationship with her is strong we have our little issues here and there like every son and mother but like I really respect my mom and everything she does for me and my older brother and older sister. And I really appreciate everything she has done. And my relationship with my dad is a bit difficult because I didn't really have him growing up. Like he wasn't there so I don't really- I don't really know him as much as I want to but like lately I have been talking to him more so like I have been getting to know him and like he is fine... yeah.

CA: Is there anything you like doing with your mom or dad specifically ?

BV: I want to travel with my mom. [Redacted]... I want to go with her to Mexico so she can see her family over there.

CA: You stated that your mother was from Mexico can you tell me about the area in Mexico that she is from ?

BV: She is from Cuernavaca Morelos and I haven't been there [laughed] my older siblings have but I haven't so I can't really describe it and she doesn't really tell me all that much so I don't really know.

CA: Would you like to go there one day ?

BV: Yeah.

CA: Is or was religion a big thing in your family ?

BV: At first it was like I remember my mom taking me to church and having like... she told me I was baptized like when I was a baby and later I think I was in second grade when I had my first communion and all that. So in the beginning when I was like a kid or whatever, it was a big deal like we used to go to church every Sunday but lately the past three years we haven't been going at all so like yeah.

CA: Can you tell me more about your siblings? What is a favorite memory that you have with them ?

BV: For favorite memory it would probably be... I wouldn't say it is a memory but my brother and sister and I we all like on Friday- well it can be any day but usually on Friday we have a little board game night and we play monopoly and heads up and we just have like... we usually do it every Friday so I don't know if that counts as a memory or not. I just really enjoy it. It is something we bond with.

CA: Is there anything you like to do together ?

BV: Well yeah that was an example but me and my brother we like to... we are really into music so we bond with it a lot and we usually like, he buys an album of an artist and we listen to it fully

and we just talk about it and yeah we talk about it and listen to it.

CA: Does your family have any family traditions ?

BV: Not really unless you count the normal ones like Thanksgiving or something but not really.

CA: Do you have a favorite family dish ?

BV: [laughed] no nah nah not really [laughed].

CA: I want to talk about your friends so can you tell me about your friends ?

BV: My friends from school or from the neighborhood ?

CA: Both

BV: My friends from school they are a bit weird but in a way I sort of respect them because they do what... they are able to be themselves and they express themselves however they want and I really respect that and usually I'm friends with females so like I don't really have like guy friends all that much like maybe two or three but yeah I really- I'm glad I found them because they are people I can relate to even though they are different from me. And my friends from my neighborhood they are more like me they are like... they've grown up in Logan and for most of them we went to the same Elementary school so I have known them for years. They are... I wouldn't really consider them friends they are more like family to me. So yeah.

CA: What do you all do in your spare time ?

BV: My friends ?

CA: Yeah

BV: My friends from the neighborhood because I don't really hang out with my friends from school outside of school so I don't so... like my friends from the neighborhood we usually play soccer or we go to someone's house and we like we either play FIFA or Fortnite or we just hangout. We can either go to the movies or just like chill.

CA: I want to talk about your school next. Do you have a favorite teacher or have you had a favorite teacher ?

BV: In high school currently not really but in middle school when I was in seventh grade my- he was my science and history teacher; his name was Mr. Acosta yeah. He is probably one of the reasons why I want to study psychology and maybe actually study education and possibly be a teacher because of the way he taught. He made like, he made me want to go to school and it was like having his class- I had his class twice and it was for two hours and I really enjoyed having his class because he made me want to be there [laughed] he was so funny like he made me laugh all the time, in a way he gave me advice like a lot and he sort of shaped the person that I am right now.

CA: Describe your school environment. Is there any groups in your school ?

BV: Yeah. I wouldn't really say there's group from like race because it is really not like that in High Tech High Media Arts it is more of how people's personality are and in a way sort of where they come from, where they live. Like there is the people who live in Logan who hang out with them and then there's the people who live in Point Loma who hang out with them. Honestly sometimes it depends on where you live and other times it depends on how you act and your personality because like I don't hang out with kids from Logan that go to High Tech High because I don't really mess with them so I hangout with the kids from Point Loma who are a bit weird but as I said, I respect them because of how open they are.

CA: Do you think there are differences between schools in Barrio Logan and the school you attend?

BV: Yeah there are a lot of differences because school in Point Loma is very nice like it looks like nicer than middle school and elementary school so there is a difference in appearance. Also a difference on how it... the people that go there and also financially there is a difference.

CA: What are the financial differences ?

BV: Well in my high school there is like new comp... the MACbooks or whatever. I didn't have that in my middle school and in my high school they let us go out to Liberty Station and in my middle school we obviously didn't have Liberty Station to go to. So like there's that and I just feel like just the area makes it financially different.

CA: Do you think that your current school provides... more resources for you than the Barrio Logan schools?

BV: In a way yeah. They... my school sorta teaches you life skills on how to like talk to other people and they are really focused on us making friends and partner work and all that. So there's that.

CA: If you could make any changes to your current school what would they be?

BV: I would say the schedule because the schedule is kind of weird so we have first period which is with... it's humanities with Anna it's like we have her for an hour and second period we have multimedia with Trisha and we have that for an hour and then we go back to Anna for third period and that's another hour and then we have a forty minute lunch and then we come back and we have Mele who is like next door and we Mele for like two hours and that's usually the end of



the day or something unless we have x block or advisory and I don't know I am just tired of having the same teachers teach me everyday I mean I just have like four different teachers and I don't know I am just tired of them sort of.

CA: If you could make any changes to Barrio Logan schools what would it be ?

BV: I would just say hopefully it financially changes for all schools can be the same financially because it is sort of unfair just cause it is in Barrio Logan and the people there who live there and go to their schools- in a way the people who go to like a Barrio Logan school are usually like if you were to compare a school from Barrio Logan, lets say an Elementary school from Logan to an Elementary school from Point Loma and you would compare the scores and all that I would say most likely the school from Point Loma will be smarter and I would think it would be because how financially it is like they have better computers, they have sort of the better teachers and they just have an advantage over us or like over the people who go to school there. So I just wish things would be equal and like financially would be equal.

CA: I want to talk a little bit more about Barrio Logan College Institute. Do you think there should be more programs like BLCI ?

BV: For right now to be honest no because I feel like for right now Barrio... BLCI should be the only program like this because it gives kids more of an appreciation for it and I feel like if there was a million other BLCI's people would be like "oh whatever another one right here" people wouldn't appreciate it as much as they do now because if someone would like lets say I would leave BLCI I can't come back so like there is no other place like here so I would lose it completely but lets say there was other BLCIs then I wouldn't be as appreciative of it but eventually throughout the years obviously there is going to be more places like this and BLCI will make another BLCI so like eventually I know there will be another one but I just feel at this certain point like maybe they should just hold on or just wait.

CA: What about other BLCIs in different communities that are similar to Barrio Logan ? Not in here.

BV: What do you mean ?

CA: Do you think they should create programs in other cities that are like Barrio Logan?

BV: Yeah there is CVCII [Chula Vista College Institute] already, it is in Chula Vista so yeah I already know that there is programs like here like BLCI in other cities and I feel like yeah every city should have like a BLCI. Like Chula should have one well they already have one like National City like everyone should have a program like this because it can literally like... it changes people's lives and I feel like everyone should have the opportunity to go to a program like BLCI.

CA: You previously mentioned *Círculo de Hombres* could you tell me more about this ?

BV: Yeah *Círculo de Hombres* is in English it is translated to Circle of Men and its basically a group of sixth graders to seniors and we each go every Thursday from six... six to seven thirty or eight, it depends. And we basically talk about how it is to be a man and how it likes... like the barriers that us men go through and like and in a way we talk about the mask we put on how we are afraid to be ourselves and afraid to show our emotions and it explains that be it also in a way it brings us closer like the people who are in *Círculo* like everyone there I've known them closer because of *Círculo*. And I feel like that is also a way to like bond with us in a way, like to bond together. It gives us a way to release our stress because we can talk about anything there like we have thirty minutes of separate time to have real talk and we can talk about like any issues that are going on and everyone there can give you advice on it. And it is just really helpful.

CA: I want to talk a little bit more about your future. You stated in a previous interview that you were interested in UCLA because it is in LA. Tell me about why you are interested in the LA

area ?

BV: I just feel like the LA area is like, depending on what part of LA there is you know the rich part and also the... I wouldn't say... there is also a bad part... I just feel like LA is another San Diego but I feel like it is just like in a way it's a step ahead of San Diego because everyone who lives there and just like... I just feel like LA is like a perfect fit for me. YEAH

CA: You also mentioned you want to study psychology or education to help others. In what ways will psychology allow you to do this?

BV: I haven't really figured out a specific job if I study psychology but I could be like a therapist or something for teenagers and like help them one on one. I could do that or with education like I said before I could possibly [emphasized] possibly be a teacher and yeah. I feel like those are the two things that can help impact a person's life.

CA: You also mentioned a possible minor in Chicano Studies. Tell me about this interest.

BV: Well a minor in Chicano studies just for the knowledge I want to know more about the history and I had a friend, a junior, that explained to me why she wanted to study that and she just explained she doesn't really know who she is she doesn't know where she... she wants to know more about where she comes from. So she basically told me that she wanted to study that and that really got me thinking, like I don't really know who I am in a way, like where I come from. So I was like I want to- I can minor in Chicano Studies.

CA: I have one last question, it is about you. Do you have a person you look up to as an inspiration ?

BV: I have two people. I look up to my mom just cause of how strong she is and how like even right now she is working everyday and providing for us, for my family and I just look up to her

because she sacrificed so much for us and it's just like crazy cause- to think that she left her family like twenty-four years ago and she hasn't... my grandma like passed away and she wasn't able to see her and the last time she saw her was like twenty-five years ago and like it's just crazy- everything she has been through and like she is still working and providing for us as a single parent and I just like, want to be as strong as her. And the second person would just be well my favorite soccer player Zlatan just cause of how confident he is in himself and like on how good he is at playing soccer. I just feel like he is someone I have been looking up to as a kid growing up and watching him play and like watching him score all those goals and it's just like... like I don't want to be like him cause I am not like six foot five but like it's so crazy to me how confident he is in himself and his ability to play soccer.

CA: Is there anything that I didn't cover that you would like to add?

BV: No [laughed]

CA: That concludes our interview thank you for your time Benito.