

0:00:00.000,0:00:07.080
Hello my name is Paola Godinez - today is
May 9th 2020 and I am interviewing

0:00:07.080,0:00:13.349
César López through zoom for the UCSD
Race Oral history project, can you please

0:00:13.349,0:00:16.580
state your full name, date of birth, and
place of birth

0:00:16.580,0:00:22.980
sure good morning my name is César López
my date of birth is August 23rd 1974 and

0:00:22.980,0:00:28.769
I was born in East LA so East Los
Angeles California thank you

0:00:28.769,0:00:33.110
so to start off can you introduce
yourself to me

0:00:33.110,0:00:41.489
sure I'll start with where I come from,
my parents are both from Mexico my dad's

0:00:41.489,0:00:46.289
from Mexico City and my mom originally
from Monterrey, Mexico so they both

0:00:46.289,0:00:53.520
immigrated to the United States in the
1960s so that's where it all starts, both

0:00:53.520,0:00:59.850
of them met here in the United States
and I was born in 1974 they got married

0:00:59.850,0:01:05.700
you know couple years before that and
lived in East Los Angeles I was raised

0:01:05.700,0:01:11.250
for the first couple of years of my life
at a place called the William Mead

0:01:11.250,0:01:16.409
Housing Projects also known as Dogtown
near really close to downtown Los

0:01:16.409,0:01:23.430
Angeles to the Classical Vera and then

around third grade or so we moved out to

0:01:23.430,0:01:29.490

the San Gabriel Valley moved out to a
City Rosemead California and and from

0:01:29.490,0:01:33.360

there

you know had a I have one sister one

0:01:33.360,0:01:42.299

brother and well we had a you know a
very multi-ethnic community the Latino

0:01:42.299,0:01:47.040

and Asian mainly growing up with kind of
the white flight and the older white

0:01:47.040,0:01:50.880

community moving out of those areas
Monterey Park for instance is right next

0:01:50.880,0:01:56.790

to Rose Mead which is you know there's
there's studies and and it's one of

0:01:56.790,0:02:01.380

these places where it's seen as there's
a book of first suburban Chinatown right

0:02:01.380,0:02:06.299

we see the kind of the impact of the
immigrant community kind of moving in

0:02:06.299,0:02:12.400

and and and the the backlash against
that so

0:02:12.400,0:02:18.790

so I grew up in that context I did my
undergraduate work of a BA from USC in

0:02:18.790,0:02:23.769

political science in English and then I
went on to graduate school at UC

0:02:23.769,0:02:28.810

Berkeley in Ethnic Studies and I have a
master's degree and a PhD which I

0:02:28.810,0:02:34.540

completed in 2002 since then I've been
for a little bit I was adjunct in Los

0:02:34.540,0:02:39.129
Angeles at different universities Loyola
Marymount University Cal State Long

0:02:39.129,0:02:42.819
Beach
I had a postdoctoral fellowship of

0:02:42.819,0:02:48.430
Mellon Fellowship at USC for a year and
then right at that point I got my

0:02:48.430,0:02:53.920
position or accepted position as a
tenured-track faculty for the Chicano and

0:02:53.920,0:02:57.159
Chicana Studies department at San Diego
Mesa College and I've been there ever

0:02:57.159,0:03:00.189
since so it's been 16 years now that I've been there

0:03:00.189,0:03:03.760
and I'm very happy and proud and
currently I'm the chair of the

0:03:03.760,0:03:10.030
department thank you thank you for
sharing all of that um so I noticed you

0:03:10.030,0:03:14.590
mentioned you moved from East LA to San
Gabriel Valley how was that transition

0:03:14.590,0:03:21.310
for you? like when you moved? you know it
was it was amazing in the sense that my

0:03:21.310,0:03:26.680
cousin's the cousins that we hung out
with the most lived a couple blocks away

0:03:26.680,0:03:31.449
from the house that we were able to rent
so we went from living in the projects

0:03:31.449,0:03:39.639
an apartment to living in a house with a
yard and it was like I said it was a

0:03:39.639,0:03:45.370
period of transition in the late 80s and
early 90s with the community becoming

0:03:45.370,0:03:51.340
more Latino more Asian and so we rented
the home for a couple of years so that

0:03:51.340,0:03:55.900
my parents were able to end up
purchasing the house which was also an

0:03:55.900,0:04:01.659
amazing kind of reality or kind of a
dream come true for my mom and then my

0:04:01.659,0:04:06.519
dad kind of went along with it but part
of how that happened was really quickly

0:04:06.519,0:04:12.909
was the experience of my parents my dad
worked for the coca-cola company in

0:04:12.909,0:04:18.039
Downtown Los Angeles for many years over
25 years he was you know he had a

0:04:18.039,0:04:25.760
teamster job Union benefits, my mom was a
head start teacher and aide

0:04:25.760,0:04:28.910
but along with all of that these
full-time jobs my parents also did side

0:04:28.910,0:04:35.690
jobs with selling food, we had a taco
truck catering truck taco truck and and

0:04:35.690,0:04:40.400
it was because of the work that they did
on that which was extremely hard work so

0:04:40.400,0:04:45.800
I'm very sympathetic and also kind of
keeping an eye on issues like the vending

0:04:45.800,0:04:49.790
and street vending and different things
happening in Los Angeles and now across

0:04:49.790,0:04:54.230
the country because that was the
opportunity, the entrepreneurial

0:04:54.230,0:04:58.610

opportunity gave my my parents the
ability to buy a home where we lived so

0:04:58.610,0:05:03.980
you know a lot of hard work
absolutely what was what was your

0:05:03.980,0:05:11.330
relationship with your parents like?
ha ha very good you know I love my mom my mom

0:05:11.330,0:05:18.440
passed away in 1998 but my dad is still
here still with us still going very

0:05:18.440,0:05:25.400
strong and he was 10 years older than
her so it was you know now I think you

0:05:25.400,0:05:29.060
know as an adult
me and my 40s I have a really you know

0:05:29.060,0:05:33.170
as they say you kind of get perspective
on life so I have a lot more perspective

0:05:33.170,0:05:38.030
on the challenges that they faced like I
said the example of working a lot not

0:05:38.030,0:05:44.510
just full-time but working extra and the
and really the the motivations that we

0:05:44.510,0:05:47.780
have and the struggles we have you know
with perspective we understand them

0:05:47.780,0:05:52.790
better but at the time you know I was
resistant to helping my parents even

0:05:52.790,0:05:56.360
though you know we're like oh I don't
want to go sell in the taco truck I

0:05:56.360,0:06:01.160
don't want to go sell churros and but we
did and looking back it was it was

0:06:01.160,0:06:05.990
important because it helped the family
you know and it was stressful and

0:06:05.990,0:06:11.690
challenging but you know I thank my
parents for those experiences and I

0:06:11.690,0:06:17.990
appreciate them a lot, I love them thank
you so what was your relationship with

0:06:17.990,0:06:22.010
your siblings I know you mentioned you
have a few siblings? yeah

0:06:22.010,0:06:25.730
and really good I mean I hung out with
my brother my brother's a year and a

0:06:25.730,0:06:32.030
half older than me my sister is six
years younger than me so I'm a middle

0:06:32.030,0:06:36.320
child so we played a lot together and we
hung out together and a lot of like

0:06:36.320,0:06:41.410
sibling rivalry kind of stuff
especially in the you know like the

0:06:41.410,0:06:46.180
preteens in the real early teenage years
and all that but you know we have a

0:06:46.180,0:06:50.590
really good relationship and we relied
on each other a lot until we got into

0:06:50.590,0:06:54.070
those those ages of teenagers where
you're kind of on your own you wanna do

0:06:54.070,0:06:59.680
your own thing and we all rebelled in
our different ways but you know we all

0:06:59.680,0:07:06.040
have our strengths I look to my brother
for for his strengths and he looks to me

0:07:06.040,0:07:12.460
and my sister my sister is she's a
social worker she works for the LA

0:07:12.460,0:07:19.360

County Probation and so she she also
went to USC and got her she went

0:07:19.360,0:07:23.860
she went through the Community College
as my brother did as my mom did but she

0:07:23.860,0:07:28.180
ended up they had a Santa Cruz UC Santa
Cruz and then USC and got her Masters in

0:07:28.180,0:07:33.430
Social Work and my brother's had many
different kind of jobs managerial jobs

0:07:33.430,0:07:38.830
and things that he's done and he
continues to do so we we grew up having

0:07:38.830,0:07:43.599
to you know support each other and I
think like I said looking back I think

0:07:43.599,0:07:48.070
we did did a really good job of that in
spite of the challenges of you know

0:07:48.070,0:07:56.080
family what were some of those families
wages that you speak of? oh well like I said

0:07:56.080,0:08:02.139
a lot of it was just you know my parents
are always working so as you know an

0:08:02.139,0:08:07.960
immigrant family you know my the work
ethic was very real and the challenges

0:08:07.960,0:08:14.280
of trying to you know once again you
know we rented and then we owned a home

0:08:14.280,0:08:19.539
always trying to get a little bit more
for the family those were I think that's

0:08:19.539,0:08:23.470
at the crux of it especially when you're
doing work like a like a taco truck or a

0:08:23.470,0:08:28.630
catering catering food it's so much
extra work so I it's hard for me to

0:08:28.630,0:08:33.010
understand how my parents really did it
because we did it it was like non-stop

0:08:33.010,0:08:37.690
you know so it was cooking there was
always food cooking in the house and we

0:08:37.690,0:08:40.570
could have whatever we wanted but it was
always for the truck it was you know

0:08:40.570,0:08:46.630
there was a point where the taco truck
and all I became very successful almost

0:08:46.630,0:08:52.080
for you know like almost a year period
where my dad had friends

0:08:52.080,0:08:58.590
who were who created what is called the
Alameda Swap meet or the indoor Alameda

0:08:58.590,0:09:02.640
Swap Meet in Downtown Los Angeles and
right when it opened today you can look

0:09:02.640,0:09:07.560
it up and it's like you know it's a huge
indoor swap meet but when he just

0:09:07.560,0:09:11.850
started you know he was the only one who
was selling food there and so we kind of

0:09:11.850,0:09:15.420
captured the market and so we went from
you know kind of going to different

0:09:15.420,0:09:20.430
spots in Los Angeles and in the county
to going just to this one spot and he

0:09:20.430,0:09:25.470
blew up really fast so that's part of
how my parents rate but by our house is

0:09:25.470,0:09:30.330
about extra money but it was also a lot
of extra work so it was a lot of stress

0:09:30.330,0:09:35.220

my parents as in the relationship is
very stressful my mom you know try to do

0:09:35.220,0:09:40.560

her teacher work and very local to the
community where we live and my dad you

0:09:40.560,0:09:44.970

know we're kind of working in downtown
and kind of you know working overtime

0:09:44.970,0:09:49.680

and different shifts and it was yeah it
was the challenges of that I think that

0:09:49.680,0:09:57.540

were that were specifically kind of
shaping our experience and I know the

0:09:57.540,0:10:04.200

Alameda Swap Meet you're talking about. What was the name
of your taco truck? did y'all have a name

0:10:04.200,0:10:11.930

by any chance? you know it had a lot of
names one of them was Pulpo on Wheels

0:10:11.930,0:10:19.860

when it shifted to more specific seafood
you know and and I kind of went through

0:10:19.860,0:10:24.840

a couple different iterations like one
time my dad because he knew the one of

0:10:24.840,0:10:29.460

the owners of Pollo Loco I like in East
LA and so it had a Pollo Loco kind of

0:10:29.460,0:10:33.870

feel to it for a while and then it just
went straight like all kinds of Mexican

0:10:33.870,0:10:39.480

food and so Alameda Swap meet was
more of like it just went you know it

0:10:39.480,0:10:44.700

was very all kinds of Mexican food and
we just did it was like overdrive so

0:10:44.700,0:10:47.970

yeah so it's had different names but the
but the focus of the food is typically

0:10:47.970,0:10:54.900
Mexican with what kind of like different
like I said different shifts with with

0:10:54.900,0:11:01.980
the times
yeah What was your favorite food? my

0:11:01.980,0:11:05.130
favorite food
hmm I would say just tacos yeah carne

0:11:05.130,0:11:11.310
asada tacos real simple as a kid today I
appreciate it all you know I used to you

0:11:11.310,0:11:17.550
know like I like all kinds of you know
Mexican food and but yeah I think as a

0:11:17.550,0:11:21.300
kid growing up in the taco truck was
always just give me a simple taco de

0:11:21.300,0:11:25.620
Asada
I like al pastor you know too but it

0:11:25.620,0:11:29.040
wasn't but we served everything you know
there was birria (beaf stew), there was menudo,

0:11:29.040,0:11:33.900
there was like I said mariscos (seafood) it
was all over the place you know trying

0:11:33.900,0:11:38.730
to capture Venetian also we had we did
aguas and we did churros my dad even like

0:11:38.730,0:11:43.740
baked churros or cooked churros and we
would sell them like a fresh basket like

0:11:43.740,0:11:48.390
a huge charola (tray) you know that we would
sell and that was our job kind of thing

0:11:48.390,0:11:52.800
there were that kind of left it was left
to us to do and so it was like you know

0:11:52.800,0:11:56.760

like I said there was moments for a long time we're just doing that was it was

0:11:56.760,0:12:02.580

the grind you know on my parents and the family and you know as kids no one

0:12:02.580,0:12:06.870

really wanted to be there but we were there and we learned that we had to be

0:12:06.870,0:12:11.010

resilient you know and as my dad says we had to kind of be trucha in life

0:12:11.010,0:12:14.910

you know you have to kind of just survive you have to struggle you have to

0:12:14.910,0:12:22.170

make do what you got and and so I think for me it helped me be focused and to

0:12:22.170,0:12:28.260

and to have the resiliency that I needed to to be successful in my life

0:12:28.260,0:12:32.340

especially in education it really helped me even though my parents and my dad had

0:12:32.340,0:12:37.560

some Elementary School in Mexico but not much after that and my mom you know she

0:12:37.560,0:12:42.420

got her AA degree from the Community College after over 10 years of attending

0:12:42.420,0:12:48.050

so it's you know yeah how would you describe your educational experience

0:12:48.050,0:12:56.130

growing up? you know I was I was a nerd I was you know I was the the one that got

0:12:56.130,0:13:02.220

the good grades so I was always over appreciated you know and for that I

0:13:02.220,0:13:06.900

look back now and think in my family to my brother and my sister I think I was

0:13:06.900,0:13:12.360
the one who got a little bit more
spotlight because of that but I always

0:13:12.360,0:13:16.270
liked school and I was really you know I
was pretty good at it it wasn't the the

0:13:16.270,0:13:21.040
straight A student but I was pretty good at it
and I think I was able to negotiate you

0:13:21.040,0:13:27.640
know different elements of it like
leadership and and and working working

0:13:27.640,0:13:31.840
with others and things I was through
high school I was in the journalism and

0:13:31.840,0:13:37.150
that was the editor in chief and in
college you know I went into college

0:13:37.150,0:13:41.170
thinking I wanted to go to law school
you know but part of that was just my

0:13:41.170,0:13:44.620
perception of what you know what it
meant to be an attorney and all that and

0:13:44.620,0:13:50.770
it wasn't until I got to the university
that I made some very important had some

0:13:50.770,0:13:55.510
very important experiences that helped
to kind of guide me towards a graduate

0:13:55.510,0:14:05.890
school PhD and what made you switch from
from law school to ethnic studies right

0:14:05.890,0:14:11.980
you said? mm-hmm you know the the main
thing was I had to two key experiences

0:14:11.980,0:14:16.600
one was an internship with the Mexican
American Legal Defense and Education

0:14:16.600,0:14:21.370

fund Maldef so I wanted to see what
civil rights law was about and working

0:14:21.370,0:14:25.720
in that environment so I did that for a
semester during my freshman year at the

0:14:25.720,0:14:29.980
University and I liked it but I wasn't
quite convinced I wanted to see a

0:14:29.980,0:14:35.020
different a different form of it a
different aspect of law so in the summer

0:14:35.020,0:14:41.050
I I worked for an entertainment law firm
so I went to Century City in Los Angeles

0:14:41.050,0:14:47.560
and worked for a small but you know a
little significant entertainment law

0:14:47.560,0:14:50.710
firm just to see how that was you know
really the glitz and the glamour the

0:14:50.710,0:14:57.490
money you know and and because of those
experiences that I did complete I I

0:14:57.490,0:15:01.630
realized the work wasn't for me I
couldn't I didn't see myself doing you

0:15:01.630,0:15:07.360
know 60 70 hours of that kind of work
every day every week for the rest of my

0:15:07.360,0:15:13.480
life and so it was it was eye-opening
also I realized as an undergrad that I

0:15:13.480,0:15:16.870
really like school so I know I even
wanted to go to graduate school I wanted

0:15:16.870,0:15:20.980
to go to post you know post graduate and
I wanted to get a masters or some kind

0:15:20.980,0:15:25.570
of degree and I applied I was a
political science and English major so I

0:15:25.570,0:15:29.200

applied to political science programs
and I also applied to

0:15:29.200,0:15:33.610

at the ethnic studies programs and for
me it was when I visited UC Berkeley and

0:15:33.610,0:15:40.120

I talked to some of the incoming cohort
of students and the faculty and and the

0:15:40.120,0:15:44.620

vision that they had and really
understanding the depth of significance

0:15:44.620,0:15:50.589

that ethnic studies that UC Berkeley and
the Bay Area has had you know talking to

0:15:50.589,0:15:56.170

people like Ronald Takaki talking to
people like Carlos Muñoz you know Mario

0:15:56.170,0:15:59.800

Barrera these were people that were
kind of still teaching kind of like

0:15:59.800,0:16:04.779

semi-retired Takaki was still teaching
when I was there and Evelyn Nakano Glenn

0:16:04.779,0:16:09.700

Michael Omi you know these you know
these were the scholars that I you know

0:16:09.700,0:16:14.440

I started to like realize this is where
I wanted to be so so it was that shift

0:16:14.440,0:16:18.670

it wasn't you know and and then it was
it was what I tell my students it was a

0:16:18.670,0:16:22.540

leap of faith I didn't know that you
know what it meant really to be a

0:16:22.540,0:16:26.350

professor I didn't have anyone my family
was a professor I don't have any of the

0:16:26.350,0:16:30.910

social networks that some of my
colleagues or that my kids are

0:16:30.910,0:16:35.829
gonna have but I took a leap of faith
and I said I'm gonna you know turn my

0:16:35.829,0:16:40.540
back to you know the glitz and the
glamour and and the possibilities of you

0:16:40.540,0:16:45.040
know the field of law and and stick
stick to what I really was feeling more

0:16:45.040,0:16:53.769
and more closer to and that was you know
PhD now that you have a step a greater

0:16:53.769,0:16:58.630
foot into like um your field and like
becoming a professor how does that make

0:16:58.630,0:17:08.949
you feel? yeah I'm very grateful to like
I said I think where I come from my

0:17:08.949,0:17:15.280
family, my mom, my dad, my relatives being
Chicano right I think all of those give

0:17:15.280,0:17:19.929
me a sense of home, a place of
beginnings you know that I come from

0:17:19.929,0:17:25.630
somewhere and that I have those roots
that are important to to guiding my

0:17:25.630,0:17:34.210
context but I'm also very proud I'm very
proud of the the fact that I like I said

0:17:34.210,0:17:38.410
coming from somewhere family my
foundations and then that I represents

0:17:38.410,0:17:42.370
something that I'm truly profoundly
proud of and

0:17:42.370,0:17:48.309
I you know I uphold my sense of integrity
and my sense of you know of why I'm

0:17:48.309,0:17:51.700
doing this you know in terms of
believing in the mission of the

0:17:51.700,0:17:56.080
Community College, believing in in the
role of higher education, believing in my

0:17:56.080,0:18:01.300
students, believing in in Chicano Studies,
and ethnic studies and like nothing is

0:18:01.300,0:18:07.600
perfect but believing in that mission so
what are some of the challenges that you

0:18:07.600,0:18:16.390
faced um yeah some challenges you faced
in the work you do? you know part of one

0:18:16.390,0:18:20.440
another challenges was was getting just
you know once again getting through each

0:18:20.440,0:18:25.809
thing you know many times when you talk
to people and I talk to when you talk to

0:18:25.809,0:18:30.100
people that are somewhere that have
reached a plateau of some kind whatever

0:18:30.100,0:18:34.600
in whatever field sometimes they make it
look really easy like oh wow you know

0:18:34.600,0:18:38.290
you're looking like you got it all
together but it's always you know the

0:18:38.290,0:18:43.240
challenges behind the scenes I think
that that you know that are that we

0:18:43.240,0:18:47.170
don't reflect on as much like for
instance one of the biggest challenges

0:18:47.170,0:18:50.710
for me in grad school was when my mom
passed away it was my second year of

0:18:50.710,0:18:55.030

grad school and I was away I was in Berkeley and my mom and family were and

0:18:55.030,0:19:01.360

Rosemead down in LA so that was a huge challenge because it was a question of

0:19:01.360,0:19:05.790

do I pause you know what is my responsibility to my family

0:19:05.790,0:19:12.490

um you know and of course just the loss of my mom so it was it was you know it

0:19:12.490,0:19:17.530

was one of those things where you know it was a moment to reflect and to say

0:19:17.530,0:19:22.840

well what would you know you kind of have to to face you know face why you're

0:19:22.840,0:19:26.710

doing what you're doing right is it important enough, does it matter?

0:19:26.710,0:19:30.100

you know I think it was one of those kinds of moments and and just the the grieving

0:19:30.100,0:19:34.570

process so I think you know there's always and there's reasons to stop or to

0:19:34.570,0:19:38.350

pause along the way of the road and not to say that you know you have to go

0:19:38.350,0:19:41.830

straight but one of the things that I was kind of determined to do was to

0:19:41.830,0:19:47.320

finish so you know so that I think for me just finishing the graduate program

0:19:47.320,0:19:52.580

getting the doctorate degree the way that I did was

0:19:52.580,0:19:57.649

it was big you know it was it was the challenge itself in terms of the job you

0:19:57.649,0:20:02.510
know I was an adjunct a freeway flyer as
we call them you know moving from

0:20:02.510,0:20:07.760
different universities to colleges like
I said I taught at LMU just on the west

0:20:07.760,0:20:12.830
side and then Long Beach Cal State Long
Beach Long Beach a USC as well in

0:20:12.830,0:20:17.299
downtown for about two years two and a
half years so I was kind of moving

0:20:17.299,0:20:21.380
around trying to get my bearing and I
think you know now that I look back that

0:20:21.380,0:20:24.440
was that was a really good experience
kind of interacting with different

0:20:24.440,0:20:31.070
people and getting different advice from
different colleagues and and mentors so

0:20:31.070,0:20:35.419
but I was also this kind of you know it
was the anti-climactic like I have this

0:20:35.419,0:20:39.799
degree I've worked you know you know
with along with undergrad and graduate

0:20:39.799,0:20:43.909
you know over ten years to get it and
and where's the prize you know where's

0:20:43.909,0:20:49.960
the tenure track job which I which is
kind of more and more what I wanted and

0:20:49.960,0:20:54.740
so it was part of that was just the
patience and and the resiliency and kind

0:20:54.740,0:20:57.799
of having hope but things were gonna
work out once again it's going back to

0:20:57.799,0:21:02.269

the leap of faith because there were sometimes that were pretty tight in

0:21:02.269,0:21:06.470

terms of job opportunities they kind of you know they came in waves which is

0:21:06.470,0:21:08.990

typical you know you're like an opportunity comes and all of a sudden

0:21:08.990,0:21:15.889

you know it's like at LMU I had a really great mentor Dr. Edward Park who was a

0:21:15.889,0:21:22.669

was a teacher of mine as an undergrad and Ed Park was a was a great mentor

0:21:22.669,0:21:26.840

you know because he took time out to talk to me about the nuances of being a

0:21:26.840,0:21:31.669

professor of being an educator you know working with students you know what you

0:21:31.669,0:21:36.019

know but even the tone that you use and and and what is the goal of you know of

0:21:36.019,0:21:42.679

your of your your pedagogy of your practice, of your assignments you know and

0:21:42.679,0:21:46.340

then connecting that to a larger tradition you know if we're talking

0:21:46.340,0:21:50.419

about ethnic studies and at that case it was the American cultures program I

0:21:50.419,0:21:54.980

think I was called LMU so it was kind of like an American Studies kind of abroad

0:21:54.980,0:21:58.190

program but it really was it had you know Chicano Studies, Asian

0:21:58.190,0:22:02.779

American Studies, African American Studies so I think the challenges are

0:22:02.779,0:22:05.960
you know all of that I experienced you
know working not

0:22:05.960,0:22:10.789
having work opportunities thinking
that things are gonna be open up and

0:22:10.789,0:22:14.000
then you know like I said in academia
it's all in waves you know sometimes

0:22:14.000,0:22:17.419
there's hiring freezes other times
there's there's a lot of you know

0:22:17.419,0:22:23.390
opportunity and things so I think that's
part of it I did have the support of my

0:22:23.390,0:22:29.090
of my wife you know like we worked
together and she was doing her her thing

0:22:29.090,0:22:34.190
in education and so that was another a
key part of the support system that I

0:22:34.190,0:22:41.179
had that helped me kind of get through
those times as well so so yeah thank you

0:22:41.179,0:22:45.559
for sharing all of that
what about rewards you would say? any

0:22:45.559,0:22:50.570
rewards you get from like the work you
do and like working in education? yeah I

0:22:50.570,0:22:54.500
mean I gotta say number one is working
with the students and being surprised

0:22:54.500,0:22:58.940
every semester even right now in the
pandemic you know we're we're on you

0:22:58.940,0:23:05.899
know we're remote instruction it's still
a pleasure to talk to students to talk

0:23:05.899,0:23:10.100
to students especially that are are

doing what you know that I see myself

0:23:10.100,0:23:13.970
and them in terms of trying to persevere
trying to figure out what how can I hang

0:23:13.970,0:23:18.679
in there, how do I address the realities
of what's happening right in front of me

0:23:18.679,0:23:24.980
whether it's a job, a change, or a family
situation, or illness, or you know access

0:23:24.980,0:23:29.179
to technology you know something so
basic that now it's a it's not basic

0:23:29.179,0:23:34.549
it's mandatory right if you're going to
continue as a student so I think number

0:23:34.549,0:23:40.429
one is that it's also you know I think
being in a position that I'm at as a

0:23:40.429,0:23:47.480
tenured faculty you know and as a chair
of a department I I recognize the

0:23:47.480,0:23:54.710
privilege I recognize the opportunities
and I'm thankful to to to all of that

0:23:54.710,0:23:58.220
all that came before me the the the
people that helped me get to where I'm

0:23:58.220,0:24:05.630
at no this wasn't just me and my pretty
face it was it was so much so much of

0:24:05.630,0:24:11.480
the the advice and the counsel and and
and the support and help from other

0:24:11.480,0:24:16.789
people so I'm thankful and I recognize
that you know I'm so very proud of that

0:24:16.789,0:24:21.890
I think also working in where I am
in a Chicano Studies apartment it's a

0:24:21.890,0:24:25.880
small department it's always been a
small department but we were along with

0:24:25.880,0:24:31.400
a couple other departments we were the
first to be a Chicano Studies department

0:24:31.400,0:24:37.220
and one of the first at a community
college so I think that for Chicano

0:24:37.220,0:24:42.890
Studies it has a special history in that
legacy of struggle and that legacy in

0:24:42.890,0:24:47.600
academia within Chicano Studies within
ethnic studies especially who our

0:24:47.600,0:24:52.910
founder Gracia Molina de Pick who
was a faculty at Mesa College in the 60s

0:24:52.910,0:24:59.330
helped to establish our department
she wrote the curriculum for the AA in

0:24:59.330,0:25:04.040
Chicano Studies that's included in it
plan de Santa Barbara she was you know

0:25:04.040,0:25:10.700
one of the key Chicana, Mexicana
feminist activist of her time of her you

0:25:10.700,0:25:16.910
know for period 60s and 70s and beyond
she left Mesa College to go get a

0:25:16.910,0:25:21.890
tenure-track position at UCSD so she
stayed local always and always involved

0:25:21.890,0:25:27.830
so I so for me it was like coming into
that position and Mesa College in

0:25:27.830,0:25:32.450
Chicano Studies is actually something
very very important and very significant

0:25:32.450,0:25:37.340
to me I'm very proud of that

has there been any difficulties trying

0:25:37.340,0:25:47.810
to maintain that Chicano Studies Program?
yes yeah no you know well part of it is

0:25:47.810,0:25:52.700
just the the way that we are situated
within the institution and this is a

0:25:52.700,0:25:57.710
story that you know that happens and is
a reality in different ways but similar

0:25:57.710,0:26:02.810
vein at all kinds of institutions where
you have ethnic studies kind of related

0:26:02.810,0:26:07.610
programs and departments for us we're a
small we're a department of two we were

0:26:07.610,0:26:13.910
three apartment of two tenured faculty
and we have between six to eight or nine

0:26:13.910,0:26:19.100
adjunct instructors that teach every
semester so we're a pretty busy

0:26:19.100,0:26:24.650
department but institutionally were on
kind of low on the totem pole if you

0:26:24.650,0:26:30.080
will resources when there are resources
it's always you know you know always a

0:26:30.080,0:26:33.080
political struggle and the institutional
struggle to

0:26:33.080,0:26:38.450
to maintain those to kind of stay ahead
of the curve like for instance one

0:26:38.450,0:26:43.399
example specifically in this time of
remote instructions Chicano Studies at

0:26:43.399,0:26:47.389
Mesa College was one of the first
departments to offer fully online

0:26:47.389,0:26:55.940
classes at Mesa College in 2006 and I
helped to create the first courses that

0:26:55.940,0:27:00.950
were continued to teach and we've been
expanding ever since now what that did

0:27:00.950,0:27:05.269
is that put this put us on track to be
better prepared for right now we have

0:27:05.269,0:27:13.190
all of our curriculum is ready to go
online for distance education and I'm

0:27:13.190,0:27:16.489
seeing and we have a lot of instructors
that are very experienced at teaching

0:27:16.489,0:27:22.789
you know in an online in a hybrid format
what I'm seeing across the campus though

0:27:22.789,0:27:27.649
is a lot of challenges for other faculty
and other programs that don't have those

0:27:27.649,0:27:35.779
experiences that maybe weren't as
motivated to innovate early on but we

0:27:35.779,0:27:39.679
were and I think that's part of Chicano
Studies and ethnic studies is you know I

0:27:39.679,0:27:46.639
didn't come to Chicano Studies and to
ethnic studies to to hide in my office I

0:27:46.639,0:27:51.139
came there because I understood the
struggle I understood the ongoing battle

0:27:51.139,0:27:55.340
you know the institutional battle and
political battle and community battle

0:27:55.340,0:27:59.600
that it is to be in academia in that
context if I didn't want that I would

0:27:59.600,0:28:03.350
have you know I got accepted to

political science program so I would

0:28:03.350,0:28:07.039
have maybe went to history or something
English no I mean everyone has their

0:28:07.039,0:28:10.730
struggles but I think the ones specific
to Chicano Studies and ethnic studies

0:28:10.730,0:28:15.580
programs are you know they're so ongoing
and they're almost you know either

0:28:15.580,0:28:21.200
repetitive you know they come in cycles
as well so so institutionally you know

0:28:21.200,0:28:25.600
the good thing is we've had leadership
administrative leadership that has been

0:28:25.600,0:28:33.259
supportive over the years in different
ways right and I think you know from you

0:28:33.259,0:28:39.320
know come you know resources to
technology to tools for teaching to even

0:28:39.320,0:28:41.299
the physical space I mean for a long
time

0:28:41.299,0:28:46.210
Chicano Studies and Black Studies at
Mesa College were housed in

0:28:46.210,0:28:51.970
used World War Two bungalows right for many
decades and it wasn't until the late 90s

0:28:51.970,0:28:57.700
that finally right the momentum the
urgency the money the the politics

0:28:57.700,0:29:01.540
everything kind of lined up so that we
could be housed in a brand-new building

0:29:01.540,0:29:05.380
which was a brand-new building at the
time the G building in the early 2000s

0:29:05.380,0:29:10.060

so I mean that's you know almost 20
years ago now and we've as a campus

0:29:10.060,0:29:14.650

we've built up our campus Mesa College is beautifully rebuilt right if

0:29:14.650,0:29:18.700

you haven't been there in a while it's
you know fantastic new building new

0:29:18.700,0:29:24.070

facilities for our students and for the
community so you know so there's those

0:29:24.070,0:29:29.080

struggles you know so when I got to miss
a college in 2004 I walked into a brand

0:29:29.080,0:29:33.330

new building with a brand new office and
a brand new chair and I here

0:29:33.330,0:29:37.090

everything was brand new I'm like wow
this is great you know this is the way

0:29:37.090,0:29:41.020

it's always been the way it should be
especially when I visited the offices of

0:29:41.020,0:29:43.810

my other colleagues on campus because
they were still in old buildings and now

0:29:43.810,0:29:46.810

they're all in new buildings that are
that are more modern than the ones we're

0:29:46.810,0:29:52.330

in right but but then you know you have
to kind of like take a step back talk to

0:29:52.330,0:29:56.170

the people that have been there for a
while the other faculty talk to the

0:29:56.170,0:30:00.610

community members as well you know cuz
Mesa has always had a link to community

0:30:00.610,0:30:05.500

connection or alums that are here in San
Diego and that are very much supportive

0:30:05.500,0:30:10.000
and interested in Chicano Studies and
ethnic studies and and and learn about

0:30:10.000,0:30:14.830
you know the bungalows right learn about
the the kind of the legacy of struggle

0:30:14.830,0:30:20.680
the you know that is you know that is
ever-present so you know I pinch myself

0:30:20.680,0:30:24.160
I'm very happy and proud to be at a
community college and to do the work I

0:30:24.160,0:30:29.440
do to be in a leadership position that I
am to have the opportunities that I have

0:30:29.440,0:30:37.510
but I also am very reflective of you
know the future and I think about well

0:30:37.510,0:30:41.560
this is what we've done in the past and
we got to keep it in our pocket because

0:30:41.560,0:30:46.030
we may need to bring it out again you
know in terms of you know expanding our

0:30:46.030,0:30:50.860
links and our connections or maintaining
those with community keeping in touch

0:30:50.860,0:30:58.510
with students you know with our MECHA and
other groups on campus and and then kind

0:30:58.510,0:31:02.080
of being a part of
of the institutional memory I think

0:31:02.080,0:31:06.690
that's that's a key part especially for
a small department because we're were

0:31:06.690,0:31:11.020
often overlooked right we're kind of
seen is there and you know and I think

0:31:11.020,0:31:17.140

you know we've had to transform our our
presence to from you know the historic

0:31:17.140,0:31:23.410
kind of all celebratory and symbolic or
even token representation on campus like

0:31:23.410,0:31:28.030
with events and things like that to
really expanding the the kind of the

0:31:28.030,0:31:33.100
intellectual place and space of Chicano
Studies of ethnic studies of Black

0:31:33.100,0:31:38.500
Studies on campus to really kind of
guide in the educational mission to help

0:31:38.500,0:31:49.780
to to mold it and in the ways that we
can. Thank you, so now with the Pandemic going on, how would you say your
community, the community members you work with,

0:31:49.780,0:31:59.050
or the work you do in general has been
impacted? yeah it well a lot of it is

0:31:59.050,0:32:04.330
grind to a halt
I mean it has because like I said part

0:32:04.330,0:32:08.740
of our the work that we do well from
number one as a class right in working

0:32:08.740,0:32:14.080
with students it's all gone remote so
there's more of a disconnect right

0:32:14.080,0:32:19.030
amongst colleagues amongst the community
on you know a campus community so we're

0:32:19.030,0:32:23.250
we're trying to just stay connected to our
students and that's a challenge right

0:32:23.250,0:32:29.410
it's a challenge technologically it's a
challenge you know dealing with the

0:32:29.410,0:32:32.920
realities of students and community are

facing that some of the faculty and

0:32:32.920,0:32:39.550
staff and admin are facing all of that
but I but I think it's also the the

0:32:39.550,0:32:45.610
challenge of for us as a department like
I said us Black Studies we're we take

0:32:45.610,0:32:51.250
extraordinary steps to have a presence
on campus that exemplifies our student

0:32:51.250,0:32:59.050
work that exemplifies our history but
also the the rigorous and exciting

0:32:59.050,0:33:02.860
intellectual traditions that we
represent as interdisciplinary

0:33:02.860,0:33:08.260
departments and so every year we we're
working where we're having guest

0:33:08.260,0:33:13.370
speakers for the campus we for instance
Chicano Studies 10 years

0:33:13.370,0:33:17.809
to go now was nine years will be ten
years 90 years ago we created the the

0:33:17.809,0:33:23.360
annual Gracia Molina de Pick feminist
lecture series and UCSD has one as well

0:33:23.360,0:33:29.510
and they have one because just like just
like us just like them Gracia donated

0:33:29.510,0:33:34.100
you know a nice chunk of money out she
donated eighty thousand dollars to us

0:33:34.100,0:33:36.410
that's to Mesa College
I believe she don't need a little bit

0:33:36.410,0:33:43.760
more to to UCSD but so in honor of that
in honor of her legacy you know we have

0:33:43.760,0:33:48.860
these events these annual events that we
do one of the big ones that we help to

0:33:48.860,0:33:52.970
establish just three years ago and it's
you know there's a whole history to that

0:33:52.970,0:33:57.679
which which you know I think I want to
get into that right now but I mean three

0:33:57.679,0:34:02.450
years ago we helped to establish the
Raza Grad on our campus a cultural

0:34:02.450,0:34:09.230
celebration focused on Chicano Latino
students community families and this

0:34:09.230,0:34:12.620
year we can't have it you know it's only
been three years and we were really

0:34:12.620,0:34:16.940
looking forward we could planning all
year and and I said like I said I think

0:34:16.940,0:34:20.060
and I say that because it's a very
personal thing for the department

0:34:20.060,0:34:26.120
because unlike a university you know we
don't have the same infrastructure that

0:34:26.120,0:34:30.139
you know in terms of the bodies and the
people power a lot of the work that

0:34:30.139,0:34:34.159
happens at the Community College is is
you know the labor of love of people

0:34:34.159,0:34:38.270
sitting on extra committees and extra
time to make sure that these things

0:34:38.270,0:34:43.760
happen and for our students and for our
community so you know I so I think part

0:34:43.760,0:34:46.399
of it is you know it's a challenge you

know because we're used to being very

0:34:46.399,0:34:51.379

active you know we're used to bringing
in like I said expanding the role of

0:34:51.379,0:34:54.679

education you know expanding the meaning
of that even taking it out into the

0:34:54.679,0:34:58.490

community I mean in the best traditions
of ethnic studies and Chicano Studies

0:34:58.490,0:35:03.740

and Black Studies right and I think
sometimes my colleagues you know some of

0:35:03.740,0:35:08.060

them are great because they do go that
extra mile but a lot of times the

0:35:08.060,0:35:13.670

rewards for that or not as clear for
some and so if there isn't the the the

0:35:13.670,0:35:17.630

motivation for it it's you know it's
sometimes that work doesn't happen so

0:35:17.630,0:35:20.690

but we're really feeling it you know I
think like I said not just for the

0:35:20.690,0:35:24.800

reasons everyone else is but also
because we do every year try harder we

0:35:24.800,0:35:28.820

really do and it
shows and it's in a and I can say it

0:35:28.820,0:35:32.780

proudly not just boasting but I can say
proudly you know we have that record of

0:35:32.780,0:35:43.850

doing that since we started. So before concluding this interview, is there
anything you would like to add that you

0:35:43.850,0:35:49.370

would like covered? you know I would just
say that I think one thing I want to

0:35:49.370,0:35:55.010
emphasize is that the Department of
Chicano Chicana stays at Mesa College is

0:35:55.010,0:36:00.860
an important part of the history of
ethnic studies programs in in San Diego

0:36:00.860,0:36:05.780
in San Diego County the state and the
nation and I would go back to you know

0:36:05.780,0:36:10.190
honoring and recognizing Gracia Molina
de Pick as our founding faculty member

0:36:10.190,0:36:15.770
because she was you know she was a
fierce fierce fierce scholar and

0:36:15.770,0:36:23.300
intellectual and activist feminista and
you know she was crossing boundaries and

0:36:23.300,0:36:28.430
and and developing coalition's and
working across different communities you

0:36:28.430,0:36:32.510
know since she started like I said in
the 60s and she has a long family

0:36:32.510,0:36:36.530
history connected to the Mexican
Revolution and she's just a such a

0:36:36.530,0:36:41.270
wonderful person she passed away this
this past year and we honored her back

0:36:41.270,0:36:46.880
in we did a campus event for her in
August of last year we also have a glass

0:36:46.880,0:36:51.710
gallery that's dedicated in her name on
campus that's a permanent

0:36:51.710,0:36:56.840
exhibition of her of the legacy of
Chicano Studies of ethnic studies and

0:36:56.840,0:37:02.570
it's also a revolving gallery and I say

that because you know in other people

0:37:02.570,0:37:05.990
like people like Professor César Gonzalez
who is our founding faculty or founding

0:37:05.990,0:37:11.510
chair who passed away also last year so
I mean we have this kind of changing of

0:37:11.510,0:37:15.620
the guard you know people from that
generation that are now leaving us but

0:37:15.620,0:37:19.400
their legacy is strong and I think I say
that because two things sometimes you

0:37:19.400,0:37:23.570
know the Community College is kind of
get left out of some of the scholarship

0:37:23.570,0:37:28.130
so I think it's important that if I say
anything is you know I think having that

0:37:28.130,0:37:33.110
perspective having that that connection
to the history is important that people

0:37:33.110,0:37:37.250
realize that that in and it's always
been and always will be it's the

0:37:37.250,0:37:40.730
students connected to the faculty and
staff

0:37:40.730,0:37:45.830
connected to the community that will
make the difference in terms of

0:37:45.830,0:37:49.820
redefining education challenging you
know what what it is what's what's the

0:37:49.820,0:37:54.710
meaning great what are we doing why you
know do work that matters as

0:37:54.710,0:37:59.990
Claudia Saldua would say and also
connecting it to the realities of our

0:37:59.990,0:38:04.640
students and I think challenging them to
to get the AA and Chicano Studies for

0:38:04.640,0:38:10.670
instance to transfer or to develop life
skills are are important beyond just you

0:38:10.670,0:38:15.800
know the job or or beyond the perception
of what that is I think we we hope to

0:38:15.800,0:38:21.410
train you know or to help educate people
become you know really well-rounded

0:38:21.410,0:38:26.810
critical thinking people right and that
that change our world that improve our

0:38:26.810,0:38:30.740
communities and keep us healthy so with
all of that I that's that's my

0:38:30.740,0:38:35.150
perspective on on the work we do I think
that the community colleges are

0:38:35.150,0:38:41.750
essential essential in the context of
you know we we accept everyone and we're

0:38:41.750,0:38:49.960
and we we are the community thank you so
much for everything CV@sar, our interview

0:38:49.960,0:38:56.630
concludes with that question like I said
this work is this work is used for such

0:38:56.630,0:39:02.240
amazing things and this will be archived
in our UCSD library and then the refugee

0:39:02.240,0:39:06.860
teaching Institute might also use this
interview because they're trying to

0:39:06.860,0:39:10.340
establish like an ethnic studies
curriculum at the high school level for

0:39:10.340,0:39:15.230
students and so we kind of wanted to

look into like how faculty teaches

0:39:15.230,0:39:18.590
ethnic studies what are some of those
challenges and kind of to look more into

0:39:18.590,0:39:24.050
that so all of this is amazing thank you
you know can I tell you one last thing

0:39:24.050,0:39:31.520
that you mentioned that, yeah go for it, this past this
past academic year and into this year we

0:39:31.520,0:39:35.900
started a Chicano Studies was invited to
participate and we asked to participate

0:39:35.900,0:39:43.220
in the CCAP program which is a program
of teaching college level courses at the

0:39:43.220,0:39:47.960
local high schools and it's been at Mesa
College since the 1960s so we're now

0:39:47.960,0:39:52.220
part of that program and we've actually
expanded into a couple of different high

0:39:52.220,0:39:56.490
schools teaching Chicano Studies
courses college-level courses at the

0:39:56.490,0:39:59.490
high schools so that's something we're
starting to work on and that we're

0:39:59.490,0:40:04.080
expanding and I think it's it's a great
opportunity to to make to kind of

0:40:04.080,0:40:08.250
network out to the teachers and others
at the high schools in terms of

0:40:08.250,0:40:12.180
resources our curriculum but also the
social networks that need to develop to

0:40:12.180,0:40:16.830
thicken to make sure that students
continue right into higher education

0:40:16.830,0:40:21.270

whether it's community colleges, or the
or any of the Cal States, UC's or any

0:40:21.270,0:40:25.950

of the any of the institutions so that's
something that were we're starting to

0:40:25.950,0:40:30.660

work even more on and I think we're and
we are scheduled to teach one or two I

0:40:30.660,0:40:35.820

know in the fall this coming fall at at
Kearney high school we've been at

0:40:35.820,0:40:43.260

Mission Bay High School I know they
requested a class at at UC high so so

0:40:43.260,0:40:47.130

yeah I think that's that's great work
and I think that's it's important work

0:40:47.130,0:40:54.420

in the future that's amazing
and I work at San Diego High and some of the students who

0:40:54.420,0:40:59.460

take Chicano Studies from San Diego City
College yes I think thats amazing

0:40:59.460,0:41:03.300

like they do really enjoy these classes
when I'm talking to them and like what's

0:41:03.300,0:41:07.310

your favorite class of the day and they're
like it's in my community college class

0:41:07.310,0:41:11.450

so I think that's super amazing