

Race & Oral History Project

Title: Cindy Rocha Interview

Narrator: Cindy Rocha

Interviewers: Zeltzin De Leon Campillo

Location: San Diego, California

Date: May 16, 2020

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Zeltzin De Leon Campillo: Hi, great. So I'm going to read you the oral history release form.

"This interview was conducted in accordance with the goals and course description of a HIUS 144: Race and Oral History in San Diego, under the direction of professors Luis Alvarez, Yen Espiritu, and Simeon Man. In consideration of the recording and preservation of this oral history by students of the University in California, you, Cindy Rocha, the interviewee, and me, the interviewer, Zeltzin Campillo, hereby transfer to the university the rights to publish duplicate and otherwise use the recordings and transcribed interviews and any photographs and or videotape footage taken during the interview. This includes publication rights in print and electronic form such as on the Internet, the right to rebroadcast the interview or portions thereof, and permission to transfer the interview to the future media. The University of California, San Diego hereby agrees to preserve the products of this oral history interview according to acceptable professional standards and agree to provide the narrator and interviewer with access to the taped interviews." So with that, do I have your consent to move forward with the interview?

Cindy Rocha: Yes.

ZD: Yes. Okay, perfect. Thank you so much, Cindy. Great. Alright. So, today is May 16, it is 3:01 p.m. My name is Zeltzin De Leon Campillo, I'm interviewing Cindy Rocha today. Cindy is one of the artists at Chicano park's new more mural in honor of Anastasio Hernandez Rojas and his family. It's a project headed by the American Friends and Service Committee. Thank you for joining me, Cindy. So how did you first get into mural painting?

CR: I first got into mural painting through a job that I had, I was teaching at an art studio and the owner would often get people asking for like commissions or if there are any artists that were willing to work outside of the studio and I was commissioned to do a mural painting in National City for a home. And that was like the first mural that I can get kind of like a bittersweet moment because the person that I, the homeowner that we painted it on, the last day kind of said some

very gnarly things. Yeah, it got a little racial that day. And yeah, on the very, very last day. Yeah. So, luckily I was with a friend at the time who was more than willing to use their white privilege to like help and like, defuse the situation and to talk to that person. But yeah, that mural just like, kind of like, like a bad taste in my mouth.

ZD: Yeah.

CR: Yeah, we are doing this work pro bono. And then you wanna say some out of pocket stuff (chuckles).

ZD: Wow, what, what an impression, right, first time writing a mural seems to kind of set some type of precedent.

CR: Yeah, it really did.

ZD: Yeah so. Wow. So that's how you started with mural painting. Is that one of your favorite art mediums? Um, what, what's your art style like, if you have to describe it?

CR: I, I, the more and more that I paint murals, you know, the more than I'm starting to really enjoy them and like them. Typically, I'm a very like reserved more person. But through painting these large-scale murals... Kind of gives me a sense of like something bigger than myself, like, here's this huge canvas that a lot of people will see and it's just a way to express myself in a bigger way than I normally would. I'm kind of like, "here's what I have to say!" (laughs) It's huge, like, you know, "you're gonna listen" or "you're going to see this" (laughs).

ZD: Yeah, that's amazing. How big do you think the mural is at Chicano Park?

CR: I know that the pillars are like six feet wide. And it's seven or eight stories tall. It's the largest there today, so.

ZD: Yeah. It is the largest mural in the park. That's impressive. Well, that's such a cool opportunity to get to express yourself in such a big way. You know, and especially for the cause for Anastasio Hernandez Rojas and his family. So getting into that. Would you, would you mind describing the

situation that happened to Anastasio Hernandez Rojas and his and his family, you know, the reason this mural's being painted?

CR: Yeah. Um, so I don't know all they like super deep every single little detail, but this is my understanding of it. And I was just kind of briefed on it and it was very difficult to digest, Because the first time I learned about it was with his widower, Maria (last name), so that definitely added an extra layer of depth to the conversation that we were having. But what I understand is that he was, I don't exactly know where he was at, but I know he was with his brother. And they were being apprehended by the Border Patrol. He, he and his brother ran, his brother tripped and fell so Anastasio turned around to go help his brother and got him up and then they both left but somehow in that exchange or that whole move in, uh, one of the Border Patrol agents... I'm sorry, one of the border patrol agents grabbed him, and he had already sustained an injury to his leg from work. So he had this, I think it was he had pins his leg, or his ankle. I believe his ankle. But the Border Patrol had kicked that ankle. The agent have kicked that ankle and, uh, I think that's how they they got him and while he was under arrest he told them like, you know, "it hurts. It hurts." And then I can't remember. I know, like, so he was injured there. And one of the things that I do remember, and I'm not sure if it's like, while he was being apprehended the first time because I know he had to be transported somewhere, to like this other facility. Again, I'm not too familiar with the whole process but I do... One of the things that I do remember the most was that before he was transported he had a bottle of water with him. And this story just when I heard it it brought tears to my eyes that this is what kicked off the whole situation. The agent asked him to empty the bottle of water, but because he didn't understand English that well he took it as like, empty the contents of the bottle. So he uncapped it, uncapped the water bottle and poured the water out and that really pissed off the agent because he thought he was being insubordinate, for whatever reason, and then I guess there was a beating that took place there. when he has transported, He was hogtied and handcuffed. And I believe it was twelve agents from three different institutions that were dry tasing him, beating him, kicking him. All while it was being recorded by 12 witnesses. The, yeah. It was, it was like really tough to hear, that that happened but the witnesses had recordings and you can like, I watched the video and you can hear people screaming. You can hear him screaming, like they're asking why. They're asking them, witnesses are asking, why are you... Why are you guys beating him? He's not resisting. He was not resisting, he was on the floor hogtied. They just kept doing it. And when I read about it even more, and even like taking his pants off or something like that. They just really wanted to like, dehumanize him, and oh, that just weighed so heavy on me, it still weights heavy on me. And so they caught all of

that on camera and a bunch of the agents had confiscated the original footage from those witnesses. There were two witnesses that were left. One of them later came out like after the whole family tried to receive justice. And were going through the whole court system. They weren't getting anywhere. Because they really tried to like, slander him. They tried to say that he was like on methamphetamine, all kinds of stuff to just, you know, bringing up his, his arrest record, just trying to like villainize him to justify this beating. To somehow, like, get the public to, I don't know, to sympathize with the institution. I don't know. I don't know why. But I'm... So... He's a, I'm sorry. I lost my train of thought.

ZD: Its okay, it's a it's a very impactful story, um, you know, the way that he was just completely undignified, right.

CR: Yeah.

ZD: You know, and his status us you know being a non-citizen. So, um, yeah. It's an impactful story and I can understand how it can feel like a lot on your shoulders, you know, being part of this mural and wanting to honor him through this. Um, and so, do you think, why do you think that you were selected to be part of such an important mural?

CR: Um, I think there are two very safe primary reasons why I was selected to do it. There's like the spiritual reason, you know. Like things happen and like you are led down this course throughout your life, man. Little events happen to you that lead you down these little roads to like, to where you like to finally find a purpose. Just, yeah, like be able to say, like, okay, this is what I want to do.

CR: and life has a funny way of showing me that (laughs), you know, and that's kind of how I met Victor, like I kept... a bunch of people like, professors would be like, Oh, "you need to meet Victor, you need to meet Victor" and I eventually did meet him through a weird way of just knowing other artists and going to all these events. And I think when I took an airbrush class at Grossmont he realized that I had a very strong work ethic. Like, I showed up to class every day, was never absent, always on time, stayed behind to clean up, do extra work. And I, he always told me that one of the things he really values is that I'm very like, sensitive and very emotionally...I'm capable of not repressing those feelings and being very empathetic towards people. I think that I'm very. It's like a I don't know. I think people think it's like a weakness but I consider it like a straight to be

like emotionally vulnerable and in being able to connect to people and hear stories and and have them, have that connection to people. I think those are the two reasons why

ZD: Definitely, that's great. That's part of emotional maturity.

Okay. And so with, you know, with the story of Anastasio in mind and the experiences that he went through that his family went through in the last 10 years too. Um, you know. Sadly, these stories aren't too common. And so I wanted to know personally about you. Where did you grow up and what was it like living in your neighborhood. First, maybe, what was some of the best things about growing up in your neighborhood?

CR: I grew up in Fallbrook, which is primarily like a farm town. Very conservative. what I really, really love about it is, it's very beautiful. There's trees everywhere. It's like the countryside. Very small. So there's definitely a sense of community and my family has been there for a very long time. And I remember like, feeling a part of it. There was a time when I was younger when my uncle rounded up all my primos and I, and we went around Fallbrook and they were doing like a tree planting community service there. And we all went and we were planting trees and, like my uncle and my cousins and I planned to go back there to be like, "I planted this tree (laughs) look at how big it is!" So, those are definitely the positives

ZD: Yeah.

CR: Small towns and...

ZD: Yeah, sounds, beautiful. You do miss the landscape sometimes moving out of the, out of nature. But yeah, so you have a large family right?

CR: Yeah, I do. Yeah.

ZD: So, um. Was it challenging for you growing up being in a large Brown family? It seems like you know Fallbrook being kind of a predominantly white area.

CR: Yes, there were a lot of challenges with that because I'm not, I'm a second-generation Chicana. My parents being the first generation they, a lot of them, because it's like such a large family they grew up in... grew up being poor and a lot of my uncles and aunts from maternal and

paternal, were very much involved in, in gangs. Because when you live in a small area like that you do get labeled as gang affiliated just for the choices that like your aunts and uncles made and there were so many times where we would just be hanging out and, you know, the cops would be called to raid my house because there's "gang activity." We'd just be barbecuing.

ZD: That's like, gang activity.

CR: yeah or like You know, like walk, just hanging out like walking to... We would walk from one town to the other. My cousin Anthony lived on the other side of Fallbrook so we would go walk over there to pick him up and walk back to my other aunt's house (laughs). We were, we were bored and you know, like, getting pulled over for that. You know having, having one of my uncles in the car and you know like been pulled over by the cops and searched because they're felons and having that for flavor being implemented and you don't know what's going on. Those are all very like scary situations. And it, when you're exposed to that at a young age you, you do become distrustful and you do notice like why, why are you doing this?

There's, you know the story of when I was like 17 and going down to the 7-eleven market with my friend and we're trying to get chips. The guy that I was dating at the time, he and his friend, got out of the car. Don't even look like gangsters like that. They went around the 7-eleven to go to the restroom and like, this sheriff pulls up and starts asking them questions. And then he calls for back-up. There's another sheriff being very aggressive and I'm sitting the back of the car, and he comes over and starts to question me and he, I'm asking for his badge number because I know something's wrong here. and they're like, extremely aggressive yelling at us and so I asked for his badge number and he calls his buddy over and says, "hey like, doesn't this girl look like the girl that was involved in the so-and-so yesterday, or last week," he said. And I looked at him and I was thinking to myself, this guy is trying to like pull some kind of foolery here and I looked at him and I didn't even live in Fallbrook at the time. And I said, I don't even live here. He asked me where I live. And I said I live in Lake Elsinore, and he grabs the door and he slams it right in my face and says, "go back to Lake Elsinore." And I just remember going like, they let us go because we weren't doing anything. But when we got back to like my friends' house I was just thinking, God, that was really scary. Number one and number two is what gives them the right to do that? Like, like, what was the, what was that all about? I was just so confused. And so angry, and scared at that time. I feel like that has always been in the back of my mind as far as like how the, how just the police, you know, like, the police can treat others. How they will just look at you, Sometimes, and because you're a certain color automatically assume that you're committing a

crime when you're looking for a bathroom or, you know, like, reaching, you know, and it doesn't just apply to me. It applies to like whole bunch of other people you know you have that happening in the black community too where, you know, kids are reaching into their pocket to pull out Skittles. But here they have this idea that, you know, because their skins of a certain color that they're automatically some kind of thug, or some kind of gangster. These, I kind of, I kind of feel like we're robbed a little bit of a childhood, in a sense, you know, like we, we don't get to experience that innocent, just, that innocence that that you're supposed to experience as a child and some, someone that's growing up in the world. You have to be more aware of your surroundings, of you know, who you are, like, where you're at. Those are the things that you have to carry inside of you, even though you don't necessarily always acknowledge them or even present them. I don't present any of mine (chuckles).

ZD: Yeah, it's like a whole new consciousness, a whole new level of consciousness. That must be exhausting to carry at all times

CR: Yeah.

ZD: Yeah, and that's and that's unfortunately so big in our communities. Um, do you feel that, or how would you feel, how do you feel about the way that law enforcement, that's ICE, CBP, SDPD execute their jobs? You know, do you think that's an experience that, you know, is shared across communities?

CR: So, I don't think that they do... I don't think that the people that go into those types of jobs, most of them, I want to say, do it because they're doing it out of a place of, of love. Like, I don't think that they're very they're examining themselves and saying, Hey, like I want to do this because I want to like better, you know, my community or, you know, there's i don't i just feel like There's something there that's just not um, there's something that's missing. You know, like, like if you examine yourself and you want to know what your purpose is. My purpose was never to like be oppressing of somebody else or or policing other people. But this brings up something that just popped in my head. And I'm relating it because I had a friend, who I no longer talk to, who is, um, who did, did become a border patrol agent. And I do... And he wasn't Brown. He was white. So, I do remember talking to him once. And he was saying, he was telling me about how they have these codes. And, you know, like they use the alphabet. Right, so like alpha or something, you know, to spell things out. And he told me that, this was this is really racist, but he told me that

like when they approach, a person of color, like a black person, they'll say they say like, oh, between them they'll say, oh, "I have a November", because the letter N represents November, I guess in their like, in their like lingo. You know how it's like... Does that make sense? Like,

ZD: Yeah

CR: if you read, if there are like, like the letter C is like Charlie, like the letter Z is like Zulu. So the letter N is November, like, "Oh, we have a November."

ZD: Yeah

CR: And, yeah. So I stopped talking to that person, a long time ago, but just thinking about that now reinforces my idea that people don't go into these forms of what they say, like, public service, because, because they're, they're looking at themselves saying like, oh, you know, like "my heart's telling me that I don't, that I, that I want to do this." I think it's more of like a power thing. I think it's definitely an ego thing. And I also think that it's a control thing, you know, and and racism. My, the Border Patrol agency started off as the Texas Rangers (chuckles). They don't have the best history like, it's rooted in racism. So, and I don't think that they, the law enforcement agencies like the CBP or ICE, I don't think that they're they're going in with hearts, full of compassion for these people like "let me help them" or anything like that, like, no, they're going in there to oppress people to, why? I don't, I don't see the philosophy. Those types of agencies.

ZD: Yeah.

CR: I guess. Yeah, I understand, like, the whole drug business. That's one thing that I kind of agree with but at the same time, you have like, these, you have immigrants that are coming to the United States because they're genuinely looking for a better life, and they're not smuggling drugs. So, that's very (inaudible)

ZD: Yeah, Definitely. You raise a really good question: What are people's motivations in becoming, you know, law enforcers? So definitely, um, and speaking of areas that are highly, highly surveilled by police. Um, what do you think, speaking of this mural, What do you think makes Chicano Park such a great place for making this mural?

CR: Um, because I think it's a place where people can, can look to, can stand in, can feel that there was a point where this this little plot of land was fought for against these big institutions and, like, the bigger power and where we won. And it's just the place of, of, a source of community power that we can say, you tried it and it didn't work because we stuck together and we prevailed and it's always going to be there and it's always going to stand there... (cut)

ZD: As for the audience for this mural. You know, to you, who's your audience? And what message do you want this mural to transmit to that audience?

CR: Um, I don't want the audience to be limited for anybody. I want it to, to speak to everybody. I want to, you know, even people that are carrying so much hate and discrimination, there are. I want them to look at it and view it view it as like a work of art, but also maybe like, something on that mural spark some empathy with them or help them to realize that not everyone's a bad guy, or that people are just trying to make the best of their lives. So I welcome everyone to come see it.

ZD: Yeah, good. That's great. Um, what... So when you were... As you're painting this mural, right, I know your art style, but art style is a big way of bringing out certain emotions. So how do you say, how do you think you've incorporated that to evoke some sort of, some kind of emotion from people that see this mural?

CR: I think a lot of it. A lot of emotion is going to be evoked throughout the community on this mural and like when people see it's going to definitely rely on a lot of the imagery and as well as like, the usage of color. For example, one side of the mural is the Anastasio side and the other side is the Maria side and a lot of us believe that there's a balance that needed to be achieved between both sides, like, there's definitely a masculine and a feminine side. There are things incorporated throughout it like Mother Earth, like the four elements. Yeah, but definitely through the imagery that we chose we chose some very powerful images of what's happening to, to people in a Trump era of Immigration reform and we have, you know, children that have perished while detained and ICE. We have kids in cages. We have a bunch of, just very powerful images. We decided to include the father and daughter that had drowned from the Rio Grande, Texas. That was my contribution to it. And at the time, it had caused some students, like when I initially made this decision, it caused some students to be very upset with me in the airbrush class for wanting

to include it, because they thought I was being insensitive to their family and they considered it like, murder porn and they were saying that you shouldn't include those kinds of images but you know, one quote has really really stuck with me from, for a while now, and it's by Nina Simone. And she said that artists painters and sculptors should always, I think it's like, carry a message. But she said they should be making work that reflects the times, and and I just think that, that, just, I watched this all yesterday, wish I had this quote memorized, but I'm... I think that's very powerful like, to be an artist and in times like this. What, you do need to reflect like, what's going on. And as difficult as it is to see and to know that these things happen, like we can't just turn our eyes away from it and like, pretend that these people, that these immigrants haven't died or that people haven't lost their lives. As if there are no kids in cages, but it's so much easier to just be like, Oh, well, you know, like, "let's not be so... Let's just not look at those images" and in deciding to include the father and daughter that had drowned, I went through a whole week of just back and forth like, staying up late at night thinking over it like, thinking about it and I remember initially reading about it and not, not viewing the picture because I am so sensitive (laughs) I didn't want to see it and you know there were trigger warnings. So I waited and like, after the fourth day after reading about it, I finally decided to to view it. (CUT)

CR: To me like, because those images are so powerful, we need to, we need to, we need to see them.

ZD: So they're not erased.

CR: Yeah, so that they're not erased or... It's just, it's really tough.

ZD: Yeah, good for you for sticking to your guns and deciding to do that. And I can't imagine just the not, just not the decision, but the process of painting a picture of so much, of something so heartbreaking, you know. Something that, yeah, an event that destroyed a family's life. Um, so, you know, how would you say that the the mural has influenced you actually like the process of painting this mural. Would you say it's influenced your art and, you know, you as a, as a whole?

CR: Um, yeah, it's definitely changed the way that I view artwork now. And one of the things that Victor Ochoa has always definitely engraved me and that I always carry with me is that I don't want to make art, just to make art, and just to paint like a pretty picture. I definitely want it to have a message. I want it to say something. I, and that's definitely changed the way I create, because

when now when I create I'm always looking for, for presentation and identity and a message. Because I don't just want to be another artist painting you know, flower portraits or...not there's not that there's anything wrong with that. It's just not how I want to use my, how I want to use the medium to express myself.

ZD: Of course, definitely. It's good to have that purpose. Um, and so, as for this mural. You know, it was set to complete, to be completed in in May, which is the month we're in now. But with the coronavirus outbreak, the mural is not set to be released for a few more months, I've heard around September. I've heard stories that you know it might start getting released. Um, how do you think that this pandemic outbreak will impact the release of this mural?

CR: Well, it's definitely put us behind schedule (chuckles). We just had a meeting today about that with the artists and the organizer, Pedro Rios, from AFSC, and we are gonna start. We just got a message that we can return to work

ZD: Yes! Nice!

CR: (laughs) and we'll be returning to work on Monday. They're bleaching some of the stains from the rain gutters. Yeah, and hopefully I think the 27th is when we're going to go full on back to work, but of course there's going to be like, limitations as far as how many people can work on a tier. We're going to have to wear masks the whole time. I mean, we're working with toxic materials anyway, so we wear masks regardless (laughs)

ZD: Yeah, okay.

CR: And we wear gloves, um. We've had to sanitize the whole site. Power wash it and clean and just disinfect everything and everything. And I know that, I think it's like Urban Corps or Job Corps, one of those uh, cup, organizations helped us out by power washing and it's definitely, it's a community mural so it takes a lot of different organizations, a lot of different hands to come together. It's not just, "Oh, we're going to show up with our paint in and brushes and it's gonna go up", it's a lot of other input from people in,

ZD: Yeah, well, it takes it takes a village right?

CR: Yeah (laughs)

ZD: Yeah. Yeah, that's, I'm very excited to hear the painting will continue, you must be excited too...

CR: I'm so excited to get back to work.

ZD: Yeah. Um, well, what about you, right? You are supposed to be painting. We're stuck inside. And, what, how has your life... How has your life changed and been impacted during this time?

CR: My I'm not as, I'm not outside as much as I used to be. I often, well, before the pandemic, I was going to school in Long Beach. So two days of the week I'd be driving up to Long Beach and spending time up there. And then I'd drive home the same day and then wake up, go to Chicano Park and work there. Come home. And the next day would be spent at school and then back to the mural, and then two days, like maybe one or two days, would be spent trying to do homework, but a lot of the times, the way that. Well, the way the site is set up right now at Chicano Park is that, that we have like Wi-Fi and a desk area so you can bring your stuff there to work and then what was just heartbreaking is that we would often have a lot of people just like come and help out or just hanging out. And we can't really have that anymore. So I mean...

ZD: Yeah, That is sad.

CR: Yeah, it was fun to just arrive on site and see other people that were really "hey what's up? how you doing?"

ZD: Now they gotta they gotta stay away. There's always community members in the park. There's always company.

CR: Yeah, there is (laughs)

ZD: Yeah yeah

ZD: Yeah. Wow. Yeah. Well, I'm glad to hear that everything is going to continue. Sounds like you usually have a very active life outside of the home.

CR: Yeah. Still pretty active.

ZD: Yeah, definitely. And you get to paint outdoors. So, you know, you get a little bit of clean air exposure, other than being indoors.

CR: Yeah, for sure.

ZD: Yeah. What would you say is your biggest concern around this pandemic? On whatever scale, right, whether it's a mural or in your own life in general?

CR: Um, I often worry about Victor and I worry about like Mario, Victor Ochoa and Marco Chacon, and Gloria Rocha too, because they are part of like that vulnerable population. And I'm worried about my, my mom, my grandparents and that's like, that's what this pandemic has done to, I think a lot of people and families is like, either you have to take these extra precautions to be around people or not even be around them at all. You know.

ZD: Yeah, I've definitely had the same experience. It's hard, having people that are vulnerable and we've realized now that a lot more of us are vulnerable, than maybe we would have thought before and, yeah. And so going back to, um, you know the topic of of brutality in law enforcement, violence against black and brown. Communities, um, how do you think this outbreak and the social distancing enforcement that has come with it will impact activity of SDPD or ICE in our communities?

CR: I believe that there is an added stress to brown and black people being monitored by the police to enforce social distancing. You have instances where you know, there's, you know, and I think it was an OB. The other day where black woman was apprehended and arrested for I'm not sure exactly what, they said it was because she was a refusing to cooperate, but there were so many other people there at the beach. And why is the only black woman being arrested? We have instances where these anti-coronavirus protesters, protesting downtown and fully exercising their white privilege. You have you know, like people storming, what was it, Michigan was it Washington? Where a bunch of armed protesters with guns.

ZD: Michigan.

CR: In Michigan where they actually have guns storming the state capitol and nobody's being arrested. No one's been arrested, so I don't know of a better example of like, white privilege. Then, then these instances that are happening in our backyards that are happening now that that perfectly illustrate that, that imbalance.

ZD: Yeah yeah. Yeah. A lot of things are coming to light with the situation. I think you're right. Very good point. Um, well, yeah. Again, this is a very relevant issue in our neighborhoods. How do you think that Chicano Park, or the Barrio Logan community, will react to the mural once it's released?

CR: (sighs) I think it'll be welcomed by the community. Um, we seem to be getting a lot of support from people that just like, walk by or, pre-pandemic were walking by and and, you know a lot of the artists will take the time to talk to other to talk to the passer-bys and tell them what we're doing and explain the whole story of Anastasio and the images and, and what we're trying to, to capture. But I think that at large, that there will be some controversy around it. Because of of the theme and not everyone agrees on how the themes presented should be handled and then at the end of the day, it's, I can only put that message out and it's up to the viewer to interpret it and take what they want from it.

ZD: Yes. Yeah, definitely. Well, I've heard some people consider murals, like this, and definitely this mural as a way of achieving justice or even as a way to contribute to the communities healing. How do you, how do you feel about that statement?

CR: I, I agree with it. I am one of the... A lot of, or two of the artists that are involved, Eduardo Parra and Mario Chacon are very spiritual and we contacted other community members like, throughout the design process to come to our meetings. There were a couple of the Aztec dancers, that would come and talk to us about (*inaudible*) and how, you know, to bring in that indigenous spiritual, spiritualness to, to, to the mural and, and our main focus throughout the design process was, you know, being able to present an idea. And at the end of the day, you'd have to justify how, how that image or how your idea is going to bring about healing for the community. And we've had a lot of ideas and a lot of iterations and a lot of some of the artists don't agree, like, oh, you know, like there's too much depth in this mural. We need to scale it back and reconsider more of the healing aspects of it. So there's a lot of restoration going on, a lot of

back and forth just the design alone took six months for everyone to agree. And with that, as the primary focus. Like, how do we how do we paint this mural and provide a sense of justice for Maria, or how do we heal her and her family. There were times where she would come to our design meeting and her brother or Anastasio's brothers would also come in and add input to it. There was one image that we were considering using and that was the image Anastasio in the hospital on life support. And we had talked to Maria and, and to the brothers Anastasio and they wanted people to see it. But ultimately, they decided not to because their children, one of the children, one of his children didn't agree and had never seen that photo of him. So they felt like they shouldn't include it. But there was a time where they were all very much in support of using a photo because Maria... The first time that I met Maria, she told me of this story because Victor had told her how I wanted to include the photo of the father and daughter that had drowned and how I was wrestling with it at the time because I hadn't decided whether or not to use it. And Maria told me that she herself went through a period where she didn't see the video of Anastasio's beating for a whole year. And every time that it would come on the news she would just turn it off. And she said she came to a point where she wanted to see it and she did. She watched it for the first time. She said she was built so much rage and so much anger that she would, what she started to do was she wanted everyone to see it. So she started to do like a little tour around San Diego and would go to schools and show the video and tell his story to, to students. And she told me like, "no mija, like people need to see it". Like, people need to see those images because they forget and as someone that's been through this whole process and has gone through it for 10 years, like when someone that's struggled with that for that long of a time... I, I had to I did make the decision to paint it, because they felt it. They know what it's like, and that was a very powerful moment too.

ZD: So even though you didn't end up drawing, painting Anastasio on life support that image, you know, it's meant to evoke that anger is what I'm an understanding

CR: Yeah, right.

ZD: So she probably wanted people to feel that anger.

CR: And the other compromise of that was that we would show their death and how they died in the manner in which they died because it was a powerful image, but that we would also paint them living. Yeah, so we do have their faces in there. To honor them

ZD: Yeah yeah. Yeah, yeah. Wow, I'm so excited to see this mural, um, you know, the last thing that I wanted to ask is what's your opinion on what needs to be done to stop this problem of brutality and hyper-surveillance in our neighborhoods and also in the border regions.

CR: I, I've, um, struggled with this recently. Because I don't know what needs to happen. I don't know if it's empowering your community to be more vigilant of each other to take to, to show your neighbor more compassion and, and to be alert yourself. When, when you do see somebody being pulled over to like sit around and watch and make sure that they're okay.

Or, you know, I think that we can, as a community, we can monitor ourselves and I often think like, maybe like that's the answer. And I was talking with one of my friends, Chris Williams from Lemon Grove. He does a lot of like stuff there with with the black community and, you know, we're talking about this and you know we're both thinking, we need to educate our communities and, and you know, like the Black Panthers, like they were like, they're all about empowering themselves and and I feel like that's, that is a big proponent of helping to alleviate some of that, that monitoring from outside is to with, like, being able to monitor ourselves and and having that autonomy, I guess of community and saying like, we will handle, ourselves. So you don't need you to come intervene and bring in all this brutality. I think people are more than, communities are more than capable of doing that, of coming together, providing healing, and I think this pandemic has shown that, you know, like, that communities can exist. To serve each other and to help each other you know you got your Brown Berets and the Black Panthers that are doing like, like handing out food to people. You don't see the police doing that.

ZD: Nope.

CR: You don't see food drives by SDPD. Maybe you do. You just, I don't know, I haven't heard of them, but you know having organizations, I feel like, to empower ourselves,

ZD: Yes.

CR: will help. I don't know if that's the answer.

ZD: But it's maybe it's a answer. Yeah, I really love that answer. And I'm really, really glad, just as somebody that walks through Chicano Park and that, you know, hangs out. It's part of my

community. That you are a part of this mural. You know, I think the your contribution is is really meaningful, given your experiences, your work ethic and the way that you are able to understand the circumstances around our community. And the experience of the family of Anastasio and Anastasio's experience. So thank you, thank you so much for talking about such heavy topics with me. Is there anything else that you want to add?

CR: Um, no. Not right now, I kind of just want to go cry in the car (laughs). Just kidding (laughs.)

ZD: I completely understand. Um, I can't tell you how many times, you know, you hear stuff like this and it's just hard. Like, when does the pain stop? You know.

CR: Yeah, and sometimes you can't even help, but I think that, like, that could be somebody in your family. You know, you could be in that situation, like.

ZD: Yeah.

ZD: Yeah. Well, thank you so much... (cut)