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History of the Chicano Movement
Committee on Chicano Rights

INTERVIEWEE: Baca, Herman
INTERVIEWER: Patino, Jimmy, Historian, UCSD
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[1 TAPES – 60 Minutes]

BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 6, SESSION 4.

BACA: The Luis "Tato" Rivera issue was not only a struggle against police oppression, police brutality in the Chicano community that most, you know, most Mexicanos, most Chicanos had suffered from, you know, through the generations. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) I remember an older friend of mine telling me that he remembers when during the Zoot Suit era in the '40s, the Pachuco era, the cops picking up Mexicanos and cutting their hair, cutting their hair and pantsing them, humiliating them, which is no different now than the practice, especially here in National City, of the police stopping the Chicanos and making them sit on the curb, you know, like they were some sort of Viet Cong prisoners, for some stupid traffic violation or, you know, some stupid violation. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) So, those mentalities, those attitudes don't go away and are not going to go away until we have some power in our community. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) And, you know, most of the police force it's like, like I was telling you, or if I told you, I've always told people that National City doesn't have a police department. We have an occupying force. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) And, most of the police officers that work in National City are not from National City. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) It's like I told chief of police, who came in and stated, with the city manager and another individual, who stated that they were in the community, you

know, and find out what the problems were. And I told them, "Sit down. Sit down." And, some things do change, because here you have a city manager and a chief of police coming to the Chicano Rights office [Laugh] and I said, "Sit down. Sit down." I says, and like I told them, I says, "So, you're going around trying to find out what the problems are and talking to people, huh?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "Well that's easy." I said, "It's your department." I said, "I'm going to tell you what I told every reporter and everyone else that ever listened to me about your department. National City doesn't have a police department. It's got an occupying army." And I says, "And the problem is," I says, "is that most of your officers have nothing vested in National City. They don't live here. They don't cut their grass here. They don't have friends and socialize here. Their wives don't shop here. Their children don't go to school here. They as a family do not go to church here. So, the only thing that they have vested is the almighty paycheck." And I said, "And the bad thing about it," I says, "most of them come from other communities like El Cajon, and Klan-tee," and I says, "and we know what they think about National City, right?" (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) And they just looked at me. I said, "We know what they think about National City. Come on." I said, "Nasty city," that's what they think. "Gang members. Illegal aliens. Mexicans." I said, "Let's be honest about it, you know, that's what they think." I said, "And the bad thing about it is, most of those individuals come back to work with that attitude, and that's why you have those problems." I think out of ninety-three police officers in National City, three live in National City. (Patino: Wow.) [Laugh] I think there's six or seven firemen (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) that live in National City. So, they have nothing invested.

PATINO: Are there more Chicano officers?

BACA: There's more now.

PATINO: They increased?

BACA: I wouldn't call them Chicanos. But, you know, because that Craig Short mentality, like I said, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) I raised that issue about them disrespecting and humiliating the kids and making them angrier than they are and creating their own problems, you know, just getting this kick out of it. I don't know what it is. I see no reason why they can't put them in a car, you know. (Patino: Right.) Instead of humiliating them. But, National City, I've lived, and I think I can talk about National City because this is my home. This is where, outside of my little home in Los, in New Mexico, Los Lentos, the rural community where I came from, this has been my home, you know. And, the criticism that, the struggle that we carried out, you know, against the institutions here, against the departments, the political structure, has been because of, you know, the treatment of persons of Mexican ancestry. I lived, where we're at right now, right here since 1955. Before that, like I told you, I was raised in Old Town, National City. (Patino: Uh huh.) So, I lived here from '59 until 1962 in this home here that belongs to my mother and father. When I got married I lived around National City, and that was from '62 until 1966 when I came back and lived across the street. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) My son Mark was just six months old and he's now forty years old. So, I lived at that home. All my children were raised there. You know, all my children went to the same schools here. And, in 2002, 2001 I lived, I moved next door where now I live next to my mother. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) So, I've lived, I've lived here in National City, you know, all of my adult life. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) And, outside of the other place where I was raised, this is home. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) What I always liked about National City was the old families, close families, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) the friendships that we developed over the decades. Most of the people that I went to school I still associate and I still socialize, and a lot of them, you know, also became involved in the Chicano Movement in trying to correct

the inequities and the injustices that we had confronted here. So, National City is a special place, you know. It's a good community, other than for the institutions.

PATINO: Right. And police brutality sounds like a real local issue. How does the local issues intersect with something supposedly international like immigration?

BACA: Like I said, the political system has defined immigration as a law enforcement "problem," so they always wrap that around in trying to rationalize why they do what they do.

(Patino: Uhm-hmm.) So, to a great degree it is an extension of police brutality. [Laugh]

Because, most of them wouldn't know an undocumented if they stepped on their foot, or most of them don't even have a clue of all of the factors that make up the so-called immigration issue.

(Patino: Uhm-hmm. Uhm-hmm.) So, yeah, National City became my adopted home and, like I said, a lot of people don't know it but this is the second oldest city in San Diego County Proper.

(Patino: Yeah?) Yeah. Most people don't know that. And yet, it's the poorest. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) And, the question is, "Why?" We're in the middle of the busiest border and the second largest city in California. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) We have bayfront taxes. So, what's the reason for it being the poorest city in San Diego County, other than racism? You know. Other than for racism? I remember the old mayors used to have a saying, "National City's been good to me."

Yeah, like making millionaires out of them. And, that has always been a struggle here in relationship to the city, and it continues to this very, very day. I remember, like I told you before that there was, we used to have an old saying about in La Raza Unida, "Chicanos put the Democratic Party first and they put us last." (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) That's the same situation here in National City. City Council puts business, who don't even reside here, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) first and they put the residents last. I always make reference to, to something that manifests that. When I was a kid in Old Town, National City, we used to have a place called Casa de Salud and

I spoke briefly about it. It was a two-story building and they used to have a boxing gym in the back, a basketball court at the top. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) You know, it wasn't very much but it was something that kept us out of the streets, to a degree. And, that place was demolished in 1970 and they never, they never reconstructed anything similar like that. And so, when we were growing up there was two places that we used to have recreation, you know, play basketball, or baseball, or like I said boxing, and one of them was Casa de Salud, and the other one used to be Kimble School. And, when I drive now the, most of the blacktop is, has buildings on it or trailers on it, so even that's gone. So, one of the big reasons that I got involved with a lot of the young people that, you know, that are now fifty and fifty-five was to try to assist them and organize them into, we then called it a "teen post," and it was to try to get some recreational facilities, you know, down in Old Town National City. And, I remember in 1970, politically, going to the city council meeting and raising the issue, and the mayor, Mayor Kyle Morgan, telling me "We don't have time or money for those kinds of things." That was 1970. You're talking, what, thirty-six years ago? And, to this day they say they have something down there but it's nothing comparable to what existed. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) So, I have another old saying that I always tell reporters that, "You want to drive on a street in National City that doesn't have potholes you have to go to the Mile of Cars." Because, that sort of dramatizes where the city government's priorities are at, you know, where they place residents concerns. So, it's like I told -- [To Mark] Get him over here.

MARK: Benny. Benny.

BACA: Now he wants to follow that dog. So, that's sort of, that's sort of the entrenched (Mark: Benny. Come here.) institutional accepted policies, you know, that probably went out with Calvin Coolidge [Laughter] in the '20s, you know. (Patino: Yeah.)

MARK: Over here?

BACA: Yeah, put him over here. And, . . .

PATINO: The government's in business, right?

BACA: Yeah. Yeah. You know . . .

PATINO: Work together?

BACA: What's good for [Laugh] . . .

MARK: Benny.

BACA: What's good for – what did it used to be -- business. If it's good for business it's good for America.

PATINO: Right.

BACA: [Speaking to dog] Hey. Okay. Okay. Go away. Benny. Honey. Hey.

MARK: Hey, get over here.

BACA: Give him some biscuits or something over there. So, that's always been the struggle that residents are placed last. (Patino: Right.) Even to the present day. We recently had an issue here with eminent domain, where they're taking property for business. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) You probably noticed there's a whole bunch of condos and buildings going up?

PATINO: Uhm-hmm. I did notice that.

BACA: And, you know, it was nothing but a ploy for the gringo-controlled, so-called "minority" council to continue, you know, that practice under the façade of, "Hey, what's good for business." You see that now with the talk of bringing the Chargers to National City. (Patino: Right.) They can't even open a swimming pool and they're talking, you know, they're talking about probably a \$600 million, I mean, like they're on peyote or something, you know. [Laugh] "Hey. Build the Casa de Salud," you know. Take, I mean, when there's a poor community, you

know, there's a lot of problems. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) And, one of the big problems of National City is that out of three homes only one is owned by a National City resident. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) So, 66 $\frac{2}{3}$ of the homes are not owned, are not homeowners, you know, residents. So, you have people passing through, (Patino: Right.) and of course that creates the problem of, once again, people having something vested politically, or economically, or socially. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) So, that creates a problem as far as organizing. (Patino: Yeah.) And so, consequently it's very easy for outside forces that have something vested, like business – [To dog] Benny.

Excuse me. Get over there. Get over there. Come on. Get over here. Get over there. Get. Get over there.

So, you know, like I said, and to me the reason that I bring up this issue is because of the parallels. I remember in Los Lentos, in Valencia County where I come from, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) there was Chicano sheriffs, commissioners, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) predominately. (Patino: Right.) [Laugh] So, when I came here, you know, and I started seeing that, or reading that there was one assemblyman in the whole State Legislature, that there was only one elected person of Mexican ancestry in the entire county, you know, it, I guess subconsciously it was, you know, "What's going on here?" (Patino: Right.) Because, like I told you New Mexico there was heavy political involvement because of the patronage system. (Patino: Right.) If your party lost, everybody lost. Everybody from the congressman down to the janitor that worked in the local schools. A whole new group would come in with the other party. Just like I was telling you, I remember my father telling me, who was involved in politics in New Mexico, that his father passed away in 1939 and I think he was still voting religiously in 1950 or 1952. (Patino: Right.) So, [Laugh] that showed you the intensity of the politics. And here, you know, like I said, and to this very day even though there is a so-called minority mayor of Mexican ancestry, who is

vacating now, [Laugh] and three city council persons that make up the majority that there's still no political power. And it's the same old, same old with some brown faces, (Patino: Right.) and with some brown individuals. And consequently, you know, because there is no force to make them accountable you see what you see, and you see why National City continues to be the poorest city because of the siphoning off of the potential (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) by outside interest groups. So, National City politically was a big, big contrast to what I, I guess, witnessed when I was a young person, and it must have stuck in my mind somewhere along the way (Patino: Right.) that I, that started making the comparisons that I started to see the differences.

But anyway, this is where the Committee on Chicano Rights has always been, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) you know. It got started here and it got started with an issue that had been very prevalent here, police brutality. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) And we, like I said, education, zoning issues, just bond issues that dramatized that inequity, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) you know. Because, the Committee on Chicano Rights really was an organization that was structured to try to raise the political and social consensus of our people through self-determination, you know. It was always our position that if we're the problem, meaning our people, being viewed by the political system then we had to be the solution. There's no Santa Claus. There's no Lone Ranger. There's no Robin Hood that's going to come and save anybody, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) you know. Power is created, organized power is created by organized people and organized resources. So, our thing was that, you know, "Hey, we're not going to win an election for you." (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) You know, "We're going to start the process, so you're going to win the election, or your children are going to win the election," (Patino: Right.) you know. So, the CCR, you know, like I said, when you look at it it's probably best known due to the immigration issue, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) because of our proximity to the border. (Patino: Right.) And, you know, there's a lot of

interwoven relationships that exist between, you know, the two communities from San Diego and Tijuana. (Patino: Right.) And, like I said a little while ago the San Ysidro/Tijuana border is the busiest border in the world. Over fifty million vehicles and persons cross that border every year. So, like I said it to you before, what happened with immigration here was going to happen somewhere later. But, it always happened here first. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) And, immigration, like I told you before, is like a black hole. It sucks everything in. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) It doesn't release anything. It just sucks everything in. I remember, talking about immigration, about my first meeting with César. And, you know, immigration is very, very interesting because it creates situations that affect and cannot be easily explained, you know, especially when there's poor people involved. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) My first meeting with César was probably in 1973, '74, somewhere around there. It was at the Christ the King church. That wasn't the first time I had met him but the first time that we sat down or we discussed a political issue was at that meeting. It was at the Christ the King church. And like I told you before I was with an organization called Casa that was, that saw the issue of immigration intricately interwoven with what we were attempting to do, and something that had to be corrected (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) in order for us to do what we wanted to do, which was start the process or complete the process of franchising our community. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) So, César's position -- and it never ceases to amaze me how the political right takes things out of context. You've seen it with Affirmative Action and Martin Luther King. (Patino: Right.) "You judge a person by the contents of his character not the color of his skin," you know. So, let's follow Martin Luther King and not have any Affirmative Action, like nothing every happened. (Patino: Right.) Like there was never slavery, there was never inequities, there was never injustices, there was never

outright systematical rules, laws in society to ensure that you didn't get anything, you know.

And – hold on. [Talking to someone else] The what? Okay. So. Okay. [Laugh]

PATINO: Hang on.

WOMAN: Bye daddy.

BACA: Good-bye.

WOMAN: Bye.

BACA: So. The first time that we discussed a political issue, to say the least it got hot and heavy.

PATINO: What was the context of the meeting?

BACA: We were meeting for, I forget what the reason was. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) It just happened being a chance meeting. Maybe we were both speaking at a function. I forget the actual reason what brought us together. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) But, the union's position was, like I said, probably like our position had been two, three, four years before that, you know. That, just like the Minutemen position now that, you know, "They're breaking the law." That, you know, "They have nothing to do with us," you know, "They weren't from here," blah, blah, blah. And, the union's positions, of course, were that, and César's position was that they were breaking their strikes. (Patino: Right.) And, if some way, somehow you got rid of them the growers would come around, you know. You'd have a better shot at the growers. (Patino: Right.) Which sounded great on paper, but realistically, realistically it was, forgot one thing. Where was the power to make the growers do anything with or without these people, right? [Laugh] They would have found somebody else. So, okay. [Calling to son] Mark. [Recording paused]

You know, the union's position was very simple, just like the rest of the Labor Movement, AFL-CIO, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) and that was that like so much probably our position

was three, four years before that, that they were the problem, that, you know, they were breaking the law, and, you know, they didn't have no business here, and, you know, they . . .

PATINO: Taking jobs?

BACA: Yeah, taking jobs. And, you know, and blah, blah, blah. So, that was basically the position of the union. And, our position was was that, you know, poor people didn't create slavery, that they were pawns in a situation of some very, very powerful economic and political forces that were manipulating the situation, that were exploiting the situation, their labor, for their own interests, and that they were just doing what everyone else was trying to do. Survive. And, you know, that they were just workers like other workers that had similar problems with the powerful economic forces of the system. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) So, like I said, César's position was that if they were breaking the strike and some way somehow if they just got rid of them they'd have a better shot at the grower and bingo! The union would have a foothold (Patino: Right.) or the union would be on its way, you know, to, where they would be on their way to organizing the workers. So, I remember stating to him, I says, "You know, if you're poor and they're poor, if they are being exploited and you're being exploited, and you're trying to stop the exploitation and the abuses," I says, "now, if your people are workers and they're workers, shouldn't that apply to both of them? (Patino: Yes.) I mean, a worker is a worker." (Patino: Uhm-hmm. Uhm-hmm.) And, we're not, we're not going to end that system that has been manipulated and that system that has been set up to exploit our people. Not only in the rural areas, not only in the field, but in this whole society. (Patino: Right.) You know, people in the rural areas comprise probably, maybe, maybe five, eight percent of our population in 1970. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) We were an urban people. And, you know, I says, "Those problems you're speaking about also affect us, but in a different way." (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) And, you know, we

are attempting, with our limited resources, our limited power, to help in your efforts, but, you know, we cannot forget about these people who are probably in a worse situation, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) you know.

PATINO: I wanted to ask you. How was it that you were able to, and your groups, were able to see that, recognize that undocumented workers were part and parcel of the problem when it seemed like movimiento... The idea's going around where were looking back to Mexico or looking back to our history and stuff. Why didn't other folks make that connection?

BACA: Like the whole issue of "Why aren't," or "Why wasn't everyone involved at the movement that was a movement to improve everybody's condition?" You know, it was conditioning. It was miseducation, lack of political consensia, social consensia. Like I told you before, you can't have a solution until you first recognize or understand that there's a problem. (Patino: Right.) You know, and most people, unfortunately, in this society, because of our lack of power, are in a box. You know, that's why people in power can do with whatever they want to do with us because they define it. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) The most perfect example is young Chicanos going to school, maybe not so much now as before, but back when I was growing up you go to kindergarden and in the morning you were Jorge and in the afternoon when you went home you were George. (Patino: Right.) Nobody asked your mother and father. Nobody asked the person that baptized you. Nobody even asked you, you know. So, there's a true manifestation of a powerlessness, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) and most people went along with it because, "Hey, they got the power. They must know what they're doing." (Patino: Uhm-hmm. Yeah.) Saben, you know. And, the Chicano Movement, you know, like I said the Chicano Movement was a question mark. It's always been more, it always raised questions, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) you know, about everything that affected us. That's why most people didn't like it.

(Patino: Uhm-hmm.) The Chicano Movement was like holding up a mirror to peoples' face and they didn't like what they saw, but they blame you for holding up the mirror, not for what they were seeing. And, you know, whether it was even the church, like I told you, was the almighty Democratic Party or the poor people's savior, the Democratic Party that people had been conditioned to accept, you know. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) Those three institutions . . . [Speaking to Mark] Mark. Put the lock, or Benny will pull it up.

So, all those things went into making of all the issues, you know. When you look at history, you know, we, to a great degree are still affected by the hacienda mentality. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) You know, if you look at people that are apolitical, you know, most of them, most of them – I told you the story about Burt and César's funeral, (Patino: Right.) you know, most don't think that a Mexicano has anything to offer. And, you have to go back to the hacienda system. And the hacienda system is, is you weren't even, you didn't even have a last name. If you lived on Patron Gonzalez's hacienda you were known as "Jimmy, el peon de La Hacienda Gonzalez." (Patino: Yeah.) And, of course, you never left the hacienda. You, you know, you just existed. And, since everyone was the same you never looked to another peon for anything. [Laugh] He was just as bad if not worse off than you, so why are you going to go there? (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) So, the only people that got respect and recognition were people with titles, "priest," "sensiado," you know, the abogado, "the notario," you know, people with titles. And, you still see that today. I mean, you can go to a wedding reception, you can go to a baptism, and there'll be a hundred, hundred and fifty people in line waiting to be served and the priest will walk in and somebody will get him and take him right up front. Police. I've seen, here at the local bar, I remember back fifteen, twenty years ago this sergeant walking in from the NCPD, throwing his weight around and, you know, this guy sees him from outside of the bar.

There's a little patio back there. The guy runs up there. You'd think Kennedy walked in. You'd think JC walked in. And, he was shaking his hand. "Hey, come on in," you know. This guy probably beat up fifty Mexicans a night, the night before, you know. And, presented him to everyone and said, "Hey," like the Savior had arrived. And, that to me is the hacienda mentality, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) you know. If you don't have a title, forget it, you know. That's why the politicians, they can be the dumbest fools that exist in the community, but because they're now "city council," or "assembly," or there might be a "judge," now they're dona, dona, you know, or "Yes sir," or "Mr. City Councilman." Still the same dumb fool you knew two days before he got elected, you know. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) So, but that's the hacienda mentality. And, you see it, you still see it a lot. That's why, there's always a resistance because of the conditioning when you try to register people. "Hey, register so you can bring about change." Well, you know, they can't get out of the box. Can't get out of the box. Their thinking is inside the box, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) even though they're last in the box. But there's a lot of things that, or a lot of factors that go into making that attitude, that mentality. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) Fear is probably the biggest one. They've got something that can hurt you, you know. One of the things that people always say, or tell me, is, "Hey, aren't you afraid that you landblasted the police that they're going to get you?" And, I guess it's a possibility but, you know, I also found out that the opposite is true. Because anytime I landblasted the police I made sure that I was with a hundred cameras, that it was all recorded, [Laugh] and so consequently their thinking was, "Hey, everything's on tape and they're going to come looking this way," to where most people that are fearful are always in a dark alley somewhere where nobody's recording. So, you know, it's . . .

I remember, now that we're talking about dark alleys and police, I remember that during the Luis "Tato" Rivera issue at the beginning, you know, there was that mentality, "The

Mexicans are getting out of hand. The Mexicans are getting out of line. Damn Chicanos," you know, "How come they can't be like the good Mexican-Americans or Latinos, you know? They never say nothing. They love us." But, I remember there was this one individual that had just gotten involved and we came home around eight o'clock, after working on the recall at the office, and this was just at the initial stages, and when I got home my wife was crying. I said, "What happened?" And she says, you know, "People been calling." Don't forget, we'd just been married three years and she was kind of new to all of this. She says, "People have been calling," or "This individual has been calling up saying if you don't stop what you're doing they're going to get you. I said, "Ah, don't worry about it." I said, "You know, don't worry about it." But then we sat down to eat and the phone rang. I said, "I'll take care of this." So, he said, "Herman Baca?" I said, "Yes." He said, "I'm going to tell you once you better stop what you're doing." I said, "F you, you white trash MF'er," and blah, blah, blah. He says, "You better watch your steps." I said, "You know what?" I said, "You know where I live at." I said, "But I'm telling you right now if you come over here you better bring something." I said, "I don't know where you're at," I said, "but you know where I'm at. So, you know, you going to come over just make sure you bring something, you dirty," you know, we went back and forth. Anyway, he finally hung up on me. [Laugh] And, my friend's looking up and saying, "Does that happen often?" Because – "Ah, once in a while," I says. "Don't worry about it. Let's go and eat." Like I told him later, I said, "You don't worry about the guys that are calling. You worry about the ones that are not calling, okay." [Laughter] So people, you know, fear has always been a big factor, you know, and . . .

END SIDE 1, TAPE 6. SESSION 4.

BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 6. SESSION 4.

BACA: What makes the system function, (Patino: Uhm-hmm. Uhm-hmm.) you know. So, it's like I said, all of us have to go through that process if you want to understand, you know, the conditions that surround your existence, you know. Nobody's exempt, you know. Nobody's exempt. Like I said, you can't blame someone that goes into the military and hey, that institution is the only institution that ever gave him a break, and acknowledging it or being thankful, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) you know. It's easy for us who have opportunities, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) but try going back when there was no opportunities. (Patino: Right.) I remember a friend of mine telling me that when he was a kid, he said his dream was to be the janitor of the school when he was a kid. He said, you know, "Because that was the only guy that I saw clean in my neighborhood. Everybody else worked out in the fields, the railroads, construction." (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) And here he saw a guy that used to come clean everyday. But, that was the level of thinking, you know. You wouldn't say like you're thinking, "Hey, I want to be a PhD." (Patino: Right.) That wasn't computed. That wasn't in the cards, you know. But, when I was growing up, you got out of school, you either went to work, the military, or you went to jail, or you got married. Those were your basic choices, four choices. You know, I never, I never heard anyone say, "Hey, I want to be a judge, or an attorney," or maybe I heard some people say they wanted to be teachers. There was some teachers, but not, statistically they didn't make any great numbers, you know. (Patino: Uh huh. Right.) So, all those things, you know, are factors that, you know, shape our thinking. And, people tend to forget, or young people tend to forget, you know, my generation was like caught between the old generation and the changing generation. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) You know, like my father probably did what his father and his grandfather and his great grandfather and his great great grandfather did. They all basically did the same thing. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) Small-time farmers and construction. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) Those

type of jobs. And, when I was growing up, you know, I thought at one time about going to college. Didn't have the background for it, but I thought about it. You know, I didn't have the preparation. I told you I had probably, when I graduated I had four or five shop classes. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) And, the mentality was, was "Hey, I'm pulling a fast one over them," when later on I recognized that's exactly what they wanted us to do, (Patino: Right.) those dead-end courses to wind up going into the military or into low-paying jobs. But nonetheless, that was an option, not a big option, but it was a lot different than probably my father's generation where, "Hey, go in the Army. Hey, go to work. Get married." So, those things, you know, going back to what I, like that generation. Then I started seeing this other generation coming up. And then, especially when the '60s rolled around then there was a lot of options. There was, you know, a lot of changes, you know. Even for people that never supported the Movement. I remember, going back to the attitude, the mentality in the community, I remember we used to picket at the old Safeway here on Highland Avenue by my shop, on Third and Highland, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) to boycott grapes. And, there's a bar next door. I used to go in that bar and, you know, people that we knew, people I grew up with, people that we knew had been whipped by the cops, you know, we'd go in there and, you know, there's an old saying man that "Everybody has one Budweiser and becomes an instant politician." [Laugh] And, you'd go in there and everybody wanted to all of a sudden talk to you about politics and about how incorrect you were, you know. "Hey, I never seen no discrimination." "What?" [Laugh] You know. "You forgetting who you're talking to? I saw them whip on your head." you know. But, you don't know what you don't know. So those, but I remember those individuals, after the doors started opening, like EOP, and Chicanos started going to school, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) I remember because they now had a little bit of understanding of some systematical things, like, "Hey, my kid can go to college, man. He

doesn't have to work where I work." Then coming around to the shop and saying, "Hey, how can I become a Chicano man?" [Laugh] You know. So, there's always that cause, cause and effect, action, reaction, and that's what change is all about. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) But, you know, since I came from both generations I also understood the old generation. I also understood that they didn't like to talk about discrimination. Maybe try to save us, or protect us I would say more than save us. Like, I always remember the older people telling us, "Don't get involved. Don't say nothing." And, you know, that was that fear factor that something was going to happen to you. And some, well it did happen to people that did get involved. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) I told you about that individual that used to tell me, when he was organizing unions, an older man, Local 89, the Laborers Union, he said, "Herman, you guys got it easy. You guys just get threatened by words." He said, "We had to go up to the mountains in Otay, then it was desolate. It was just, you know, hills, in the '50s," he said, "to have meetings." He said, "Because if they found out," he says, "they'd arrest you. And, people that had no papers. They'd deport you. They'd put trumped up charges on you and what have you." I mean, "Hardball." (Patino: Right.) So I, luckily I got to see that why they did what, why they did the things that they did and I also understood how, why they never appeared to want to get involved, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) unless it was "sanctioned." (Patino: Yeah.) So, the Chicano Movement to them was like, "Wow, this is crazy."

PATINO: Taboo?

BACA: You know, this is, "These guys are smoking the wrong stuff or something," you know. [Laugh] I mean, you know, you just don't do, do those things. And, you were challenging all of their precepts, you know. Hey, the Democratic Party, like I said. My friends grew up with Roosevelt. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) I mean, Roosevelt was an individual that gave them jobs.

PATINO: During the Depression?

BACA: Yeah, hey. [Laugh] I mean, he was "for the poor people," that quote, you know. And, in a way when there was no food there was no work.

PATINO: Yeah. Right.

BACA: So, you know, they never questioned that, even though the democrats used to manipulate that you-got-one habit. The church, like I said, hey they were just taught to obey. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) They never challenged anything. I mean, hey, it was, you know that was your connection to go to the pearly gates. And teachers, oh man, you just didn't say a bad thing about a teacher. They were, they knew what they were doing. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) They know what you got to do. So, all of those things, you know, I understood. I understood and a lot of people didn't, you know. They kind of were going to jam it down their throat one way or the other, and that's not the way it works, you know. Change is, change is hard. Change is difficult.

PATINO: It seems like one of the main goals of the organizations were to change consciousness?

BACA: Yeah. Like I said, yeah, raise political and social consciousness.

PATINO: Right. What kind of tactics did they use to do that?

BACA: All of them, you know. (Patino: Yeah.) Demonstrations, pickets, press conferences, newsletters, newspapers, speaking, you know, taking on issues that sometimes people said, "Why are you doing that?" Like the rezoning. "What does rezoning have to do with us?" You know, but we, we, that's what the CCR basically was. It was a political raising conscious type of group, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) and we didn't have the resources to say, "Okay, we're going to structure this." I mean, all of us were volunteers. Like I told you, even during the Luis "Tato" Rivera issue. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) I talked to the press, then I'd jump on the printing press and, you

know, earn my daily bread for my family, you know. So, it wasn't just like I was hanging around just doing the press conferences or speaking engagements. No. And neither were the other people. People were going to their, you know, their jobs, their classes, teaching their classes, or whatever they did. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) So, the Committee on Chicano Rights, that was the basic concept behind it. That if our people were the problem they have got to be the solution. And you cannot get a solution until you first understand or recognize that there is a problem. But, like that old saying, "A slave does not become a slave when they take the chains off him. He stops being a slave when in his mind he says, 'No,' for whatever reasons, and then he starts moving to an understanding, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) you know, to a very complex situation that affects his existence." And, you know, a lot of people say, you know, "What are you talking about? I'm doing okay." Well, maybe as an individual you are, but not as a group, you know. I mean, we've gone from building the pyramids to, [Laugh] "Hey, I'm doing okay." That ain't too much, is it, (Patino: No.) for people that built the pyramids, you know? So, that's a process that has to happen, that's been going on since, you know, the 1500s. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) Here and Mexico, and wherever our people are at, and it's going to continue. And, situations, circumstances are going to, you know, will always bring about change, either positive or negative, as some of the generations of our people have seen, you know. Some generations have been completely dormant, you know. Some others are active but misguided, you know. Because it's, you know, the whole Latin effort back in the 1920s to relabel themselves to become acceptable, get away from that stigma of "No Mexicans or dogs allowed" signs, you know. "Hey, I'm not Mexican. I'm Latino." "No, you're not." [Laugh] I said, "I know your mother and father. I know your brothers and sisters." There is no such thing as a Latino, you know. What's

a Latino? Is that a mass? Is that a language or what? Ain't no people called Latinos." You know, is there a Latino country that I haven't seen? Huh?

PATINO: Right.

BACA: Especially with people with names like Gonzalez, you know, [Laugh] Hernandez, you know. So, those are the things that the CCR, you know, attempted to deal with, that it attempted to address, you know, with, on a shoestring budget with volunteers. And, but out of all that activism a lot of things came about, you know. And, you know, not as much as we would have liked to have seen, you know, in the last thirty-eight years. But, some things have been established, have been set, some concepts, some precepts that people can go back and say, "Hey, we got this problem. Well here's, it looks like maybe here some people are doing the same thing," you know. Let's leave it there. I know you got to get going.

END SIDE 2, TAPE 6, SESSION 4, TAPE 2.

END INTERVIEW.