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**University California San Diego**  
**History of the Chicano Movement**  
**Committee on Chicano Rights**

**INTERVIEWEE:** Baca, Herman  
**INTERVIEWER:** Patino, Jimmy, Historian, UCSD  
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[1 TAPE – 90 Minutes]

**BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 7, SESSION 5.**

**PATINO:** Two thousand six, Session 5. University of California, San Diego.

**BACA:** What is it, August 23?

**PATINO:** August 23.

**BACA:** 11:20 a.m. Before the KKK presence at the U.S./Mexico border, Carter had been elected in 1976, (Patino: Right.) and the immigration issue was brewing nationally. There had been legislation, from what I remember, and correct me. My dates might be incorrect. But if I remember correctly there was already the Rodino Bill, which was a piece of legislation to fine employers, you know, that had come from the Dixon/Arnett Bill, which was a California (Patino: Right. Okay.) piece of legislation. Dixon/Arnett being a, if I remember right, a republican from the Redlands. I don't know where in the heck he was from. I forget now. But, so there was discussion at the federal level about the immigration issue. And, it was announced that, by the Carter Administration they were going to appoint a Mexican-American to the INS Commission, ironically so. [Laughter] And, whose name was Lionel Castillo from Houston, from Houston, Texas. So, some way somehow, I forgot how it came about, we wound up meeting with Lionel Castillo in Houston, Texas. There was an individual, Alberto Garcia from San Ysidro that had

been actively involved in the immigration issue there at the border, immigration abuses. He had an office, doing documentation there at the border, some other businesses. Peter Schey, who went on to argue cases before the Supreme Court had become involved in immigration. Carlos Vasquez, who had done a lot of documentation for Casa Justicia. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) There was another attorney, Fred Header, I remember, that went down there with us. There was some CCR people. The ones I remember were Phil Alcala, and like I said, Carlos, he also went to Houston, I mean, with Leonel. And, I think there was another attorney, Tim Barker. He wasn't an attorney then. He was a paralegal at Legal Aid as, I'm pretty certain, Peter Schey was at the time. So, we journeyed to Houston where, before Castillo was confirmed. I think he had been appointed but he hadn't been confirmed. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) And, I forget the exact dates, but we met with Leo there at some office. I forget, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) you know, what the office was. And, we discussed the issue, you know, from our perspective. And, you know, from what I remember it was a give and take but a very friendly type meeting over a very, very, an issue that had become very, very emotional and volatile, the immigration issue.

**PATINO:** What was his stance?

**BACA:** Well, you know, he basically took the information in, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) expressed some concerns about the past history of the INS towards the Chicano community and towards Mexicanos in general. And, if I remember Lionel Castillo was a controller there in Houston. I mean, he had no prior, [Laugh] (Patino: Right. Right.) prior dealings or a background of dealing with the immigration issue. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) So, it was a learning type of exchange I guess, (Patino: Right.) from his perspective. Our perspective, of course, was what it had always been. We already had a preset political perspective and (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) agenda on the immigration issue, that it was not a law enforcement or a military type issue, and that that had to

be changed. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) You know, that law enforcement, military, the manipulation and exploitation of labor had to end. That in essence we weren't even talking about immigration. We were talking about, we were talking about a labor issue, (Patino: Right.) you know, concerning the so-called "illegals" that were coming across. Of course there was, there was administrative problems with immigrating people, but that was another issue and, you know, in our political perspective. So, you know, I mean there was backlogs, you know. It was difficult for people (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) to legally immigrate. And so, from what I remember from, with the meeting with Castillo was there was, it was a give and take, friendly type of a meeting. There was a lot of publicity due to the fact that he was Mexican-American, due to the fact that he was talking to "Chicano" activists. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) You know.

**PATINO:** So he gets, so he gets confirmed?

**BACA:** Yeah. So, he gets confirmed and then they come out with the Carter Immigration Comprehensive Plan, the so-called "immigration solution," which is basically what you see even to this day. (Patino: Right.) Some form of, it was a carrot-and-stick type of approach. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) The carrot was that people would get amnesty, you know, after meeting a certain criteria. The stick, of course, was the traditional, that it was a law enforcement, military type of a problem and you know, you've got to increase the Border Patrol and, you know, man the border and, you know, bring in technological type of equipment, sensors and what have you. And, of course, that was something that we're totally opposed to. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.)

So, during that time, like I said, the issue was starting to percolate. (Patino: Right. Right.) The Chicano Movement took it on as a number-one type of a priority, that this was an issue that was affecting our people across the board, whether we were citizens, whether we were documented or undocumented, that this was something that was aimed at our efforts to franchise

our community. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) So, people started to discuss it. People started to take actions. Like I told you before, I've always had an old saying that with San Diego and Tijuana being the busiest international border as far as crossings that whatever first happened policy wise in San Diego was sooner or later going to happen in other areas. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) It was going to affect other Chicano areas. So, geographically we found ourselves in a very, very pivotal type of geographical political area. (Patino: Right.) Because, most of the attention, the emphasis, the media attention, was on the U.S., I mean at Tijuana/San Diego, U.S./Mexico border. So, Chicanos started discussing, taking actions, talking about, you know, what had, that something had to be done. And, I remember that after the Carter Immigration Plan there was a call for foreign importation workers, foreign – I don't care how you slice it, they all wind up being Bracero type programs. They're special programs to manipulate and exploit Mexican labor. That's, you know, no matter what they're called. So, Castillo became the spear chucker for the Carter Immigration Plan and, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) and consequently became our political target, you know, as to what was wrong with the old legislative immigration solutions being proposed. So, I remember after the plans were announced, and I'll get back to Castillo in a minute, because, you know, he took a lot of the pointed criticism. But, I remember people within the Chicano Movement started to check in with the CCR, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) you know, trying to inform themselves, trying to educate themselves, trying to determine what, you know, what the issue was and what could be done about the issue, and how they could deal with the issue in their own areas. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) So, I remember there was a meeting and I forget exactly what the reason for the call was that was originally made. It could have been, it could have been on the immigration issue but I doubt it. There was, from what I remember there was, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) there was another reason for bringing a lot of the activists to San Bernardino.

(Patino: Okay.) For, the meeting I recall was called by Armando Navarro from Riverside.

(Patino: Okay.) And present, that I remember, was José Angel Gutierrez, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) of course Dr. Navarro, Quiñones, Professor Quiñones. (Patino: Right.) So, there was Raul Ruiz, Rudy Acuña.

**PATINO:** This is in '77?

**BACA:** This is in 1977. Right, you know, when the Carter Immigration Plan had been . . .

**PATINO:** Okay. So, it was after the plan was . . .

**BACA:** There was people, like, um, Antonio Rodriguez from CASA. (Patino: Okay.) Felipe Aguirre, and of course, people from the CCR. So we met, and I remember after the, the reason for us being there that we met, some restaurant owner, some backroom, I forget whereabouts, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) and to discuss the Carter Immigration Plan, that this was going to be discussed and supposedly acted on, and that we had, and that was going to be something that was going to affect us as it had been affecting us, the whole immigration issue, and something that had to be confronted. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) So, I remember out of that meeting we said that, we agreed that there would be a, that we should have a national immigration conference to respond back to the Carter Immigration Plan at a national level. And, so we all left with our concept of that idea that we would start to formulate it. At the time the most highlighted individual there, of course, was José Angel Gutierrez, with the national connection, national stature. So, we awaited the call from José Angel Gutierrez, and remember we're talking about different sections geographically of the country. I mean, José is in Texas and we were in California, and other people were, you know, in other areas, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) in other states. So, a call went out and the call was for a national immigration conference, and you know, but it wasn't as to what we had agreed on, as far as bringing it about. (Patino: Right.) José kind of took it upon himself

to, you know, make the call, basically on his own, you know, without the, what was agreed with the individuals or the organizations that were present at the Riverside Conference. And so, you know, that caused a rift (Patino: Right.) at the, within the Chicano Movement, with the organizations that were present and what have you. They said, "Hey, wait a minute." And then on top of that there was the Socialist Workers Party that we and other Chicano groups had had problems with, with them coming in and attempting to take over the issues, and violating our principle of self-determination. What was highlighted was part of the organizing effort. We saw it as a violation of our right, or a lot of us I should say, here in California saw it as a, because of the problems that we had had with them, as a violation of our right to self-determine, you know, issues of concern to our community. So, we kind of decided, the people from California, that we were going to go ahead and we were going to structure our own immigration conference.

(Patino: Uhm-hmm.) To make a long story short, there was a number of meetings in various areas throughout California and we attempted to structure something to no avail. There was just too many different personalities, too many different organizational differences. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) And, but of course there was that whole issue of the San Antonio conference. That's where they had called for the immigration conference. (Patino: Right.) And, it was for October 28, 1977 that they were supposed to have it. Like I said, I'm assuming that the reason that José Angel Gutiérrez went with the SWP was because they had a national type organization. So they, you know, there was great disagreement over that from within the Chicano Movement, their involvement. Okay. So, there was a lot of infighting over that issue. So the, I even forget what the, what the group, what the name was that we took on here in California.

**PATINO:** Of the conference?

**BACA:** Of the organizing effort. I'm reading right here that on October 5, okay, there was a meeting. No. No. No. That's not it. Excuse me. That's something else. But, there's some documentations here regarding the organizing effort, but I don't see any names. But anyway, to make a long story short, the effort kind of fell apart in late October. As a matter of fact I remember, was it late October or before that? No, before that. Yeah, because I remember, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) there was a final meeting, there was a final meeting in, I think in Blythe, like around July or August, and I remember it was like 118 degrees and there were a few individuals that were still trying to kind of keep the thing going. (Patino: Uh huh.) And, I remember this individual from L.A., there was a lot of disagreements over objectives, and tactics, and strategy, and over the infighting that what was going on. This one individual says, "Companero -- oh, to hell with this." And he says, "I'm leaving." [Laughter] And, everybody was like at the end of the rope and says, "Yeah, you know, it's a done deal." So.

**PATINO:** And this was an attempt to organize a . . .

**BACA:** That was the California or the original concept that we had agreed upon in probably April, June, somewhere around there, of 1977, (Patino: Uh huh.) that led to the immigration conference in San Antonio.

**PATINO:** Okay.

**BACA:** So, I guess everybody went back to home base and the, we're still fighting the Carter Immigration Plan locally, and media wise, what have you. And, I remember on October 14, 1977, or the following day, getting up and reading the newspaper that there had been a confrontation at the San Ysidro/Tijuana border by, I forget what this group was. But there was, there had been a confrontational rock throwing over the issue of the INS giving David Duke, Grand Dragon of the [shuffling papers] – yup – Grand Dragon.

**PATINO:** *Klansman Hit?*

**BACA:** Yup. So . . .

**PATINO:** *By Rocks?*

**BACA:** So, it's October 17<sup>th</sup>. So, it had to be, (Patino: Uh huh.) yeah, the fourteenth. And, they had given a grand tour by the INS (Patino: Uh huh.) of the border regarding the . . .

**PATINO:** The facilities and the . . .

**BACA:** Yeah, well really, it was to, for them to make statements against, you know, the undocumented, the undocumented so-called "illegals" and that they, and to announce that they were going to patrol the U.S./Mexico border. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) But, like I said this group might have had good intentions, but they were not from the community (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) and they were not the group that had been dealing with the immigration issue since the early '70s. So people, of course, started calling about this outrageous tour and the political implications for the whole immigration issue, that these guys were coming down and basically, you know, confronting and trying to do what they had done to blacks in the South to Mexicanos.

**PATINO:** David Duke says here, "The rising flow of color is washing over our border, washing away our culture, our racial fabric, and changing America as we know it." [Laugh]

**BACA:** As a matter of fact there was protestors, were Vets against, Vietnam Vets Against the War, the National United Workers, Revolutionary Student Brigade, and the Committee Against Racism.

**PATINO:** I see.

**BACA:** So, you know.

**PATINO:** Students.

**BACA:** Obviously we weren't going to allow them to (Patino: Right.) do what we had told the SWP, the Social Workers Party, that they, we're not going to do it which would violate our right to self-determination on an issue that affected our people. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) So, the CCR once again was thrust into the issue and as you can see by the documentation present here there was great concern nationally over (Patino: Right.) the announcement, you know. There's correspondence there from Lieutenant Governor Merv Dymally, Tom Hayden, and national organizations, black, Jewish, organizations that all had, had had negative experiences dealing with this racist organization. So, a press conference was held, you know, somewhere between by the 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> of October. I mean, I'm seeing here that it says, the article says that it was the 17<sup>th</sup>, so I'm assuming that this happened either on the 16<sup>th</sup>, on October 16, 1977. (Patino: Right.) And, so we called for a press conference at the old Chicano Federation building in Chicano Park and our basic position was that any kind of action carried out by this group or other extreme racist terrorist groups would be met with an in-kind response (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) from our community, from the organizations in our community. So, that was our basic position. And out of that, out of the press conference we decided that this was but a, this tour, this action, this seed being trying to plant, being planted by this right-wing racist, terrorist type groups was the result of the policy that, of trying to continue the manipulation of and exploitation of cheap Mexican labor. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) That was affecting our communities, our efforts to franchise. So, we decided we were going to confront that. So, we called for a march. Now, you're talking about probably the 18<sup>th</sup>, October 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>. That was held March 28<sup>th</sup>, (Patino: Okay.) which was ironically the same day that the San Antonio Immigration Conference (Patino: Yeah.) was to take place. (Patino: Okay.) So, ironically everything started, the political attention because of

this highlighted emotional issue shifted from, from within the Chicano Movement, from San Antonio to San Diego.

**PATINO:** San Diego? Yeah. And the March wasn't only in response to the KKK, but for the larger plan, (Baca: Yeah.) Carter Immigration Plan?

**BACA:** Well we, remember the context. (Patino: Uh huh.) Black groups responded. African-American groups. Jewish groups. So, it was a broad base. It wasn't just the Chicano Movement, even though CCR was leading the effort, (Patino: Right.) and, even though it primarily, the immigration issue was affecting Chicano-Mexicano community. So, if you look in the documentation it's, there's a name for the march and it wasn't CCR. It was Coalition, or – I even forget, (Patino: Right.) you know. But . . .

**PATINO:** Was it Coalition?

**BACA:** Yeah. But, so we decided to call a march and there was massive, and I do mean, that's the most massive news coverage that I've seen, that I had seen up to that day and probably up to the present, as far as my personal involvement and CCR's involvement. The media was calling from Japan, from Brazil, [Laugh] from Germany, (Patino: Uh huh.) from Mexico. Extensive, I mean, interest in the Mexican media, which ironically gave, established a lot of the context with the national Mexican media that we utilized after the issue. (Patino: Right.) You know, the context that came out of that. Some of the reporters I got to know, you know, on a first-name basis. And so, there was extensive media coverage. There was intensive community concern, you know, in the various communities. So, we decided to have the march and like I said we probably had, what, ten days, (Patino: Right.) eighteenth? Yeah. Ten days to organize it. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) And, people started calling in. We started sending out information. And, organizational, I remember, I remember Corky Gonzalez calling and stating that, you know, that

if we needed assistance and we needed help, and if it would be okay for him to come down, which I said, "It would be a great honor if you came down." So, that established our political relationship, you know, with the crusade, (Patino: Right.) something we had just had, you know, correspondence communications with, you know. It hadn't been on a political personal type level. So, the 29<sup>th</sup> came and I remember, you can take whosoever's figures you were, you want, but, you know, there was, in my estimation five, ten thousand people that came out to march. And like I said, a broad, a broad segment of the community representing various elements in the community, you know. There was professional people. There was organizational heads from the Black Community, from the Asian Community, from the Jewish Community, the students.

**PATINO:** Do you remember . . .

**BACA:** Indian people.

**PATINO:** Some of the organizations from the African-American community there?

**BACA:** I know NIA was there, Dr. Ron Karenga's organization.

**PATINO:** Okay. Right.

**BACA:** There was, who else? Black Federation, I remember Vernon Sukumu, and Greg Akili, and Kenneth Msemaji. People came out from the political institutions. There was, there was, I remember then-city councilman Leon Williams from the African-American community. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) Jess Otto that was the city council person from the city council district. People from the religious community, you know, preachers and others. So, it was a broad-based type of a march, you know. From our community, like I said, there was Corky Gonzalez or Rudy Acuña. There was Dr. Navarro, there was Bert Corona, there was Raul Ruiz, there was Abe Tapia. So, I remember after the press conference that, like I said there was extensive interest and extensive media coverage, you know. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) And since we had decided to go

ahead and have this march, you know, I was getting up at four or five a.m. in the morning and working until ten, eleven o'clock at night, you know, on the march, and dealing with the media and what have you. And, I remember one morning, you know, right after the press conference, you're probably talking about the 20<sup>th</sup>, October 20, somewhere around there, my wife called me up and, you know, when I left in the morning and it was, of course, dark, and her telling me that they had graffitied our house, the front of our house, which I was unaware of when leaving at four o'clock in the morning. And, I said, "What do you mean they graffitied our house? Who graffitied our house?" And, it was the usual, you know, the usual racist scrawling, you know, "Wetback," "Go back to Mexico."

**PATINO:** There's, (Baca: Yeah.) I'm sure you got hate mail too?

**BACA:** Yeah, there was a lot of that.

**PATINO:** This was later in '78. Yeah.

**BACA:** Yeah, I'm sure there's a whole thing on hate mail there somewhere.

**PATINO:** Yeah.

**BACA:** But, so anyway, so that then became another concern, the safety of my family. I remember my children were the ones that found it, my eldest, Nick and Mark. And then them walking to school, which was probably eight blocks away and then telling my wife when they got home that somebody had asked them about where I lived at. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) And so, I decided then that I couldn't be at two places, or be worried about something happening to my family in this intense emotional situation and me having to leave at four and getting home at eleven. (Patino: Right.) So, I had to ask my wife and my kids to, you know, to go to L.A. with their, with my wife's sister. So, basically I had to ship them out, you know. And, after that, you know, the level of concern got, you know, "Hey, these guys want to play, for the organization

these guys want to play hardball? Then, (Patino: Yeah.) you know. They called the song, now we're going to do the dance." So, I remember the guys [Laugh] saying, arming themselves and saying, "Hey, you know, they're not going to do to us what they did to the blacks in the South." you know. [Laugh] That's what it came down to, you know. (Patino: Right.) So, I remember, I said, "Okay." And then I remember that security got real intense, you know, a number of people, and then says, "Hey, you know, we're going to stay at the house until this thing blows over." So, there'd be eight, ten guys at the house at night. And then, I remember them marching around the back yard and going up and down the alley with rifles, you know. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) And, after two or three nights of that I remember somebody saying, "You know what man? Getting up at four and getting home at eleven, and then (Patino: Patrolling all night?) patrolling around at night," [Laugh] I said, "You know, we're, hey man the guys are getting tired, man. I mean, they're dead tired." (Patino: Yeah.) So somebody said, "You know what man? Why don't we just get Herman and take him over to this individual's house, who lives in Encanto. Nobody knows where he lives at and everybody can just get a good night's sleep, man." [Laugh] So, "Good idea." "Okay, good idea." So, that happened. And, I remember, like I said, the day of the march was a Saturday. A couple of days before that people started coming in. I remember my compadre, Abe Tapia state president of MAPA coming in and, you know, bringing in some guys from L.A. Other people started coming in. And so, everything was laid out and on Saturday I remember going to the shop, a lot of people, a lot of activity, and then around, I forget exactly what time the march went off but I remember we went down to the airport and we picked up Corky Gonzalez and his guys, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) and to fill them in on what was happening.

**PATINO:** They came in that morning?

**BACA:** Yeah. Came in that morning, Saturday morning, I remember. And, we then talked on the way back to San Ysidro (Patino: Uh huh.) where the people were congregating.

**PATINO:** What was Corky's take? He was, I guess, interested in the immigration issue at the time?

**BACA:** Well, like all other Chicano Movement activists he, he understood, you know, the implications of, historically of the manipulation of an exploitation of Mexican labor, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) and the impact on our efforts, our communities, our rights, and all Mexicanos, you know. So, he pretty well understood more than others that had to kind of be brought along, what the issue represented and what it implied for our people. So, you know, basically we were, Ralph Inzunza used to have an RV. So, I remember we picked him up in the RV. And then on the way back, like I said, to San Ysidro, which is what, nineteen-mile, twenty-mile drive, we just discussed, you know, what we had been doing, you know, what our position was, you know, dealing with the issue here in San Diego, you know. And, you know, when we got over there there was, you know, they parked us there. And if I remember right it was Larson Park, you know. That's where we were at. That's where the march was going to start. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) And, I remember all of the "activists" that had come from out of town and, you know, we all got together in that RV before the march started (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) to discuss, to, you know, to discuss what was going to happen, you know, what had been planned, what we had planned and what have you. And, I remember security coming in and saying, "Okay, it's time to go, you know. So, let's go." So, I remember when I got out of that van I said, "Wow, where did all these people come from?" I remember there was a lot of people. There was a lot of media. And, people were waiting. Security had lined up the crowd so we had to walk from the back towards the front, and I remember, you know, people coming up and people, you know, very

enthused and very concerned about, you know, what was happening, the implications that this racist, this organization with its racist history of oppressing and brutalizing the black community, you know, thought that they were going to come down here and do the same thing to the Mexicanos, you know. [Laugh] Which, most people said, "No way. No how." So, I remember the march taking off, and like I said there was a lot of people. A lot of people. A lot of media. I remember the media, man. Security just had a, because we were walking. And, I don't know if there's a newsletter there, but that famous picture where everybody is in there, you know.

**PATINO:** Of the press conference?

**BACA:** Well that's, the press conference is one thing, but there was a CCR newsletter. Somebody took a picture and, you know, it shows everyone there, basically, you know. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) Corky, myself, and Bert Corona, (Patino: Abe Tapia?) Tapia, and (Patino: Navarro and Raul Ruiz. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) You know. So, I remember that we went over the bridge, I mean, and you know that's INS and Customs office. And, there was great concern that there was going to be problems, you know. And, I remember some of the business people that were involved (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) with the Ad Hoc Committee, had been involved with the Ad Hoc Committee before, you know, setting up meetings saying, I guess trying to take the edge off. [Laugh] You know, donating and contributing money. But, you know, so they, you know, "We can't have this and we can't have that," and you know, you know, that sort of thing in other words. "Cool it down, man." you know. And my thing was, was, you know, "Hey, you know what man? We're going to do what we got to do, but we're going to decide what we're going to do, you know? Nobody's going to tell us what to do." That was the whole essence of self-determination. (Patino: Right.) So I guess, I guess they had great concerns that there was going to be violence, but we always had good security. (Patino: Right.) We always had good security,

and people understood. "If you're going to come to a CCR function you're going to do what CCR says," you know. "This is not your function. [Laugh] It was a CCR function," (Patino: Right.) and, you know, "We have a responsibility to the people that we have invited here. We have a responsibility to our community that nobody gets hurt," and what have you.

**PATINO:** The Committee Against Racism?

**BACA:** Yeah, this, you know, this was some of the – so, it was on October 16<sup>th</sup>, okay, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) according to this flier, here that he got that, which from what I remember was a Sunday, you know. (Patino: Right.) And so, you know, but on the other hand we weren't going to allow people to dictate or [Laugh] motivate, or affect, or dictate our agenda. (Patino: Right.) So, I remember being told that those windows – have you ever crossed the bridge from the east side of the freeway to the west side where you go into . . .

**END SIDE 1, TAPE 7. SESSION 5.**

**BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 7. SESSION 5.**

**PATINO:** Uhm-hmm.

**BACA:** And up stairs there's offices and there's a lot of windows, big 4 x 8 I guess type windows. (Patino: Right.) So, you know, I said, "Don't worry about it." [Tape paused] There was an individual that I, who I may or may not have spoken to about, Mario Cantu. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) Mario Cantu was from San Antonio. (Patino: Right.) And, so Mario Cantu, for some reason, had this deep, deep hatred for the PRI. And, as a matter of fact, I told you that Mario Cantu, the president, Luis Echevarria at San Antonio, at the World Trade Fair, after Mario had printed up the presidential photo on the newspaper, you know, for the, there was a, from what I remember, a breakfast that had been given to him by Chicanos like José Angel Gutierrez, and (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) I remember Reies López Tijerina was there, and other, other people

from our community had given him a breakfast, you know. And, Mario had printed up this newspaper and the kids were handing it out and oh it had the official presidential photo, and when you opened it up there was the massacre of the students, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) '68. So, Echeverria, when he came out, bolted from the security and ran across the street where Mario was picketing him and attempted to physically kick him, and that photo was on AP, Associated Press photo, that went all around the world. [Laugh] So, and Mario had gunrunning charges against him that, by the Mexican, by the police, by the Mexican government. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) So, I remember Mario had come down, was one of the individuals that – I knew of Mario. He had been in Casa since the '70s, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) but I had never met him. And, he had called up too and said, hey, you know, if he could come down." I said, "You're more than welcome." But, I remember him saying, when we were by the border, "Let's cross the line, man. Let's cross the line." I said, "Nope. Nope. You know, you're dealing with an organization here. You're dealing with an agenda, a plan that's already been formulated." And, I remember Corky saying, "Hey Mario, this is not your, this is not your march, you know." And, you know.

**PATINO:** He wanted to cross the . . .

**BACA:** Yeah. The international border (Patino: Right.) to dramatize, you know, make a statement I guess. (Patino: Hmm.) And I said, "No." I says, "You know, this is just not a march for today. It's some, you know, it's a marathon type of an issue, type effort." So, I remember the noise always, because you had to come down those steps, or those, down to get to the west side of the freeway. And, I remember security, man, security lined up people all along those windows and (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) there's no problems. But, I remember being on the west side and that's when security stopped us so the people could bunch up and we could all walk in, into, back into Larson Field. And, or Larson Park, and I remember just sitting there.

We were talking, you know, Corky, Armando Navarro, Bert Corona, and myself. We were just lollygagging, just waiting for the crowd to bunch up so we could keep on walking. And, I remember Corky asked, no, Armando Navarro asking Corky, I think that's the way it went, "Hey, Corky, how many people do you think are here today?" Corky responding, "Oh, there's got to be at least 5,000." And then Corky turned to Armando, "How many do you think are here?" And, Armando said, "Oh man, there's got to be at least 10,000 man. Look at that line." So then both of them turned to me and saying, "Hey Herman, how many people you think are here?" I said, "Hey man, there's got to be at least fifteen to twenty thousand. You can't even see the end of the line." [Laugh] So all three of us then turn to Bert Corona, who was of course the elder of all of us, and said, "Hey Bert, how many people you think are here?" He says, "Ah," he says, "we're all lying. How about 50,000, huh?" [Laughter] So, we got a little chuckle of that, you know, kind of breaks up the air. Then, you know, we went back and, of course, I remember we went back into the RV and then, which served as a speaker point, you know, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) where people can get a drink of water and what have you. And, I remember Chunky, Chunky playing, and (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) I think the MC was, I forget who the MCs were, and but I remember Father Hurtado being up there, the photos, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) introducing people and what have you. And, everybody gave their speeches, you know, which basically was that this was a, that this, with this right-wing involvement, this racist, this terrorist involvement with like groups like the KKK was because of the Carter Immigration Plan. That was the objective, political objective that we were trying to communicate, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.), you know. "The hell with the Klan," you know. I mean, the Border Patrol, like Corky I think pointed out in his speech, was to the Mexican people what the Klan was to black people. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) And so, it was an attack. It was an attack on our political, a response to the Carter Immigration

Plan and all the similar policies that, you know, had continued the manipulation of the immigration policy to exploit Mexican labor. So, after that I remember we went over to Ralph Inzunza home where – there's some photos here where you see Bert, Abe, Mario Cantu, some local people, Corky, myself in those photos. You know, we just kicked back and, you know, just talked about the issues and what have you. And, I remember that after the Klan march the immigration issue really started to, the interest really started to increase. Before I get off that, don't forget that the day that we had the march against the KKK Carter Immigration Plan, that San Antonio also had their conference. And, from what I recall from reading there was also a thousand people there. (Patino: Right.) So, that shows you the great interest that the immigration issue was generating. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) You know, like I said from when I got involved in the early '70s, to that point, I mean, '70, the early '70s, it was a little ant hill of an issue and now it's becoming a Mt. Everest of an issue, a national issue, an international issue really.

**PATINO:** Why do you think that was? Just because of the . . .

**BACA:** You know what? That's interesting. Why it took center stage, you know, in so many areas. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) I don't know if it was because of the increase of population. I don't know if it was (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) because of, and consequently the need for more labor. (Patino: Right.) I don't know whether it was because of our increasing the numbers and political awareness in our community. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) I don't know, but it became an issue that, like a black hole that started pulling in everyone, (Patino: Right.) from the left to the right, from political institutions like the Congress, Supreme Court, the educational institutions, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) the churches. There was a lot of activism around the immigration issue by the churches. I remember attending numerous conferences. You know, Bishop Flores in San

Antonio. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) Yeah, I remember they had a big, big immigration conference themselves. And the reasons, whatever the reasons were, the exploding population in Mexico, the economic situation in Mexico, the policy, military policies in Guatemala, you know. (Patino: Right.) Whatever the reasons were it started to increase. And, like I was telling you before, Lionel Castillo became kind of the point man and, you know, he was in an unwinnable position, or, you know, for the simple fact that, you know, he, [Laugh] if he was of Mexican ancestry, and number two he was carrying the dirty water of those that had manipulated and exploited cheap Mexican labor and were, you know, and he was leading an organization that was, had a historical record of brutalizing persons of Mexican ancestry.

**PATINO:** So, to hire him was a political move?

**BACA:** It was a political move to try to, I think, dampen, and to try to (Patino: Uh huh.) find acceptance or approval of, for the Carter Immigration Plan. But, as history has shown it didn't work. I remember, Lionel Castillo he got the brunt. Lionel Castillo went from Lionel Castillo to "Coyote Castillo." (Patino: Yeah.) And, I remember the, we mercilessly picketed that guy everywhere. Here. We picketed him in New York. I remember a conference, he was there. I think Houston or San Antonio, I forget, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) in Texas. But I remember, wherever we would go, because we labeled him "coyote," a smuggler, the head of the biggest smuggling organization in the world of Mexican labor, and we would picket him, and we would start yelling, and we'd start howling like coyotes. [Howling] [Laugh] I remember here at the, in Mission Valley one time we were, he was inside this, talking to some group or something and were outside and we were howling, you know. [Howling] And I remember this little white lady coming up and saying, "Why are you guys howling? Is there a dog conference going on or something?" [Laugh] So, I remember some of the guys from D.C. telling me that they used to

meet with the attorney general, Griffin Bell, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) and the Mexican-Americans, okay. They would meet with him and, you know, debrief or whatever. And then one time, you know, Lionel came in late, you know, like five or ten minutes late, and all the Chicanos started going [Howling]. [Laugh] "Shut up. Shut up." [Laughter] So, I remember one time here also regarding the Carter Immigration Plan, like I said Griffin Bell, Attorney General Griffin Bell was the U.S. attorney general. And, Bell came down to San Diego like so many other politicians came down and visited the infamous soccer field. The infamous soccer field was where people from Mexico used to congregate (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) and then cross, cross the border, you know, and it was like a festive kind of place. [Laugh] It was all kinds of places, depending on how you want to describe it, but people used to sell tacos down there, you know, mercado type stuff, and you know, people would take off, you know, they had reports of violence, you know, depending on who, who wanted to define it. But, everybody used to visit the infamous soccer field. All the politicians would make their proclamations and statements and what have you from down there. So, Griffin Bell came down and we picketed him and then, you know, I don't know how it came about but I don't remember meeting him here. But, a meeting was set up with him in Washington D.C. to discuss the immigration issue, or more specifically the objections to the Carter Immigration Plan. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) So, I remember once again I think Alberto Garcia, Peter Schey, Carlos Vasquez, Ralph Inzunza went at one time, probably Tim Barker. We went to D.C. to meet with him. I remember we had a press conference here at Lindbergh Field, and then we journeyed on to D.C. And they, they had given us ten minutes. Okay. So anyway, Griffin Bell was from -- where was Carter from? From Alabama?

**PATINO:** Georgia.

**BACA:** Georgia. So, he was one of those country good old boys. I mean, this guy's accent was like if you're listening to the Dukes of Hazzard, [Laugh] you know, the program? (Patino: Yeah.) Southern. (Patino: Oh yeah.) Southern drawl. [Laugh] So, I remember he came in and there were some other individuals. I remember there was Gil Popa from the Justice Department, the Office of Civil Rights. There was several just individuals. And, I remember there was this guy from PASO, which was a counterpart in Texas to MAPA. (Patino: Right.) And, I forget what it stood for, but Political Association, Spanish Association. (Patino: Yeah.) Something. I don't know. But anyway, so he walks in and, you know, we're talking there and I remember him, listening to him for the first time and he says, "Well, how ya'll boys doing today," you know, in that Southern drawl. I said, "Damn," I said, "this guy's, this guy sounds like David Duke, man, you know." [Laugh] And, he says, "You know, shore was glad that you boys could come on down here and visit," you know. And he said, "Well, you know," he says, "I'd like to know what your objections are to the Carter Immigration Plan." So, you know, a few people gave little comments, and then I remember this guy from PASO, from Texas, that had not been invited, I mean he, one of the guys from the Justice Department, I guess, brought him in. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) He was not part of our group. (Patino: Uh huh.) I remember him saying, "You know, Attorney General Bell," he says, "you know," he says, "you know I'm from Texas and what's going to happen if this bill is drafted into legislation, into law, is it's going to affect a lot of small Mexican restaurants." And, I remember Griffin Bell saying, "You know," he says, "I was down in Texas not too long ago," and he said, you know, "I was visiting one of those Mexican restaurants," talking about it, "and let me tell you," he says, "I really love that chorizo." And for some reason I say, "Yeah, Mr. Bell." I said, "I know a lot of Mexicans that would love to give you the chorizo." [Laugh] And, all the Mexicans started cracking up. And, all the white guys

are going, like, "What's so funny?" you know. [Laugh] So anyway, instead of him being there ten, fifteen minutes like they said he was there for like an hour, you know. So. (Patino: Right.) I remember we made the rounds, you know, afterwards, going to various congress peoples' offices, and (Patino: Uh huh.) you know just kind of expressing our position to them and our opposition. But, I don't know what happened to Lionel Castillo, you know, but I remember that's the way it started, and it started out as Mr. Castillo wound up, ended up Coyote Castillo, you know. [Laugh]

**PATINO:** How does that go from the Klan march to focus on Coyote Castillo?

**BACA:** Well, you know, like I said the whole issue was always the Carter Immigration Plan, or the (Patino: Right.) policy. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) So, after that, of course, we got more, more involved (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) with the immigration issue, you know, nationally and in Mexico, you know. (Patino: Right.) I think in '79 – now you're moving up -- I remember . . . I remember there was a conference in Mexico City. I think it might have been before, it might have been before the Klan march. I'm not too certain. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) Or, it might have been after the Klan march. I remember we got invited and for some reason, you know, I couldn't make it. But, that's the conference where they came out with the bill of rights for the undocumented, which is, you know, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) one of the best bills, more like a proclamation, (Patino: Right.) stating the bill of rights for the undocumented. You know, I always use that as, because that was the one that kind of called, kind of laid it out in terms of labor; workers, (Patino: Right.) and that's what I always used about the amnesty. If, you know, a person is here and he's working and he's paying taxes then he should be allowed to step forward and get his immigration status, adjudicated. As simple as that. (Patino: Right.) If he's not a criminal, or, you know, all the other things that keep a person from, you know, becoming a documented individual, you know,

being a criminal, prostitute, insane, you know, blah, blah, blah. (Patino: Right.) Now, that's immigration. But, the reason he came here is not immigration. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) You know, not for Mexicans, you know.

**PATINO:** And, that bill of rights was drafted in Mexico City?

**BACA:** Yeah. It was drafted in Mexico City and I remember it, I remember that, and then after that I remember, I think it was '79, I got invited to a Culiacán Mexico, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) and Ralph Inzunza, Carlos Vasquez, and José Berrellez and myself, I remember going there. It was a symposium. And, how I got there or how it came about, heaven knows, (Patino: Hmm.) you know. But I remember getting there, and of course by this time I had a media rep, reputation. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) So, I remember we landed there at Culiacán and there's a press conference at the airport, and blah, blah, blah. And really, I had never been to Mexico, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) other than Tijuana, Rosalita, and Ensenada, you know, that, those, (Patino: Right.) those. But, like I said I had a lot of dealings with the Mexican media, (Patino: Right.) especially after '77, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) on a national level.

**PATINO:** What was their take on it?

**BACA:** Their take was that they would cover Herman Baca because Herman Baca would say things that they couldn't say, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) you know. And . . .

**PATINO:** The immigration issue in Mexico how, how did that give you a different dynamic?

**BACA:** Well, you know, it was funny because remember I told you about the Chicano community and the mindset that it was very, very much like the Minutemen?

**PATINO:** Right wing? Yeah.

**BACA:** Right wing?

**PATINO:** Uh huh.

**BACA:** In Mexico, when I first started to go down there, which was around 1971, and when I say "Mexico" I mean Tijuana, (Patino: Right.) the undocumented was used as a "traidor", a traitor. (Patino: Uhm-hmm. Left his country?) That he was leaving his country. And, of course, the declaration was, was, or their take was that, "There was plenty of work," you know. "No problem." (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) I'm not talking about the institution. I'm talking about the general attitude. (Patino: Right. Right.) So, as the issue started, like I said, to percolate . . . there, there was a lot of interest. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) And, of course, some of the issues that I first took down to Tijuana were blatant offenses against persons of Mexican ancestry. The rape of this woman by a border patrolman. (Patino: Right.) The shooting of two handcuffed individuals. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) Babies dying at the border. So, [Laugh] it was a no-brainer, you know, kind of thing where they, they couldn't, they couldn't turn a deaf ear to it. (Patino: Right.) So.

**PATINO:** So, which group's brought you to Culiacán?

**BACA:** You know, you put a gun to my head I don't know. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) Like I said, how it came about and what have you. But, I remember, number one, it was hotter than hell. [Laugh] I mean, it was like in July or August. (Patino: Right.) Like that Blythe meeting, man, it was just hot. And, I don't know, in Culiacán there's a bunch of crickets. That's another thing. You just walk down the street stepping on crickets, left and right. [Laugh] I don't care where you go there's crickets. [Laugh] And I remember, you know, saying, "I have a very low tolerance for academic discussion," [Laugh], you know. It's like somebody's trying to sell something, you know. So, you know, so I've always had a very low tolerance for academic discussions. [Laugh] And, in 116 degrees I'm . . .

**PATINO:** Even less?

**BACA:** And, the colleges over there are a little bit different than the colleges over here.

[Laugh] (Patino: Right.) The colleges over there is you see mariachis running around, you see people selling tacos, and paletas, you know. [Laugh] And, I remember this student stepping outside through the windows, you know. And (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) I remember that the, the symposium was after, it was either Memorial March. Yeah, Memorial March, a Time for Resistance. I think that's what it was. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) And, that was a conference that we had over here at St. Rita's and then we had a march at the border with coffins to dramatize the brutality, the shootings, the deaths of Mexicanos at the border.

**PATINO:** Was that the Carter March?

**BACA:** No, that's . . . .

**PATINO:** This is before that?

**BACA:** That is the Time for Resistance. (Patino: Okay.) That was on that poster. (Patino: Okay.) I think it was the Memorial March, I think. And, it was after that march. And, but I remember, just before I got off of it, now that I'm on it, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) we had the conference and once again it was broad-based. I mean, there was church groups. There was Anglo groups, but predominately-Chicano attendance. And, that night we had a cultural program and Dennis Banks was there, the Indian activist. (Patino: Uh huh.) And, Rudy Acuña, and Corky Gonzalez. Bert Corona was supposed to show and didn't show up. Stood us up. So, the Committee was teed off at him, man. And, but anyway I remember that cultural show that there was, there was, you know, people like Chunky, and big musical groups, okay. There was a teatro. I think it was the Teatro Esperanza, if I'm not mistaken. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) And, I remember they did this skit and it was, you know, it was a cafeteria hall, whatever they had there at St. Rita's, and this was after an all-day workshop, you know, talking from the religious, to the

law enforcement, to brutality, blah, blah, blah type of conference. And, speakers, you know, and in the main auditorium was Corky, myself, and a couple of other people spoke at the general session. But, I remember that night they had that cultural show and, you know, this teatro did this skit, you know, and it was about people crossing the border and this Mexican-American border patrolman and (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) who was real brutal towards his own people. And anyway, the whole gist of the message was was that this border patrolman had come across when he was a young kid, had been separated from his family, or his family had been thrown back across and he wound up with somebody from this side. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) And, the gist of the, the conclusion of the teatro was that the guy had beat up his mother, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) you know.

**PATINO:** Oh, okay.

**BACA:** This old lady that was coming across the border in later years. So, I remember it was very, very emotional and I remember, you know, like, "Wow," you know, "they did a very, very good job." (Patino: Right.) And, the next day, like I said, there was a march at the border with coffins to dramatize the deaths of Mexicanos and the brutality and the violence at the border. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.)

But, back to Culiacán, like I said Bert didn't show up. The Committee was teed off at him for him standing us, the conference up. And for the conference we had some buttons. They were like three-inch orange buttons that said, "Time for Resistance. Communittee on Chicano Rights." you know. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) And, we had a whole bunch of them left over from the conference. So, this individual José Berrellez, who just deceased probably a year ago -- (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) he was older than us, you know he was in, you know, his seventies, you know. A World War II veteran. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) So, he had come in the '70s, you know, being from

the military and what have you, you know. He was taking a Chicano Studies class at Southwestern. So, he was always like, and why he took it I never asked him, but he was taking Chicano Studies and he, of course, was in-the-box conditioned type of Mexican-American, you know, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) military. You know, the typical World War II type mentality, you know. So anyway, so his professor told him, "Well, if you think that way why don't you go see it firsthand?" you know, "Since you're talking against what Chicanos are doing." So, he came down and he stayed for the CCR and that was probably the KKK March, huh, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) right before that. And anyway, he was one of the ones that went with us and I remember I had never been on, like I said other than Ensenada and Rosalita and Tijuana I had never been into Mexico. So, we took Aeromexico's airline and I remember that was an experience. [Laugh] Because, everybody was walking around, talking. They're going up there and talk to the pilot. [Laugh] And, you know, everybody drinking. And, like I said I remember José Berrellez and Carlos Vasquez started telling jokes and then everybody started coming around. Everybody was laughing at their jokes. And, they did this like for two hours. One would tell one joke and then the other would tell another joke in Spanish, and they would go back and forth. So everybody's laughing and drinking. I remember, but it was completely different than the airlines here. [Laugh] So, José, we used to call him "Don Pepper" because he had a joke about a Don Pepe. [Laugh] So, we kind of switched it a little bit. We used to call him Don Pepper. "Hey, Don Pepper." And, Don Pepper, we had all these buttons that we took and he took the buttons. So, he was handing them out to everybody and anybody. Taco vendors had this, "Time for Resistance. Committee on Chicano Rights." buttons on. [Laugh] The professors had them. The students. The musicians had them. [Laugh] Everybody had those orange buttons. So, like I told you, the discussions, the symposium was being held at, it was like a basement. You'd have

to go down, like downstairs. So, if it was 116 degrees upstairs you can imagine what it was downstairs. So, I remember, I said, "You know what man?" I says, "I'm getting out of here man." I said, "Call me when it's my turn to talk, you know." So, I remember Don Pepper coming into the room and I'm in there drinking beer, and he comes in and he says, "Hey Herman," he says, "I've been listening to those guys down there and," you know, he says -- what do they call them? I don't know what they call those sort of discussions. It's a plenary session. Polemics.

**PATINO:** Polemics?

**BACA:** Yeah, the polemics. He said, "Hey those guys are giving polemic," or whatever it was in Spanish. He says, I said, "What the hell's that?" He says, "Oh, you know, giving position papers under various subjects concerning the undocumented," you know, "like health, like unionizing, like, you know, workers rights, you know, education, man." He says, "They've got all these papers and what have you?" I said, "Is that right?" I says, "Yeah," he said. He said, "I guess that's what they're expecting from you," you know. And me, I was just going to give my usual rap, you know, about (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) the manipulation, the exploitation, the Gestapo Border Patrol, you know, and our history. "There's been two agencies who only job has been to keep us in our place." I said, "One we're very familiar with, the Texas Rangers, and," you know, "since 1924 that's gone on to the . . ." you know. That was my usual rap. So, I said, "Man," I said, "What am I going to talk about man?" I said – so I remember him telling me, he said, "You know what?" he says, "They're all talking about the unionizing, the education, health, and all this and that." He says, "But you know what?" He says, "Before the undocumented can be unionized, or his health or education taken care of, he first has to cross the border, alive." (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) I said, "Hey, that's a good point man." I said, "Violence" because we,

because that's what the conference is about. He said, "Talk about the violence." (Patino: Uh huh.) So, I remember going down. I gave my little wrap. But, I remember Don Pepper and he was down there talking to some taco vendors or students and passing out the little buttons, right. So, he's telling me this story about this professor, I guess, from the university comes up to him and the students and says, "You know what?" He said, "Ese palabra Chicano. Es una palabra my baja aqui en Mexico." you know. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) And, he said, "Yeah. The word 'Chicano' is a very, very low-class word here in Mexico," and you know all the students are listening and the taco vendors, and Don Pepper was very articulate in Spanish and he turns around and tells him, he says, "Well," he said, "you know what?" He says, "You know the history of Mexico and the Aztecas?" "Oh yeah. Oh, of course I do, you know." He says, "They're our ancestors." (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) He said, "Well, you know the history when they came into the Valley of Mexico," he said, "they put them over there in that lagoon," he said, "because they thought the rattlesnakes were going to finish them off," he said, "they were so low." He said, "But unbeknownst to the other Indian tribes, the Aztecs relish rattlesnake meat and, you know, [Laugh] they survived." (Patino: Right.) He said, "But they were the lowest of the low. They were mercenaries." And, the professor said, "Yeah, but look how, to what great lengths they went to, you know? They became the conquerors of all the Indian tribes in Mexico." And, he says, "Well," and Don Peppers says, "You know what?" He says, "Well, you keep an eye on us. The Chicano's going to do the same thing, and probably even higher, huh?" So, all the students started laughing, you know, and the taco vendors, and the professor takes off, you know. [Laugh] But, they all had the little orange buttons, you know.

So, I remember when I went to give my polemic, my dissertation, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) I walked in and the whole room, I mean there must have been like a hundred people, right, in this

basement, the whole room has those orange buttons. And, I look up and Bert Corona was there.

[Laugh] Guess who had an orange button? Bert. [Laughter] The one that stood us up. I started laughing. I said, "That is a true politician, man." [Laughter] "I was with you all the way."

**PATINO:** "I got the button to prove it." [Laugh]

**BACA:** Yeah. [Laughter] So, yeah, so the issue started, you know, lot of interest in Mexico. I remember my dad one time, he didn't tell me, you know, but he was talking to a friend, a common friend of ours at a party, and I'm listening to the conversation about my mother and father went on a tour to Mexico. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) And, with a group of people. So, they're going around this village somewhere out there, and heaven knows where at, in Mexico. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) So my dad, my dad was the type of, a very friendly type, outgoing type of individual and he would talk to everybody and anybody, you know. So, I guess he's talking to this individual in this village. So, you know, he tells him what his name is. He said, you know, "My name's Nick Baca." And, my dad's telling this individual at this family party, you know, that I'm listening to both of them, that the guy says, "Hey, are you related to that Herman Baca?" My dad goes, "What?" He said, "I didn't even know where I was at." He says, "Yeah, that's my son." [Laugh] So, you know, it's, like I said I used to get a lot of publicity or a lot of media coverage in Mexico, and one of the reasons was, was the racist *San Diego Union* down here would do everything to manipulate it, not cover (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) our positions, or our issues, or our perspective. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) So, we figured out that if you send something to Mexico City, then Mexico City would telefax it to Washington D.C., [Laugh] and then from Washington D.C. it would go all over the United States. (Patino: Right. Right. Right.) Well, we figured that, "Hey, that the *San Diego Union* is saying, 'Hey, this is . . .'" Because, what would happen was reporters from all over the world would stop by the *San Diego Union* and say,

"Hey, where can we find this guy at, you know, because, we're here on the immigration issue?"

(Patino: Right.) I mean, go look at my little, where I had my index cards at the shop. I mean, those people, there's reporters from Japan, Brazil, from (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) Germany, from Spain, from France, from -- phew. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) You know, so that was the kind of interest that the issue was generating. So, they would stop by. There would be like a little route that everybody would take. They would first check in with the INS, who would give them their spin, then they would give them a little tour. Depending on how important you were, if you were important you would get the helicopter tour and it would show, "Look at all this violence, and they're violating our border," all that, their little spin. Right? Or, they would give you the jeep tour, you know, and (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) show, "Hey, the way they throw rocks at us. And, you know, "They're over there getting ready for, you know, to come across at night." And, you know, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) you know, whatever spin. Then after that they'd look for the alternative point of view and they'd come over to the shop. So, I would always tell the reporters, I said, "Did you get your tour?" They'd say, "How did you know?" [Laugh] I said, "That's what they do," I said, "try to brainwash you before they, you come over here." So, that would start the discussion. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) "Well, you know, what's your position?" "Well, you know, well our position is, is that," and I'd tear into the Border Patrol first about, besides the Texas Rangers of 1924, you know, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) there's only been two agencies, and, which is the Texas Rangers and the Border Patrol's only job has been to keep Mexicans in their place, from enjoying the same rights, or working conditions, or wages as the majority of society. I said, "You don't believe me?" I says, "You know, every year they supposedly deport," which is really an administrative remedy, "a million Mexicans." And, I said, "Ninety-eight percent of the so-called undocumented." And I says, "And you know what," I says, "if you look at the history of

the Border Patrol," I said, "that's the most incompetent agency you'll ever find." I said, "Because you know why? Because they have never ever, in their whole history, stopped one Mexican from crossing that border. Oh, they might have delayed him. They might have arrested him," I says, "but after the sixteenth or seventeenth try the guy got across." [Laugh] I said, "Unless they killed him." That's the only time that they've ever stopped anyone. Anyway, so they would get this perspective, you know, "Hey, you know." So, I remember when the issue first started, the PR section of the Border Patrol we'd make mincemeat out of them, you know, as far as public relations. (Patino: Right.) As far as the spin, you know. They were always Gestapo, you know, the Border Patrol. You know, there's a bunch of Mexicanos in the Border Patrol, (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) but those, those were the Judases that sold out their people for thirty pieces of silver. Oh, they would get teed off, you know. [Laugh] But, you know, so later on they started getting PR savvy.

**PATINO:** Right. Right. To respond?

**BACA:** Yeah. But before that, at the press conferences and with the media, the interviews, we made mincemeat out of those guys, you know. [Laugh] One time they were going to sue me for slander and, you know, one of the Border Patrol's wives said that their children were ashamed to tell their friends that their father was a Border Patrolman, because of Herman Baca. [Laughter] So, but that was Culiacán, and that was Mexico, and that was the Carter Immigration Plan. It really became an issue that, like I said, like a black hole that just engulfed everyone. You know, the Pope started (Patino: Right.) making declarations and proclamations about the rights of the undocumented, the treatment of the undocumented. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) The Supreme Court, the Congress, the president, the churches.

**PATINO:** And, at least for a while they were debating it in Congress?

**BACA:** Yeah. And all the while, just like right now, (Patino: Right. Right.) "What is the solution?"

**PATINO:** It drags on and on?

**BACA:** You know. It not only drags out in the institutions in general U.S. society, but also in our own community, as you have seen. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) There's a great misunderstanding of what the definition of the issue is. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) And, you can't have a solution to a problem unless you know what the problem is. (Patino: Right.) And, of course, when you come from a disenfranchised community like our community, the only definitions you get are from rags like the *San Diego Union*, or the T.V. stations, the Anglo-dominated media. (Patino: Uhm-hmm.) So, you know, when you hear Mexicanos talk . . . .

**END SIDE 2, TAPE 7. SESSION 5.**

**END INTERVIEW.**