

## Herman Gallegos

### TAPE 70, CR 93, SR 45, TC 12:00:00

12:00:09 Herman, we're going to focus on the period in the late '40' and early '50's, set the scene?

12:00:21 Yes, uh, I'd like to say that I started the movement in 1952 when I became involved in organizing in a community in East San Jose, called Sal Si Puedes, which means "get out if you can." But I think a lot of us who got involved in the movement, uh, whether in '52, or '62, or whatever, really have to say that we've been part of a continuing struggle. Uh a struggle that was involved, uh, involving our parents, our ancestors, our people in this country, to overcome the devastating impact of economic poverty. Even though we were very rich in culture and values, and family support, nonetheless, discrimination, racism, has taken it's toll on many generations. So, it wasn't that we started in any particular period, but it was really a continuation of where our family ended and we picked up...

12:01:13 ...Now, I was working in a gasoline station in East San Jose, and right near, in, Sal Si Puedes, and I was also going to school at San Jose State University, which was previously called San Jose State College. A brilliant young organizer by the name of Fred W. Ross, who had been organizing in East San Jo- East L.A., talked about the Zoot Suit Riots, the Bloody Christmas incidents, how the CSO, the Community Service Organization, was organized to fight racism and discrimination as well as to develop political empowerment. Fred talked about how Roybal, Ed Roybal,

ran for city council after World War II and lost. But when the voter registration program came into being, elected the, Roybal election that resulted in his being the first City Council person in that city in 70 years. And that was a result of voter registration. So as Fred Ross talked about ways by which communities can empower and organize themselves, it was suggested to Fred that he organize in Sal Si Puedes, and that's how I got involved.

12:02:20 And one of the other people who got involved early on was a guy named Cesar Chavez, and you and he started building what would be a CSO chapter there in San Jose.

12:02:33 Yes, I think we...

12:02:49 About meeting Cesar...

12:02:54 Yes, I mentioned that Fred W. Ross was a brilliant organizer who helped to provide the know-how to those of us who were concerned about improving the well-being of Hispanics in Sal Si Puedes. He was then working with the Industrial Areas Foundation, which was started by the late Saul W. Alinsky, who started in the back of the Arts Council in Chicago, and Alinsky would tell us these stories about how he'd brought together these community groups to help overcome the adversity in those neighborhoods. And so, with support from the American Friends Service Community and other groups, Alinsky was able to piece a budget together, a budget for Fred that allowed him to spend this time in East San Jose. One of the first things he did was to organize house meetings, where we'd have ten

people at a time. They would go to a house, and Fred would stand up and talk about what had happened in East L.A., and talk about a vision of how we could do the same for our communities...

12:03:53 ...That's where I met Cesar, and I remember Cesar living in a very tiny house where Helen and the kids lived. And Cesar had a sofa in the front room and linoleum, no rug, in the front room, and a very tiny kitchen, a big double bed and then lots of cribs. The streets were unpaved, no street lights. Uh, Cesar lived smack in the middle of Sal Si Puedes. Some say Sal Si Puedes got it's name because of economic poverty. Some say because the streets were unpaved, if you didn't get up in the middle of the night you got stuck, and your car wouldn't move. But nonetheless, uh, as part of this organizing period, we did voter registration work...

12:04:33 ...And I remember meeting Cesar for the first time. He was a lumber handler. And he had this warm smile. And he had a gold tooth that always seemed to show up. And he, very expressive eyes. And sometimes he's give away himself by his eyes, a moment of surprise. And other times if he did something, or thought he should have done something, or something happened, he'd say, "golly!" You know that was something, that he would shake his head and say "golly." But in our first meeting I think he had a very deep-rooted suspicion of middle class. I was one of the few folks who had a college degree, and I hid that as much as I could. Uh, primarily because I think Alinsky and the organizers taught that people who are affected by problems should be the ones helped to organize and be empowered to change this. You couldn't have middle class social workers going into the barrio to assume the leadership role in place of the people

affected. And ironically I was just a very young man with a young, new college degree, 22 years old, and Cesar was a few years older, and very inexperienced...

12:05:49 ...And I remember the first time we got together to practice our speeches, we were nominating, I was nominated president, Cesar first vice-president of the new Sal Si Puedes CSO chapter. We went over to my house, we stayed up till three o'clock at night practicing. I was practicing my Spanish, Cesar was practicing his English. And finally I said, "Cesar, we just can't go on all night, let's just say what we have to say." The next night the auditorium was filled with about 500 people. Jose...Alvarado, who was a radio announcer, and his candidate was Joe Flores from Robert Hall Clothiers, announced the fact that new leadership was going to come into being, and they nominated a slate of officers that were very well known. I got up and made my speech, I got my nomination of Cesar and we won....

12:06:35 ...And after that, we were so happy and surprised. And Fred Ross said, "well, why are you surprised?" We said cause we'd never run for office and certainly the speeches on the other side were better. And Fred very calmly said, "yeah, but who's been doing the work, the voter registration work for the last six weeks, who's been going door to door? Don't you think the people really know who the workers are?" So I think that was a very important organizing principle that Cesar and I learned. That you really didn't have to promote yourself. That it was by doing the work that the people really developed the confidence in you. And I think that was an important lesson for us.

12:07:12 Helen's influence on Cesar?

12:07:28 I think the hardest thing for anyone involved in the movement is being away from home, the sacrifices you make when you have very little money, and you put it into the car to drive people around to get registered. Cesar was a lumbar handler, but not always working on a continuing basis, so he was unemployed a great deal of the time. And there were times when they had very little and yet Cesar continued to persevere. And Helen and Cesar's family, mother and father, brothers and sister, Rita, brother-in-law, all were very supportive of him. And Helen, particularly, really stands out. I remember one year, when we were registering voters and it was getting on to dusk, and we ran across a preacher from a church...

12:08:23 That story again?

12:08:26 I think one of the early examples that I witnessed that showed what kind of a strong support system Cesar had from his family, but particularly from Helen Chavez, happened one Christmas Eve, some years ago, around 1952, when we had been out doing some community work, and it was getting on to dusk and it was about time for us to return to our homes. And one of the ministers from a local church spotted us and asked us if we wouldn't mind distributing a few Christmas boxes of food to people. These boxes were left over and thought that we might know someone. We said sure, we'd be happy to do that, although we're not in the giving game, that is of Christmas baskets. But we said we'd help out...

12:09:14 So we went to one home and um, they took the box, eagerly, went to several other homes, and either no one was home, or they had

already had a box, and so time was getting on, and I felt the pressure to get home, it was Christmas Eve. And, so I drove to Cesar, and we were still talking about who should be given this box. We pulled up in front of Cesar's home, very tiny little home, very modest home, and uh, so I said to Cesar, I said, "I know, you take it, I mean you're not working, and it's Christmas Eve, and I'm sure you could use it." He said, "No, no, no, I can't take it." I said, "Cesar, look, uh, I know you haven't been working, I know you can use the food. It's not that much anyway, besides, you know, Helen can use it."...

12:10:04 ...So we went inside still arguing about this. And Helen was, this was Christmas Eve, there was no Christmas tree, no turkey, no pies, it was Helen invited me to have a bean burrito. I said, "yeah, sure, but I've got to get going home." And I looked around, I said, "Helen, you know we have a box of food there and I really think you should take it. Cesar doesn't want to take it." Helen smiled at me and looked at me and looked at Cesar, says, "you know Cesar." And I said, "but you've got to." And so Cesar and I resumed the discussion, and he says "look, you know I can't take it, and you know why." And I thought about it. And he said, "and you would too, you wouldn't take it." And then I remembered, I said, "you know, you're right Cesar, even though I would be the only one who would know that you had taken the basket, you would always feel uncomfortable, that somehow, others, or I would know, that we had taken something that maybe should have gone to someone else, more needier." [PIC ROLL OFF] And I said, "you know, you're right Cesar, let me go over to la Signora (??), who does a lot of door to door work with her church, and let me give it to her." And that's what we did.

## **CR 94, SR 45**

12:11:23 Herman, story of Cesar's kid who was sick?

12:11:40 In 1955, CSO became a national organization, I was elected first vice, and subsequently became president, and Cesar became the executive director. And we had our offices in Los Angeles, and Cesar was working out of the L.A office, and I would try to get there on weekends at least or whenever I could to see him. One evening we were had to talk strategy and we had to go to a meeting, and Cesar, I asked him as usual, how's Helen and the kids? And he was telling me about one of his daughter's who was going to have surgery, and I said "when?" And he said, "well, tonight." I said, "Cesar, don't you think you should be there?" He said, "we really have to do this." I said, "but, Cesar, don't you think this is more important?" He said, "it is more important, but on the other hand, I've got to do this." I mean, this was an incredible commitment to community that some people may never know.

12:12:41 Let's go back earlier. Ernesto Galarza?

12:12:53 If we look at the forties and the fifties and up to the sixties, this was not a time of great compassion for farmworkers or for social justice. Certainly in '62 with the new frontier, and the various initiatives that Kennedy and Johnson placed on equal opportunity, that there was change. But in the forties and fifties Ernesto Galarza was unsuccessful in organizing a national farmworkers organization simply because organized labor wasn't

there, there wasn't the commitment of the Congress, there wasn't the re-, there weren't the resources there...

12:13:29 ...And we found that Ernesto had a difficult time in getting materials published, his books on spiders in the house, and about agribusiness, were uh, very hard to get published in those times. It was very, very sad that a person, a genius of a Galarza was not able to get read and published as easily as he would, because it was Ernesto who talked about the evils of the agribusiness. He talked about the system of the, of the bracero system, which led up later to defeat the bracero program, based on Galarza's analysis...

12:14:08 One of the groups that was most helpful to Cesar and to all of us in that early point in the movement was a group of young men, priests, organized into what is called a Mission Band. When I first heard, I thought that was an orchestra. But it was a band of priests who got together to provide advocacy in Mexican-American communities in the rural valleys of California. Unfortunately they, uh, picketed once too often, and particularly with the lettuce strike in the Imperial Valley, and they were subsequently disbanded by their archbishop. But it was to Father Don McCullough, Tom McCullough, Don McDonald, John Duggan, Ronald Burke, Jerry Garcia, John Garcia, Father John Garcia, that really were helpful in tempering Cesar's views about how to approach organizing the farmworkers. It was these men who provided the mentoring and the tutoring that helped Cesar to understand very clearly what had to be done in order to organize.



12:15:12 People who believed in the social role of the church? Or a profound religious...?

I would say both but primarily the...

I need a whole sentence...

12:15:28 The Mission Band had both a religious and a social influence on Cesar. First, in terms of the understanding about the problems of agribusiness, interpreting the work of Galarza, for example, interpreting the role of the encyclicals, which were not purely religious terms. I remember, though, on the social stuff, I don't know how much we picked up initially. I remember parking in front of Cesar's home any number of evenings with Father Don McDonald, and he would ask us, "do you have your rosaries?" We would say "no." He would pull out some plastic beads, and then he would proceed to lead the rosary. And each decade we would offer up our prayers for the organization to help the poor, farmworkers, and so on. By the end of the first decade of the rosary, Father McDonald was sound asleep, and Cesar and I would be sitting there wondering what came next, and then Father Don would wake up, we'd go on from there...

12:16:28 ...But clearly the religious influence did reach Cesar. And in fact there were some who probably even criticized him when he was having the fast, to wear the symbolism played into the basis of helping to organize. There are some people who don't feel that that should happen. There are others who felt that Cesar was a genius in using political, religious symbolism as a way of attracting people to the organizing process.

12:16:55 And that's particularly appropriate when you're working with Mexican-Americans.

12:16:58 Well it seems to be that we have to be both culturally hospitable. We have to be sensitive to the, the uh, religious temperament of communities. I think, though, to assume that all Hispanic farmworkers are simply Catholic isn't true. I have to say, though, that in the early years the Catholic Church played a very, very important role. In later years, of course, Chris Hartmire and the Protestant denominations were helpful to Cesar. Josephine Duggan from the American Friends Service Committee, the Quakers, the Friends Committee, were very, very helpful to us and to Fred in the early beginnings. So, I would say that in an ecumenical sense there was a great spirit of desire to help the unorganized.

12:17:38 You and Cesar had worked a long time in CSO. In 1962...convention...

12:17:53 It was a very painful time for us. The organization had now clearly moved to the point where there were many folks in the organization felt that we should pay more attention to the increasing numbers in the cities. Certainly 80% of Latinos now living in the urban cities. And the crying needs of unorganized farmworkers who, left to their own devices and to traditional union organizing would never be reached. Cesar's experience in Oxnard, in Ventura County, where our farm labor committee reached something like 1300 members showed that farmworkers could effectively be organized...

12:18:35 ...We thought that perhaps turning this over to Helstein(??) and to the packing-ship workers might succeed in offering institutional union, a base by which to go forward. But they clearly didn't have the internal capability and expertise, or vision, that Cesar did. And by this time there was this tension within the organization between those who felt we should spend more attention to one base of constituent's interests than the other. And I remember in the Imperial Valley, in the, believe it was in Calexico, we were meeting, and uh, Cesar was giving a report, and Maria Duran-Lang, who has past away, got up to speak. And she was criticizing Cesar, and referred to him as just simply as an organizer. And Helen Chavez was sitting to my right and I thought she was going to leap from her chair to the front and smack Maria. But I said, "Helen, let me handle it." So I got up and I defended Cesar...

12:19:32 ...But I think it was at that point, the handwriting was on the wall, and it was at that point that I left the organization as well. And it seems to me that, uh, CSO had served a very important purpose, not the least of which was to empower 44 neighborhoods and communities throughout the state. And if you look back to that era of its legacy, it wasn't just Cesar Chavez, there was Dolores Huerta, there was Cruz Reynoso, there was Gil Padilla, there were people in the labor movement, Tony Rios, and Gil and others, that today, in many instances are still active, uh, in the movement...

12:20:11 ...So as a training ground, and an empowering mechanism, it worked. Clearly we achieved things like helping to increase registration of Latinos. We achieved old age assistance for non-citizens. We dealt with

local neighborhood issues. We dealt, had to deal with the McCarren-Walter Act. We had to deal with McCarthyism and the fright of communism. But clearly now we had moved into a state, a regional and national arena and at this point the organization had that challenge. And Cesar recognized that the organization could not become a farm labor union and was not about to adopt farm labor organizing as its main menu, decided to leave.

12:20:52 From then on as he started to build the union, what he did really affected Mexicans in the cities...

12:21:08 The sixties was a time when all Latinos were trying to provide, or to gain, some visibility on the national scene. Unfortunately people in Congress viewed us as a regional population without realizing that in the Midwest, and right around Washington D.C. there's huge pockets of Hispanics. And yet we were seen simply in terms of a regional people. There was a walkout against the EEOC, in Albuquerque. There were other things that were happening on the Hispanic scene. Uh, part of which was to demonstrate that we were here as a people with specific problems that need to be understood. That unlike the American understanding and grasp of slavery in America, there's very little sense of what was happening to Latinos and Hispanics in the southwest and in the country. And Cesar, through the farmworker movement, through the peregrination, the march from Delano to Sacramento, and the fast, [PIC ROLL OFF] brought national attention to a group called farmworkers and then to this dynamic individual.

**TAPE 71, CR 95, SR 46, TC 12:30:00**

12:30:13 Herman, you were starting to tell me what effect Cesar and the farmworker movement, the peregrinacion, and the fast, had on Chicanos in the cities.

12:30:25 Well first of all we lacked national visibility, Cesar gave it almost international visibility. The other was that, in the cities, there was a sense of frustration that, unless you rioted in the case of Watts or Rochester, that you really didn't get any attention. And there was always this tension between a movement that was headed toward violence and a movement that was going to be non-violent...

12:30:50 ...And at the point, of 1968, when Cesar went on the fast, we felt that this was so helpful to some of us that were involved. I was by that time with, organizing the Council La Raza. And we had a sense of danger, because there was Corky Gonzales and his movement in Colorado, there was the Reyes Giannina (??) incident, there was the situation that was in the Carson City forest, there was the incident, uh, Jose Angel Gutierrez talking about eliminating the gringo. Uh, there were the time of the Black Berets, and the Brown Berets, and so on, and all of that created tensions because there was the push for militancy and a push for organized change....

12:31:37 ...What Cesar added to it was the dimension of non-violence. And I remember in 1968, writing, along with Henry Sante Esteban, a pledge to non-violence in which we warned that violence would destroy far more than it would create, that we should use Cesar's example to, how to demand change, and we would have it, but we should not be trapped into returning violence with violence. So Cesar, I think, within our own community,

presented a voice of reason and consciousness that said, “look, I’m not saying don’t be militant. I’m not saying don’t be pro-active. All I’m saying let’s not kill ourselves in the process of doing this. They may kill us, but let’s not try to match the opposition with guns. And so, this was a very, very valuable lesson to us.

12:32:23 Let’s go back again to the 1950’s, to meeting Cesar, do you remember your first impressions?

Somewhat shy...

I need a whole sentence...

12:32:35 When I first met Cesar, I believe it was at a house meeting that Fred Ross had organized, and remember shaking hands. And, Cesar had a rather anemic handshake. Later, when we got to be good friends, I said to Cesar, “Cesar, you have to change your handshake, your hand is like handing somebody a cold fish.” I said, “what you have to do is to grab their hand, look ‘em in the eye, and shake them.” I said, “You notice, what some of the politicians do, they not only shake you vigorously, but they grab you by the elbow and say good to see you, even if they don’t know your name.” And so, the first handshake was rather anemic....

12:33:13 ...But I do remember Cesar’s smile, his suspicion, as I said, of middle class professionals, and I was certainly, I wasn’t middle class, but at that point I had a college degree, one of the few. But over the years we had fun. And I think that one has to look back at their experience, as Galarza

says, you can't change your history, but you can learn from it. And Galarza's also said that the best kind of history is that in which you've had a part in shaping. And to think that we had a hand in shaping so much of that early part of the movement, with somebody just as great and as noble as Cesar, obviously leaves me with many wonderful memories.

12:33:52 Back to Galarza for a minute. What happened in the thirties and forties?

12:34:06 The problems of organizing any group, whether it be farmworkers, or urban poor in the cities, was in part a factor of the struggle between capitalism and labor. Uh, I'm a product of southern Colorado, where we had the great coal field wars in Ludlo (??), and a struggle between the Colorado Fuel and Iron and the miners, many of whom were killed when they established a tent city and were massacred....

12:34:38 ...And I think the resources for organizing just simply were not there from organized labor. They were more concerned with industrial workers and urban workers per se, in auto, machining, steel. The uh, foundations, the philanthropic community, didn't even know that Latinos existed. There was no outside income of resources to help people to become organized. There was, as I mentioned, very little in terms of national compassion. There was, I remember, in 1952 a Harrison-Williams Study on migrants, at the time I think when Harry Truman was president. We were just delighted and thrilled to know there had been hearings on the problems of farmworkers. There was very, very little done by way of research and information.

12:35:26 In the 30's, aspects of class warfare, the communists were active in the fields.

12:35:36 Class warfare, yes, yes it was. Uh, we had no idea how big and how powerful agribusiness was in those days. How they subverted the use of the Department of Labor to deal with the bracero program to provide a managed care system of workers to work in the fields. Carrie McWilliams tried to expose some of that. Gallarza tried to chronicle that but he couldn't get published. Again, most of the efforts for helping the farmworkers were met brutally and unsuccessfully. this doesn't mean that the organizers were less brilliant or committed, it's just it was not in the cards, uh, in terms of the countries commitment to helping the underclass of this country.

12:36:18 The country goes in cycles, the farmworkers really came together as a movement in the 60's and 70's, but the 80's were a very hard decade for labor. What do you think happened?

12:36:34 Well, number one, I think there's a valuable lesson, and again, Gallarza, Ernesto Gallarza wrote about this in his book. He talked about the fact, warned us about the danger of organizing around the compassion of others. That compassion can be temporary and soon run out and without that you have nothing. And to some extent the 60's was a time of great compassion for the poor and the underclass in this country, and that was one reason why Cesar was able to get a lot of volunteers and help....

12:37:02 ...And the other thing that Gallarza wrote, warned about, was the danger of, of, uh, organizing around charismatic leadership. He felt that



charisma is a one-time, one-person thing, and when that person is gone you have nothing, unless you have built a movement. And so there was always a concern that what Cesar was doing was very heavily weighted around the charismatic aspects of his style and his leadership, and others concerned about negotiating the contract the organizing of the hard and fast union discipline which required his being there more than he was outside. I'm not criticizing that except to say that it was very easy to know that, on the one hand, his great contribution was he brought the public attention to the farmworkers and to the poor, the other was, did he really organize the Farm Labor Union?

12:37:53 Because a lot of people in the movement were conscious of that process, the fact that they needed Cesar to fill a symbolic role, but that that had some dangerous problems.

12:38:04 Yes. The notion again of a charismatic leadership. And I think that Cesar would be the first to tell you, because he's a product of the organizing period of the Alinsky and Fred Ross principles, that you really have to empower individuals and groups and communities, and that, uh, the individual, per se, is not the basis for the organizing. And I think Cesar understood that. And I often wonder sometimes, how Cesar felt being propelled into the limelight, as famous as he is. Uh, I know that there were times that he would say, "golly," you know, this is not something that he wanted....

12:38:43 ...Uh, I remember a story that I can tell you about a young ten year old who was helping me do some gardening, and I asked him what he

was learning about Chicano history in school. And he had obviously learned nothing, including the fact he knew nothing about the Treaty of Guadeloupe Hidalgo (??), or Juarez, and so on, you know, Benito Juarez, and so on. I was a little exasperated, and said, well you have heard about Cesar Chavez, I'm not talking about the boxer. And he said, "oh yes." I said, "I'm talking about Cesar Chavez the farmworker organizer." He said, "yes, I've heard of him." I said, "well, great, I used to work with Cesar." "You worked with Cesar Chavez?" I said, "yes." Then he looked at me, and he said, "hey, I have a question." Said, "what?" He says, how come he's famous and you're not?" And it seemed to me, and I said, "well, the Lord works in mysterious ways."...

12:39:32 ...And I think that for us, this was the first time that we in our Latino community had a figure that we could look to, not to represent us, but to epitomize the best of what is good in our community. And I think Cesar certainly did that. And I think Cesar would be the first to say, "look, this was not about my getting on the front page of the New York Times, or on any of the network news, it was about my commitment of service for my community.

12:40:01 Because on one side he's a symbol, on the other...

12:40:12 Yes. A movement, it seems to me, must reflect the contributions of the people who, who's names we'll never know. Clearly the early beginnings, I remember, uh, Mrs. Sophia Bujorques (??), who belonged to one of the uh, Pentecostal denominations. She was our best vote, uh, voter registration person. She would go door-to-door. Or Johnny

Torres, who was a barber. He would register everybody who came in. And if they weren't citizens, he would help them become citizens. There was a Juan Marquoida (??) who helped on our CSO radio program, CSO Informa, uh, ran that for three years as a volunteer, giving information to the, about cancer, community affairs. That's the movement. You know, Cesar and others played a significant role that symbolized, you know, the movement, but it [PIC ROLL OFF] has to be, has to be the little guy, the little woman, the person in the background. That's, that's what the movement's about.

**CR 96, SR 46**

12:41:17 Herman, we were talking about the fact that Cesar symbolized the movement, but it was all those little people. His ability...to reach out and attract this amazing cross-section of people...kids, intellectuals, and priests.

12:41:34 Yes, one of the, uh, organizing principals was that we learned from Alinsky, was never do for others what they can do for themselves. The second principle was the power of the mix. And we really learned the value of engaging others who would share the concerns of your issues. And therefore, it was easier during the sixties to bring people in. Today, it's very difficult, because every cause is hurting. Uh, the environmentalists have there's. And you can take virtually any issue, and Congress has either exacerbated the issue by cutting...

12:42:06 Exactly, so with the mix, who did he attract?

He attracted..

“Cesar attracted...”

12:42:11 Cesar attracted, uh, persons who had been in the CSO movement, so, it was, it was a community based, uh, attraction. I mean, it didn't start with Fred Ross, and an Anglo, it was basically going to people like Gil Padilla and others, who had been involved. Secondly, he was able to attract, uh, people of good will, like Chris Hartmire, from the religious base. He was able then to bring in the artists, uh, Luis Valdez, and he was, Teatro Campesino, and so on. But he also brought in, uh, young people from New York, all kinds of folks came in. I remember when I was asked to head up the Delano strike assistance committee in San Francisco, uh, we engaged the Longshoreman's Union and all of the various progressive people of the city that used to send car caravans to Delano, and they were welcome there. So, uh, it was an in-, an incredible array of folks that led to uh, strengthening that early beginning that Cesar had.

12:43:10 Now, the '90's, the issues are still the same...

12:43:20 In 1965, uh, Ernesto Galarza and Julian Samora (??) and I were asked by the Ford Foundation to go into the southwest to find out what the critical issues were that were facing our people. What we found was, that in the southwest, there was no one overriding issue. Clearly farmworkers was an issue, but so was urban poverty, so were police issues, the dropout problem. In almost any community you went to, there were critical issues that, uh, plagued us then, and plague us now, for example, the lack of visibility in the media. Someone described the phenomena as if we looked

into a mirror and didn't see ourselves. We still lack visibility nationally through the media, (except for this program, of course)....

12:44:02 ...But, the main is that many of those problems are still there, in fact, Galarza used to say that problems, given the numbers, may become so big, that is will become beyond the capability of some institutions to deal with that. Look at our prisons, look at the welfare roles. On the down side, there are many negatives, but with respect to intractable, persistent poverty, but yet, there are a lot of positives that have happened since then. But still, until the people left behind are taken care of, we haven't really succeeded.

12:44:33 Citizenship classes and voter registration...

12:44:38 Yes. I think there is a valuable lesson to be learned by the fact that by organizing, uh, as we did in the fifties, that we will then generate a new level of leadership, and who knows how many Cesar Chavez's are in that mix?

12:44:55 When you look back at what Cesar accomplished, what do you think his legacy is?

12:45:01 Well, for the, for the living, uh, certainly a generosity of spirit, an example, a model of a very caring person, and, considering the spirituality of Cesar, uh, I think that we can say that he was indeed a very effective servant. And he has given us the courage to be and to do. And we have to remember to keep alive the sacrifices he made, because building a movement isn't about starting and stopping, it's about continuing. The gains

you make in a movement can surely be lost, for example, we need to be sure that, as we move forward as a people, that we are as compassionate in caring about other groups, other people. That just because we have been left out, and made invisible, we have to be much more inclusive and caring uh, so that the legacy of Chavez lives on. And I think that's what he gave us.

12:46:01 You used the word 'sacrifice.'

12:46:08 Yes. It is. I'm not sure that Cesar could have accomplished what he did without sacrifice. I'm not sure that any movement can really be a movement unless people are willing to sacrifice. Are willing to die, if necessary, for change, for positive change. And, um, there's no holiday when you're fighting injustice, and Cesar was at it all the time, seven days a week. I remember one time, how much he really enjoyed a dinner we had, it was a diet cola and some vegetarian Chinese food. He thought he was in heaven. So, one has to learn to enjoy the environment of the pressures. To be grateful and thankful for the wonderful friends you make. For the moments when maybe the best you've got is something like a cola, and wonderful vegetarian Chinese food. I mean that's a blessing. And Cesar was able to enjoy those blessings.

12:47:07 I have a feeling that sometimes he did his best under pressure.

Yes, he did.

I need a complete sentence, "Cesar did his best..."

12:47:17 Cesar did his best, uh, under great pressure. He was, uh, unnerved at least appeared to be unnerved when he confronted very hostile, difficult situations. But those, the warm smile, and expressive eyes became very deliberate when he confronted someone in authority. You never had to worry about Cesar getting lost, or that he had no commitment, or that he had weakened his commitment. He was remarkable, and tenacious....

12:47:48 ...And, I guess, if I had to describe him in one way, it's that Cesar never asked anyone to do anything that he wouldn't do, or that he would ask anyone to do more than he was willing to do. And in fact, so often times I think the unwritten principle of an organizer is, to do more and make the others feel guilty, and you'll pick up a good share of activism, so Cesar, by his example I think, maybe made some people feel that they weren't working hard enough. And believe me, the people around him worked very, very hard, all the time.

12:48:28 And...could anyone keep up with Cesar?

12:48:32 No, it was, well I think of Dolores Huerta and a few others, Gil Padilla, and a few others, who also worked very hard, and somehow, I think they need to be enshrined in this. But in the main, uh, a person who is moving as the elected leader of a movement must be prepared to do more. I just don't think you can say, "O.K., I'll do only half as much as the people I'm working with." I think it's the nature of leadership is to always try to do more. Sometimes even more that you think you're capable of doing, or giving....

12:49:06 ...Again, Cesar I think, was able to do that because Helen Chavez and his family, and his family support system were always there for him. And I think as we think about doing anything we need to take a look and reassess our family connections, our support system, because it can get awfully lonely out there, it can get awfully hostile....

12:49:28 ...People think you're doing this only for fame, or for money, or some other ulterior motive. And I remember before Cesar was a household name, Chick Allen (??) was asking me "well, who is this guy, Chavez? He's only in this thing for this or for that, or is he communist?" All kinds of names. But then when he was discovered by the New York Times, then of course there were a number of people who thought they had discovered Cesar, and were quite willing to help. But the fact of the matter is, uh, Cesar grows on you over time, and uh, I think uh, as I think about him, and I do, I still think of Cesar in so many different ways. I think of it fondly, to think how fortunate I was to have had this opportunity to work with such a great human being.

12:50:23 How did people's lives change, was Cesar actually able to make a better life for farmworkers?

12:50:30 Cesar was able to improve the well-being of farmworkers by, first of all, giving them dignity and giving them hope. Cesar was able to provide tangible benefits to those workers who succeeded in getting contracts. Uh, Cesar also provided the kind of training and, uh, and leadership for a new generation of farmworkers. I think that those who are now running the farm labor movement are products of that. So, yeah, we've



left a legacy. He has also left a legacy in the cities. Uh, for young people who need, desperately need role models, uh, who need to know that you can make a difference, and to be able to look to Chavez and others like Cesar, to say, “Yeah, I can do it, too.”

12:51:20 Si se puede.

12:51:21 Si se puede.

**TAPE 72, CR 97, SR 46, TC 13:00:00**

13:00:11 Talk about the fasts.

13:00:27 Cesar’s commitment to change by this time was influenced by a lot of the reading that he did. I think in the spirituality of his development was clear to me. When I knew Cesar, he was influenced I think initially by people like Father McDonald, and others of the Mission Band that I mentioned. But we talked about the encyclicals, which are a very powerful lessons for us to examine, in terms of labor and capital and the rights of workers, and refugees and immigrants and so on. And I think those had an effect. When we met with Alinsky, Cesar read, at Saul’s recommendation, books about power, about Machiavelli, and uh, De Toqueville, about democracy. And Cesar read, was, became an avid reader. And over the years it seemed to me Cesar became, I think, concerned about the movement and the style of leadership, and became convinced that non-violence was a lesson that had to be practiced, and taught by example. And again, as I have mentioned, Cesar never asked anyone to do something that he wouldn’t be willing to do, in terms, including putting himself on the line.

13:01:42 What happened in '68 was really his way of focusing the movement on non-violence, wasn't it?

On non-violence, but also to...

I need a complete sentence.

13:01:51 We need to look at the fast in terms of what Cesar was doing, first, not as a religious symbol, but rather to make sure that the farmworkers themselves did not get frustrated and return violence with violence. And it was also a very effective way by which Cesar could focus on the plight of the workers. For the first time there seemed to be some stirring on the part of the national media that here was a story about a person who was doing some very remarkable things. I'm not sure that Cesar woke up one day and said "well, I ought to go on national television."...

13:02:24 ...I think what happened was the inevitable consequence of doing something very humanistic, something very dramatic, that caught the public's attention. Plus, the visitations of the Kennedy's and the trade unionists. The pilgrimage of great people to Cesar helped to give that movement greater credibility than it had ever had before. And so, the symbolism that surrounded Cesar was not Catholic, it wasn't uh, Ghandian per se, it was a mix of a very ecumenical movement built on solid organizing principles.

13:02:58 I mean, and the response was "that's just a cheap trick to get publicity."

13:03:02 That's always the case when someone begins to show signs of gaining strength. Is to try to discredit it, and try to pass it off as a sideshow and circus and so on, but the more they did that, the more it added to Cesar's credibility. And Cesar was a remarkable genius in his own right. Would give a lot of credit to Fred, and to Saul Alinsky and to others. But remember, Cesar, by this time had matured as an organizer in his own right. He had organized CSO chapters in Oakland and in the valley and certainly had learned the art of organizing himself, and added his own embellishments to it.

13:03:44 ...go back again over the fact that...

13:03:50 Clearly there were many, many issues during the sixties that now had burst forth on the Chicano scene, and at times on the national scene. The frustration on the part of some of the activists was that somehow Cesar wasn't quite cooperating or participating in the walk-outs or in the marches, or in the efforts to achieve a specific goal that someone had in mind. It's not that Cesar was unfriendly, but Cesar had a goal. He said, "look, if we're going to build a union, I've got to concentrate on that." And for many years, Cesar, wasn't a matter of isolation, but the priority was clearly focused. But as you look at it, there was a lot more cooperation than meets the eye and Cesar was always at least giving signals to people that he endorsed that or was helpful and was cooperating....

13:04:40 ...But in the main, the issues that were in the Latino community were so many you couldn't even begin to keep track of that. Whether it be

the blowouts, the student rebellions, or the terihina (??) thing, or the Corky Gonzalez in Denver, the La Raza Unida in Texas, and the Paso in Texas, and the Mapa, and then the other thing, the CSO. For the first time we see a plethora of activity not all of it constructive, and some of it on the edge, that you would simply spend your time going from one meeting to the other....

13:05:11 ...But Cesar, I think to his credit, said, “no, let me concentrate on this, you know, what you’re doing is a good thing.” He never condemned it, but said, “look, I’ve got to get my priorities straight,” and I think, there is a lesson in that for all of us too, that we can’t just spread ourselves so thin as to not be affective, and so I clearly was the voice of frustration from time to time on why Cesar wasn’t involved and that sort of thing, but I think he was right.

13:05:32 Because the students said “we are the movement.”

13:05:42 Yes, they were through informal and formal channels of communication, and clearly if we’re going to achieve any uh, significant impact on some of the uh, remaining issues, uh, going forward into the next millennium, there’s go to be continued collaboration, cooperation on the part of all the organizations. But, as Monsignor O’Brady said when he was helping us through the Industrial Areas Foundation, uh, we must continue to pump up new life from the bottom, new leadership from the bottom, and that’s what, I think that will do it for us.