

LD
3745
M57
2007

An Interview with Dr. Tony Miranda

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

The UNLV @ Fifty Oral History Project

Oral History Research Center at UNLV
University Libraries

University of Nevada Las Vegas

2007

©UNLV@ FIFTY Oral History Project
University of Nevada Las Vegas, 2007

Produced by:

The Oral History Research Center at UNLV – University Libraries

Project Director: Claytee D. White

Coordinator and Interviewer for Math and Sciences: Dr. David Emerson

Project Editor: Gloria Homol

Interviewers and Project Assistants: Suzanne Becker, Andres Moses, Laura Plowman,
Emily Powers, Shirley Emerson, Mary K. Keiser
Lisa Gioia-Acres

Recorded interviews and transcripts composing the UNLV @ Fifty Oral History Project have been made possible through the generosity of CSUN (grant initiated, presented, and shepherded through the CSUN political process by Andres Moses) and the Libraries Advisory Board. Lied Library provided a wide variety of administrative services and the Special Collections Department, home of the Oral History Research Center, provided advice and archival expertise. The Oral History Research Center enabled students and staff to work together with campus community members to generate this selection of first-person narratives.

The transcripts received minimal editing. These measures include the elimination of fragments, false starts, and repetitions in order to enhance the reader's understanding of the material. All measures have been taken to preserve the style and language of the narrator.

The following interview is part of a series of interviews conducted under the auspices of the UNLV @ Fifty Oral History Project. Additional transcripts may be found under that series title.

Claytee D. White, Project Director
Director, Oral History Research Center
University of Nevada Las Vegas

Table of Contents

- 1976 – coming to Las Vegas; appearance of campus; coming from graduate program in anthropology at UCLA; discussion of dissertation; memories of working with Las Vegas Urban League while looking at Oakland public schools; growing up in Santa Maria and Santa Barbara, California; discussion of sister and parents; memories of rowdy behavior as teenager; marrying at 18, a father at 19; going to night school.....1-5
- Working as postman; continuing night school for bachelor's; divorced; attending UCLA graduate school on Nat'l Institute of Mental Health scholarship; discussion of best friend's influence (Jose Quaya, aka Dr. Loco and his Rocking Jalapeno Band).....6-8
- Thoughts on the atmosphere at UNLV, 1976; beginning of ethnic studies program, founded by Roosevelt Fitzgerald and Claude Warren; long discussion on teaching introduction to Chicano literature and the interaction with students.....9-11
- Discussion on political aspects of Chicano studies; administration's attitude toward ethnic studies in the '70s; influence of students on course content; making friends in a new community; living accommodations near Paradise and Twain; post-doctoral studies at UC Santa Barbara; remarrying; social activities.....11-15
- Thoughts on political activities in the '70s; assessment of tenure as faculty senator; remembrances of past presidents; chair of the anthropology and ethnic studies department, '93; last memories of Roosevelt Fitzgerald.....15-19
- Feelings on stepping down from the chair in 2004; discussion on wisdom of creating Wilson Advising Center to help students; personal perspective on Millennium Scholarships; memories of controversy about tenure, '83; personal opinions on the difficulties of obtaining tenure.....19-21
- Revising book on Hispanics of Southern Nevada; opinion on more academics on Board of Regents; highlights of wife's career; thoughts on the future of Latino community in Las Vegas; current teaching assignment: Introduction in Cultural Anthropology, Anthropology of Aging, and 2 ethnic studies classes; life after retirement.....21-25

Preface

Dr. Tony Miranda grew up in Santa Maria and Santa Barbara, California. His father was a chef at the Santa Maria Inn, and the rest of the family spent summers picking strawberries in the surrounding fields. He has a sister who earned a degree in psychology from UCLA, and he credits her voracious early reading habits for inspiring him to continue with his education.

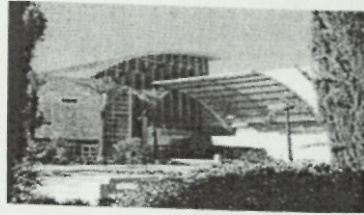
Dr. Miranda married and worked as a postman for a while, then began taking night school classes in order to obtain his high school diploma. He liked school so much that he continued at Long Beach City College, then Cal State Long Beach to earn his bachelor's degree. He was offered several fellowships and chose SC on a Teacher Corps fellowship. A friend informed him of an NIMH doctoral fellowship at UCLA, and he chose to take it.

In 1976, before he finished the doctoral program, Tony applied for a teaching position at UNLV. He was accepted provisionally, meaning he had to complete his doctoral dissertation in one year. He successfully completed his doctorate and was offered a tenured track position.

Dr. Miranda taught Introduction to Chicano Literature for a year, and then took a post-doctoral ethnic studies course at UC Santa Barbara. He returned to UNLV to teach, served as faculty senator, and held the position of chair of the anthropology and ethnic studies department from 1993 until 2004. Today he is revising his book on Hispanics of Southern Nevada and teaching three classes. His second wife has been retired since 1995, having spent 16 years with SIIS. When he retires, they will continue to make Las Vegas their home.

ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER AT UNLV

UNLV Oral History Project @ Fifty



Use Agreement

Name of Narrator: M. L. (TONY) MIRANDA
Name of Interviewer: CLAYTEE D. WHITE

We, the above named, give to the Oral History Research Center of UNLV, the recorded interview(s) initiated on 7/24/2006 as an unrestricted gift, to be used for such scholarly and educational purposes as shall be determined, and transfer to the University of Nevada Las Vegas, legal title and all literary property rights including copyright. This gift does not preclude the right of the interviewer, as a representative of UNLV, to use the recordings and related materials for scholarly pursuits. There will be no compensation for any interviews.

M. L. Miranda

Signature of Narrator

Date

Claytee D. White 7/24/2006

Signature of Interviewer

Date

This is Claytee White and I'm on UNLV's campus in Wright Hall this morning with Dr. Tony Miranda. It is July 24th, 2006.

How are you this morning?

I'm a little sweaty.

Well, it's a little warm this morning already.

Yeah, humid.

So do they turn the air off in this new building over the weekend?

Must be because I'm a little warm.

Yeah, that's what I think, too. So how do you like this new Wright Hall?

It's good. I'm coming, you have to understand, from a chairman's office, which was a lot bigger, to a regular professor's office. So this is a lot smaller than I've been used to, but it's fine.

So give me -- which department are you?

Anthropology and ethnic studies.

And you were chair of the entire department at one point?

I was the chair for 11 years, from '93 to 2004.

Oh, wonderful. When did you first come to UNLV?

1976.

What did it look like in 1976?

Oh, gosh, it was a very small campus. You could walk to any building and then be real close by. Of course, the city wasn't that big, so you could go anywhere and be there in ten minutes. But now it's grown so rapidly over the years, the campus and the city. I don't know. A good deal of this campus I have not been to. That's true, swear to God. It's like when they're building neighborhoods, you knew it before, but then you get lost because there are all these new buildings. That is the same thing with UNLV. It's just grown just so rapidly since I've been here, particularly in the last decade. So, yeah, it's amazing.

So in 1976, where were you coming from when you came to Las Vegas?

I was a graduate student at UCLA in anthropology. I had my master's degree and they hired me on the provision I would become tenure track if I was able to complete my doctoral dissertation in the year, which obviously I was able to do. So I was offered a tenured track position at the end of

that year as soon as they got notification that I had successfully completed the doctoral dissertation at UCLA. So...

So what was the subject of your dissertation?

I did a study, an ethnographic study of the street academy in Oakland, California, that was being funded by the National Institute of Education and the Bay Area Urban League. They had a couple of street academies. There were alternative schools for kids, mostly minority kids that had been pushed out or dropped out of school. There was a chance for them to complete their high school credits so they could get a diploma. One of the street academies was located in the African-American area of Oakland; the other one was in the Latino area of Oakland.

I was the one that was studying both of them at the same time, going back and forth between two of them. I was able to accumulate a lot of data on this particular because we were testing all different kinds of -- we were looking at behavior modifications and how that would work to provide incentive for students to do well. Some of the modifications would be things that kids would want like tickets to concerts at the time, CDs -- well, no CDs -- albums, clothing, things like that that they could earn credits toward if they completed like a contract, met all of the criteria that was set out on this contract. They'd have to sign it and everything. And then if they completed it, they'd get these rewards periodically to keep them going. So I was able to write my dissertation on that. It was called "The Street Academy Project."

So were those successful?

Yeah, from when I was studying them, they were pretty successful, and they went on after I left. So it must have been doing all right. But it was funded through the National Institute of Education, through the Urban League, and then down to the community.

So now, are you aware that we now have an Urban League here in Las Vegas?

Yeah, I was aware of that. Yeah. They actually are responsible for my work. I was actually working with them, too, looking at the Oakland public school system at the time of Patty Hearst and the --

The SLA.

-- the SLA. The superintendent of schools was assassinated in the parking lot where my office was way back and I had just left my office. So it was a really tumultuous time to be in the

Oakland public schools because it was almost like -- not as bad -- but something like terrorists because they were threatening to harm anyone that was working in the school district at that time. So it was kind of wild.

Oh, it had to be.

So where are you from originally?

I grew up in Santa Maria, California, Santa Barbara, California.

Beautiful.

Long Beach, California, and then here. Yeah, Santa Maria Valley and then --

So tell me a little about your early life and the family that you grew up in.

Well, in Santa Maria when I was growing up there, it was a town of 10,000 people.

So Santa Maria is where within California?

It's between Los Angeles and San Francisco about midway. It was, like I say, a farming town. Where we lived was surrounded by strawberry fields forever. All of us in the family worked in those fields for extra money. My dad was a chef at the Santa Maria Inn at the time. It was a great rural town, a good town to grow up in. The minority groups there, the Mexican-Americans and the Filipinos, were in the same neighborhood, and most of the rest were white. But it was kind of segregated in that way. I don't know about consciously, but that's just the way it was. The Mexican-Americans had their barrios and the Filipinos were close to them.

I drove through there last year. I hadn't been there since I was a little kid. I saw my little house. It looked like a big house when I was there because I was only like a little kid. Everything looked big to me. And now it looked like -- you know, 50-something years later it's still there, but it looks like a little, tiny shack. But it was brand new at the time.

Oh, wow. How big is Santa Maria now?

Oh, gosh, I don't know. It's huge. I mean Vandenberg Air Force Base is there. They, just like Vegas, have built out and a freeway's gone through it. I don't know how big it is, but it's huge compared to when I was there as a kid.

Yeah, like I say, it was a good town to grow up in. It was small town America, really, where the little ethnic groups were segregated. I don't know whether that was a good thing, but that's the way I remember it.

Right. Did your mother work outside the home?

Yeah, she was out there in the fields and everything with us. You know, we had plenty of strawberries. That's for sure.

And the strawberries tasted like real strawberries.

Oh, they were delicious. Oh, yeah, I would lie out there and just, you know, one for me and one for the farmer and one for me. They found me out there in the field. I had hives all over me from eating all of the strawberries straight from the vine and I was just all swollen. I stopped eating strawberries for a while.

But we had a nice yard. We had walnut trees, apricots and avocado trees. As a little kid, I'd pick all these apricots and then take them down to the corner grocery store and sell the guy a crate. I could probably get like 20 bucks for it. He gave me a quarter. But I thought it was big time. I thought, wow, I'm making a lot of money.

What about sisters and brothers?

Yeah, I have a sister. She went on to get her Ph.D. in psychology from UCLA. She married a professor of bio-med statistics, and he's been retired now for a long time. They live up in Encino Hills. They have a nice big home overlooking the valley there. But, yeah, she struggled along raising -- you know, married once and helped to put her husband through medical school at UCLA and then had four kids. Four kids later, divorced. You know how the story goes. Then she met this professor and they got married. And they're still together now after all these years.

Who instilled that love of education in the children?

You know, it's hard to say because both my mom and dad -- I think my dad just barely got out of high school. And my mother didn't even get out of the eighth grade. So I don't know if they instilled it. It was just that I guess -- maybe it was natural. I mean with my sister, my sister was like almost like a genius. When she was just a little kid, she had read all the children's books in the library and then went on to adult books and just kept reading and reading and reading. I think it's really her that spurred me on.

So she's older?

My older sister, yeah. She's seven years older than I am. Yeah, I don't know if I would have been as interested because I got in a lot of trouble as a teenager and things like that. There was very

little hope for me. People thought I was going to end up in San Quinten, as some cop told me one time. "You know, Miranda, you keep this up and you're going to end up in San Quinten."

So what kind of things were you doing?

Well, you know, the typical rowdy teenage things and getting in fights and speeding. I had all this testosterone flowing. It wasn't me. The devil made me do it. You know, I would get in trouble every now and again. I was not a good student in high school. I was mostly the class clown, sat in the back of the class and harassed the teacher and fooled around with the girls. I was a typical teenager of the time, you know. It was kind of fun because it was like a cutoff point. I was doing real well in school until about the eighth or ninth grade and then I just went bananas.

Yeah, puberty.

I just went off the deep end. I got in with the car clubs and gangs and stuff.

So how did you get into UCLA with that kind of high school record?

Well, eventually -- you know, I got married really young, 18. I was married at 18 and was a father at 19, and here I didn't have a high school diploma or anything. So I couldn't get a decent job at the time. In fact, I was trying to get into the service at that time because I couldn't get a job where I could support a family. I thought, well, if I got into the service, at least the service would support me and my family, but that was before Vietnam. So maybe that was a lucky thing. You know, I'm here today because they didn't take me back in the 60s because I was trying to get into the Marines and the paratroopers, typical macho services, and they wouldn't take me because of the fact I had dependents already. They weren't taking anybody with dependents in those days. Now they'll take anybody. But luckily, I guess, they did not take me.

So I just started going back to school at night just to get my high school diploma at Long Beach Evening High School. I have that diploma. I don't have it up here, though. I should bring that in.

Yes, because that would inspire the students here.

Yeah, it would. And I tell them the story, the ones that are not doing well. I say, "Hey, come on, you know, I mean I've been there and done that and I know you can make it, I know you can do it. If I can do it, you can do it. We're from the same background, man. You can do it."

So I went on and went to school at night and finally got my high school diploma.

In which year?

Oh, God, I was supposed to graduate high school in 1957. I didn't graduate with my school. I didn't graduate. I think I got my high school diploma in about '59 or '60 at night. And then I just kept going. I took a class here, a class there at Long Beach City College.

How did you support the family?

I worked during the day as a postman. I finally got on at the post office, which was a big deal in my life, a nice steady government job, two bucks an hour, but, hey, it was steady. You know, I had a wife and child to think about. So that saved me.

I was going to Long Beach City College at night taking classes and to my surprise, I was getting A's. I thought, wow, I'm going to go full time and see -- I'll work at night and go to school during the day, which is what I did. I quit my full-time job during the day as a postman and took temporary postal worker. They're the ones that do all the crappy stuff, you know.

Sorting the mail.

Well, no. Delivering it at one o'clock in the morning or something all over Long Beach. I know that town like the palm of my hand.

So I worked at night and went to school during the day full time. I made the president's list and all kinds of good things like that. I just decided, well, I like this. This is good. I liked going to school. So I transferred over to Cal State Long Beach and kept going the same way, working at night and going to school during the day. I finally got my bachelor's degree in anthropology.

But I sacrificed my marriage. It was hard to maintain a good relationship when you're trying to do too many things at one time. So I ended up getting a divorce.

Then I got offered all of these -- because of my high grade point average at that time, I got offered all kinds of fellowships -- for Berkeley, for UCLA, for Stanford, all of these places.

So why did you accept UCLA's?

Well, actually, I went to SC first. I went to SC first and I went with a Teacher Corps fellowship. Teacher Corps was implemented to get teachers to teach in ghettos and teach in barrios. All of us had to learn how to speak Spanish.

Did you know already?

I knew some Chicano dialect of Spanish, which was not proper for the schools, although most of the kids, that's what they spoke. But they wanted us to be teaching the proper Spanish and

English. So I went with that program. They took us down to Tacate. They had these Argentinean teachers teaching us proper Castilian Spanish. Again, we were older, but we were still a rowdy bunch of Chicanos and African-American kids. So we had a real good time down there.

And this was the time when -- so we're in the 70s?

'69, '70. '68, '69.

Okay. So the Civil Rights Movement? Chicago Rights?

Yeah, all of that was going on. Yeah. They sent us down to Tacate, which is on the border between Baja California and California to teach us proper Spanish. They had the Argentinean teachers because they spoke proper Spanish. They didn't have Mexican teachers because they were low class, you know. They didn't speak the right kind of Spanish. And these gals were like little Nazis and they just could not handle us because we were still a rowdy bunch from L.A., you know. We were young yet, too, just really having a difficult time settling down, but eventually we got through that program.

Before I got through that program, a friend of mine had gotten into UCLA graduate school on a National Institute of Mental Health doctoral fellowship. There were some open slots there, so he came over to SC and said, "Hey, come on, man, you ought to come over to UCLA. There's a slot open for an NIMH doctoral fellowship." And I said, "Oh, okay, I'll give it a shot." So I gave it a shot and they took me. I was there with my best friend, who today is a professor at San Francisco State University.

What is his name?

Jose Quaya, also known as Dr. Loco because he has his Rocking Jalapeño Band. He plays all the oldies but goodies up and down the coast in all the universities across the country.

Fantastic. So he never had to grow up. This is wonderful.

He never had to grow up. He's got white hair now and a little Hochiman beard. He puts out a CD every now and then. I show a video in my class, Hispanics Today, and his music is the background music. I didn't even notice it and then I said, "Oh, that sounds familiar." Oldies but goodies.

Oh, this is amazing.

So he succeeded as well and helped me to get into that program and helped me to get the

doctorate. I don't know whether I would have gone on for a doctorate had he not been there saying, "Hey, come on, you've got to be there with me." I would have probably ended up with a master's in education, maybe a Ph.D. where I might have become a principal or something of a high school. Another friend of mine became a principal at Norwalk High, also coming out of the Teacher Corps program. But I didn't go on. I might have been able to do both.

That's right.

But I didn't do both. So I just went with the anthropology with UCLA.

What did you think of UNLV at that time period, the thought processes, not just the way it looked, but coming onto this campus from that kind of philosophy at UCLA?

Well, I mean to be honest with you, I wasn't thinking about that. I just wanted a job and I didn't care about money or anything. I just wanted a steady job. Philosophy I didn't care about. At the time I was not thinking in terms of that.

Although if you're talking about Chicano activism, I was active as far as the Chicano student movement. I was a part of that in California at Cal State Long Beach at SC and at UCLA. And then I came here and it was kind of like, well, okay, yeah. Yeah, I was aware of the difference. This institution seemed like it was 20 years behind the times when I got here and I kept telling people that. What's going on? There were no minority faculty. And what minority faculty there was were hired on part-time contracts, like temporarily.

So I think the administration might have thought that it might blow over so they wouldn't have to put them on tenure track. I mean that's just the feeling I got when I came here. There was some doubt whether I would get it because they had that stipulation. I had to get the doctorate within the year. Now, that was tough to do.

How many classes were you teaching?

Well, I was teaching a full load. And this ethnic studies program was just starting out.

Well, tell me about it. Who else was here in the program?

There was Roosevelt Fitzgerald. Do you remember Roosevelt?

Yes, I do.

Did you know him?

I took his classes.

He was the greatest, and he actually started it with the help of Claude Warren here in anthropology, who was instrumental in pushing for it, as well. But he was responsible for getting the program together, both at that time black studies and Chicano studies program. His wife, who was a Chicana from New Mexico, put the Latino-Chicano side of it together.

Now, what was her name?

You know, I keep forgetting names. I used to know them and I can't --

I'm sure I can find it.

If I think of it, I'll give you a call.

That's wonderful.

They'll come to me when I'm driving home and I think, oh, yeah, that was what it was. That's old age, you know.

But they were running the whole program. Claude was a master student I think at Notre Dame and he had a doctoral committee that was waiting there for his doctoral thesis to get done. He never got to them, of course, because he was so busy putting this program together that he wasn't able to work on his doctorate. So his doctoral committee disintegrated and he never did get it. That was a bone of contention between him and the university. It really weighed on him heavily the whole time he was here.

So was he supposed to have done the same thing as you, finished it within a year?

I don't know what his contract was. I'm just assuming it was similar. And he didn't get it; I got it. But he remained as the director of ethnic studies. Most of the time he was trying to just keep his job. He was in a constant battle with the administration because he didn't get his Ph.D. Students were calling him Dr. Fitzgerald, anyway. He was trying to keep this program going and he did, although it was because of his having to fight constantly to keep his position that this program really didn't flourish, not until we got Rainier Spencer here from Emory. The minute we got him, he pushed for a minor in African-American studies. He pushed for a bachelor's in African-American studies. But that's after Fitzgerald died. He replaced Fitzgerald.

So Fitzgerald was the chair until -- so we're talking about from 70 --

Gee, he was director of ethnic studies. I think he was chair of this department for a year or so.

So we're talking about the mid 70s until he passed away in the mid 90s?

Yeah, he passed away -- when did he pass away? '95? '96?

Something like that, yes.

Yeah. And I didn't really contest it because I thought it was his baby and I didn't think it was my place.

What kind of classes did you teach when you first arrived?

I taught Introduction to Chicano literature. I put together people of LARASA, which was looking at all the Latino ethnic groups. At that time it was mostly Cuban and Puerto Rican but mostly Mexican.

That's another thing that got me when I first got here because I didn't know there were any other Latino groups. I came from Southern California, and if you had a Spanish surname, you were of Mexican descent. There were no Cubans. There were no Puerto Ricans. So it was shocking because the first time I taught that class and, of course, coming from a Chicano student activist, militant student activist background, I was pro Castro and pro Che and all of those people.

I would start speaking in positive terms about their revolution. And I've got Cuban students out there whose families had fled the Castro takeover and they would debate me point for point. And what it ended up being, especially this one gal -- her name was Mercedes Fabricio -- I mean she came to tears in the classroom. "You can't talk. You've never..."

But it was so good. The class was so good because she challenged me and we had a thing going back and forth. All the students were just like wow. They'd be taking notes like this is great because it was real. She had been there and had to flee and here I was coming from Southern California and ideologically and politically I agreed with them. We were so far to the left at the time, politically speaking, that you couldn't say anything bad about them. I didn't hear their side, the Cuban refugee side, until I ran into them--her--in a classroom, one of the first classes I had.

A little Mexican girl who could barely speak English--she's now a successful lawyer, Suzanna Reyes--would sit there. You knew she was just here from Mexico because of the way she dressed and her accent was so heavy. I was able to get her all inspired politically and all of that, although she went to the right, as most of us do as we get older. But she was able to get out -- I mean to graduate from UNLV. She was vice president I think of the student body and she went on to University of the Pacific at Stockton and after many years got her law degree. And after many,

many attempts at the bar here, she finally succeeded in passing the bar.

There are many students like that, such as a cardiologist, Dr. Robles, who was one of my first students. If there's any gratification or reward this is it because he gives me the credit and she gives me the credit for inspiring them to go on. And now he's a cardiologist with his own clinic in South Texas.

That's wonderful.

Yeah. And he comes by and still visits me with his whole family. It's great.

So how did your teaching of that history change after that class?

Well, I kept teaching it in the same way. Hopefully, I'd get another few students in there like that. Although as the years went on, I did mellow out. I did mellow out. I think some of the readings that I assigned early on were really, really -- like what's the name of that? I think I still have it up here. Oh, I forget the name of the book already. But I mean it was way to the left. And I think I've gradually moved to the middle, politically speaking. You know how it is as you grow older. You mellow out.

A little.

And you move a little bit more to the middle, although your heart's still with those that are struggling.

Good. So those two people you worked with -- you worked with Fitzgerald, you worked with --

(End side 1, tape 1.)

So it was you, Fitzgerald --

Before I got here, it was Fitzgerald and his wife. Fitzgerald was teaching all of the black studies courses and his wife was teaching all of the Chicano study courses. She was just hired temporarily. I don't even know what degree she had.

I think the students got together on this campus, the Chicano students. And most of them were Chicano students. There were no Cubans or Puerto Ricans at that time that I remember. If there were, they looked at the Chicanos as weird political types and they didn't want to get involved with them anyway. Like why aren't they thankful that they're here? That's the way they saw it. So I taught it just as I had been taught in California, Southern California. The Chicano studies

there were definitely politically from the left. It was Nationalistic and sometimes it was Marxist, sometimes it was both. But they were really down on any Mexican-Americans. Even that label was not accepted by Chicano because that was a more conservative label and that was a label given to us, you know, the hyphenated American label. That was given to us by the dominant society at that time. And I used words like that, dominant and dominant society.

So today what is the label that's correct?

Well, Latino is correct. I'm using Hispanic to label the class Hispanic today. I use it because we're in Nevada. Nevada's still kind of conservative in terms of their terminology. Hispanic is a more conservative term. Latino is the more liberal term. It's just gotten so confusing anyway. When folks come over from the various Latin American countries, they're still calling themselves by what country they come from. Then when they get here, they become Hispanic or Latino, never while they're there. But when they get here, then they're lumped together. Then maybe they would identify with the larger label. But most of them do know that Hispanic is the more conservative term. Actually, they prefer where they come from. Cubano, Puerto Rican, Chicano or Mexicano, not Latino or Hispanic.

I see. What was the administration like in those days, those early days, those mid 70s?

Well, the stories I got from Fitzgerald was that the administration was not sympathetic and a lot of the faculty was not sympathetic to ethnic studies; that they didn't want it on this campus. He met a lot of resistance. But because students wanted it, the Chicano students in my case and I guess the African-American students in his case put out a petition and voiced their concerns about the fact that there were no Latino faculty here, Chicano faculty or African-American faculty, no administrators.

I think that's when finally the administration moved to -- it had to be pressured -- moved to open up a tenured track position but with that codicil, that qualification. There weren't very many Ph.D.s, Latino and African-American Ph.D.s at that time. It's like we were .00001 percent of the whole professorate, if that. And so because of the pressure of the community, which I do think that they thought would blow over and maybe they wouldn't have to -- that's the impression I got. I don't know if it's true or not. But that was the impression I got at the time from people that I talked to and the fact that they were so behind other schools in California and Colorado and Texas

and New Mexico. Here they are sitting in the Southwest. Even today, you know, we just got African-American studies, bachelor and minor. I just got the Latino studies minor, no bachelor's yet. In other schools there are separate Chicano studies program and separate departments, African-American studies program. Not here still.

Yeah. And it hasn't been that long that we've got an African-American history position --
There you go.

-- in the history department. So you're right.

What was it like making friends in Las Vegas when you first arrived?

Well, most of my friends were Chicanos from Las Vegas. They'd all come to me, you know, like can you get me on here? I'd really appreciate it if you could write me this letter or that letter. I was able to get Juan Lujan -- I wrote him a good recommendation and he was hired and became affirmative action officer. He and I were instrumental in getting Larry Mason, who's now I think the president of Clark County Schools' Board of Education.

I see. Yes, okay.

But we got him here, as well, in an administrative position.

I was the only Latino faculty in a tenured track position for -- I don't know -- 20 years or so. And then they began in the late 80s, early 90s to open up like Casas in history. She got hired. And then Dolores, who is now assistant dean at the honor's college, Dolores Tanno. And then another professor over in education -- I forgot her name -- a Latina, I got her hired early on. And then gradually, gradually -- and I know they hired one in sociology in women's studies and English. Now they got -- what's his name? -- Perez hired over there. Gradually, over time it began to open up for Latinos. But I was here alone it seemed to me for over a decade.

Where did you live when you first moved here?

I lived up by Paradise Road, those apartments up there for the first year I was here, which was kind of convenient in a way because it was --

Like Paradise and Twain area?

Yeah, right in there, which is --

It has changed a bit now.

Yeah, it's changed quite a bit, actually. But they were brand-new apartments, real nice. So I was

fairly happy there and it was close to the university. Then I got a post-doc to go to UC Santa Barbara and it had to do with ethnic studies. So it worked out really well. I had worked here like maybe -- in '76 I got hired. '77, one full year I worked, and then I got the post-doc. So I went to Santa Barbara, UC Santa Barbara for a year on a post-doc and then came back.

So a post-doc, you're researching and teaching or just teaching?

No. It was all research, all research. It was great that whole year in Santa Barbara. Santa Barbara is also one of my hometowns. I grew up there, as well. So it was like going home for a whole year.

And it's so beautiful.

Yeah, it was nice. We got an apartment down in Elwood Beach within walking distance to the --

So you're saying "we" again.

Oh, yeah. I married my wife there, my second wife, who was a secretary in the psych department. This building here housed anthropology and --

So are you talking about Wright Hall?

Wright Hall, this building right here before they renovated it. History was right on the first floor. You remember that. Political science was on the second floor. On the third floor was anthropology. Well, back then it was anthropology and psychology, and she was the part-time secretary for psychology. So we got married in Santa Barbara. She went with me on the post-doc. When I say "we," she got a job as a secretary in the nuclear physics department. She had a really good job there for that whole year, but we had to come back. So...

What were social activities like for a young married couple in Las Vegas?

Well, it was pretty good if you were in the community, you know. If you were part of the Chicano Latino community at that time, there were parties all the time and political events, the Governor's Ball and all of that kind of stuff. I think it was Governor List then. I got to meet people that were --

Movers and shakers?

Yeah, and semi-famous in this local area, like Rikki Cheese and people like that.

So was it because of your political activities in the community or was it because of your position on UNLV's campus that you got involved in those circles?

I think both because they did check me out to see where I was coming from.

So tell me about the political activities in your community at that point.

They were still trying to get more faculty here and more administrators, which, like I say, I did have a part in getting at least two good positions for administrators. But there still wasn't any faculty aside from myself for the longest time. So they were really concerned with that.

Before I got hired, I had to come and give a presentation in the community like part of the student Latino community, mostly Chicanos. Some of their parents showed up for that presentation. They were just beaming that I was up there giving a presentation that they could all understand. I mean it was on an academic level. It was showing them, and they were real proud of the fact that I was up there and glad. They came up and shook my hand and patted me on the back. "I hope you get this position, man. We need you over here." And I was able to do that. And they were checking out, too, to find out that I was a Chicano and not a Cuban.

Yes.

Because they were concerned with the fact that a lot of the games that were made by the Chicano student movement to get faculty, to get administrators, to get bilingual and bicultural education, to get fellowships for Chicano students native born whose families had suffered discrimination and prejudice in the Southwest over the years, that they would be the beneficiaries of the Civil Rights. All this is the Civil Rights Movement. Without Martin Luther King none of this would have happened and we were very well aware of it. But we wanted these things to go to the groups that had suffered the discrimination and prejudice. It seemed to a lot of the Chicanos at the time that the Cubans had just gotten here and they were using their Spanish surnames to get the benefits of what the Chicano student movement had pushed for all these years.

It was true in some cases. Well, they were concerned with that. They came and told me that or I wouldn't even have been aware of it -- I mean what's a Cuban? -- until I actually got into the class and had students that were very strongly Nationalistic and anti-Castro Cubans did I understand where they were coming from.

So tell me about your activities here on campus. Were you ever a part of the faculty senate?

I was a faculty senator for several years. That was really a foreign experience to me because I mean I didn't know what the hell was going on to be honest with you. I mean I had never been in

a position like that and here I was, on boards that were governing the whole university. And I think I never did realize that until later that, jeez, I was a senator and we were deciding where funding went and this, that, and the other thing and who got to stay in. I was on the -- what is it? -- the senate --

A tenure something?

No. The one where students are -- I forget the...

Oh, okay.

Anyway, it's like a judicial committee for cheating and stuff like that that had to decide whether students would be allowed to go on or not. It was affecting everybody's life and I was just -- my mentality was still a peasant mentality. You know, I'm just a farm worker. What am I doing here?

But that kind of practical thinking, though, probably made some good decisions.

Who knows? I don't know. But I mean for the longest time I felt really out of my element. Like I said, "What am I doing here?" I'm not a big schmoozer, nor do I talk a lot. Unless you talk to me like now, I won't say anything. I hardly spoke at all in any of those meetings. Even as chair, I let them do all the talking because I don't have to say anything. I never knew it was that way. But you just throw something out there, and they'll go on for hours on the subject. You don't have to say a word, just give them the little spur to go, "Okay, talk about this. What do you think about this? Do we have consensus on this, or no?"

Tell me about the administrations that you remember, the memorable ones, the memorable presidents.

Presidents. Well, I remember -- what was his name here?

Was it Maxson?

Well, I remember him. But before Maxson there was -- God, he's over at the museum -- he was.

Unrue?

No, it wasn't Unrue. It'll come to me.

So you're talking about Baepler.

Don Baepler was president when I was hired. I really didn't know him very well. I knew him better through the years as a chair. But I met him, shook hands, and there was not a lot of interaction there. So I don't know.

So who began to move the university? Which president would you credit with moving the university forward?

Let's see. I think Maxson was pretty good at that. He was really friendly, glad, handy type of guy and seemed to -- like Lujan was very close to him after he got in. And when Maxson left, boy, they -- because I guess he was close to Maxson, the next person that got in was the governor --

Kenny Guinn.

-- Kenny Guinn wanted to get rid of him I guess and forced him out and he was successful in doing that. I don't know the details. Everybody's got their side of the story and all that. But I know that Lujan didn't want to go and he was very close with Maxson. If he was close to Maxson, then I know that Maxson was probably pushing hard to get minority faculty here.

Carol Harter was good, I thought. I know there are some that would disagree with me on that. I know a few Latinos who didn't think she was that great. But she was always good to me. "Hi, ya', Tony." Like she'd call me by my first name and everything. Wow, you know, the president of the university knows me. "How's it going? How's your department?" Blah, blah, blah. You know, she was friendly.

Wonderful. Now, tell me about being chair of the department. When did that happen?

1993.

And how is the chair selected?

Previous to me getting on there, it was like a rotation. But it got to the point and it got to be such a stressful job and it didn't pay anything -- it was like a stipend, a small stipend to take on all of this --

And you don't teach as many classes, do you?

No. I taught one class. But with all of the problems that arise and all of the whining from everybody, from faculty, from students, from the students' parents, from the administration and all the paperwork, the stipend was not enough.

I wasn't really crazy about the idea of becoming chair, but I got talked into it by a couple of my colleagues here. I think we were going to go on the outside and look for a chair because no one wanted to be chair. It was just too much stress and it didn't pay anything. So okay. And I didn't want someone from the outside to be hired. I'd rather myself. At least everybody knows me. I

know what I'm all about. And I felt okay with that.

So I took over as chair in '93. It was a difficult time because of what was happening with Fitzgerald. Fitzgerald was really sick and he had just had the bypass. I had to go pick him up and bring him to class and take him home. Were you in any of those classes?

I was in a class later, his last two classes on this campus.

Yeah. And I wasn't going to fire him. I mean we were friends. He was like a brother, man.

And you could still see the fire in the classroom.

Yeah, through all of that. Through all of that, it was still there. So I was really having a difficult time because he was missing a lot of classes. I had to take over his classes that night and I hate night classes. But I took over his classes one semester after another semester after another semester. You know, I could go out to this little lot.

I was getting pressured by administration to force him to take sick leave or something. And he would tell me, "Well, you know, Tony, this is the only thing that's keeping me alive." What do you do when somebody tells you that, especially a good friend like he was?

He was such an amazing storyteller. He just went on and on. He should have put it all down before he went.

And he did write some articles at one time for The Voice.

He did.

But where are his other things? Did he ever write anything else?

He had a few scholarly articles about the building of the Hoover Dam, mostly that. And he had the column and everything.

But all of the stress of his trying to hold his position here I think finally got to him because he wasn't old. What was he? About 53 or 54 when he died. But they were pushing me to get rid of him because they were still paying his salary and all that.

I think towards the end there -- I don't know. I don't think he ever did quit really or resign or retire or anything. He just kept going until he dropped dead literally and figuratively, until he couldn't go anymore. But it was difficult because I had to keep taking over his classes mid semester. He couldn't go the whole semester. And then when he did teach, because of his medication and all this, he was going on crying jags in front of the class and everything like this.

It was just awful. He'd tell me, "Let's go to Denny's," before I'd take him home and stuff.

Did they serve hot dogs?

At Denny's, yeah. But he would tell me then, he would say, "You know, if I knew I was going to be this way, I maybe would have done some things differently." But he never followed the medical advice. He just kept on like he was a hundred percent and he wasn't. I mean after the first bypass he tells me, "You know, Tony, I've got the pipes of an 18-year-old now. I'm going, man." So he takes off in his Mercedes Benz and he's working at nights and he's teaching during the day and, boom, he gets it again. And he doesn't change his diet or his routine or anything.

So you knew it was going to happen again. And it did happen again big time. The second time was awful. That's when I was having to deal with his illness and having to just try to prop him up for as long as I could, especially when he tells me, "It's the only thing that's keeping me going, keeping me alive." Like, okay, well, so I'll pick you up and take you. And that's what I did for the last few years.

Wow. That's a good friend.

Well, yeah. I mean, you know, I just had to do it for him.

So you were chair until which year?

2004.

Oh, okay. What was that like after that time to step down, to step away from that?

It was a relief. It was like a huge burden being lifted from my neck. It was like, you know, having these tires around your neck and you're lifting them off and you go, "Ooh." Instead of getting better, I mean even after Fitz's episode, we got some faculty that were just really whiners and caused a lot of problems with other faculty and the chemistry changed. The faculty members I'm talking about just could not stand each other. So there was this tension always because of them. They would e-mail, fight over e-mail and not just keep it between themselves, but include the whole department. You know, if you're going to have it out with somebody, just let it be between you and me. Let's not bring the whole department into it. It ended up with two of the faculty -- one of the faculty just throwing up his hands and saying, "I can't take it anymore; I'm leaving," you know, a tenured position.

So it must have been --

And his wife didn't get tenure. So they're both gone now. And maybe it'll --

Settle down now.

-- settle down now. But they really weren't the problem. They left because of the one -- we won't mention any names.

Yes, please.

Do students here get enough financial help, enough counseling, all kinds of help on this campus?

Jeez. Well, from this department I mean initially we were doing all the advising and counseling until they finally decided to get the Wilson Advising Center. They've taken over most of that. Some of the things that they don't know about like various classes, they'll call and ask about. But, yeah, that was another great thing that happened. To take that away from us was a big load off of us because a lot of times we would have been giving bad advice and counsel and the student would suffer. They really needed a center like that. So when Lea took that position and implemented that, Wilson Advising Center, that was really helpful to the rest of the faculty and to the students because they know the curriculum now and it's only rarely -- and that's usually when a new program comes in -- that they want to know about this class or that class or whether it's going to count and who do they have to call for information.

What about the Millennium Scholarship? Has that been good or is that enough?

The Millennium Scholarship? I really don't know. I know my grandson got one and will be attending UNLV in the fall on a Millennium Scholarship. So from a personal, grandfatherly perspective, yeah, it's great. Tuition and books, that's great. I don't have to pay.

Yes. Back in 1983, there was kind of a crisis with the Board of Regents. They wanted to make it easier to get rid of a tenured track professor. Do you remember anything about that controversy? I remember a little bit about it. There was quite an uproar about it, as you might guess, from faculty. I mean it's difficult enough to be on a five- or six-year probation before you're considered for a full-time permanent position and then to achieve that and then to have the vote undo or do away with tenure. It's really a stressful time in an academician's life, his trying to get tenure. To achieve that and then to have the face the fact that you could lose it, you know, we got really upset behind that.

I don't think people outside of academia really understand what goes into obtaining tenure. I mean it's not an easy, you know, well, here, you've served your five years, here's your tenure. You've got to publish this. You've got to do community service. You've got to be out there all the time. You know, poor students. It's just like walking on egg shells for five or six years.

I mean people have broken down in here and gotten really ill over it, I mean, you know, really ill with this tenure process. It's a very stressful time. If they realize what we went through -- I think they think, well, this is a vacation. They only see the tip of the iceberg and all the difficulty is underneath, as the Titanic found out. It's that big chunk underneath that's really difficult for the professor.

We have to keep working after tenure with the publications, keep pumping them out, as many as we can and keep getting our good teaching evaluations. If we slip in that or community service or any of that, they hold it against you and you don't get merit increases.

So we're constantly working. It doesn't end at the end of the day. You're thinking about what your research is. You dream about it. You have your tape recorder by your bed stand so if you get an idea you can tape it right away and not lose it. But it's 24 hours.

And they don't realize it. They just see the teaching end of it. If it was just teaching like at a community college or something, I wouldn't get upset. But it's not just teaching. It's so much more. The research is really -- especially for this university --

(End side 2, tape 1.)

Well, now professors coming in are under a lot of pressure to conduct research and publish, even more so than when I came onboard. So the pressure on new faculty is more intense today than it was I think. They have to achieve well in all three areas -- community service, teaching and research -- or they won't get tenure. I think this gal that didn't get tenure this last year -- she had come in '76 -- might have gotten tenure easier than now.

So what kind of research are you doing now?

Now I'm just revising my book on Hispanics of Southern Nevada, "History of Hispanics in Southern Nevada," trying to bring it up to date. It was published in 1997. I've written a couple of chapters that I'd like added to that book. And I wrote a chapter for Dr. Wright and Semata's book on the Mexicans in Las Vegas.

So did you turn your dissertation into a book?

No, I didn't turn it into a book. I just didn't turn it into a book. I didn't even think of it at the time. I was just so glad to get rid of it, to have it accepted. It was on an urban street academy. So I don't know how that would have gone as an academic publication. There were a lot of statistical analyses and that sort of thing on student progress and grade point averages and things like that. So I don't know how that would have played in the scholarly -- it was scholarly, but maybe too scholarly.

Getting back to the Board of Regents, do you think we should have more academics on that board that would understand?

Definitely, because they don't. I mean they're business people mostly and they really believe that a university should be run as a business. That's not the right model for a university. Maybe for the business school, but for a liberal arts college I don't think so. We're just stressing different things. The things that we stress and the things that they stress are not the same. And I think that's part of the conflict. It just doesn't fit well with the business model. There has to be some freedom for creativity and thought.

This whole idea about tenure is another problem that they see as, well, you know, like these guys now just hang around and do nothing because they know they can't be fired. Well, that's not the case. We're constantly working even after we retire. You know, like I'm thinking about Dr. Warren here. He's still out there doing his archaeology just like he was still working here, but he's doing it on his own just because that's where his head and heart is, in the field. And that's usually the way it is with most of us.

We get burned out, yeah. But then we get regenerated and then our creative juices begin to flow. Again, it's not something you can keep constant. You go up and down, up and down. When we're down is probably when they're looking at us. Well look, he's not doing anything. Yeah, I just wrote 50 books. What do you expect? I mean you only have so much to give. But that's usually when they see us is when we're down so it looks like we're not doing anything when we're just trying to recreate and regenerate, get those juices flowing again. As you probably know being an academician and a scholarly person, you have your spurts. It comes in spurts. It's not there consistently. You've got to go up down, up down, up down, up down. It's not like you can

just put them out like -- I don't know -- like someone in the business, just write reports or whatever. Creativity takes -- one, you have to be within your own little zone there and two, you've got to be able to think about it and not be disturbed.

Right. It needs nurturing.

You need to nurture it. It doesn't come in one constant flow. It ebbs and flows, ebbs and flows, and they're always catching us on the ebb side. Oh, look, what's the matter with that guy? He's just sitting there.

Now, tell me about your wife's career. Did she continue to work after coming back from Santa Barbara?

Yeah, she went to work. She was a part-time secretary for the psych department here. But when we came back from Santa Barbara, she became a supervisor at the State Industrial Insurance System, which is no longer in existence, SIIS. Do you remember SIIS?

Yes.

Yeah, she worked there for about 16 years and then she retired. So she's been retired since about '95. That really more or less is what her career was for 16 years after working here. Her first job was part-time secretary here. And that's how we met.

So anything else you want to add? What do you see as the future of the Latino community in Las Vegas?

Well, as you know, this is one of the fastest growing ethnic communities. We've surpassed the African-Americans as far as population goes. And we're continuing to grow and grow and grow. I keep seeing more and more Latino students in these classes. So they're taking advantage of higher education. And you're going to see more professionals, Latino professionals out there if I keep seeing them at the rate I'm seeing them. Like my ethnic studies, Chicano studies, and Latino studies classes, they're half Latino kids. These kids are going to go on and do well and make a real contribution to this community.

How many classes do you teach now?

I teach three classes, regular load. An Introduction in Cultural Anthropology, which I'm teaching now, and Anthropology of Aging and two ethnic studies classes, People of LARASA and Hispanics Today. So, yeah, I'm just trying to -- I'm getting near the end of my term here, too.

When would you like to see yourself retiring, and where would you retire?

I'd retire right here. I like it here. Housing has become more expensive, but I got my house. You know what I'm saying? For people coming in now, it's expensive. But I bought my house back in the 80s.

What area of the city did you buy?

I'm in South Green Valley, in a nice neighborhood. Walk the dog early in the morning. You know, no problem, knock on wood. It's quiet. I have a nice big house. I have my own home office and everything there so I can work in peace and quiet. So that's another reason why I don't care that this office is small. You could have put me in a closet and I wouldn't have cared because I do have a nice office at home that I work in. So I don't know. I might be good for another year or so.

What do you see doing after retirement?

Probably puttering around in the yard and stuff like that for about -- I don't know --

Six weeks and then?

-- six weeks and then write my memoirs or whatever because that's usually the way it works out. You fix everything, you clean everything, and it only takes a month or so. And then you go, God, what am I going to do now? Go be a greeter at Wal-Mart or something. I don't know. What are they paying anyway?

It's not enough.

Thank you. Have a nice day. I'm practicing already. Have a nice day.

This is wonderful.

Say, you got a Sam's Club card? Can I see your card? Here, let me see that sales receipt, with my little yellow marker out. What the hell are you looking for? Do I look like a thief? Am I going to steal something here?

I have enjoyed this interview so much. I really appreciate this.

Oh, Claytee, you're welcome. I appreciate that wonderful comment.

Okay. So now you can get on with your --

Yeah, yeah. Got to go in there and give them hell.

Good. Thank you.

(End side 1, tape 2.)