

Abel Cavada

Interviewed by Francisco Garza Jr

September 21, 2022

Interview conducted in person

Transcribed by Francisco Garza Jr

[Francisco Garza Jr]: My name is Francisco Garza Jr and I am here with Mr. Abel Cavada. It is Wednesday September 21, 2022, and we are at Mr. Cavada's Law Office in Corpus Christi, Texas. We are here to learn about Mr. Cavada's life and his role in the Chicano Movement in South Texas. So, first things first, do I have your permission to record this verbally?

[Abel Cavada]: Yes

[Garza]: Okay, fantastic. How are you doing today?

[Cavada]: Just fine.

[Garza]: Okay, sounds good. Uh, a great place to start would be your early life, uh, could you please tell me about your background and, uh, your younger years?

[Cavada]: Okay, I was born here in Corpus Christi, and uh, over in the westside I lived in the westside, uh, up through high school. And uh, I was uh, let's see my mother was from the valley, she moved over here, she got married to my dad, uh, I want to say about 1940. Uh, my dad went to the World War II, uh, I'm not sure the exact year, uh, but he was in the Navy in the Pacific. Uh, and uh, was in the I guess World War II. Excuse me. My mother, uh, was from La Joya, Texas and uh, she happened to have been the valedictorian of her class way back, way back then, I think 1939. It wasn't a very big school, it was a very small school at the time, but she was valedictorian. And she, uh, was real strong on education, so she, you know, pushed for our family education. She wound up being the matriarch of the family because she was the oldest surviving sibling of seven from, uh, back then. She died about seven years ago, and uh, she made sure that we got educated. Our family, the kids, we all went to Catholic school here in Corpus. I attended cathedral here for eight years and then I went to the Corpus Christi Academy, which used to be out on Lantana, for two years, and then the last two years I went to Miller High School. I was, kind of got tired of the, you know, that kind of closed education. So, I went to public school and graduated from Miller. From there I went to Del Mar College for a year, then I went to the service for two years, uh, '68 through '70, and then in 1970 I went back to Del Mar. Uh, it was at that time, I don't know if you want to get right into it, but uh, it was at that time I got into the MAYO organization, Mexican American Youth Organization. It had probably been in the formation for about two years when I joined, and there was a lot of activity at Del Mar. It tended to be, uh, a hotbed of a lot of things going on at the time, uh, a lot

of political things, you know, Movement type things. Uh, when uh, and I talked about this before, I was exposed to the Chicano Movement, of all places, in New York City, in Queens. I was visiting a cousin of mine who had been living in California, and I went to visit him, there was all kinds of Chicano propaganda in the apartment, posters and buttons and stuff, and you know, I was really impressed by that. Uh, it made an impression on me immediately and I felt right at home in that situation. When I was at Miller High School, there was one teacher there, I can't remember his name. He was an Irish guy and he taught Mexican history. So, I took like, I want to say, it seemed like two courses of that, so I was very familiar with Mexican history, Texas history, you know, and how it relates to Texas and the U.S. So, I was real familiar with all that. And when I was up on the east coast, in the military, I happened to see a little article in a local newspaper up there about MAYO in Corpus Christi. And so I said, you know, that really impressed me. I said wow, all that's going on at home while I'm gone. And so, uh, when I came back, I went to Del Mar, and I was right into the Chicano Movement that was ongoing here in Corpus. There was a lot of activity back then. Uh, I think Del Mar was kind of like a central place, because uh, you know, all the area people that were going to college went to Del Mar at the time. Uh, so, I became a participating member, I guess, of MAYO, although we didn't take, there weren't memberships, you know, you just showed up. And so, uh, there were people like Lupe Youngblood from Robstown who was one of the founders and leaders, Carlos Guerra from Robstown, uh, he became very well-known much later, uh, well throughout but much later he was a writer for San Antonio News, a special, I forget, an editorialist, I guess. Uh, and uh, so that's how I got into the MAYO movement, and immediately we were already talking about Raza Unida Party, as a political party, to run candidates and stuff. But, during those couple of years that I was involved in, um, uh, we were involved in protests, and uh, you know, different activities here in Corpus. Uh, and you know, we were always looking for, uh, you know, some way to express our, uh, our politics of the time, I guess. Uh, so we were, we had a number of protests here, we even had a, uh, we sat in, we had a sit in at the school board here one time. There was, uh, the issue was, uh, bussing and, uh, expenditures of funds and stuff. There was a guy here who had been superintendent for many years and everybody perceived him as authoritarian, racist type guy. Guy named Dana Williams, and he had been the superintendent for a long time. And so, we kind of focused on him as the enemy here. And education was, and bussing at the time was, the biggest issue here. We were all, the community was getting, you know, kind of screwed around with that issue. We wound up in a lawsuit, and uh, so they had enforced bussing for a while, for some year. But we were involved in that as well as other issues. From 1970 to 1972, uh, during all that activity we were, the people around the state were talking about, you know, doing, setting up a political party, a third party. And uh, you know, we took it on, so statewide. Now just so people get an understanding of the background, MAYO started out with like, I don't know, ten people, mostly students. And they met a few times, they met in, uh, they met in Gardner Park near San Antonio, uh, people from around the state, from Crystal City. Uh, some of the people there were Lupe Youngblood, Carlos Guerra, Ignacio Perez from San Antonio, Jose Angel Gutierrez from Crystal City, uh, Jesus Ramirez, from Farr, from San Farr or San Juan I forget they're right next to each other. And all, Willie Velasquez, and all those guys went on to do amazing things. Jose Angel Gutierrez, this is MAYO guys, just students. He wound up being, uh, the county judge of Zavala County, he wound up

being the leader of the state Raza Unida Party, and, uh, national Raza Unida Party. So, they went from ten guys to multi-state organizations in a matter of about three years.

So, it was a movement. It was, our part of the Chicano Movement out of Texas, was probably the most influential part of the Chicano Movement in the country because we grew so fast. We had chapters in California, New Mexico, all of Texas, Illinois, Indiana, uh, and Wisconsin that I know of. And, uh, you know, during the course of the, the Raza Unida Party I met a lot of those people from other states and they were active in their states, and most of those guys were from Texas. They had moved out there. So they were exposed here and then wound up exporting the Movement to wherever they were at, right. Except for the California people. Californias, you know, was very active in the Chicano Movement, but they joined Raza Unida Party, which was, which we started here. But they had other organizations, just huge numbers of organizations, in California. They also had the Farmworkers Movement, which the Chicano Movement supported. Now, the Farmworkers Movement was a, uh, they supported Democrats. They never, they never came on board with Raza Unida Party. But we supported them, but they wouldn't support us because they saw it expedient to be dealing with, you know, certain liberal Democrats for legislation and stuff like that. And that was fine, but we did help them. So did the, all the Chicano Movement in California supported them. One of the biggest things about 1970 was the Grape Boycott, that affected all the U.S. and Europe, the European countries that supported the Grape Boycott because we export grapes to Europe, apparently. And, uh, so that was big, but they were not, never part of Raza Unida Party. But we had, uh, Colorado was another state that set up Raza Unida Party. Corky Gonzales was a civil rights leader in Denver, very influential in that area. And they had their own movement Crusade for Justice, but they joined Raza Unida Party. By 19, I want to say 1970, I had just missed all that because I came back from the service. But, in 1970 there was a national convention in El Paso, Texas. And, uh, the leaders that showed up there were Jose Angel Gutierrez, who was a leader of Texas, Corky Gonzalez. Reies Lopez Tijerina from New Mexico, you can read up on him he was a leader from northern New Mexico that fought for rights under, property, land rights under the land grants and federal property. He was saying that the federal property belonged to Chicanos there from northern, uh, New Mexico. And, but he was from Texas, so he moved over there, and led the whole Movement over there. Very influential in New Mexico, um, you know, history. So, uh, we went from, um, those ten or so guys here in San Antonio that met, who were from South Texas. Then they met in Mission, Texas, at the actual mission up there, there's a mission there near the, right next to the river. It's an old, I think it's an old Spanish mission, and they met there. And then they, they pretty much decided then, that they debated whether to go statewide on Raza Unida or to do regional efforts. Like they identified areas where we had majorities, for example, and decided, but they said Hell let's go statewide. So, after that, we collected signatures around the state, enough to get on the ballot. And I think there was some litigation back then, I wasn't involved in that I wasn't a lawyer. But, uh, there was a guy named, um, Warren Burnett, who was a lawyer out of Odessa, Midland area. And he was a very liberal guy, and he supported our effort, he was, apparently, he was a friend of our leader Jose Angel Gutierrez. And they wound up in some litigation and we got on the ballot. They were trying to disqualify us, you know, our people that signed petitions. We did petition drive here in Corpus and all over the state. We got, I think over 100,000 signatures, verified signatures around the state to get on the ballot. So, then we had to work. I went from Corpus

to Kingsville. And in Kingsville, that was the real hotbed of Chicano Movement over there in Kingsville because it was the only 4 year college in South Texas back then. There was no other four-year college. None in, none in Brownsville, none in Edinburg, none in Laredo, not, not even here in Corpus. The, this was a Christian University back in the 70, 1970, and it was a two year college. So there was no four-year college except Kingsville, so everybody from South Texas went there because it was a state-supported school. You know, people went of course all over the county who had money. But if you didn't have money back then, like most people didn't, you wound up in Kingsville because it was a state-supported school, tuition was, was low at the time. And so, there was people from all over South Texas who we were exposed to people, and worked with people, from all the communities. From San Antonio on down, mostly San Antonio to Laredo to the Valley, all this area, all went to college there. So, uh, during the, lets say 1970 to 72, we were working very hard in establishing our local Raza Unida Party in Kingsville, and in Corpus. We ran candidates in Kingsville. Uh, we, you know, we ran a county commissioner, we ran, uh, couple other positions there. And we had to do a lot of work. It's just incredible. When you're starting from nothing, you know, political parties been around for a couple of centuries here, but ours was, we started right there, so it was a lot of work. But, uh, we also had a little, we had a lot of help from the local county clerk there, who helped us along. She was a sympathizer, so she would guide us, say you got to do this you got to do that and do these reports, and all that, she was, she was an expert. And I remember her name, her name, her last name was Najara, and she was a county clerk or assistant county clerk there, chief clerk, and she helped us, you know. We probably couldn't have done it without her help. And so we ran candidates there, and uh, our guy, our main guy, did not win. Uh, but then a few years later we ran somebody for city council, and we got one guy on the city council. And so we got a lot information from him, to stuff going on there. But in Robstown, we were successful in 1972. We won almost everything in Robstown. We won the city council, the school board, the drainage district. And the, you know, the, that was a dramatic change in Robstown, that's, and it was, it stayed that way for many years, even into the 90s we had influence there. Some of our people in power or in position. Uh, the uh, but what happened in Robstown there was a superintendent of schools and a mayor who both had been in those positions for 30 years. So, 1972 was the year we were going to end that bullshit. So, uh, the people voted for all our people, we got our people in. And the superintendent was fired, or he left, I'm trying to, it's hard to remember, but he was gone. The city mayor, who had been there forever, he was replaced, and then we had the school district for a long time. Uh, and uh, our activity in Kingsville and Robstown we did a lot of coordination with our Chicano Movement, our local politics and our local elections and all that stuff. And uh, we were always ready for a protest, you know. One summer, for example, in Robstown, there was a couple of guys on the city council that were not our people, and they would just vote against everything, right. And one of them had some convenience stores, two or three of them, there in Robstown. Another guy, uh, he was a store manager for a furniture store. So we picketed both of them, just to embarrass them, with the community to show how they were basically sellouts, right. And so, the guy that uh, uh, the guy that owned the, uh, convenience stores, we picketed him the whole summer, one whole summer, and I think it was 1972 or 3. And people quit going, he closed down, left town. And, you know, he was just a real, real jackass, he would not, he would oppose everything that our people came up with, our people on the council came up with. So, we

replaced him the next election. The guy that ran the furniture store, it was an area furniture store, uh, we picketed his store, to embarrass him. They fired him, I think they fired him. It was a Lacks out of Victoria, they were out of Victoria at the time, and they had stores here. They got rid of him because, you know, they were losing business. And they're so stupid, you know, all they had to do was just be reasonable, you know, we weren't, we weren't doing anything crazy. We were probably the most responsible uncorrupted people ever, you know. Uh, then we had uh, we had uh, over, over the years we still had control over those things, and the drainage district. Raza Unida people ran it, okay. And then uh, I want to say, uh, that's for the local stuff, 1980s, about 1985, '86 we lost control of the board, then we got control of the school board again. So, uh, the board got rid of their attorneys, the big attorneys here in the area for taxes and all that stuff. So we got rid of them. And then uh, we investigated, my law office actually, investigated what the superintendent there. And we did an audit, and we found that they had broken the law, they had stolen money. And the superintendent had even, that's when they started computers back then, he had taken computers home, basically stolen them. Guy named, his last name was Gallegos, and he was from Colorado. They brought him in from Colorado. And the way that they, uh, broke the law and stole money was, it's, there's a law in the education code that says if you change your budget, your administration budget, you can't just say well we're adding half a million dollars. You have to itemize. Who's getting what, what raise, and all that. And what they did was, to the school board, they just threw it in as a lump sum thing. That's illegal, and it's a crime. And there was corruption here in Corpus. So we took, we got, we got, a big report, an audit report, and we did a report on what they had done over there. And we brought it to the district attorney here in Corpus. It was a white guy at the time, the mid 80s. And they did something extremely corrupt. We gave it to them, we said look we want you to look at this, we know that they've broken the law because we have the proof here. So we gave them the proof against that superintendent. And the DA here gave that report to that superintendent's attorney, okay, and then that attorney wrote a scathing letter to the grand jury stating that this was all politics, and it was a Raza Unida politics that we had it out for this guy. For no other reason. In other words, ignore the corruption. But the corrupt part was the DAs never ever give information to a defense lawyer, that's unheard of. We're not allowed to influence a grand jury, it's secret, unless they invite you testify, okay. And this guy didn't testify, his attorney wrote a response to our investigation that was handed over from the DA to the corrupt superintendent. So we fired his ass, okay. The school board fired him. Then he sued us in state court here, and we had lawyers that assisted us and removed it. We got a guy from the Valley, who was a, it was a white guy but he sympathized with our movement back then. And he, uh, he filed a removal to federal court, which is the proper jurisdiction for civil rights violations and stuff like that, which they were alleging. Political, you know, first amendment shit. So when we did, that they said we're out of here. They wouldn't mess with the federal system because you can't trick them, and you can't, you try any bullshit there and you're likely to, you know, get sanctioned, fined, thrown out of court, who knows they have a lot of power. So they quit, the guy left the state, and we didn't give him a penny. See in most, and, okay, just an aside here. After we got rid of that guy, the school district in Taft called me, and asked to help them get rid of their superintendent because he was doing strange stuff. So we went through a process, and that guy had like a three year contract, we did some hearings, uh, gave him due process, public hearings and the whole bit, and they fired him. And, uh, what's weird

about white people, they don't accept when brown people tell them they're full of shit. And so that superintendent stayed in that office for months, he wouldn't leave, he'd show up for work every day after he was fired. And the board over there, had named the assistant there, they called it something else. It's not a superintendent but, it was a woman, and they named her interim. So she handled all the affairs, that guy just wouldn't leave. And that's not the only time this happened. This had happened before. This happened over here in Calallen one time. But, uh, he sued us, and because he had a three year contract, we settled with him for \$50,000. And the school board was happy because, you know, he was probably entitled about \$300, \$400,000 over three or four year contract. So for \$50,000 we got rid of him. So they were happy with that. But, uh, so, you know, that's what was going on here in the area, you know. Raza Unida people were getting rid of these crooks, basically. Back to Raza Unida Party, while all this stuff was going on, all the local politics, statewide politics, this was going on all over the place. Cities everywhere, where we were, had any influence was just massive changes, you know. Robstown was one of the strongholds, and Crystal City was the main one. Over there for a period of time they controlled everything. We controlled everything. And we made changes in education, uh, there was one graduation, uh, year where they had to use the stadium because it didn't fit in the usual place for graduations. Because they had adults graduating from GED classes that nobody had ever bothered with, um, and uh, and other stuff and other educational things going on there. We even had a graduate program funded by Carnegie Foundation and we were educating people to be superintendents of school, at the time. So there was a bunch of people went there and it wound up being around the state being, uh, superintendents. In '86 when we still had Robstown, we, we, uh, we brought back a superintendent that had worked in Crystal City. He worked there and it was, I don't know if, what, I don't, you know, it's hard to keep up with everybody. But he wound up in Dallas, we brought him from Dallas, we brought him to Robstown. And then, you know, we did a purge over there of all the crooks again, and we put in some better people, people that had been there in the district. Uh, there was a, you know, that was during that corruptions area, we got him to replace a Gallegos guy, okay. And then those other people, administrators, were still there, so he got rid of them. So we kind of, you know, got, did some house cleaning back then. But during all this time, we were, you know, especially out of Crystal City, we developed a relationship with the Mexican government. And so, uh, the president at the time was a guy named Echeverria, Luis Echeverria. And uh, they had, we had, ongoing relations with that administration, and they provided books for the school district in Crystal City in Spanish. The real bilingual education. Not the transitional stuff like the rest of the state. But over there is bilingual education, and we had Spanish textbooks. History, math, everything. And so, uh, that, that's expensive, and it's from another country. So we were getting foreign aid from Mexico for the first time. And then, that, as that relationship developed, the Mexican government offered Raza Unida Party, up to, it was up to \$20 million dollars in scholarships. So we had, we were recruiting around the state to send people to Mexico to study, for medical school, some of our, we have, there's doctors that went to medical school under that scholarship program. And so, the, uh, the students and I went in a group over there to visit the students over there one time in Mexico City. There were people that were studying everything, arts, history, medicine, everything and they met with us to give us an update on how they were doing. But they would get free books, free tuition at the universities over there, different, all over the place. And they'd get a stipend from that scholarship fund, so

every month they'd get a stipend while they're studying, so man they had it made, you know. They'd get, sheesh, it was a lot of money back then. Four or five hundred a month, plus free everything, it was enough to live comfortably and study comfortably. Uh, so I knew some of the students that had gone over there in the first because we recruited them from Kingsville, from other places around South Texas, okay. So, uh, that was a major, major thing. That was really the first, maybe the only time, that a foreign country had proved foreign aid to Chicano people. Non, you know, from another country. What other country has given us, given citizens of the U.S. foreign aid? It hasn't happened, that I know of, okay. We were also developing some ties with political parties in Mexico. Uh, in particular it was a political party at the time was Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores, or those Mexican Socialist Workers Party. In 1980, we had a uh, I don't know what you call it, a convention with, where we were the honored group there. And it was a, man I'm trying to remember what it was, and the year. No that was earlier than that, it was early on, this was 1975, this was after where we were all involved here in the local area. Robstown, Kingsville, Crystal City, other towns, Carrizo Springs, Laredo, just everywhere there was movement. Okay, no I, I'm getting confused here. In 1980 we had this meeting with this socialist party, and like we were, we had a person, one of our representatives at the table. That guy was from New Mexico, he was the state chair of New Mexico Raza Unida Party, a guy named, his last name was Pena, I'm trying to remember his first name. And he was the most dramatic speaker there in Spanish. And they were, these guys, the people on that panel were like ambassadors from all the Latin American countries. Vietnam ambassador to Mexico was on that panel, and he spoke perfect Spanish, he was an Asian guy spoke perfect Spanish. So we got all these, I mean, you know, people, important people, and our guy. And, but our guy was more dynamic than the rest of the people who, you know, are seasoned politicians and ambassadors and all that stuff. And he got a standing ovation from all the people there, there was a lot of people there. It was basically a socialist convention for Mexico for that particular party. After that year, that party kind of broke up, and they formed other parties, and Mexico politics has been changing ever since. Right now the president of Mexico is a socialist, but he's not a member of either of the major parties. He, uh, they started a party called MORENA party. So it morphed a lot since 1980 until now, now they got like a Bernie Sanders type president over there. Uh, the um, in 1975, uh, we sent a delegation to Cuba. And that involved, it was Raza Unida people from California, all the states that we had people, California, New Mexico, Texas, Indiana, and Illinois, that I recall. And so it was about 20 people and some people that Crystal City that went, four or five of them from there, including the superintendent of schools, who was the same guy we hired here in Robstown in 1986 later on. Uh, and during that trip, that trip was sponsored by the Mexican, a portion of the Mexican government, of the Partido PRI. And in particular it was Mexican female architects who had a lot of influence in Mexico City with the national party, and so they sponsored us. And so we went basically to Mexico City, and then because of the bureaucratic, there was some bureaucratic problems getting all the paperwork, we had to stay there like ten days. So the Mexican government paid our stay in Mexico. You know, hotels in the central district, you know, meals, everything. And then, uh, from Mexico City we flew to Havana, and we were there for about ten days, and they gave us a tour of a lot of the things going on there. Uh, mostly social services, uh, health clinics, art, art exhibits, factories, technical schools, daycare centers, all that over there is free. Free medical, free health, schools, they have these technical schools where the kids go stay there at the school a

week, and they go home on the weekends. And those kids were like, the real young kids were like, man super smart. They were giving us lectures on the technology that they were using for whatever the industry was there, part of it was the sugar industry, and how they refine it in factories and all that stuff. So it was very interesting. But, uh, when we were in Mexico City, while those ten days we were in Mexico City, they took us around to meet some of the exiled intellectuals from Chile. There were hits on them by the dictator from Chile, 1972 there was a coup that was supported by the U.S., uh, through Nixon Administration. Henry Kissinger was probably the architect of the whole thing, and, um, they basically financed a military coup in Chile, and they took out the government. They had an elected socialist government in Chile. So they killed hundreds of people, professors, intellectuals, activists, union people, and a lot of them, they were given asylum in Mexico City, or in Mexico, I don't know if all of them were in Mexico City. But we got to meet some of them, they took us to the safehouses. In small groups, two or three of us, there was twenty of us there but they took two or three of us, they didn't want a big old crowd at a safehouse, you know. So they took two or three of us, to different people. And they would tell us about what was going on in Chile, which was military coup supported by the U.S. and that the dictatorship over there was, had hits on the intellectuals. They had to, they had to leave. And a lot of them were socialists, they weren't all socialists but they were against intellectuals, you know. So, uh, we got to meet them and that was a dramatic thing because they were, I mean like, it's like super smart guys like your professors here, and they go through a lot to get to those positions. And then can you imagine if someone trying to kill them here because of what they're teaching or talking about? So, we got to meet some of those, that was pretty dramatic. I guess, all of that, my point is, is that this movement went from ten people here in South Texas to meetings in Cuba, relationship with Mexico, \$10 to \$20 million dollars in scholarships, more, uh, foreign aid and education by providing schoolbooks to the school district in Crystal City, and there was just like huge numbers of things going on I'm just touching a little bit of it, you know.

But it was in, every area you can think of, education. Like 1970-72, there were not too many Chicano lawyers, or doctors. You know, we take it for granted now. But they didn't, there was very few back then. So, we had to fight to get into law schools for example. And then once we were in, we fought to get other people in. The right kind of people. We didn't want just another corporate guy, you know, a brown corporate guy, we wanted people that had some community experience and stuff. So at University of Houston for example, and others, we formed a Chicano Law Students Association, and we demanded to have input on the admissions process. We even had a sit in there at the University of Houston and they caved, they okay said we'll get one of your guys, we got a black representative on the admissions committee. So those people had a lot of influence on who got in, okay. And then, um, so once we were in we got some of our Raza Unida people into law school who would not have gotten in otherwise, because we had somebody on the committee. See, and in the past they had the corporate guys on the committees, and they'd want more corporate guys. So we got a lot of activists into law schools in Houston, especially in Houston, UT, and other places through that process. And it wouldn't have happened had we not done anything, had we not been active. So now it's for granted, we have a Mexican American mayor who I'm not real proud of. She took a picture with this idiot governor last week, grinning from ear to ear. You know, this guy's against abortion, he's against women's right to health care, their own health care their own decisions, he's a racist with our

people, Mexican people on the border. They're moving people across the country right now, uh, you know, tricking them into buses and saying promising jobs. They got sued just yesterday. The governor of Florida got sued, in a class action suit, for fraud and some other things. Basically, to me, what they were doing, they're breaking the law en masse. I represent people that actually, you know, will like smuggle a person who shouldn't be here, well they get arrested, they go to jail. These guys were doing it by the busload. That should be illegal, it, the feds should be arresting the governor of Texas, and the governor of Florida, for transporting, persons, undocumented persons to other states across state lines. It's crazy. They're breaking the law with impunity, you give somebody a ride from down the highway you're going to jail. So anyway, my point in all this is is that we went from a few people to international stuff, we're dealing with a political party in Mexico, socialist party in Mexico, we're dealing with the PRI in Mexico. They gave us millions of dollars for scholarships that were well used, all of our people got educated over there, they came back, most of them came back, some of them stayed over there, to teach and stuff because they got PhDs over there so they decided to stay, I knew a couple of them. Most of them came back and went to the communities, educated, you know, for free. Uh, and then, you know, uh, our movement pretty much lasted up until 1980 or 81. 1980 we had one of the last state meetings where, you know, the population was dwindling among the members. But what had happened during those ten years is that our people went through a lot of crap. We got singled out for firing, for activities, a lot of people, some people had problems with police. We had one guy over in Pearsall got beat up by the DPS, just for being an activist. And after that his mind wasn't right, they caused some brain damage and he kind of faded away, he was a real good activist from Pearsall. And then the politics changed over in Crystal City which was our base, so there was a lot of outside pressure from the Democratic Party, especially statewide and especially from San Antonio because near San Antonio they had a lot of influence. So they started some division, started locally, people that had been, that were from there went to college, and came back, and then there were people, Raza Unida people that we had brought in from other places to run the school districts, to you know, to be the teachers, to be the administrators in the city. They say hey, I'm from here, I want the job. So they formed a political, kind of a political party, and we called them the oportunistas, okay. Because they wanted to go back and they thought they were entitled to the jobs. So they started causing a lot of divisions and rifts, and of course it's a small community so it's very easy to divide when it's families involved. You get your family on this side and the other family on that side, and so. And then there was another group, which was they were the thug party, they were the, in Crystal City they were the Barrio Club, and those guys they were like Nazis they beat people up. And so it wound up being three groups, and in spite of our efforts there was one election where, the last election over there was '78, we won everything. But because of the influence, because they were starting to gather their forces against us and using their money, there was some local wealthy white people from that county that funded these various groups against Raza Unida, okay. And so the corruption came in that way. And so what they did was, they started hiring lawyers from San Antonio to sue our people, so when we won the election they, this is unreal, okay. They brought on these lawyers and they sued all our people for an election contest. And they brought in a racist judge from Sonora, Texas, he was another district, they brought him in because the judges were organized by district, and the judge there I guess he reclused himself so they brought a judge from outside, supposedly

neutral, but he was a racist. So he decided that the elections were, uh, had been, uh, illegal. So he ordered a new election, but in the process, they had depositions. You know what deposition is? That's when you can get somebody's testimony under oath prior to the lawsuit so you can have evidence. So you can kind of get people down on their testimony, so you can use it later on, you can say wait a minute you said this during the deposition, now you're changing your story. And it's to discredit and, you know, get an advantage. They deposed every single voter in Zavala County that had voted, every single voter. They had depositions going on at the courthouse over there, 5 or 6 at the same time, different lawyers. Our lawyers, Raza Unida lawyers, were volunteers. They were from the area there, people that were part of Raza Unida Party. And their lawyers were from San Antonio who were financed and paid by the rich people in Zavala county. So they undid this election, and then they sued us for the, something called muniments of the position. In other words, uh, your salary for four years was going to be \$250,000, that's it, about \$80 per year or something like that, so, of the people that were in office. So they sued our people for like a million dollars, these were the quote "Mexican civil rights lawyers" from San Antonio who were hired by the whites to give us Hell, okay. So the, uh, when they, uh, they went through all this process, they had a special election. And then because Crystal City is a migrant community, they had a special election when everybody was gone. They went up north, I don't know if you know about the migrant thing, but back then it was very big and so people would go up north. The judge ordered the election when they knew they were going to be gone, so our people who had been deposed and were shell-shocked from the depositions, that had never happened before, it's dramatic, okay. They bring you in, you're just a normal voter, simple farmworker, and they're asking you about all your personal questions, you know. Who you sleeping with, stuff like that. Yeah, and they'd freak out. Because everybody knows, we know you're sleeping with the neighbor over there, man they'd start sweating and shit. And so the voters were intimidated that way, horribly. And then they were probably almost relieved that they had to go up north and not vote. So our people, all our people lost the special election except one, okay. But they sued all, the county, the rest of them for a total of a million dollars. And man they were sweating bullets. And this is not, this is the truth, okay. I was in Kingsville, okay, by then I'm a legal aid lawyer. So, when this happened, Jose Angel Gutierrez who was the county judge over there at the time called me and says, "Hey, we need help over here man, we got sued." He got sued too. I helped him out of two lawsuits, civil rights lawsuits. Uh, that uh, he was involved in. And then, this group that got sued, the county commissioners and stuff that had lost the special election. They'd won and then lost when the racist judge had come and threw us all out. Uh, I settled a million dollar lawsuit for \$10,000. So, with the attorneys in San Antonio, I went to visit San Antonio to visit with them, after I talked to the people in Crystal City, you know, so I could get an idea of what the heck was going on because I didn't know. So then I went over there and settled it out for \$10,000, and each of the four people that got sued for a quarter of a million each paid \$2,500 and they were glad to be done with it, you know. So that was pretty much, that election was pretty much the end of Raza Unida Party. They'd, they destroyed us through legal means, through money, through corruption, and causing divisions in the community. Some of it from within, you know, like the opportunistas who would come back home and say "Hey I'm back, I want the job now. I should have it, I'm qualified now." Of course we're the ones that educated, those assholes, you know. So, uh, we had, we always had state conventions during those years, every couple of

years we had a, you know, convention and we'd get our, uh, try to get our stuff together. We were one of the early parties that had a statewide, female that was state chairman, Mariela Martinez from Austin. She was a teacher at the time and she was involved in Raza Unida politics and stuff, and she was great. So Raza Unida Party, in my opinion, was always, we always gave women, you know equal voice and everything. Some of them were local presidents, local organizational presidents, she was our state chair for two terms I think, one after the other, we didn't want her to quit, she quit, you know. But in Crystal City, Robstown, some of our leaders were women, strong women, so we always, in Kingsville, we always appreciated their participation and we always had equal rights. From the very beginning, when we did our party, we were the progressives in this country. We were for health care for all, we were for civil rights for all, voting rights for everybody, housing, employment, you know, we pushed all that stuff, you know, uh, early on. And you hear about it now with the progressive Democrats, but we were at it since way back then, and we put it in, in fact, over in Crystal City especially, because over there, they had, oh man, all kinds of money they attracted to the community, they did housing for example. They had so much money they gave houses away, to people that qualified. Just gave them away. And most of the programs they make you, you got to pay, you make payments, you get financing from friendly finance, you know, what do you call them, agencies, you know. The Farmers Bureau and all that stuff. And uh, this was the Urban League, there was so much money there that was well spent, there was no corruption, we were never corrupt, we were always under the microscope, we couldn't be corrupt. Gave houses away, instead of making them go through financing, they say, "Crap what are we going to do with all this money," give it to them. So you know, a lot of people got free homes. And we also did, also educated a lot of people that, we got people in Crystal City into GED programs that would not have gone, you know. And so, one graduation year there were parents and children graduating at the same time, in the same ceremony, because they did that they brought the adults into the ceremonies, grandparents and stuff. It was amazing. Uh, what was going on in Crystal City, for example, to give you an idea, in the elementary school they did a mural there, our people did a mural there, of Mexican historical characters, you know, heroes. Pancho Villa, Emiliano Zapata, people like that, on the mural. When the opportunistas took over, they painted over it with Disney characters, literally. Painted over it with Mickey Mouse and stuff like that. Can you imagine that? Talk about reactionary, going backwards, you know. So, uh, I want to say about five or six years ago, no, time flies. We had a reunion in San Antonio, I want to say about ten years ago, and man we had people from all over the place. Man we had, uh, huge number of people. 500 maybe. We had one this past weekend, the 50th anniversary of Raza Unida Party, it started in '72, when we ran statewide candidates, almost for every position, unheard of for a third party. Uh, the uh, in 2022 that's 50 years. So we had a reunion, uh, this past weekend, and uh, I was a presenter or a moderator on one of the groups that had to do with community newspapers, publications and stuff. We had several of them through the years there in Kingsville, and then we had one in Robstown that was we supported, I worked on it Robstown also, La Lomita Newspaper. And there were newspapers from all over South Texas, that was one of the things we used for propaganda, that's all we had. So we would make our own, so every community where we had any kind of influence, we had a newspaper. Uh, and you know, I talked about it's pretty lonely work, because you had to do all the writing, taking photographs, you had to raise funds, sell ads, do all that that stuff, for one newspaper, so it kept you busy,

and there's very little help, nobody wants to do that stuff. So, uh, there was some other people from other communities that talked about it. One guy, uh, they had a protest and it was right before I got involved so I didn't know about it, but the uh, this guy got charged with inciting a riot as a felony, and he was convicted but placed on probation, way back then. The only one I ever heard about that they prosecuted, and basically it was just a protest, probably a school walkout back then. That's how the MAYO thing started, it was school walkouts. Miller, Miller High School had one, Kingsville, Alice, and then in the Valley it was major walkouts in Elsa, Del Rio had a major walkout. San Antonio had three, three different school districts. So that's how basically the MAYO movement started, so it went from that, that was one of their first activities. And then went on, we developed very quickly man, within three years, by 1972 we were running statewide candidates, and had a legal party. By 1980, I think it was '81, the Democrats, there was no Republicans. I don't know, you don't know this, there was no Republicans in Texas. They had no power at all anywhere, everybody was a Democrat. But all those people that think Republican were in the Democratic Party, because it was like a monolith at the time. So you had all the right wingers, you had a few liberals in there, the liberals were kind of wishy washy, they weren't real strong. So they were kind of conservative, you know, from modern perspective they were pretty conservative. The right wingers, the Democrats, anyway they changed the law so that we couldn't have a third party very easily. The made it harder because they increased the, uh, the requirement for the signatures, from 2% to 6% of the last vote. So we got 20 million population in Texas maybe more, you know, maybe 5 million voting, so you got to have 6% of that, it was just too much. Nobody could do that, it's almost impossible. That's why the Green Party, they'll have elections in certain states, but not every state, because those states have different laws. The Democrats in Texas pretty much, uh, legislated us out of competition, just made it too hard. And by then, I talked about it a little bit, you know, people were, uh, persecuted around the state. They'd lose their jobs, they'd get a good job and then, you know, the boss would find out they're an activist and they would fire them. So a lot of people left the state, they went up to, a lot of our people went to Wisconsin. During those times they had a very progressive governor over there, and a very progressive state. And so people that left here, the educated kids from here, they'd go up there, they'd find jobs in universities, in administration of the governor over there. There was a lot of our people working for the governor of Wisconsin at the time, or they'd go to universities and stuff. So once they're gone, they're gone, the families, they'd take their families. They're not here, they're not participating. But that was because we were pushed out, because the forces that were opposed to us, they got their shit together and they decided they were going to sue us, like in Crystal City. They were going to push us out of jobs, they were going to do everything possible to kill our movement. And, you know, and times changed. So the movement kind of dissipated through, even our biggest leader Jose Angel Gutierrez from Crystal City, he had been the county judge, he would up in Washington state. He left as far as he could, as far as he could go away, because they pushed him out. When the politics changed over there, we had three to two, and then we lost one guy, those three cut his salary in half. And he was the county judge, and they had majority. So when they cut his salary in half, he said well I'm going to do half the work then. But a county judge does probate law, criminal, administers the county, and so he'd go, he would do half the work. He said, "You're going to pay me half, I'll do half." So, but he couldn't do that, then they filed a grievance on him with the Judicial Qualifications Commission

in Austin. And he called me, out of Kingsville, and said, "Hey I need an attorney, want to come with me?" and I said, "Well yeah, you got anybody else?" "No." So I go with him to Austin to the, uh, the uh, Judicial Qualifications Commission meeting where they're doing his case, and it was like, almost like out of a movie. The original lawyer who helped us establish Raza Unida Party in 1972 shows up in Austin at that meeting, I guess they told him about it so he shows up. And this guy is like, he's like a giant in the legal community. He was a civil rights lawyer, he was a millionaire, he was a, he made his money in the oil business over there in West Texas. But he was a very liberal guy, and he shows up and they know each other, for years. And I was in awe, I mean this was uh, this was like meeting Percy Foreman or, you know, some big lawyer, national known lawyer, he was nationally known. And so he shows up there, and he says, "You want me to help you?" and I said "Yeah, take over," you know, I, you know, so he took over. But had he not shown up I would have had to do an argument there with the judges, basically lawyers and judges that were part of the commission, they're mostly, I think they're all judges. So he announced Jose Angel Gutierrez, he's a very educated guy, he's a professor, he's written books, he's a lawyer now, he went to law school, he's a, he's teaching now in California at the university. Uh, he resigned right there. He was going to do it anyway, he was, they had cut his salary, the politics went to crap over in Crystal City, it was too much. They persecuted us to, out of, almost out of existence, right. Only one of our people remained in office over there, it was a county clerk. And uh, so basically, you know, and you know, they got rid of our people that we had in the administration, in the school, in the city, in the county, they got rid of people. So all our people were gone. So it seemed like the "I'm out of here too." So he resigned there and moved his family to Washington state. He got a job over there, doing, I think he was a, man I can't quite remember, I think he was the, uh, director of the united fund in that, in northwest or something, and then he wound up on national boards of all kinds. He was on the, one of the boards, he was on a bunch of boards. One of them was the Catholic church board out of Washington D.C., and they, uh, grant money around the country and they, uh, have a lot of money. And he was in the united fund thing, he's done all kinds of stuff. He's worked on campaigns over the years, he worked the Bernie campaign here in South Texas. Uh, he came down from California, he stayed, man, half a year or a year in Brownsville working the Bernie campaign down here. Uh, he also has a foundation, a legal foundation in Dallas, that's involved in all kinds of stuff, lawsuits and stuff. One of the things that he's involved in that I'm involved in is, uh, uh, he's trying to get funds for Uvalde, for the people of Uvalde. He went over there not too long ago to meet with some of those people there. They're very organized right now, and he's trying to get resources to help them for mental health issues, uh, organizing things, and other, you know, projects that they have going over there. So he's been real active on that. I'm on that board for the Dallas area foundation, that foundation is seeking funds from, some of these other foundations, to help the people in Uvalde. So, you know, we've been involved, and we remain involved. This is a lifetime thing, none of, there were about 300 people at the meeting in San Antonio this past weekend, and I knew a lot of them but a lot them I didn't know. Because they were from North Texas and stuff, I didn't know them, but people from the area here I knew. And, uh, pretty much everybody is still involved in something, you know, either on a foundation, or on a board, writing, or they're, they were, a lot of them were retired, now we're at retirement age, most of us. But they stay active. And so, and, a lot of them are participating in the Democratic Party. The Democratic Party changed, it's character changed

from the 70s, it's not the same political party. But uh, you know, we had this great convention it's a lot of reminiscing and stuff, but there was not a whole lot of like ideas about organizing again. That ain't going to happen. But the people are not gone, and the people are still active in their personal lives and all kinds of projects, activities, protests, you name it, you know.

[Garza]: Wow. So, the party really was reaching international, as well as like national and state level things and, uh, it was—

[Cavada]: It went from, it went from local to regional to state very quickly, and then multistate right away, because the other, California, Colorado, and some of those other states. People from Texas had gone to other states but they said hey, wait a minute, we want to be a part of it. So there were like, uh, the convention in El Paso, as I understand there were like, I want to say 2,000 people there. From around the country, at the convention, as delegates, you know. And then those people went back to their communities and got to work, you know. So we were active, MAYO started in about 1968. By, and was active, and it morphed into Raza Unida Party. The MAYO faded out because we just changed to politics, and that lasted until 1980. By 1981, it was like, you know, everybody grew up, you know, we were pretty young. So people got careers, I went to law school. While I was in law school, I was still active. We were doing fundraisers in Houston for Robstown. We'd send money to Robstown for the stuff going on there, because they needed, you know, everyone needs in politics. But back then we didn't need a lot of money, because it was people that, it was people powered, you know, it wasn't financed. So we'd sent 500 bucks, that was a lot for Robstown, you know, do that every couple of months. We'd have breakfast and, you know, people pitch in and send it over there, stuff like that. We were still active.

[Garza]: So, it was really community-driven, I guess I could say. Uh, so did you experience any like, uh, like oppression or anything like in your early days? Or was it just kind of like MAYO and you were just interested from there on?

[Cavada]: Well, it, you know, it's um, it's kind of strange but like I grew up in the '50s, okay. And the '60s. I graduated high school in '67. So those were some pretty, uh, crazy years in the U.S. You know, in the '50s and '60s the black movement was going strong. That racism, you'd see it on TV back then. The cops beating black people up, putting dogs on people, hosing them down, you've probably seen those old videos. That was real, you know. And here in Corpus, right here at the Center Theatre, when I was a kid blacks had to be upstairs in the balcony. The brown people, I guess we were okay when I was going to the movies there. But, uh, people a little older than me told me there was a lot of racism here in Corpus where they'd had those signs, you've probably seen them, where "No Mexicans or Dogs Allowed" on your yard, they'd, people would put that stuff on their yards here. A friend of mine, uh, he uh, there was a something called a Bell Cafeteria, it was kind of like a Luby's but it before that. They didn't allow Mexicans in there. And he went in there one time, and they said, "You can't be in here sir." He tore the place up. And, uh, the cops came and he knew some of the cops, they told him "Get out of here, go on home." This was right downtown here in Corpus, one block, two blocks down from here. And the Center Theatre blacks were not allowed on the first floor. I saw that, I

thought it was strange, you know, because I was a kid. It didn't register very well. I said, "What the hell's going on here?" you know. I couldn't, I didn't have the ability back then to understand, but there was racism. And, uh, uh, I experienced it personally through school, Catholic school, white kids there, you know, there was a lot of, there was racial tensions. There just were. Uh, at the high school, the Catholic high school, same thing. It was racial tensions there, you know. I didn't get along with the white kids, they didn't get along with me. Uh, as you get a little more educated, more sophisticated, you can see institutional racism, that you don't get when you're a kid. You don't realize, people are denied jobs because of their color. Over in Kingsville, when I got into legal aid over there, we wound up suing the factory over here. The Celanese, it's a chemical plant out there. We sued them for discrimination because only whites got the promotions there, and those are the best jobs in the area. The chemical plant, that's like refinery work, so through that lawsuit they started hiring local people, Chicanos. And so, they got into those jobs, and they paid very well. So, uh, that's institutional racism. And then we had a, when I was student at Kingsville at the university, we protested the university because we supported the groundskeepers, the maintenance workers there, who worked there for years. And there was a white guy that was the boss, and they were real abusive, they'd tell a guy "Hey did a hole here we're going to plant a tree." And the guys would be digging a hole, and they'd say, "No cover it up I want it over there." That's the kind of crap that went on. So, we put an end to that crap, that white guy that was there he retired, he couldn't take the heat. So somebody else took over, a Chicano took over, and started treating people right. You don't make a guy dig a hole and then "Let's cover it up let's put it somewhere." They would do stuff like that. We put a stop to that, you know. And, uh, we gave that administration Hell, over in Kingsville. And, see one of the things about Kingsville is that, see the people would go to raise Hell there and leave. They go back to Crystal City, they'd go to Carrizo Springs, they'd go to Laredo. And when we were there, we decided to deal with the local people to change the politics locally in Kingsville because that's what we did, right. And they told us the only problem is when you guys come over here, you guys graduate, and you leave. So I took that as a challenge and so I stayed. I graduated and I stayed a year after I graduated, working the community, doing newspaper work, organizing stuff. And then, uh, I got the opportunity to go to law school. But I came back to Kingsville, and I'd come back during summers, and I was working with the legal aid office there like an intern. And so I kept organizing, even while I was there with the legal aid office. And uh, we helped with that lawsuit, you know, against the Celanese, and we did several lawsuits. I got into employment law because the discrimination was, where it counts, is in employment. They don't have to like you, but they shouldn't deny you promotions, right. I mean white people don't have to like us, but don't discriminate, don't keep us from getting the jobs that we're qualified for, or we deserve, or we go to school for, right. So we wound up in education, employment disputes with local governments or the university. Uh, we also got involved in a health issue in Kingsville in 1978. This is, nobody, very few people know about this. We formed a local, uh, local board to try to get a health clinic in Kingsville. There were health clinics around the country but we didn't have one. So we applied to the Carter Administration right at the end. In 1978 we got a letter from the Carter Administration granting us a million dollars, and man we were ecstatic. But goddamn it was at the end of his administration, Reagan came in and they cancelled the million dollar grant. We were going to set it, we had the whole plan, we had a board, we had, mostly

community people. We had a lot of opposition from the local doctors, the dentists, the pharmacists, you name it. Even the Mexican Americans were opposed to us, but we got approval anyway. But then Reagan came in and they took the funding, they cancelled it. So we almost had a health clinic there. It was going to be the type of health clinic where it would be a primary health care clinic, where people would go there and they'd be referred out. If they had serious problems, they'd be referred out to specialists, or hospital, whatever. If they were minor stuff the doctor would deal with it, give them prescriptions or whatever. That was the plan. We had a couple of nurses on our board and we had poor people on our board. And the doctors hated that. The local doctors are, they opposed us to the end man but we still beat them. And uh, the politicians from the area opposed us too, not just the medical people. But we almost had a big victory there, and had the administration continued we would have had that clinic for sure in Kingsville.

[Garza]: Wow so—

[Cavada]: We had the location, we had everything.

[Garza]: That's just really—

[Cavada]: So we were involved in health, education, you know, protests, international stuff, national issues, you know. We'd go to Austin all the time to protest, you know. We'd hear about a protest in Austin we'd go over. Like San Antonio school districts, had some protests over there. And uh, man there'd be thousands of people up there. Anti-war, I went to a couple of anti-war protests in Austin, anti-Vietnam. Uh, we were opposed to war, so yeah that's, that's it. I can't think of anything else man, I'm sure there's more stuff but—

[Garza]: So, uh, you were, uh, you said you're opposed to war, but, uh, you served, right? For two years?

[Cavada]: I was in the service for two years, but I was basically avoiding the draft. And, uh, I refused to go to Vietnam. So, they wanted me to go to Vietnam when I was, I was a corpsman in the Navy. And a corpsman gets into Vietnam to be corpsmen, to be the medics out there. And they were kind of, they were threatening me, because I was raising Hell in the service before I was all of this stuff. I was in a rebellion stage personally, and in the military. That's where I really learned a lot because I learned, I learned, uh, structures and hierarchies, and I applied that back home. I was starting to see things that when you leave here, you can see here better, clearly what's going on in your community, when you're gone. You really can. And in the military, it's a hierarchical structure where people, you know, people crap on the people below them, right, and I wouldn't put up with it, so I had some issues. Uh, and uh, so I learned, that's where I really learned institutional issues, institutional discrimination was very personal to me because it was personal. People bossing me around. And it was not related to the work, it was related to just being assholes, being authoritarians. And I was anti-authoritarian, down to my bones, so I didn't function well. But I joined to avoid the draft, which I did, and uh, they were going to send me again. They were going to send me from there. And I told them, I said "I'm not

going to go,” well they threatened me with prison. I said “Well, I’ll go to prison before I go over there because I have nothing against those people in Asia. They’ve done nothing to us. I have no fight there. You’re not going to make me, put me in a situation for your stupidity.” And I told them that. The higher-ups where I was involved. And so they threatened to send me over there, I said “You can do whatever you want but I’m not going to obey the order. You can do what you want.” I told them that. And so I got out of the service, I come into MAYO, and fit right in, you know.

[Garza]: Wow, yeah, very strong willed. Uh, so, you said, you mentioned that you gave a talk about, at, uh, A&M Corpus Christi. Uh, could you please tell me about that?

[Cavada]: Yeah, it’s been a few years ago, it was a few years ago. And I was talking basically about, uh, our, the way we developed here in South Texas was the main part of it. But uh, there was other people there, oh my God, uh, Jose Angel Gutierrez was there, there was a guy from the Farmworkers Union from back then, extremely heavy guy. Really, uh, dramatic. And he was real low key, but oh my God the stuff he talked about, just incredible. But they went through, and they had a, he had a newspaper, they gave him the duty of the newspaper. He had never done it before. You’re going to do the newspaper, this was in the Valley, Texas Farmworkers. Uh, and also some other people from the Movement were at that meeting.

[Garza]: Uh, is there any, uh, like family life that you would want to talk about?

[Cavada]: Family life? Uh, well, I’ve got a daughter who’s an attorney she works here at the municipal court right now, she was doing bankruptcy law, uh, but she’s working here now. I think she wanted to come back to Corpus, she was in San Antonio for a while. She went through a, she’s an amazing girl. She went to college in San Antonio, she started here, she got a degree here in Corpus, went to St. Mary’s, got a degree in industrial psychology, and then worked in the HR department for the county there at the courthouse, you know, the county. And then she went to night school, law school, while she was going through a divorce, raising three kids, and still became a lawyer. It was just amazing, I don’t think anybody else could have done that. Uh, so now she’s working here at the city. She’s enjoying it, she lives here in the area. I have another daughter who’s, uh, she does marketing, uh, she got a degree in marketing from the university here. She worked with, uh, Channel 6 for a while, doing, you know, they sell commercials and stuff like that. And now she’s working for a pharmaceutical, she works a lot of the doctors, a lot of the doctors in South Texas. I’ve got a son in San Antonio who is a teacher, of history teacher, in a middle school. And he likes, he enjoys it, he enjoys that a lot. And I have another son who’s a, he’s a, he used to do bankruptcy legal assistant, now he’s doing general practice type assistant with a lawyer here. I think in that building there. So I’ve got three of them here, one in San Antonio, yeah.

[Garza]: Wow. Sounds like they’re some great kids and they’re doing a lot of good stuff.

[Cavada]: Yeah.

[Garza]: Well is there anything else you wanted to share? Maybe anything?

[Cavada]: I've kind of told you everything I can think of, you know. The, involved with MAYO, Raza Unida, the Chicano Movement. I think the Raza Unida Party was a major part of it in this country, there was no Chicano Movement in the east coast or up north, Chicago. There was a lot of activity but it wasn't part of, I don't think, they participated down here. Uh, but, California had a lot of Movement, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas, the southwest basically. But Raza Unida Party was probably the major part of the Chicano Movement. Not the Chicano Movement, but it was a major part of it because we were multi-state, and we interacted with those other people. Like the trip we made to Cuba, we had people from California, who I still know, from 1975. We were very much into the Cuban Revolution, okay. Uh, because it's a socialist country, they have, they provide for their people, they provide free healthcare, they provide jobs, there's no unemployment, there's no homeless people out there. You don't see them on the street, they don't have those problems because the little they have they share. It's a third world country, you know, a lot of people come over here, they compare our country to theirs. But it's no comparison, they need to compare it to Haiti, to Dominican Republic, compare even to Mexico, you know, but they want to compare to us so people come over here and those are the most reactionary Latinos in our country, come from Cuba. You know, they come over here, uh, feeling entitled somehow. And I think it's wrong for them to do that, they should, uh, there's no reason for them to be right-wing Republicans, you know, Trump supporters. No logical reason for them to be doing that, but they are. The most horrible Latinos in our country because they're the most right-wing, there's other right-wing groups, but they're the worst. And uh, but the people in Cuba are just fine, you know, they support their government, they supported Fidel Castro for all those years. And uh, you could talk to them, we could go anywhere we wanted, they weren't watching us, you know, following us around like some people say, "Wow they don't have any freedom." They really have more freedom than we do because they have freedom from hunger, you know, freedom from illness, they get treated there, the uh, it's just normal for them. You don't pay for healthcare over there. It's free. It's expected, you know. Uh, but you can't compare a third world country to the most richest country. You can't. But they do somehow. And the people here say, "Wow, you know, that's a shitty country over there." Well yeah, but so is Mexico, and so is every other country in Latin America. Compare them to them, don't compare to us. You compare us to Europe, you compare us to China, you don't compare us to piss end countries down there. And they do somehow. And they feel, anyways so those people come over here, they feel entitled when they get here, and they shouldn't feel entitled at all. In fact, I don't even think they should let them in, myself, because they're the wrong kind of people. They don't respect our traditions here, in fact they're, I've had clients that are Cubans. They think different. They aren't like our people, they aren't like Mexicans either. They're very ambitious, they're very greedy, and they feel entitled. That's wrong, nobody should feel entitled. You got to work for any advancement you make, don't expect anything from anybody, work for it. Then you can expect it. But they expect it first, and they were given certain privileges by our white government, you know, that wet foot dry foot policy. All they had to do was touch land here, they'd get in one year, they'd get status, legal status, they'd get food stamps, they'd get housing, they'd get everything that no other country was entitled to. You can come as a legal immigrant, you don't get public

benefits. You're not, you can't get them. If you do, they'll kick you out of the country. They got them the day they walked in here because they were so opposed to the socialist system over there. It's a whole different, you know, topic. But our country has always been against socialist countries. We're against Venezuela, Cuba, you know, we toppled the government in Chile, we're against the stuff going on in Bolivia right now, uh, Ecuador, they went through a leftist government there for a long time then it went right-wing now they're back left-wing again. And so we're always, this government is always involved in trying to destroy because that gives people ideas that they can take, that they can have power, they can have their needs met, and the resources distributed, you know. Like the oil. How about the oil? Here, everything's privatized. Big corporations own everything. And we got to be slaves to the corporations, you know. And so, we can't have that. So, you look through your history book, you'll see that, you know, the United States invaded Latin American countries over a hundred times over the years, and toppled governments almost in every country. Because they weren't doing what this government wanted them to do, which is to cater to corporations, mainly U.S. corporations. That was, the whole history of Latin America is oppression. So, you know, there's a, you know, literature here from our people, our own writers, that we're colonized people. They treat us like they would treat other colonies, in terms of advancement, in terms of our rights, in terms of, you know. They're going nuts right now, look what they're doing to the women, you know. I don't see how any woman could support a Republican right now. What they do, a whole bunch of, probably 30% of U.S. women support Trump, and the way they manipulate the system they can get power even by being a minority. That's how Trump won, he lost by like what, 3 million votes, and still became president because they manipulated the electoral college system, which should be eliminated. We don't have, we really don't have democracy in this country, we have manipulated democracy, we have the illusion of democracy, but we don't have democracy. We have to fight for it, everywhere. In every city and every town we got to fight for it.

[Garza]: Yes, got to work hard, got to fight for it and, for everything, yes—

[Cavada]: For everything, I know it was embarrassing the other day, I saw the mayor grinning with the racist governor that we have. Took a picture here in town. Uh, he's against women, and women deserve, putting her arm around him right in front of the camera? That's embarrassing. That's embarrassing. It might as well have been Trump standing there, licking his ass, you know. Uh, that's what she was doing, basically. Probably couldn't kiss his ass because it was in a wheelchair.

[Garza]: Uh, well, on that note, thank you so much for your time. Uh, man that was a great insight into things that I never really knew.

[Cavada]: And you know, nothings over for any of us that were in Raza Unida. It's, we're not over. It changed, it morphed, you know, we still do stuff. Uh, we had uh, I didn't go into it, but we had, for the 15, from about 2004 to last year when the pandemic, we had the progressive center next to courthouse. I had my office upstairs, we had the progressive center downstairs. We had every organization meeting here in town from, uh, you know, the Bernie campaign, to local campaigns, statewide campaigns. We had, uh, environmental groups meeting there, we

housed the, uh, the Occupy group. Remember that Occupy movement in New York? We had a group here from the university. They occupied city hall here for a whole month and they stayed at my office because they slept in, they had meals there, you know, in the evenings there were, they'd sit out there all day, and in the evening they'd come stay at my building. Inside and outside, you know. Uh, the uh, man we had lawsuits going, we, because of our progressive group here, we ended that Las Brisas project, they were trying to put a dirty coal plant here, power plant, it was a, they called it petcoke, it's petroleum coke, and what it is, it's the residual stuff when they burn coal, they get that stuff and they reburn it. But that stuff is dirtier than the coal because it has formaldehyde, benzene, crap like that it gets in the air. Even, we got the local doctors to go to that meeting and oppose it. So we prevented, because of we our little group here, we prevented the, uh, that plant from establishing here, and we also helped a group up the coast here Bay City, they wanted to build one there too, that went out the window. They lost the application process because of our lawsuit and our hearings in Austin, so they didn't get their permit. See, and those son of a bitches, all they wanted to do was get the permit and then sell it, they didn't care about, they had this group they were putting a lot of money into this project to get the permit, then they were going to sell it. So we prevented that. We also were involved here locally, we had a newspaper and a radio program, for about, somewhere, anywhere between 5 and 8 years of both. We also, they were trying to privatize, uh, Padre Island, they were trying to sell, sell all the, give, or basically give it away from the Bob Hall Pier to that other, where the water comes in over here, at the end of all the hotels. They wanted to give that to a developer. And we had, we pushed for, we had a, here in Corpus, we had a petition, we got on the ballot, and we won. The people voted against it, here in Corpus. Well that was our effort, and that to me is an extension of what we've been doing, what we were doing with Raza Unida Party. It's not Raza Unida Party, but we're doing it under the progressive caucus of the Democratic Party. But basically they're a bunch of radicals, okay. So, uh, we were meeting there for, man 14 years. We had meetings every week, 2 or 3 meetings. All different kinds of stuff. Uh, but then the pandemic hit, people couldn't go to the meetings because they didn't want to get sick, you know. So I moved over here, closed it down, and that freeze, remember the freeze, that froze up all my pipes there, uh, the uh, I had a lease there and the guy wouldn't fix it. So I said "Hell, I'm out of here", and the people quit coming to the meetings anyway because they just didn't think, times changed.

[Garza]: Right, right, yeah. I think that's about all-

[Cavada]: We did a lot of stuff, we've done a lot of stuff in the last 20 years, that uh, we've continued. Just a lot of us, we just, we take different forms, but we're the same people, you know. But mostly, you know, uh, you know, I do legal work, you know, make a living.

[Garza]: Uh-huh, thank you!