

Interview with David Avalos (D), Interviewed by Jonathan Bechtol (J), March 16, 2009

D My name is David Avalos and I am a professor of Visual and Performing Arts Dept here at Cal State University San Marcos.

J The Centro Cultural de la Raza was originally founded in the early 1970s. In general, what was Balboa Park like in the early 70s when the Centro was founded?

D Well I wasn't there when the Centro was founded so my familiarity with Balboa Park goes back to childhood memories. I was born in San Diego and raised in National City so I knew Balboa Park before the establishment of the Centro and I was not there as one of the founders of the Centro or one of the co-founders of the Centro Cultural de la Raza. In terms of my subsequent knowledge there ... the park exists both as open space and also as a cultural center where the San Diego Museum of Art is located, Timkin is located, um, and I believe both those museums existed prior to 1970. I'm pretty sure they both do, subsequent to the founding of the Centro Cultural de la Raza you have the establishment of the Museum of Photographic Arts and the Mingei Museum. There also existing prior to the establishment of the Centro Cultural was the Museum of Man. So these institutions represented a cluster of cultural institutions that um that existed before and after the Centro. At the time that the Centro was established there was no Chicano presence, which you wouldn't expect to find as the Chicano movement really began growing around 1965.

J Um, do you think that the park has changed since then, and if so, how do you think it's changed

D Since the founding of the Centro Cultural?

J Yeah, or you could just be general, since the early 70s.

D Well, the Park has changed in a number of ways, at one point I think it was in the early 80s the Old Globe burned down, uh, and it was rebuilt and another outdoor stage was created. There was a renovation of a number of buildings that had first been put up for the 1915 San Diego Pacific Exhibition. Um, there were a great many debates and discussions about closing off the center of the park to vehicular traffic. That closure didn't occur I think, one of the avenues was partially closed, I think Laurel Avenue was partially closed. Um, so there was a situation of buildings being lost by fire, buildings being rebuilt, buildings being restored, a debate about what should the function of the Park should be. There was questions about the zoos desire to extend its parking lot. Uh, there was clearly, although I wasn't involved with organizations that were key to these discussions I think that there's always been a strong, vocal well organized group of people who have tried their best to maintain the park with as much open space as possible, ...

J Was crime a problem in the early 70s and 80s?

D Well I wasn't there. I started working at the Centro Cultural in November in 1978. I can give you names of people that you could talk to who were there from the get go but you're going to have to be more specific than crime, because white collar crime is uh endemic to this society so

yeah there was a lot of white collar crime in the 70s up to the recent uh imprisonment of Madoff. So you have to be more specific in your question...

J Would you feel safe uh walking the park at night?

D well, in 1978 I would have been in my mid 30s so uh, I'm about an average sized guy with uh a thick build. I never had any concerns about walking in the park. I think uh, I don't know exactly when Hillcrest became identified as a predominantly gay neighborhood but uh years after I stopped working at the Centro I remember walking down park blvd and somebody yelled out "fuck you faggot" or something like that. But uh that was years after the Centro, that was a consequence of the park's proximity to hillcrest and the ever present discrimination. You know, that's society. Um, There were periods when the presence of homeless people became much more evident but at that time at the Centro we were, we got to know a number of homeless people. We had events that we didn't have an indoor bathroom so we had to use the bathroom outdoors and we'd be careful to accompany people. Not because there had been any reports or incidents occurring in that particular restroom, which was just outside the door of the Centro, but because sometimes the women's bathroom tended to be cleaner than the men's bathroom so homeless people would sleep in there at night, so it would be a situation... But you know, again I think that you're asking me as a male with a certain build whether I felt comfortable or not, I can't speak for anybody else.

J So what was your affiliation with the Centro Cultural de la Raza when it was founded and what is your current affiliation?

D I had no affiliation with the Centro c when it was first founded. Its founding would have... you need to contact the Centro Cultural de la Raza to obtain a copy of *Made in Atzlan*. This was produced for the 15th anniversary of the Centro. There I am right there. This is the photograph that was taken in 1974 when this mural was dedicated. But this book has an excellent history of the Centro, written by Phillip Bookman. So you need to contact them their number is 619 235 6135 and the person you want to talk with is Stephanie de la Torre. And you can reach her at stephaniedlt@gmail.com. You should definitely get a copy of that book, which is *Made in Atzlan*. So you know I wasn't there at the founding of the Centro. What was your question again?

J Uh, what was what was your affiliation with the Centro Cultural de la Raza when it was founded and what is your current affiliation to the Centro?

D Okay so when it was first founded I had no affiliation. In 1974 two of my friends, Salvador Barajas and Arturo Roman, who I had become acquainted with as a student at San Diego State University. We had certain things in common, they were both veterans and uh they told me about this project that they were working on at the Centro Cultural and they invited me to come by in 1974 uh to see what was going on and to help out if I wanted to. So essentially I went there with the idea of washing brushes, helping set up scaffolding, things like that. The guy who was in charge of that exterior mural project, a guy by the name of Guillermo Aranda, goes by Yermo, uh at one point he invited me, he said "well you want to throw some paint up on the wall, you want to paint something?" so and I think I may have been given an honorarium mostly for what I

did during the summer of 74. In the summer of 1974 I was a volunteer and uh a mural painter, although ... and uh then in 1975 I was asked by Enrique Ramirez, who was a director of the Centro, to work with some junior high school students in east San Diego at the invitation of the junior high principal and painted a mural there with students from UCSD, Raul Jaquez, Yolanda M. Lopez, uh Enrique Torres, I believe his name was and uh Jose Lopez who was working at the school. And uh, but we were all students at UCSD and worked with these kids, and that was definitely on a volunteer basis.

Um, Enrique Ramirez also asked me to be on a committee during a process of reincorporating the Centro Cultural as a nonprofit organization. It had originally been incorporated as the Toltecas en Atzlan. Then it was reincorporated as Centro Cultural de la Raza in 1975. And then I was employed beginning in October of 1978 as an administrative assistant. And I left in August of 1988 and during that period I was an administrative assistant, a publicist, that wasn't my official title but that's what I did mostly. Uh I was a gallery coordinator. I was an artist in residence funded by the California Arts Council. And for one period of about 6 months, I guess it was the early 80s cause now with all the financial crisis they keep saying it hasn't been this bad since the early 80s I didn't even realize it was bad in the early 80s, but I was on unemployment for 6 months. And I when I first got hired I believed I was hired as a CETA employee, that was a federal program, and I think it stood for Civilian Employment Training Act. Whoopi Goldberg, who spent some time in San Diego once described it in a comedy routine she once did, anybody could get a CETA job. You could get a CETA job to sharpen pencils. And that was one of the interesting contradictions about the CETA money is that it would pay for employees so the Centro had a staff of people that would be hired through CETA but it wouldn't pay for programs or for materials so you could have a lot of skilled people there but, uh, if you wanted to produce a theater piece someone would pay a lot of money for that. It was kind of a situation where, when I collected unemployment I worked full time at the Centro and, uh, we found ways of getting part time jobs and working full time ... a lot of paid and unpaid hours. And then when I left, I left with a decision that I put 10 years of my life into it and left it in good standing. The director Veronica Enrique had left it without any debt whatsoever and had just secured a grant from the California Arts Council for administrative development. A grant for \$30,000 over a period of two years. And the beautiful thing about the grant was that it didn't have to be matched. Most grants you get from the government they require some sort of matching. The federal government would give you a dollar for an opera but you got to match it dollar for dollar. You got to demonstrate to them that you went out and used that money as seed money to raise other money. But that grant was for administrative development, it was unmatched so we didn't have to match it. So the Centro was left in a real good position and my feeling was, Hey it's in somebody else's hands now. Even though I really didn't get involved in any official capacity or ongoing volunteer work after that. Currently I recently am involved in a program to restore the murals so I would say this, in 2008, I became the co chair of a committee to restore the exterior murals of the Centro Cultural do la Raza.

J Have you had any success in restoring them?

D Well right now the first step we have to take is to get an assessment of their condition by a certified restoration expert. That's been done, organize a committee and now that assessment can be used to go to various funding sources and say "here , you have it on the word of a

professional that these are these are the murals.” And currently I’m in an exhibition that’s gonna be opening this Friday, a poster I did back in 1981 when I was working at the Centro.

J Do you know which one it was?

D The poster?

J Yeah

D It was a poster for the Chicano Park day celebration in 1981.

J Was it, uh, with a car and people, kinda of orange and yellow?

D You’ve seen it?

J Yeah.

D How?

J Um, a lot of you work is digitized in the UCSB special collections library.

D That was done using the photographs of Victor Ochoa and Raul Jaquez. You should be there Friday as well. Would you be able to go?

J I would love to go.

D You can meet a lot of people there that you can talk to. You’ll meet Sal Barajas, Victor Ochoa was there from the get go. He’ll be there.

J Thank you

D I’ll be there at 7 then I gotta leave about 8 o’clock. It starts at 7.

J I do have to admit when I was doing research on you I went to the Centro’s website and they said that you have a lot of involvement with the founding and that’s why I based a lot of my questions on that.

D Yeah, that’s an assumption that people make. You know, I think that... it’s going to be a challenge for you as a budding historian to sort these things out and I think that if you’re able to put together a history. If you can bring money to buy a copy of this *Made in Atzlan*... Okay, um go ahead...

J Um so uh, was Balboa Park the first home to the Centro?

D Yeah, originally, as you’ll find in *Made in Atzlan* the Centro was the group of people that wanted to organize a Chicano cultural center, both as a space where Chicano art could be

created, where it could be presented.. Where educational workshops could be conducted. We They were given permission to work at the old Ford Building and the Ford Building was created for the exposition of 1935 and currently houses the San Diego Air and Space museum. Then through a series of negotiations the Centro was relocated at its current site.

J Do you know if the original use of that building was?

D Of the Centro building?

J Yeah.

D It was a water tank. Prior to the use as the Centro it was no longer used as a water tank, it was uh it was used probably to store equipment. I'm not sure. Here this is a mural that I painted and you can see the spillway on the water tank.

J I never even noticed that before.

D Oh, you been there?

J Uh, yes.

D Friday would be a choice opportunity to meet people. There's a lot of people that you can talk with from the early years.

J If you know, why was Balboa Park chosen to house the Centro?

D Well, I think there was some debate among folks, but the feeling was that was where the cultural center of San Diego is and think very wisely they thought, "Hey, that's where we should be." But you'd have to talk to folks like Victor Ochoa and also get in touch with Alurista. Another guy who was involved was Salvador Torres, goes by the name of Queso. Um I think currently he is teaching a course at San Diego State on Chicano art, but very much involved in discussions and debates and at one time actually occupied the Ford Building when the city was moving them out. He was displeased that people accepted another location for the Centro and split, went his own way. And you know, you're going to get a different, these are all very intense personalities uh with uh with strong memories, factual or non factual about what went on. People who have been in and out of bed with each other over the last 40 years. Um, so I think that it would benefit by talking to as many people as possible, as many stories as possible and you're still going to wind up with something like the screen play for Rashomon, the Japanese film

J Um, did the city of San Diego have any type of problem with the Centro Cultural being on park grounds or insofar as the Chicano movement?

D Well, the city had a lot of problems. There was a lot of movement, there was a lot of agitation, there was a lot of demonstrations taking place. People were organizing around issues of police brutality, rampant discrimination and racism, inadequate housing, inadequate job development,

inadequate education. All the issues that comprise the concerns of the civil rights movement Chicanos were gathering around those same issues. So simultaneously, almost simultaneously, you have the state of California intending to build a Highway Patrol substation underneath the newly constructed Coronado Bridge. You have a lack of medical facilities in neighborhoods like Logan Heights, which is predominantly Mexican American. You had a lack of a cultural center. So Chicanos occupied the area under the Coronado Bay Bridge on the east side of the bay, and refused to allow the beginning of the construction of the Highway Patrol substation. So the state and the city went into negotiations so that the land could be transferred to the city and the city agreed to make it a park. A place called the Neighborhood House was occupied, it was the idea that it would be turned into a community clinic. Of course Chicano Park was established on April 22, 1970. And so the Centro was part of that moment in San Diego's history and the city was willing to negotiate with organized local representatives of the Mexican American community. Chicanos insisted that the city had to allow for these things to happen: a community clinic, a park, and a cultural center in Balboa Park. So neither the park nor the Centro were necessarily given nor the community clinic were given to anybody. They were taken by folks who said "Hey, we're representing our own needs here... the discrimination was stark, why do other neighborhoods have parks? Why do other neighborhoods have community clinics? Why is there no representative institution of our culture, indigenous, native cultures, Mexican cultures, Chicano culture?"

J Do you think that's changed? Do you think that Chicano Park and the Centro Cultural were grassroots in that effect for the cultural development of Chicanos in the San Diego region?

D Do I think it's changed?

J Do you think that they were part of the genesis of a strong, cultural identity for Chicanos in San Diego?

D Rephrase the question because I don't know what you mean by "has it changed?"

J Uh, with the founding of Chicano Park and the Centro do you think that began a new grassroots beginning of a strong cultural ...

D Oh yeah, San Diego put itself on the map as far as a Chicano movement that was taking place across the country. Primarily in the southwest and also in places like Chicago. Those were the key moments in the establishment of a Chicano identity here in San Diego. But people had been involved prior to that with movement politics supporting for example the struggle of the United Farm Workers.

J Um I'm going to cut a little bit forward. My research shows that there was a boycott of the Centro from 2000 to 2007. Do you, could you just very briefly if there's any issues involved in why there was a boycott of the Centro?

D There'd be people that would have a lot better information. When that occurred I understood the reasons for the boycott. To a certain extent I understood the reason for the Centro's leadership, at that time, to take the positions that it took. I neither supported the boycott nor the

Centro. I think that mistakes were made on both sides, I think that there was a certain level of self-righteousness on both sides. But I think the articulation of the positions both within the Centro leadership and within the leaders of the boycott would be better expressed by other people.

J To what extent did the boycott affect Chicano and Latino involvement in the general use of the park. Were you aware if it was specific to the Centro or was it, did it affect the Park in general?

D I have no idea. I don't think it was helpful. Even to this day people are still asking if there is a boycott still on. I think people were better at promoting the boycott than the end of the boycott. I think, as far as the Park being a place of attraction for people of Mexican ancestry, for Chicanos and Chicanas, I think you're beginning to see a kind of programming that reached out to those audiences. I think you see some outreach programs that were intended to bring in Latino audiences. The old globe had a project called Teatro Meta that was intended to put Spanish language theater pieces into translation and have them presented in a variety of ways to San Diego's public. Um, we saw exhibitions at the San Diego museum of art of popular artists like José Guadalupe Posada. We saw exhibitions there at the San Diego Museum of Art, artists of color including Chicanos and Chicanas including Gronk and Carmen Lomas Carza. I've seen the works of Yolanda M Lopez there and Amalia Mesa-Baines. A big exhibition of Orozco was there you know, so it would be interesting for example to get in touch with the publicity department of the San Diego Zoo to see how much attendance they get from south of the border. It became a situation where people were aware at the changing of demographics so you could have audiences for museums and theaters you gotta go to where the people are, you gotta go to the younger people. There's also an awareness that San Diego was a destination for a Tijuanaenses who could afford it. The Centro, if it had the resources would have been thrilled to have an exhibition of Orozco's work. But when the San Diego museum of art has it its appealing to different audiences. Chicanos and Chicanas are gonna go but there's also going to be people from Tijuana going there's also going to be people of Mexican ancestry in the United States who never identified as Chicanos and Chicanas. There's this confluence at this point of Chicano influence, changing demographics among people, many of whom do not consider themselves Chicanos or Chicanas and the recognition that there are audiences to be developed in Tijuana.

J And uh, just one final question. There's been two major works written on Balboa Park, one written by Matthew Bokovoy and one by Phoebe Kropp. Both of them have argued that a mythic, colonial Spanish past dominates Balboa Park's cultural identity as part San Diegan urban space. Do you think that is correct and if so how would the Centro fit into that definition?

D Well, first of all you have to look at when was Balboa Park established as a cultural center. It was established with the San Diego Pacific Exposition? What was it called?

J The San Diego Panama Pacific Exposition...

D It's called the Panama Pacific Exposition?

J No, Panama California Exposition, 1915...

D Okay, and the one in San Francisco was called Pacific Expositions... because they were competing world expositions and San Diego was not given the go ahead to have the world exposition and that's why San Diego's is called California. Anyway, you can read a lot about that. In 1884, Helen Hunt Jackson's novel *Ramona* was published. And it occurred at a time when there was an enormous migration from the east to the west. At one point railroads were offering people transportation out to the coast for an incredibly reduced fee. So, one of the things that contributed to that migration was Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona*, and this idea that in traveling from the east coast or even east of the Mississippi, traveling to the west coast, you might be going through Indian country but you weren't going to an uncivilized area. This was an area made clear in Helen Hunt Jackson's book that had been colonized by the Spaniards. And so there was a kind of comfort in one, "okay we're not going into hostile Indian territory, we're going to a civilized part of the world;" and it's been civilized by people that we have dominated not only in Europe, when you look at Anglo Saxon domination of Spain, but also in the United States when you look at the loss of Spanish territories like Florida, like the south, like Florida and any other kind of territory. At one time Spain had a big stake in this hemisphere and lost out to Anglo-Saxons when you consider Canada and the United States. So there was this sense, psychologically, you could go out there and, you're going to a civilized area and we can occupy their house. This has been done throughout history. Of what did their house consist? Well their house consisted of um the embodiment of Spanish colonialism. So after Helen Hunt Jackson's book people began restoring the missions, and some of them had been pretty much reduced to rubble, and they restored them using so-called Spanish mission style. And this, for architects and designers, became an alternative to an architectural identity they developed in the east. What is it that specific about this region, how can we have a kind of regional architecture? There's any number of books you can find that will talk about that and I think it's important in terms of a history of identity. So now you've got Rancho Bernardo where you have to sign up that you're going to have a tile roof right? So that beat goes on in terms of a cultural identity based on architecture. So when it came time to create that exposition in Balboa Park the choice was... (Side B of tape.)

Okay, so um, there was a very conscious effort to establish an identity that was distinct from other regions in the United States. Although it was embraced other places in the United States. I think the first shopping center in Kansas City was built using Spanish colonial architecture. (Looking up on the internet about Kansas City shopping center.) So it's interesting that it's there in Kansas City, Missouri which is an opening to the west. You have that establishment of territorial identity. (Looking at Internet pictures) So this stuff was something that had occurred across the nation and to us, to establish something unique in terms of architectural vocabulary and identity. So the idea that Balboa Park was established on a mythic, Spanish heritage and influence, yeah, that's definitely the case. Definitely the case. Um, and in promoting that façade you mask the history of the region. You mask the Spanish domination, the benign notion of Father Junipero Serra civilizing savages, bringing religion, health and well being to the area, that's completely masked by the actual destruction of the people, the depopulation of California, the introduction of diseases that were unknown, the malnutrition that occurred at the mission system. All of that is masked. What's also masked even further is the fact that California per acre, was the most populated state in the United States. The most populace, the most populated area was California. So the Indian past is masked behind that Spanish façade. The actual Spanish cruelty, and inequity and injustice is masked then Mexico's completely masked

altogether. Mexico is even more obliterated than the Indians and Spaniards. The idea that this used to be Mexico at one time. So yeah it's all a myth. It's all a pillow upon which to rest heads that do not want to be disquieted. Um, and so then you have in the midst of this we have the Centro Cultural de la Raza and its strong promotion of history from our perspective; a revisionist history. Its supported by a lot of that are Chicano.

J Is there anything else...

D One of the things to keep in mind too, is that the Centro is not centrally located. It's not located along with the other museums in the park. It's kind of on the periphery. If you want to find parking in the Park you don't really even go near there. I think it's interesting that it's a circle shape, shaped like a drum. There's not really a number of additional indigenous references there but that is serendipity. What is your central thesis? What are you getting at here? That the Centro has changed Balboa Park in terms of an awareness or appreciation of the Chicano cultural identity?

J What I'm doing is breaking up the chronology of the Park into various stages and examining how each stage added another layer of what is Balboa Park as an urban center. What does it mean to you compared to what it means to a WWII veteran that was housed there in the Naval Hospital during WWII and why has it changed and how has it changed. And uh, what I want to argue is that it reflects what is going on in San Diego at that time. It's almost a barometer of either discontent or issues that the San Diego region has. The first chronological part are the two expositions, and how there was a creation of a mythic past. A lot of architectural scholars, one Iris Avadort she argues when new cities are founded and there is no history, I preface that with when the Anglos came and settled in San Diego any other history aside from Anglo history was unacceptable as history. When I use her argument, is that when cities are founded with no real history, explicit ideologies is necessary to create a past. Because the Anglos that moved here and settled had no past that they would be willing to accept, even though there was history because as you said, there's Amerindian, there's Spanish in the colonial times, and there was the Mexican rule. And so, none of those were acceptable to them so they had to rely on explicit ideology. The ideology that they focused on was this Jackson's *Ramonaesque* without the racial issues that was involved in the book. The used the explicit ideology of a romantic past.

D Yeah but there's something curious that goes on, because it's not... why didn't they, then use Greek architecture? Why didn't they use the kind of architecture that was associated with the University of Virginia or Washington D.C.? Why didn't they use that? Why didn't they use forms of architecture that were acceptable already in urban centers back east where they came from? I think it would be interesting, on your part, to explore the perverse notion of wearing the splayed flesh of your enemies. Why is it that mascots are often vanquished people? The Redskins, the Braves? There's a sense of why where in James Fennimore Cooper's novels so important to the development of American identity. There's this sense of moving into territories that have been occupied by human beings and not complete obliteration of them. But there's a consumption of them in a way where... yeah, the Spaniards lived here and they're civilized, they're European but we are better than they are. Why the decision to step into the Spaniard's house? Why not demolish it and build your own house? You see what I'm saying?

J Yeah.

D There's, why that human desire in Edward Curtis to... or who's the other guy that did paintings of the What's his name? George Catlin. One of the big American myths is the vanishing of the Indians so George Catlin goes out there with this very romantic notion of capturing a dying race but he can't keep himself from putting on their clothes. He has an exhibition of his paintings in London where he's fully regaled... you know, he's wearing their skins. He is now the go to guy if you want to know about the vanishing race. There's a psychology of... Tom Metzger, head of the local KKK faction, used to live in Fallbrook. He was involved with WAR, was actually prosecuted by the Southern Poverty Law Center for inciting a number of skinheads to violence to the point to where they killed this Ethiopian. And as a consequence he lost his home to a civil suit and I was thinking what a sweet pleasure that would be to live in his home. So it's like, there's a perverse aspect to the vanquishing of others. You know it's like the head of your enemy is ferocious as long as its sitting on its shoulders but once you decapitate it and shrink it... you can put it inside your house. And I've never really explored the psychology of it but I think that it would be a mistake to say that a mythic identity arose to take place for something that people didn't want to identify with. They *wanted* to identify with it but they wanted to identify with... like "yeah, this space might have been ferocious at one time but it's my head now, it's my shrunken head now. It's a testimony to my omnipotence. Not only in Europe but..." Here is that struggle between Anglo Saxon and Hispanic took place in this hemisphere and I don't want to forget that. So I can't put a stuffed head of a Spaniard on my wall so the wall itself will be Spanish. Or Spanish in my image like what I want Spanish colonial architecture to be..." I'm just rambling right now but I'm wondering there's gotta be somebody that's written about why is it, what is that human need to ...what is that human need for the kind of triumphalism that has you wearing the skin of your enemy, or has you occupying what you imagine to have been their architectural spaces. Does that make sense?

J That makes perfect sense, actually.

D so I think that, if their proposition is indeed that, that they wanted to develop architectural spaces, urban environments that reflected your own ideology then why start from the ground up? Why institutionalize mission architecture to the point where the wealthy insist on living in houses that connect them to some sort of flimsy history?

....

Okay I think it's also important to realize that the Centro went through various stages. The first one, I would say, was the preformed stage where people to identify each other and come together and then agree to mount some sort of consensus about a need for space. Now Salvador Torres' involvement with the Ford Building might have been parallel, or intersecting with that, cause everybody knew everybody else. Then there's the final agreement between the city and the cultural group, Toltecas en Atzlan, to be housed in the water tower.

Then there's the subsequent refusal on the part of the city to have anything more to do with the Toltecas and the reincorporation as the Centro Cultural de la Raza. That happens in 1975.

And then in 1979, there is a retrofitting of the building with a fire and sprinkler system, which leads me to think that the Old Globe burned down in the late 70s. 'Cause why the hell would people be interested in putting a fire suppression system after that people lived in houses for years without that. But you can find out the history of the fire. And when that happened the staff, I was on staff at the Centro at the time, had to be physically moved out of the building so the installation could take place. And we were housed in the United Nations building over there by the those little cottages. And at the time the city proposed relocating the Centro in a more central location, greater proximity to the other cultural organizations. And then, turning the building into a storage space or a garage for equipment. And the director was willing to attend meetings and the staff said, "No, there's no way. Don't even do it. Why are you go to the meetings? All you're going to tell them is that there's no way... you know, it was an art work at that point cause it has a mural in the interior already and has exterior murals."

And then about 1980 Josie Talamantez (a Chicana) took over as director and found that it was pretty much in shambles in terms of its finances. And that history is laid out, to a certain extent...

So you got the pre-forming years which was, I guess 1969-1970. The occupation of the Ford Building, the establishment in 1970-1971. I think it was officially opened in 1971. And then by '75 the reincorporation. By '80 the financial crisis and also the crisis of alienation from the community. And Josie Talamantez was very capable administrator who was really well trained, she was able to come in and immediately establish priorities and reestablish relationships with... by the time she left there was ongoing support from the city, the county, the state and the federal government. And that was carried over by the next director, Veronica Enrique.

And then sometime between 1988 and 2000, the Centro slowly began to do something that it has never done, as far as I know, which is incur an enormous amount of debt, ten thousand dollars; which might seem like a pittance but the organization only had a budget of about \$100,000 a year. That's, you know, \$30,000 debt is huge.

And then there was a change of leadership just prior to the boycott. And then the post boycott effort. So at any particular moment in the Centro's I think you'll find that the *Made in Atzlan* book an accounting of the tension between the city and the Centro. The city actually withdraws support and it's not until its reincorporated that the city reestablishes support. And then under Josie Talamantez' direction, the city actually has a plan, the city manager comes forward with a two year proposal which the Centro's budget will be cut by 50% the first year and eliminated the second year. And Josie Talamantez, because of an association with Logan Heights and organizers there, was able to rally great community support at city council meetings. And not only thwart the city mangers plans but she made the decision, the smart decision that "we gotta become more incorporated in the daily ongoing activities of the Park so we can join in various committees and park organizations.

You seem happy

J Very happy actually.

..... (Discussion of the art gallery opening at the Centro)

D A salient question might be, especially for those who were in early discussion, why a cultural center in Balboa Park rather than Logan Heights or some other Mexican American community. I think another question that you have to have is... that you might consider is how did the change in demographics and the recognition of Tijuana as the home of potential audiences change the cultural offerings of other institutions? And especially the Old Globe.