Group Interview
Deborah Espinosa, Juan Espinosa, David Martinez, Rita J. Martinez,
Pablo Mora, Jose Esteban Ortega, Freddie ‘Freak’ Trujillo
Oral history of La Cucaracha

Interviewed by José A. Ortega
June 3, 2016
Colorado State University-Pueblo
University Archives and Special Collections
Pueblo, Colorado

ORTEGA_JA: Ok, why don't we start off with stories about how the Cucaracha started? You guys were driving in a car, the conversation that started it, and then you guys just talk to each other, talk to me, talk to each other, go back and forth.

ESPINOSA_D: Well, I would have to say as a couple, the conversation began with us, and Juan being already involved on campus making newspapers, and it was, where do we go from here? [Laughs] I can't remember any of the first time. It was just, you know, by the time you're going through school, you know the path that you're going on, and so you--there were numerous conversations. It was understood. It was just a matter of where.

MARTINEZ_D: I think it might be appropriate to ask some of the others here besides Juan how they got involved with Cucaracha.

ORTEGA_JA: We'll do that in the individuals [interviews].

MARTINEZ_D: OK.

ORTEGA_JA: This is where you guys talk to each other about experiences.

MARTINEZ_R: The story I like is about the name of La Cucaracha. So, why don't you talk about all the different names, and then the significance of that? I like the name.

ESPINOSA_J: As I remember, we had about a half a dozen meetings before we started talking about the actual first publication. The first one was forming an organization to try to get local
support. Who's going to support us? I remember that La Gente and the Madrid brothers played a big role in that. I think it's just fair to say that we weren't fondly received by some of the more established Chicano movement organizations. They saw us as outsiders coming into their territory and they had no knowledge of us, no track record of us and basically didn't trust us. The Madrdis--I do believe we met Dario [Madrid] through Esteban in Boulder and so there was less resistance. They were more supportive.

I think what Rita's [Martinez] talking about is the actual name of the Cucaracha, how that came to be. I remember after this series of meetings—and I think Jeff Vigil had a—was strong in those meetings. This was his proposal, the Mensaje de Pueblo, and I thought, “oh God, that is so preachy.” We were talking about it on the way home or it was at our house. But I remember thinking, “we voted on it, we're going to call it the Mensaje de Pueblo.” It wasn't like a unanimous vote, but it won. And so, we left the meeting thinking that's going to be the name of our publication and then I thought to myself, they're going to call us the Mens. That really made me sad to think, because the Mens was about as dumb as you can get.

My experience with Cucaracha is—I heard the founders of the Rolling Stone Magazine talk about how they started Rolling Stone. They picked the name because of Bob Dylan's song The Rolling Stone [Like a Rolling Stone] and because of the Rolling Stone band. They figured right away, the name would have instant acceptance by the audience of those two things plus just, you know, Dylan's mythology in the rock and roll world in those days. Ok, well, that happened about 1972. “we voted on it, we're going to call it the Mensaje de Pueblo.” I told myself, what is our Rolling Stone? The closest I could come was the Cucaracha. I liked it because of Pancho Villa and because Pancho Villa's marching song was Cucaracha. I liked the connotation of, “yes no tenemos marijuana par fumar.” [“We no longer have marijuana to smoke.”] And we were smoking marijuana and that was as much our song as anybody else's song. Then the book The Revolt of the Cockroach People by—what's his name? Acosta? [Oscar Zeta Acosta] Brown buffalo. I mean, what a great book. I wish that guy had written more books before he disappeared. Anyway, all these different influences to me just sounded like Cucaracha, so I just went back to the next meeting and said, “we got to reconsider the name of the Mensaje,” “What do you guys think of the name La Cucaracha,” and everybody just cracked up, like—I felt like it was just almost instantly accepted. “That'll make sense. That'll work. That's good enough. Better than Mensaje.”

MARTINEZ_R: I remember, over the years, people would ask, why La Cucaracha? Part of what you also said then in naming it [is] that it was from before prehistoric times to now, surviving. Although the Cucaracha is no longer published, the name and the impact it's had on the Pueblo community has survived, just like the cockroach [laughs]. People still call us Paul Cuc, Rita Cuc—we've maintained those names throughout the years, yeah, so people still remember, when you say, “oh, I worked on a Chicano newspaper called La Cucaracha.” “Oh, yeah, yeah, we know that.” Everybody remembers it and it was a great name.

ORTEGA_JA: So tell me about a day when—because I know you guys would come together on the weekend and put the Cucaracha together—so tell me about a time that you guys remember something happening, or several times that something happened, or something that constantly happened that you didn't enjoy or that you enjoyed.
ESPINOSA_J: Fire drill!

TRUJILLO: Fire drill!

ESPINOSA_D: Fire drill!

ORTEGA_JA: I was going to ask about the fire drills. I heard about fire drills so—

MORA: My name is Pablo Mora, and I'm from Pueblo. There was a lot of resistance when we moved back here, but I got along with all these guys. Dario and John Madrid and all my buddies. I'd met them in the Upward Bound program. Before then, we used to go out in the fields and throw apples [unintelligible]. These guys were considered the scum of the earth, you know, but they were my buddies. They really were. They were on the fast track to prison or oblivion, right? I didn't look at them that way. I thought, these are my buddies. These guys are my friends and they're going to have my back when I do what I do, which is newspapers. I've always done newspapers. When I was a teenager in Pueblo, I used to read the Denver Post and think, wow, what a lofty place to be! Look at the quality of that writing. That was the Post, right? After we did the Cuc [Cucaracha] and the economy tanked, and I had to find a job, I went to the Post for 12 years, quit it on my own accord, and came home to Pueblo where I was an editor and a reporter at the Chieftain for 19 years, I believe. But, the Cuc was one of the better papers we did. I mean, there was a bunch of them—Somos Aztlan, Escritor, La Tierra—what was?

MARTINEZ_R: Tierra Y Libertad, Ya Basta!

MORA: Yeah, Ray's paper, we did these papers. Freddie Granado--I worked with him on his paper too, and he also told me El Escritor was a mouthful. Anyway, we have all that accrued history.

I go back and I look at my bound Cucarachas now or my other papers, they're just as good. In fact, they're better in that they don't have the ax to grind that the Establishment does, right? What you get now, it comes through a bad filter and they say, "well, you people should be happy because we did change our hiring practices." Say, at the police department, what difference does it make if the cop busting your head open is named Gutiérrez or Roybal, or you know, Jackson, or whatever? What difference does that make? All they did, I believe, is put people in positions who would not fight against them, and so you got Chicanos in every position here in Pueblo, and we're, like, half Chicano population, but they're afraid to push back against the Establishment, I feel. So what we did is expose that and we're still learning now.

I just edited a book [laughs]. It's called El Movimiento Chicano in Pueblo, right? Chapters by Juan [Espinosa], Joe T. Ulibarri--he was an early attorney here--and they've got a different perspective on what happened here, right? Dave Marquez, a teacher at Central, Tito Vega on the Teatro. I edited this and tried to put a consistency, because if we don't say it, it didn't happen and that's the bottom line. I think, that, if you get the history just from the Pueblo Chieftain or the Denver Post or the Gazette, you're not getting history. You're getting their view of what happened, and it's uniformly wrong, biased. Right? So, what we did is document a history of
the people, and I open them up now and I show my grandkids. Last night, I was telling them about something. I flipped through the pages of the Cuc, and I said, “here it is” and I showed them something that we had done back then. And they were like, “Oh!” And I hope the idea has formed in their little peanuts [heads] that you have to go out and be the agent of change. You know, you can't sit at home. Eventually, they're going to come for you, whether or not it's at your school or at the store or the police force, whatever. You got to go out and fight. Right? I'm trying to get that through to them, and I tried to do that through the Cucaracha. That you can stand up to these people. So−

MARTINEZ_R: A story I'd like to tell is about our production weekends because it wasn't just a day to do the paper. We would call them production weekends and I would remember those production weekends being at Dave's [Martinez] house on 13th, at Juan and Debbie's [Espinosa] house on the far west side and there would be homemade light tables that we would work on. But there'd be just kind of enough room, squeezing around.

I remember, at Juan and Debbie's, we used to have a lot of community volunteers and one being Arron Sandoval, and he had a baby at the time, a little girl. He would come in with his carrier. I remember it being cold and a blanket over the baby and he'd come in and bring the baby in. It was back to that thing of being like family, because everyone would take care of the baby, and take care of the Espinosa kids that were running around, and any kids that were there, because it was really a true community effort.

So, some people would be in the kitchen, some in the family room that was converted into a—I don't know—the work space mostly, and people would take breaks. The community people, for the most part, would bring in food for us. We have a friend that just passed away, Dr. Licona, Virgil Licona. He worked here with the neighborhood health centers and as a physician’s assistant and eventually as a doctor. But he and his wife, Barbara, would cook for us. They were one of the couples that would cook for us and it would be great. That was their part of it. They'd come in, bring the food, wonderful “pollo con arroz [chicken with rice in Spanish],” things like that. So, you know, everybody that was involved with the Cucaracha had different roles. Some just cooked. Some took care of the kids. Some did the ads. Some did the writing, translation. It was a big effort and it would literally start, like on a Friday and go through Sunday night, if it had to, and through the night. People would take the breaks they needed to and you continued on until you—it went to the printer on Monday, and then again, like I said earlier, brought back, and then distribution happened. So it was massive. But the amount of work it took to put those together, but there were a lot of people involved.

ORTEGA_JA: I've heard stories about just extra people being there, just to hang out, just to−

ESPINOSA_J: To censure.

ESPINOSA_D: There are a lot of people in the community that would tell us, tell the writers, what they did wrong. There were a lot of philosophical discussions, you know. Some people were Socialists, some were Marxist, some, you know, Communist. All these philosophies would be discussed. Sometimes people just came to see what was going on, kind of hang out.
I just remember bathrooms becoming darkrooms. I don't know how we ever managed that but yeah [laughs]--I remember the Cucaracha office. I never really liked the office, but I also didn't have a voice in it. I don't know how that decision was made, but for all the buildings in Pueblo, why the hell did you guys pick a house?

MORA? It was next to a bar. [Laughter]

ESPINOSA_D: Exactly. It was in Bessemer.

ESPINOSA_J: Do you really remember that was Lee Mora’s mother−was the−

TRUJILLO: Yes, the yos woman.

ESPINOSA_J: And we got it really cheap initially−around $400 bucks.

MORA: He's a murderer. [Laughing]

ESPINOSA_D: Ha. Well, we probably didn't have any grants at the time. I don't know. But seriously, we had desks in the kitchen and in the living room and then there was some really−

ESPINOSA_J: Homemade−

ESPINOSA_D: Really not very−think of the oldest style of basement, dank and dark. That's where the production really took place. That's where the darkroom was, and the light tables and the typesetters. To get there, you'd come in from a back door, from the alley side or you−there was literally a hole and a stairway made from one of the top floors down, and it was very steep.

ESPINOSA_J: It was a circular staircase.

ESPINOSA_D: It was dangerous. Everything was makeshift. But it worked. It wasn't ideal, but it worked. But I always−I never liked it.

ORTEGA_JA: That house had to be like really packed, because I was just in there a couple weeks ago, and how small the house is. I mean, how condensed was everything, I mean−people just bumping into each other? It's just [laughs] −I can't see that big of a production being in that small of a house. It just−

MARTINEZ_R: My mother is 92 and she lived in that house and I would tell her that it was the same address. She couldn't believe it was that house that La Cucaracha was being produced out of, because she knew every inch of that house, because her and my parents lived there prior to the time I was born. She knew the house very well. It was, everything, a kitchen to a living room. Every space was taken up. The entryway we used as a little reception area and it worked. It really did work pretty well. And in that space, not so much. I don't remember so much when it was being produced out of other homes, but in that space, that was the office. I remember a lot of meetings and so you would meet about what was going to go in this issue or the next issue. That's where I remember a lot of community people hanging out, checking it out,
putting their two cents in and then some in, and arguments. Again, they were healthy arguments over philosophical points of view and it could be really rough, but it was also very, very educational at the same time.

**MORA:** I remember being there and Ray Otero was there, who might have been doing his newspaper. Right? The *Post* reported that Kiko Martinez had been apprehended, trying to cross the border or something and we all rushed out to the front of the building, to buy the *Post*, to find out what the hell was going on with Kiko. That building there—I know it's just a building—but we have a lot of memories there. I remember all the times I was typesetting in the basement and stuff like that, till my eyes came out, or you know, we had very heated editorial meetings. Why are we going to take an advertisement? Frank Arteaga was selling ads at the time, and he didn't give a damn who he sold to. He just wanted to sell ads. Right? “We're not going to take an ad from them!” [Arteaga] "Yeah, we do, or we're going to die." [Mora] "Well, we're going to die then, but we're not going to take an ad from them!” All that building—that building housed all these controversies, these personal discussions.

**ESPINOSA_D:** Even the apricot tree in the back yard—lots of sitting in a circle, taking a break, having something to eat buy the apricot tree. I remember that.

**TRUJILLO:** One of the things that these guys haven't mentioned, and it was one of my favorites. *La Cucaracha* used to set up a booth every year at the state fair. We did that for, oh I don't know, several years. Right? It was called “Hecho en Atzlan” [Made in the land of the Aztecs] and all these people would bring their stuff there, and we'd sell it for them. We'd get, I think it was, 10% of the sales. Well, we never made enough money to pay for the rental, right? It was just for the purpose of being out there, right? Not only did it serve as “Hecho en Atzlan,” but it was—people could come there, and they'd leave notes there. They'd come up there and say “have you seen sonso and sonsa?” and you'd say, “yeah, they're out there, getting more sonso.” Anyway, they'd be out there—other people would come in there and they would say, “man, I would sure like to go—my wife and I would like to go get on the rides, but hijole [Spanish slang for “gee”] we've got the kid.” “Well, leave them here with us, fine.” So we'd take care of them. They'd go off and do their thing and we'd take care of them. Right?

We used to sell these posters and we had this poster of Che Guevara and this cracker, this redneck cowboy, comes by Frances and me working in the booth. He comes by and he looks at it and he flips him off, and Frances says, “Did you see that fucker?” and she grabbed a hammer, and I said “wait a minute!” I had to stop her. But anyway, it was great because everybody always looked for that. It was there. Right? We didn't make any money on it. I used to have a booth in the back, or a tent or something, and I’d sleep there all night and take care of it.

**ESPINOSA_D:** We were not great fundraisers. We did—we had to go from production to planning a fundraiser. We would have fundraising meetings about who was going to do this and who was going to do that. Oh, I did this one really failed disco dance contest or something one time, and we broke even, at least. But Rita and I became caterers, and we were the Red Star Catering.
MARTINEZ_R: It was somewhat short lived but we did make a little bit of money for a while. But yeah, so there was lots of fundraising efforts and other things that we haven't mentioned yet—we had an umbrella organization which we would call P-E-R or Producciones Estrella Roja and that was a nonprofit umbrella organization, which La Cucaracha came under. So, through that, we would do some—we would take in different jobs like Ya Basta and other printing type jobs. We would do stationery. We would do booklets, yeah, anything that we could print. That became a kind of side job. Eventually that spun off to—we wanted to have a for profit entity of that, and that was Viva Enterprises. That lasted a few years as well. It was another fundraising—

ESPINOSA_D: And that's where clients from the community would go to La Cucaracha, and they'd go to that front desk and that reception area. They would be waited on and their printing order would be taken by Rita or someone else, but primarily Rita, over the phone. I remember listening to her take orders and so that was another sustaining element. But at the same time, it was very time consuming and so we were—it was very overwhelming. Not only were the Cucs involved with the issues at hand, they were present and accounted for at a lot of community events and whatever was going on, as reporters, as organizers, or supporters. One way or the other and so it was our life.

TRUJILLO: Silk screening—we used to do a lot of silk screening, remember that? We—I remember we started silk screening, like, we started laying the stuff all the way upstairs. We laid it on the floor and followed all the way down to the back door, man. Then, in the morning, Monday morning, we'd come in and the first one there would start picking up the posters to get them all up off the floor, before everybody came. We did t shirts and a matter of fact—

MARTINEZ_R: Flags.

TRUJILLO: I'm wearing one, Juan, remember that? That John Lennon one you did?

ESPINOSA_J: John Lennon--

ORTEGA_JA: Oralé! Keep it up. Let me see that.

ESPINOSA_J: I did that?

TRUJILLO: I'm sure you did.

MARTINEZ_R: We also did flags. We would do all kinds of—I would sew the flags [and] they would silk screen. Yeah, we did a lot of different things. Another thing that we did, maybe once or twice, was—remember the big—I can't even believe we even did this—but it was a big spook house. You remember that? Twice in a row—

MORA: You had to bring that up.

ESPINOSA_D: The house was spooky enough!
MARTINEZ_R: And we—so the entrance would be through the back, I think. You'd slide down the stairway and we incorporated people like the Vegas, who were involved with Teatro de la Lucha at the time. I remember Maria made the best llorona [“the weeping woman”, a ghost in Mexican folklore] ever and would scare everyone. It was another fundraising effort, one more thing to do, and we transformed the entire building into a spook house to fundraise.

ORTEGA_JE: When we had an idea we would follow through. If we had an idea we would do it. We would do like a gravestone. We had an idea and we would do it. That's the way it was. Traveling all the way to Boulder or whatever, which is another trip. Most—a lot of people here lived in Boulder and went through the whole experience and it was an experience all of itself.

ESPINOSA_D: Yes.

ORTEGA_JE: And we won and we lost. That's the way it was. We gave it up and we always had opposition to whatever we were doing [inaudible]. Some were supposedly our friends. They were coming, in opposition, especially in Boulder. The saying was “una cucaracha en cada casa,” [“a cockroach in every house”] which was a pretty good saying. [all laughing] Cucarachas! [laughing] Then there was a newspaper called Despierte! In Rocky Ford, Producciones Estrella Roja. Then we tied up in Puerto Rico and we did a Batista movement there. We tied up in Mexico in different ways. We ran into a journalist, imprisoned by Batista, from Puerto Rico, Juan Antonio Corretjer. He was famous. He came by.

ESPINOSA_J: He was Che’s poet, wasn’t he?

ORTEGA_JE: He’s a writer and independent journalist.

ORTEGA_JA: And he came down right? Didn’t he come down to help you guys? What was that like, you know, he came down and?

ESPINOSA_J: For the Kiko rally.

ESPINOSA_D: Yes.

ORTEGA_JE: We used to communicate with him. Lolita Lebrón was another--

MARTINEZ_R: Puerto Rican Nationalist.

ORTEGA_JE: Puerto Rican, went to jail. All kinds of stuff. We met a lot of people in our past and we lost a few in our [inaudible]

MARTINEZ_R: One other aspect of La Cucaracha was the radio programs.

TRUJILLO: Oh, yeah!

MARTINEZ_R: And through that, Jose would do interviews and he would also read the paper and translate it on air. What was the name of it?
TRUJILLO: It was on Saturday morning, and we had it at my house. We had a little turntable. We would play *La Cucaracha* music, turn up the volume real high, then lower it down and Jose would come out, "Noticias con *La Cucaracha*" [News with *La Cucaracha*] Turn up the volume, and then turn it down and we had one of these little machines that would go "click" "click" and this was to separate our stories. It [would] go "click" and "Este dia en *La Cucaracha*," "blah, blah, blah," "este," "este," and then, "blah, blah, blah." We would do that for about 20 minutes and "Next week in *La Cucaracha*," and he would go "blah, blah, blah." "This is going to happen" and we would do that.

And then--I got to tell you this joke. We were in my house. Right? And all of these guys would come over, of course, while we are doing this. We're doing a fire drill, because you know we have to be on top of it all the time. So, we'd be doing this kind of stuff and Jose would say something and Romo and Juan. All these guys would start laughing. Right? So, we would have to stop, because we would all get the giggles and we would have to edit it anyway. So, most of the times we would barely make it over to KPI, over on 29th, and a couple of times, we had to go around that guard, because the train was coming and we would go around that guard. We would barely get it in there in time and they would put it on. So, it was such a blast. We had a lot of fun.

MARTINEZ_D: Obviously: we were very a dynamic organization, a very dynamic entity, and you had a lot of very dynamic individuals that were involved and still are involved in different dimensions. One thing we haven’t mentioned too much about was--I nurture the fact that we always operated through entities that--we were non-profit 501 c-3 status. We had boards of directors. And a lot of our board members were community people who, frankly, didn't participate in production weekends of *La Cucaracha*. But they had enough conviction and enough commitment to what we all were doing, publishing *La Cucaracha* that they were willing to come to our offices on a minimum monthly basis. We had to have our monthly meeting, our annual meetings, where we would elect officers and so on. That to me, as an outsider to Pueblo, spoke volumes as to what we were actually doing inside Pueblo in the community who [would say], "I can't write." "I have trouble reading." "I can only help the only way you ask me to help, because I believe in you, because I believe in your colleges. I believe in *La Cucaracha* and I want to see it flourish." And I don’t think we have a list of all the names of all those people--

ESPINOSA_D: No I--

MARTINEZ_D: that came to bear, in that regard. I mean, that was very critical, and as you can see based on all the various things we were doing to survive, if you will. They were all individuals who came forward to help us in some dimension. It could've been minimal. It could have been a lot, but by the same token they were there and it was part of the spirit and their support. But maybe just coming to one meeting once a month--that really spoke volumes to me and I think for my colleagues here. That said, “you guys are doing things right and we're here for you.”
ESPINOSA_D: I remember people coming by to help distribute and in particular Ed Simms. Ed was a railroad worker at that time and so he would work out of town, but he would come by and take papers with him, because he would go into another community. So—

MARTINEZ_R: Rocky Ford.

ESPINOSA_D: Rye, Rocky Ford. And that's how the paper got out different ways.

ORTEGA_JE: Where ever you were, he would cruise it by.

ESPINOSA_D: Yes, yes he did.

TRUJILLO: And when anybody ever did stop by the Cuc office and we were doing distribution we'd say, "well, were you headed for?" "Well, I'm headed for the valley." Well, here take some papers. "Well, I'm headed to Denver." [Gesturing]

Well, Paul and I went up there [Denver] and opened up an office up on Santa Fe. I don't know how long we were there. Well anyway, we were there for a little while up in Denver.

MORA: Let me make a note there that when we were doing the Cuc, people would always refer to the Chieftain as "The Paper." Right! And the Cuc was secondary and I called them on it sometimes. I’d say, “well, what are you over doing here? You put your ad in the Chieftain or your announcement or whatever. You gave them the scoop and we're the Chicano newspaper here.” And it’s, "oh well, it's the newspaper." [The Chieftain] "It's the newspaper!" So we wouldn’t get any respect, but when I went to work at the Post or the Chieftain, then it was all, "oh you're doing this and that." What we were doing with La Cucaracha was some damn good stuff. It was purer art, I'll tell you that, and we were really trying. So, I [am] real proud of my years there--not only the people that I met and lost, a bunch of them, but the accomplishments that we made through that newspaper. We did influence, what you want to call mainstream media, even though they're really redneck now. I mean they've really taken a hard turn to the right and I don't think people are following them, like they did before. It's like an opinion piece. You cover a news story and people say “ah, I don't believe them anymore." Because I know I get my news from 10 different sources and I still don't believe it. You know, if your mother says she loves you. Check it out! [all laughing]

MARTINEZ_R: One other project that we had at La Cucaracha, which again was probably another grant, which was another way to keep money coming in, was this art project. If you remember? And we hired about seven local Chicano/Chicana artists to be a part of this project.

ORTEGA_JE: Lolaita.

MARTINEZ_R: Yes, Lola Gutiérrez, Bernard Duran. Was it Dan Duran too?

ESPINOSA_J: The only ones I knew were the local artists.

MARTINEZ_D: Leo Lucero.
MARTINEZ_R: Leo Lucero, yes.

MARTINEZ_D: The Pacheco brother.

ESPINOSA_J: Joey, yes.

MARTINEZ_R: Was it Joey Pacheco?

MARTINEZ_D: Joey Pacheco.

MARTINEZ_R: Yes, so that was one more aspect of what we were doing.

ESPINOSA_D: I [was] proud of that, because the arts, the Chicano arts, were flourishing at that time, because we--prior to that there was, let’s face it--there was no opportunity for artists to express themselves. So, with the Chicano movement, finally there were murals and many things, even the silk screening, and all of that. They had ways to get the art out there. And I liked the artists that came through there and the opportunities and the art that appeared in the newspaper. I've always been proud of that and the whole art connection. That was a great idea. Whose idea was that?

ESPINOSA_J: That was a Title six project.

ORTEGA_JE: And we did cut some grants here and there.

ESPINOSA_D: Yes, and everybody talks about the Tee Hee artists being the first to get noticed in town. It's not true. In fact, some of the Cuc's went before City Council and asked for permission to do public art and they were turned down.

MARTINEZ_R: There was Leo Lucero [who] did the--I don't know that's the last of the longest in Pueblo--on Plaza Verde park, he did a mural. It’s an eagle and a woman and solders and kind of geographical location of Atzlan. When he did that, it was a great piece and again it was during this time, when the city didn't want anything like that out. I remember that Lola had done one at what we used to call Zapata Park, and the city went and white washed that. There was another, I think, that was white washed. We had friends, within the city work force, that kind of tipped us off that they were going to white wash the Leo Lucero mural at Plaza Verde. We organized a bunch of people to go out there and lock hands and arms and they weren't able to cross our line to white wash that. It happened again another morning and eventually they gave up. It remained there after that, maybe five years later or longer. They were trying to find out who was the artist that did it, because then the city had a different point of view and they wanted it restored. So, then Leo was paid to repaint it and so that was a sign of the times back then.

ORTEGA_JE: I would like to talk now about some of the international news that we did. We had friends from Puerto Rico, Juan Antonio Corretjer was one, he was a writer independent nationalist, Puertorriqueño [Puerto Rican], had been in prison, married in prison for a few years. He’s bad, and he was our friend, he came down and saw us. I have photos of him in our
office. So, there was others, Lolita Lebrón--she was in prison and a leader. Angela Davis came in and visited with us. Cancel Miranda, another Puertorriqueño.

ESPINOSA_D: Daniel Valdez was here before the movie Zoot Suit--

ORTEGA_JE: Yes.

MORA: Russell Means of the American Indian Movement and he was a friend of mine. He was a good guy. I met him at that same conference, where Kiko kept referring to. They brought Russell in as a speaker and I liked him the minute I saw him. Later on I got to help when I was at the Denver Post. He turned out a book called “Where White Men Fear to Tread.” I reviewed it in the Post and got him more sales and he came on the book tour in downtown Denver to eat at some real fancy place. I like Russell Means and he died at a bad time. Well, I don't know what a good time is, but at the time I had called him up and left a message. He was already a movie star, he had been in--what is the name of that movie?

ALL, BUT PABLO IN UNISON: Last of the Mohicans!

MORA: Yes, he was in the movies, so he was pretty busy. So, I left him a message. He was up in Pine Ridge still [Pine Ridge Native American reservation, South Dakota]. I said, "it's Pablo Mora at the Post. Hey, buddy, you know what we don't have is a name for what happened to us. Like you got the Holocaust [and] you got the Armenian Genocide. Why don't we call what happened to us the 'Americide'?" So a couple days later he called me back and it was, you know, it was the same ol’ Russell Means, “You are so right on, Bro. Right on! Right on!” But we never got a chance that time, because he left us, you know. But these are the people [that] really did put their lives on the line, to change things, you know. I mean he was talking with other non-Indios on the reservation. What was his name?

TRUJILLO: Ballecourt [American Indian Movement leader Vernon Ballecourt]

MORA: Well, he was on our side though. These other guys were not on our side.

TRUJILLO: The goon squad.

MORA: They shot him once, but anyway, all of this should be remembered. All of this should be documented, and if we don't tell it, who's going to?

ESPINOSA_J: Well, John Trudell, who was the spokesperson for the American Indian Movement for about 10 years during the "Longest Walk". In ‘76 [the Longest Walk happened in 1978] he came to our office and we did a lengthy interview with him. It was like two pages, and like three months later, we were reporting that his family was killed in an arson fire. Daniel Valdez, who is probably best known for the lead in the movie Zoot Suit was in our office before Zoot Suit was a movie and it was still just [a] Broadway play.

ESPINOSA_D: I remember how they were working on a movie about Ritchie Valens and--
ESPINOSA_J:  *La Bamba*--

ESPINOSA_D: And *La Bamba* came out a few years later.

MARTINEZ_D: It was a fund raiser for us and we rented a theater and we showed *La Bamba*. There was another fund raiser for *La Cucaracha*.

ESPINOSA_J: We showed *Zoot Suit*.

MARTINEZ_D: We showed *Zoot Suit*.

ESPINOSA_J: We showed *Zoot Suit* and had a low rider show in the parking lot.

MARTINEZ_D: Yes.

ESPINOSA_D: Yes, oh God, so many things.

MORA: Like that Juan Antonio Corretjer--they came and we had them down there at the *Cuc [La Cucaracha]*. And I’m going to be interviewing him and I asked him, "why do you want to be independent?" He just shot me a look like, "I don't need to answer that." “Yes, you do. There’s a lot of people that don't know what’s going on and you have to answer those kind questions for them. Why are you doing this? What are the basics here?" It was a kind of stupid question, you know. I admit it. But still, I had to write it down.

ESPINOSA_D: You know somebody had to ask it on behalf of the people, right?

MORA: Right!

ESPINOSA_D: I mean you--

MORA: Why are you people so unhappy? Do you like apples?

MARTINEZ_R: There were a lot of really influential, political people and movie stars--

ESPINOSA_J: La Tierra!

MARTINEZ_R: That came through our doors that were being interviewed. But at the same time, I don't think enough is being talked about a lot of the repercussions that we also had to face. I remember our office being on Abriendo [Ave.] and I remember walking out, my car being parked out in the front. It was a one way, and I remember seeing police cars out there. It would be a pretty normal thing to see police cars parked out in front or a little bit−a half block back or something. I remember two different times: one time being followed home by a police car, because I didn't live very far. I lived in the blocks. [Then] I remember one time being pulled over, before I got off of Abriendo. At that time they could get away with it, by just saying it was a routine check—a routine stop. But it was just kind of—you knew where you were being followed from and it was just a form of intimidation. Those are different kinds of things
Being involved in the community issues was real hard, because they knew where you worked. They knew everything about you. So, we would have to deal with a lot of police. I know years later Juan and I, in talking to police about Columbus Day—was it John Gravette? Who was one—?

ESPINOZA_J: Ron. Ron Gravette.

MARTINEZ_R: Ron, I'm sorry. Anyway, he admitted that they would actually stake out La Cucaracha office. He thought it was funny thinking back about it, you know, that it was humorous. But it was a very serious situation that we were being surveilled, during this time.

ORTEGA_JE: The FBI would come up to the front door and knock on the door.

ESPINOZA_D: Yep! Well, I remember Gravette telling me a story, thinking back. It was a humorous story, but he was making fun of police and himself. It was after a Columbus protest and we would meet at the Salt Creek center there and have a potluck dinner. He says, "we were watching your daughters." Now, how did he know who my daughters were?

MORA: No shit!

ESPINOZA_D: Right! Now, they were teenagers by then. So, he made it sound like, "they got out of the car. They went to the back and opened up the trunk and they leaned in and we were watching to see what they were going to get, and they pulled out a cake." And they went in and had cake. He was admitting and I was—

MORA: They were our sugar daddies [the police].

ESPINOZA_J: You know, in the '90s, Pueblo got a new FBI agent and Ruben Archuleta was the Chief of Police. Ruben and I had become pretty good friends and he was in charge of investigations and he helped me out with a lot of cases that I was working on. But anyway, he called me up and said, "hey, there's a new FBI agent in town and he wants to meet you." I'd been wanting to meet him, too. I wanted to do an interview. I wanted to put his picture in the paper. I wanted people to know who this guy was, because he was a Puerto Rican and he had the reputation of bringing down the “Macheteros” ["the Machete Wielders"] a Puerto Rican group. Later, I saw in his office he had a big machete on his wall and it was engraved to the “Machetero” or something like that.

But anyway, the day I was supposed to meet with Ruben and this new FBI agent, I got there about 15 minutes early. Back in those days, I had access to the police department. I had been a police reporter for the Chieftain for about 10 years and I could just walk in the chief's office, without having to even talk to the receptionist or anybody. So, I did that. I said, "I got an appointment with the chief. I'm just going to go back and see him." So, I walked in his office and here's him and this FBI agent and they just froze, you know, real guilty-looking. I looked on his desk and it was covered with back issues of La Cucaracha. The whole desktop was covered with back issues of La Cucaracha. [Then] Ruben swooped down and wadded them up in a big ball like that [gesturing] and threw them in the trash can. Nobody said anything about it. I didn't
say anything. They didn't say anything. It was just so obvious that they were checking us out even 10-20 years after the fact.

**MORA:** I remember the current police chief Luis Velez. Rita was having one of her Columbus things at the library, and it really pissed the Italians off. Gradually, they've come not to go to the Italian celebration of Columbus Day, because we're across a wire fence or whatever, holding our anti-Columbus day ceremony or whatever you want to call it. Anyway, the publisher of the *Chieftain*, Bob Rawlings, who is a very temperamental guy, a flashy temper, he walked up to Chief Velez and asked him, "why don't you arrest her?" I'm not making this up. I saw him. He was doing that finger thing [finger wagging gesture] to the police chief and the police chief tells him, "why don't you go sit down over there? I'm not going to do it. I'm not going to arrest her." So a lot of times, you think Velez is just a front for, you know, basically a racist police department, but sometimes things play out in your favor, where he stood up to Bob Rawlings. I couldn't believe he did that and told him, "no! You need to go back over there, sir!"

**MARTINEZ_R:** He told me that he told him, "you take care of your newspaper and I'll take care of the police department.” Yes, so—

**ESPINOSA_J:** Bob Rawlings stopped coming to the Columbus Day protest.

**MARTINEZ_R:** They kept escorting him off.

**ESPINOSA_J:** They told him he was not welcome there.

**MORA:** Oh, really!

**ESPINOSA_J:** The police told him he was an agitator.

**ORTEGA_JA:** So, take me back to the last day of the last issue. What was that like?

**ESPINOSA_D:** Who was left standing? I think it was the three of us again.

**MARTINEZ_R:** The ones who started it.

**ESPINOSA_D:** I was doing some of the paperwork, sending out statements, and helping out in the office.

**ESPINOSA_J:** And Lloyd—

**ESPINOSA_D:** And Lloyd, yes, and Lloyd Romero. We had moved into another office right there on Union Ave. But I have to say the morale was pretty low. I remember being pregnant then and—

**ESPINOSA_J:** With who?
ESPINOZA_D: [laughing] Estrella! And it was after she was born that Lloyd Romero was in that terrible car accident.

ESPINOZA_J: We were already in Pueblo Action. It was after the last issue was done, when Lloyd got into that accident.

ESPINOZA_D: We were starting to step out, to step away, and like I said, it became pretty dire for us.

MARTINEZ_D: It was a decision that had to be made, because, frankly, we have college-educated people with a lot of talent and we gave what we could give for La Cucaracha. But at a point in time, just by the virtue of the business that it is, publishing is a very tough business. Unless you have some serious financial support, it really is the proverbial hand-to-mouth existence. At a point in time personally, I had some other ambitions and I owed it to myself to continue moving forward in that regard. It was pretty obvious there was a lot of support for us here in Pueblo. To this very day, there's a lot of support for us in Pueblo, but it’s unfair for me, for example, to ask others to give of themselves, if I'm not going to do it. By the same token, everybody here had other responsibilities as well. So, it just came at a point in time that we had to make a tough decision and it wasn't a fun decision. It wasn't a great last production, if you will, but we all at a point in time agreed that the time had come for us to look at some new dimensions and some new personal growth. Part of it unfortunately was we had to leave La Cucaracha were it lay and that's what we did.

ESPINOZA_J: Well said! José, do you know what the date of the last publication was?

ORTEGA_JA: I don't, but I can find out though.

ESPINOZA_J: I was trying to remember that today, but I–

MARTINEZ_D: I think it was 1984.

ESPINOZA_D: Yes, I think it was.

ORTEGA_JA: But you don't know the exact month.

ESPINOZA_D: No. No, that just goes to support the reality that we didn't mark the calendar. There were lots and lots–Juan said it best when he said we didn't say good bye. It was just–

ESPINOZA_J: We thought we would regroup and start publishing again.

MARTINEZ_D: It could happen. It still could happen. The upside is that the technologies have evolved.

MARTINEZ_R: We have an offer.
MARTINEZ_D: Then again, there's opportunities that still exist. Fortunately, our skills have not waned. If anything, we are probably better today than we were back in 1984.

ESPINOSA_J: For what it’s worth, we did publish a souvenir copy for the “Symbols of Resistance” in 2014 dedicated to the nine people we know that had died in the Chicano Movement, so we still could resurface at almost any time.

MARTINEZ_D: Just like the Cucaracha. [all laughing]

ESPINOSA_D: Yes.

MARTINEZ_R: La Cucaracha never dies!

ESPINOSA_D: It never dies.

ORTEGA_JA: So, if that offer that you had spoken of, if that ever materialized, and I'm not saying it’s going to, but what would the talks be about amongst yourselves, that you would put in there? What would you put in there?

MARTINEZ_R: I think it’s still all the same issues. It’s still the same issues just a different time.

MARTINEZ_D: Part of it depends on when we would be—what’s the timing of that edition? What are people talking about regarding a lot of the same issues? Right. The upside is we could be very topical. We could be fairly topical very quickly in that regard. So, it would probably be a smattering of a lot of issues that aren’t being addressed, maybe going in to it a little deeper, a deeper approach to the real issues, not just looking at the surface, but trying to dig down a little more. If possible, we also want to try to jazz it up with some really good Reefer to it, art which is photography, cartoons and so on and so forth, so it’s appealing to the reader. The other thing is frankly, people to this day—and everyone in this room would agree with this is that people who remember us or don't know we were part of La Cucaracha say, “you were La Cucaracha. I have issues of La Cucaracha that I’ve saved from way back when.” You know, it’s become that kind of situation. I don't know that too many people—maybe they can say something about a Pueblo Chieftain Article, Rocky Mountain News article, Denver post. Maybe there's something if it’s an obituary. But for the most part, people were standing on corners and waiting for that Cucaracha to be distributed and they were there picking them up.

ORTEGA_JE: At the bars-- they were waiting at the bars. [all laughing] Walk into the bars and there's—[gesturing]

ESPINOSA_D: They were passing them [issues of La Cucaracha] out.

ORTEGA_JE: Restaurants in Bessemer.

ESPINOSA_J: With Cucaracha, two dollars would get you a beer anyplace in town. [all laughing]
MORA: I still believe education is the big defining issue that they’re still screwing over our kids every day. The other night, I brought up the forum. Why not tie the teachers’ pay to their performance, their outcomes, how well they educate us? Right. Boy, they got pissy about that. A lot of the ideas we espoused they don't even want to talk about. Let’s talk about the kids that are going on the field trip to DC and stuff like that. Not on those other little kids that are getting run through the crack, then you wonder why they turn to gangs or something like that or why you have so many problems with them. Because the schools are not hospitable to them and they don't want us in there.

Nearly everybody I know--they were Vietnam veterans, because that’s where they were going? They were shooting them over to Vietnam and stuff. I didn't go, because my older brother came down from Denver--Pete Reyes, the first president of UMAS. He gave me a car. He said, "I'll give you that car if you sign up to go to Boulder." So, I had somebody personally invested in me who took me up to Boulder. Alright! Or else I would have gone to work at the mill and gone over to Vietnam and got my ass shot off. You know, I'm still doing that now. I'm still on the board of La Gente Youth Sports, trying to make a difference in these kids’ lives. All they want is an opportunity and to get the cops off their back. So, education is a big one. Police brutality is still a big issue in our community, women’s rights, you know all these things. But we're fighting.

ESPINOSA_J: We'd probably have a story about Trump.

MORA: Yes, who does he appeal to? Working class whites. That was one of our main failures. We didn't unite with the Black movement or the poor whites, the people that really have a lot of common interests with us. We didn't unite with them. We polarized them. They look at us and they see us as all that and they're going to vote for Trump because he's going to stem those "Mexicans that are coming out of the pipe." We didn't unite with them and they’re getting screwed, you know, no minimum wage jobs and all that. I grew up when Pueblo was very prosperous and there was the steel mill and a union and the guys went to work there when they turned 18. [They] worked there for 50 years and then they drop dead the next day, but they still made like 80 grand a year. When I moved back to Pueblo, the unions were gone and the city leaders in Pueblo now want a minimum wage [and] no unions. That's the kind of future that they project for Pueblo. So the issues are the same if not worse. I don't know. I think, you know, because of the drugs

TRUJILLO: The brown tar heroin!

ESPINOSA_D: Yes!

MORA: What about alcohol which is 10 times worse?

ESPINOSA_D: But literally the houses and the streets and the neighborhood are decaying.

MORA: Well, I travel all over. The La John Madrid tournament, they’re having it over there right now, and we're having La Gente burgers. [slapping the back of his hand against the palm of his other hand] [all laughing] Go over there and have one. Tortillas and fresh meat, you know.
Isaac went over there by himself with his mother. My grandson, and he got two of them yesterday, that little pig. I could have slapped him across the head.

**ESPINOSA_J:** The La Gente burgers.

**MORA:** Yes and they didn't even tell me they were going. My daughter wanted me to go. But we have some good teams, you know, all the teams over there. These are good kids, you know. That's what you've got to do is to help these kids get through without get screwed over or getting trashed by the Chieftain.

**ORTEGA_JA:** Well, thank you all. Thank you so much for being here. Thank you so much.

**ESPINOSA_D:** Thank you.

**MORA:** Thank you.

**ESPINOSA_J:** Now I got to go fishing.