Ortega: Ok ready. State your name.

Martinez: Sure. I was born David R. Martinez. In the course of time, I have been referred to as Dave, David [with Spanish pronunciation Daa-veed], Dave kook, and a few other names that I won't repeat for this piece. [Laughter] I've traced my family’s roots back to the original continuous settlers in the San Luis Valley. I grew up in Denver in a very poor neighborhood called Westwood, which, to this very day, is arguably the poorest Latino neighborhood—Chicano neighborhood—in the city or county of Denver. I was number four of six kids. I had four sisters and one brother and due to the fact, we grew up very, very poor. My dad had a third grade education [and] my mom a fifth grade education. All six kids figured out that for us to survive and get out of poverty, we needed to go to school. So, we were blessed in some way because all six of us were able to graduate from high school and continue on and now we all have college degrees.

So, when I left Denver and Lincoln High School, I went up to school in Boulder. That was a quite dramatic era in the history of the world really, and particularly in the history of the United States, because of all the changes that were going on, and principally, as you all may know by now—if you have all seen some of the other videos here—that the Vietnam war had a big impact as to what was going on. Youth come out of teen age, growing up, getting out [of] high school, going into college, or to the employment [sector], or having one other server choice and that was going to war—going to Vietnam. That really opened peoples’ eyes and created awareness. Probably since World War II, including the Korean War, didn't receive much resistance. But
suddenly there were a lot of questions going on--because of the flow of information that was reaching into the homes through radio, television, and newspapers--that maybe this war wasn't exactly what we were being told it was all about. Certainly in Boulder. The University of Colorado in Boulder [was] known for its openness--liberalism--if you will. [It] was a hotbed for protest and that's what really stimulated my mind and opened me up to some ideas that I never knew before.

I mean, I grew up in a poor community. A lot of my friends were in reform school and by the time I graduated from high school, some of them were already in the Department of Corrections. It was a rough neighborhood. The upside for me in growing up was--I wasn't a very big fellow--but for some reason, I was ok in school. So, as a result, I didn't worry about what my other colleagues and students received for grades, because I knew I was going to get good grades. So, I always helped them out and I was able to find bigger guys that would support me, if I needed that, in the streets. So, it worked out real well.

But, going to the University of Colorado--I liked Superman--so, as a result, I was going to be Jimmy Olsen. So I enrolled in the School of Journalism, and I stayed with it. But in the course of time, opportunities came up. [There] was basically a whole new dimension at the University of Colorado that that institution had never experienced before. That was "let's break down the doors. Let's open up the schools and these classes," not only for these white elite students--because the University of Colorado to this day is a very much a white institution--but [for] people of color. We have people with brown skin. We have people with black skin, yellow skin, red skin and they should have the same opportunities. So, while I was there, a Mexican American student organization was formed and there were growing numbers, fortunately, of people of color who were being allowed to matriculate there at the school. As a result of that, there was a lot [of] new incubators, if you will, for new ideas as to what really would be right and just for an institution of higher education.

So, I became involved [in] doing a variety of things. I was doing some photography for the University Annual. In the course of time, because of the unrest and what was going on, particularly with the Chicano Movement, I became involved and there were individuals who were certainly the organizers. I wasn't an organizer by any stretch. But there happened to be, because of the unrest, because of marches, because of the war and so on--I think it might have been my junior year--[a complete shutdown of] the University, Nobody had to take finals, if you were ok with the grades, because of the protests that were going on. The Administration couldn't control the campus. But, with the evolution in terms of consciousness, the growing numbers of Chicanos that were on campus, [you] could see that there was a lot of disparity, and [that] there were a lot of things that were happening that needed to change.

Well, then the Chicanos became more activated, and as a result of that, there were some protests. There were some sit-ins, and it was identified that we needed to have our own publications. That's kind of where I stepped in, through Gary Archuleta, through Julius Martinez, and others. [That's] where I ended up working--and that's how I ended up meeting Juan Espinosa. We were the two [who] basically had some technical skills [and who] could put together a publication. So, that's how I met Juan and that's how I started publishing in Boulder an independent
publication through UMAS Publications. In the spring of 1972, we published two issues of that particular publication under the banner of UMAS Publications.

I graduated and I went to graduate school in California and was able to earn a master’s degree in Mass Communications at Stanford University. Having some experience--I did an internship with the Rocky Mountain News. What I learned was, as long as I was writing what the editors at that particular time wanted—there was a cab driver strike, there was a bank robbery in downtown Denver, there’s a fire over here, there's a meeting over here--as long as I was writing those kind of stories, that they would accept I had no problems. But, when in my own time, I would go off and say, “well, look, here’s a new community center that’s trying to provide not only recreational activities, but also health care in Fort Lupton.” I would go out on my own time [and] write a nice piece. The editor would look at it and give it back to me and say, "I’m sorry, we just can't publish this." [David] "Is there any particular reason?" [Editor] "No, I can just tell you my job as editor. I’m the filter that determines what goes in and out of this publication. It’s not the writing. It’s not the quality of the writing. It’s the content, essentially."

One of the upsides was the evolution of the technology. Historically, it was very expensive to be able to put out a print product, because it was something called “hot type,” [by] which every letter basically was molded by lead into galleys, and then from there it was put into rows, not pages. So, it was a very expensive proposition, which, unless you had a fair amount of wealth, you couldn't publish. Well, in the course of time, it evolved from “hot type” to what is called “cold type.” Essentially, what that was, just print on paper. There are some machines that would do it, but then from there, you could take a photo of that page and from that, transfer to a negative and then put it on [the] printing press. That was the evolution of the technology [that] really was the catalyst that opened the doors for independent alternative publication.

With my experience in seeing what was going on, I really understood that I was not—I’m just too independent, I guess, in some respects. I couldn't sit there and just allow myself to just cater to the whims of an editor who in my mind was very limited in his or her scope and vision. As a result of that, it was a connection that was made with Juan Espinosa [and] Deborah Espinosa, his wife. We kind of had similar experiences in some respects and, if nothing else, we had similar drive, saying, “we think we should publish our own publication.” If we wanted to go ahead and apply our degrees, we want to help our communities and our people, then the best way we were going to be able to do it was to publish our own publication.

That was the genesis of La Cucaracha. We spent a semester—about six months--in Mexico, working on our Spanish, as well as putting together a plan. Based on the experience that the Espinosas had in Pueblo [Colorado], particularly with the initial Cinco de Mayo celebrations, we decided that Pueblo, Colorado would be the place for us to relocate to, with the whole focus and purpose to begin publication on La Cucaracha. We didn't have the name La Cucaracha when we came to Pueblo, but through the process of evaluation and just relevance, we actually had come up with a couple of other names. I think at one point in time it was Juan Espinosa that came back and said, “how about La Cucaracha?” I don't remember, at this time, the original name. I think it was—
Espinosa: The Mens.

Martinez: What was it?

Espinosa: The Mens−Little Mensaje de Pueblo.

Martinez: The Mensaje−we had the Mensaje de Pueblo−oh that really has a great feel for it! “A Message of Pueblo.” It’s deep, it’s thoughtful, and so on. I guess at one point in time we said, “maybe we are taking ourselves a little too seriously in that regard,” but La Cucaracha had a much better ring to it.

So, we came to town and we had to figure out a way to support ourselves, because we know, even to this day, it’s a very difficult proposition to publish a newspaper financially. Because, well, if you look at the time, there were basically publications that were publishing 900,000 issues a day that have gone under, because, financially, it is a very difficult business to get into. But, through blood and guts, we were able to get to Pueblo, [and] figure out ways to support ourselves. I myself had rented a house on the east side of Pueblo and we basically used that as our first office and were able to publish the first few issues of La Cucaracha out of that house in Pueblo.

Part of our principles that we brought to town and to the publication beyond [portion inaudible] the editorial scope that was obviously most important, was that we were willing to deal with ideas and issues and topics that no one else, at least in Colorado or very few publications in Colorado, were willing to put into print. Some of [these issues have] not stopped−police brutality, inequalities, affirmative action, discrimination in education, discrimination all across the board, as well as a lot of valuable cultural information that just was not being printed.

We started out with a monthly publication. We came out swinging. What we referred to as our first edition had a photo of−Pueblo is very known for its youth boxing--and we came out swinging with a photo of one boxer, one youth boxer−I think it was Panda Pacheco--throwing a right hook to his opponent. And it went very well. We received a very, very warm reception from the grassroots community in Pueblo. We received a very stiff reception from the quote, unquote “powers that be.”

There’s a lot of ironies in what we did. One thing for example--because of principle, we actually had rules and regulations as to who we would accept advertising from, which is not necessarily a mature business decision, but by the same token, it was a principled business decision. From day one, we had big companies [whose policies and products and so on] we did not agree with. One example would be the Adolph Coors Corporation, who wanted to purchase full page ads and double spreads in our publication, La Cucaracha, from day one. And we refused! And there were others as well, and again, that was because of principle [that they were refused]. We don't have any regrets about it, but it certainly didn't help us financially.

As a result though, we were blessed that we were able to engage the community. The community was going to invest themselves in us, if you will, particularly the grassroots community. Over a course of time, we had a number of individuals−some in this room−who
stepped forward and said, “I want to learn, I want to help,” and “I want to do something because I agree with what you are doing.” I think that speaks volumes to the credibility that over time La Cucaracha had developed.

In the course of the eight years, or so, that we published, we had subscribers in 36 states and six countries. By the same token, what we were able to do was work with a variety of local individuals. We worked with them to build their skills, and as a result, some of them were able to go on and continue based on the skills that they learned, working in various aspects of media and in other professions. So, in that regard, we were very confident, and I'm convinced that we were actually a very good entity and a very good element that we brought to the Pueblo community.

A couple of interesting tidbits: When we first started publishing, Enrique "Henry" Reyes was the President of the Pueblo City Council. He despised us with a PASSION! Why? Because we challenged what the Pueblo City Council was doing. Okay, yes, they were taking care of the neighborhoods that didn't need to have the help. But the poor communities—they didn't want to deal with the situations that were there—simple things like putting traffic lights at major intersections, just to protect the crossing of young children. But in the course of time, Enrique Reyes, once he was no longer the President of City Council and no longer had that kind of influence, he was thrown aside too. And guess what he ultimately ended up doing? He became a salesman for La Cucaracha—you know, just unbelievable in that regard. And it was a credit to him that he saw it that way.

One time during our tenure--I don't remember the year--there was a local election and they had about eight different local ballot issues. We took the position that every one should be shot down—should be voted down, because it wasn't in the best interests of the Pueblo community. We published 10,000 issues so we didn't have the penetration of any other media, but for that election by faith—and it wasn't just because of the Cucaracha—but the Pueblo voters saw that all eight of those particular ballot issues should be defeated as well. And that's what they did. So, at a point in time, we were the pulse of the community as well.

Another interesting tidbit: At one time, because it looked like the Pueblo Chieftain—the union was going to go on strike, through closed door communication, we were approached by members of that union to see if we would be able to publish a Union-supported publication of the Chieftain, while they were out on strike. Now, that strike didn't come about.

But just to give you a sample—a sense as to how—in the course of time we came in as outsiders. We were considered radicals. We were considered to be wackos, if you will, but in the course of time through our work, which people could see, we developed credibility. That I think speaks volumes to ultimately what we set out to do and what we ultimately did do. In fact, because of finances and so on, we had to cease publication at a point in time. Why? Because we didn't really have any paid staff ever and we all had to commit ourselves to survival for ourselves and our families. But once we ceased publication, word came back to us that there were some new local businesses that [we] would probably have accepted advertising from at a point in time—doctors, dentists and so on, who said “we would support La Cucaracha” if we wanted to come
back. But at that point in time, I think we, at least personally, I was on kind of another agenda, that I didn't have the time [and] I didn't have the luxury to come back to Pueblo at that time to continue La Cucaracha.

So, in a nutshell, if someone was to ask me, what would be the most important things that came out of La Cucaracha? I would say probably the engagement of the local community, the initiative of the local community, the education of the local community, the involvement of the local community. Everything that came about, as a result of the information that we were presenting that really hadn't been considered [or] presented before, I think led to some changes in Pueblo to begin with. I also believe that, for the individuals that worked with us, I think that some of them—I mean all of them—gained a lot of experience in different ways. I think they were able to take that for their own personal wellbeing and I think that speaks volumes for itself, too.

I think one of the biggest issues that we were able to address, or we influenced, was basically the Kiko Martinez trial that was held here in Pueblo. Kiko Martinez was facing, I think, 21 counts of felonies and about three different cases. The first case was a federal case because of the notoriety of the case, involving the allegations that Kiko Martinez—today a respected lawyer, was a respected lawyer back then—had attempted to send mail bombs to different Denver police individuals. Because of that notoriety, they said that “we need a change of venue.” And the venue—they opted to have that trial here in Pueblo because of La Cucaracha—I really firmly believe this—because La Cucaracha was the organ that was willing to get out information, factual information, documented information, about that particular case. When that trial came to Pueblo, the the courtroom was packed every day. In the course of that trial, the Judge had a secret meeting one evening with the prosecutors, which is obviously illegal. [The Judge] told the prosecutors, “I’m going to declare a mistrial in this case, but I don't want to declare it until we put the defense on [the stand].” So, you guys will know exactly what their defense strategies will be, next time you try the case.”

Because of the community here in Pueblo—and not all of them were readers of La Cucaracha, but many of them were—because of the organizing of the community [and] the courtroom being packed (and fortunately one of the prosecutors understood his responsibility as an attorney, his ethical responsibility), a mistrial was ultimately declared and that was what basically started the domino effect. And all the dominos fell in favor of Kiko Martinez against the government’s prosecution.

One other thing that I think that was very instrumental from La Cucaracha was the land rights case out of the San Luis Valley. I believe Mr. Pablo Mora was the member of the staff who drafted the first proposal for some funding for the Land Rights Council, which was the organization that was created through some of our supporters and a couple individuals that helped with the Cucaracha. As a result of that funding [they] were able to organize the Land Rights Council that ultimately was instrumental in getting a law suit filed in 1981. That has now led to over 4000 property owners being able to go back up on that mountain and regain the rights that they had that goes back all the way back to the regional land grant. So, there's been a lot of successes from the Cucaracha.
One of the biggest successes for me personally, and that is all “the kooks,” as we affectionately referred to ourselves. We are still together in different respects; we’re not always together physically on a daily basis, but our mindset and our feelings and so on. We are family and that is just invaluable for me. It’s something that you just feel and you learn and you grow with. It’s nothing you can learn out of a textbook and it’s nothing you can necessarily learn out of a newsroom, but it’s because of those feelings, those connections that we have— that blood that flows through us—that’s really brought, for me, a really important dimension to my life that nothing will ever replace it.

**Ortega:** So one quick question--was there ever a concerted effort to stop *La Cucaracha?* Did anybody ever try to shut you down?

**Martinez:** Well, I don't know that we were big enough that there should be a concerted effort to shut us down. Based on some of the funding that we had received, for basically job training and so on, we did have the FBI raid our office at one point in time. The pretense was that we weren't doing what we were supposedly contracted to do and the funds that we had received were somehow being misappropriated and going for activities that were illegal. Based on that raid, where files were taken and so on, the whole office was searched, people were searched, and so on--over the course of time in the review and the investigation. I don't remember how much time passed, but suddenly I received phone calls saying, “we completed our investigation and we have not found anything that would merit any type of criminal action. In fact we have not found anything wrong and we want to return your files.” So, we had a meeting back in one of the offices, in downtown Pueblo. At the time, Delores Montoya was kind of our office manager, although without training. She was also our accountant. So, we had this meeting and the accountant for the federal government, who was there said, "all your numbers--I've got everything figured out. You did everything correctly but there is one penny that I can't allocate. I can't figure out where that one penny goes." And lo and behold, Delores Montoya stood up and said. “let me see if I can find it for you.” And in that meeting she found it. “Here’s where that penny goes,” and it was like, "oh yeah.” You know.

In addition to that, we did have the IRS, for taxes. They conducted an audit of the *Cucaracha* tax return. We had an agent come in [and] he spent a week in our office. In fact, we created a work space for him, a little desk, and a little chair. He would ask for this, “I need this document” and Diane would get them for us [or] would get them for him—he needs this document. So, he spent a whole week [and] in the course of time, he kind of got to know us. I mean, when he first walked in Monday morning, he was like, “uhhh, I got all these radicals and scary people that want to kick my butt and who knows what they're going to do?” [In a low sarcastic voice]. You know. He was there Monday to Friday 8 to 5, but he did take his hour for lunch. He did all his computations, but all the documents that he requested we brought to him and so on. Then Friday after noon he said, “okay, you know, I’m going to be leaving now, but I would like to give you all a little report.” So, we called our little group into the office—into the room--and he said, “I've looked at everything that you’ve done. I can tell you that you didn't always dot every i or cross every t, but you didn't do anything illegal and my report is going to say that you deserve a clean bill of health because if there is any type of mistakes, they are innocent mistakes and there's nothing here that needs to be followed up on.” So, we had that kind of scrutiny and all of us can all talk to confrontations that we may have had, from time to time individually, because of who
we were and because of the racism that exists, if you will, in Pueblo as well as other parts of country.

Another thing is, with La Cucaracha, we were able to as a publication—at that point in time—there was something called the Chicano Press Association. A lot of the publications started out grassroots, either from community based organizations or from universities and colleges who added a little more resources. We all addressed a lot of the same issues, which are still being addressed today. They still have not been necessarily changed [like] health care, education, employment, discrimination, and so on. But in the course of time, because of how we published the information that we published, with limited resources we did expand our coverage. And we did a lot more cultural stuff. At one point in time, we had a weekly recipe that we presented. We tried to identify little monumental achievements on the personal side as well.

In the course of time, we started setting the standard through La Cucaracha for the Chicano Press Association for the quality of the publication. The writing was good—was solid—we edited well. We had some very good photographers, who contributed a lot of nice photos. We had two or three good artists. Juan Espinosa was really a multi-talented man and he not only could write and shoot photos, but he was also a good artist. We had Rich Montañ o, who created some fabulous art.

In fact—one other quick tidbit there—Rich did a cartoon of Governor Lamb. Governor Lamb was the governor of Colorado that—to this day—used to preach that all immigrants should be kicked out of the country. Donald Trump might have been one of his students. [All chuckling] And Governor Lamb believed at a point in time that when a person reached a certain age that person basically should not receive any more health care. But Rich one time did a cartoon, essentially a takeoff on Governor Lamb, with the Statue of Liberty, and it was "bring your masses and so on here." And we published it. We [then] got a call from the governor’s press secretary, saying, "this is kind of a confidential call, but what would it cost the governor to purchase a copy of that cartoon for his personal collection?" [Laughter] We made a Velox—at the time it was called a Velox. We made a stat—a copy of it—and I think we basically didn't charge him anything. I think we may have charged him coping costs. We sent it to him because, even though he would get up and say, “we’ve got to close the boarders and these immigrants and these Mexicans are doing damage to our state, we can't have them living here,” and so on, pounding his fist— he wanted that cartoon for his personal collection and as far as I know he still has [it]. When you have that kind of input, when you get that kind of reception, it says that you have to be doing something right and I think we were doing a lot of things right with La Cucaracha.