Loyola Atencio Gutierrez

Oral history of La Cucaracha
And Activism

Interviewed by José A. Ortega

April 13, 2016

Colorado State University-Pueblo
University Archives and Special Collections
Pueblo, Colorado

ORTEGA_JA: Okay, this is José Ortega I am interviewing Lola Gutierrez on April 13, 2016. This interview is taking place at Lola’s house, at 1317 N. La Cross in Pueblo, Colorado. The interview is sponsored by the CSU-Pueblo University and Special Collections and is part of the La Cucaracha history project. I wanted to confirm that Mrs. Gutierrez understands that this interview is being recorded and this recording will be preserved at the CSU Pueblo University Archives. CSU Pueblo University Archives retains the rights to publish, duplicate, or otherwise use the recorded interview. This includes rights of publication in electronic form, such as placement on the internet for access on that medium. Do you agree? [Affirmed with a head nod]

Okay, so what is your full name?

GUTIERREZ: Loyola Atencio Gutierrez

ORTEGA_JA: And when were you born?

GUTIERREZ: [Pause for recollection, then laughing] That’s not fair! [Laughing] When was I born?

ORTEGA_JA: Yes!

GUTIERREZ: October the 2nd 1938.

ORTEGA_JA: In Pueblo?

GUTIERREZ: In San Pablo, Colorado.

ORTEGA_JA: Okay and what is your educational background?
GUTIERREZ: I got my GED on my porch in the mail, because I couldn’t—they didn’t want us talking in Spanish or anything at Centennial at the time I was going. They used to make us—we used to take tortillas and they’d make us go to the boiler room in the basement. Ah, prejudice, you know! I went through that a lot in my life. So, I went to PCC [Pueblo Community College] and I took classes to get my GED and I passed it, except for math. I’m not sure. I don’t have a math head. I’m not a math thinker. I’m mostly a humanities, art, music, poetry, and things like that.

ORTEGA_JA: And that’s where you got your final degree or did you go on further from that?

GUTIERREZ: I went to the place where you’re at.

ORTEGA_JA: Okay, was it SCSC [Southern Colorado State College] at the time? [Nodding her head, yes] Yes! And what did you graduate with from there?

GUTIERREZ: What did I graduate with?

ORTEGA_JA: Yes.

GUTIERREZ: A fine arts degree in Art and a Bachelor’s in Humanities and a minor in English and a minor in Spanish.

ORTEGA_JA: And can you tell me a little bit more on the prejudice that you had, while you were going to school?

GUTIERREZ: Well, they made sure that I never got an A. You know, I’d get an A minus or a B+, stuff like that. And I would tell them—I would fight back with them.

ORTEGA_JA: And was it just the teachers or was there kids that would—

GUTIERREZ: No! No, the kids were real good, but the teachers were terrible. They didn’t want you to advance. You know? They denied our intelligence. We were subject to harassment and everything like that. “Don’t do this, don’t do that, because we’re the bosses! We take care of all this!” Just like they have for years and years. I used to fight with them because of the Indian and Native American rights and things like that, because I’m Native American and Spanish.

ORTEGA_JA: What type of Native American?

GUTIERREZ: Tewa, from the Taos Pueblo—that’s the moccasin people.

ORTEGA_JA: Were there any teachers at that time that you did look up to or were they all [bad]?
**GUTIERREZ:** [Shaking her head side to side.] Not even one! I was young and they would hit [on] me for—to go to bed with them and stuff like that. And uh, uh, no!

**ORTEGA_JA:** So, after college and all that, what was your experience with the Chicano Movement, prior to working with *La Cucaracha*?

**GUTIERREZ:** Mostly here. I used to come, when they had the meetings over here, when they were starting the *Cucaracha*. So prior to that I didn’t have any access to any information or involvement.

**ORTEGA_JA:** What kind of jobs or pieces of art that you did before that?

**GUTIERREZ:** Well, I started painting when I was six, [and] sold my first painting when I was 17. It was a beautiful, beautiful landscape and I sold it to one of my friends, a guy friend, from here in Pueblo. I don’t know where it went, but I got $40 for it. I don’t know how much it is now! [Laughing]

**ORTEGA_JA:** I mean did you hold any jobs or was it all just art that you just had done?

**GUTIERREZ:** I went to school and in between I was teaching. I was teaching the students that came from Asia, India, Mexico, Taiwan, and Thailand. I met a lot of good, good people. The students were good to me. At that time it was when Selena [Quintanilla, Chicana Recording artist] was killed, it was—I go, “Another one bites the dust!” Pendeja la gente!

**ORTEGA_JA:** So, that was—okay when you were teaching them it was after, but it was all art that you were teaching them?

**GUTIERREZ:** No, I was teaching them English!

**ORTEGA_JA:** Oh, okay! And where were you teaching that at?

**GUTIERREZ:** At the library at East High [Pueblo East High School]. I did that from ‘73 to ‘79.

**ORTEGA_JA:** What kind of art do you produce? Is it all paintings or sculptures? What kind of things do you do?

**GUTIERREZ:** Sculptures, paintings, water sculptures. I restore statues, and like the one we’re restoring right now of St. Joseph. [Pointing to her left.] I restored about—I don’t know how many—you know I’ve lost count. I’ve done a lot of work for St. Leander’s, for just donating. I did the crying room were they take the kids. I did that one and I volunteered that one too. I’ve done a lot of volunteering, because I feel like, why save my talents, because I want people to be a part of me. And also to inspire the children, you know, mostly the teenagers, cause they were terrible. [Laughing]
ORTEGA_JA: Did you have any gallery openings? And did you have anything like that prior to La Cucaracha?

GUTIERREZ: Yes, in Taos and all over Colorado. All over Colorado—mostly in Colorado, New Mexico in Taos, and you know Denver, Pueblo. Colorado Springs, Florence, all over. It was good! [Smiling big!]

ORTEGA_JA: Was it just those two states or did you go anywhere else, because of your—this could be anytime?

GUTIERREZ: No, I had four children, small, at the time and I couldn’t take them with me, but I took them to Texas. We would go in the summer in the station wagon that I had and we’d stop at all the universities, because I wanted them to get an inkling of education and the value of it.

ORTEGA_JA: And the value of—was it just of the education or also of their culture?

GUTIERREZ: [Nodding, yes] Uh, huh, because their dad was from Texas and I was from San Pablo, but I moved over here in 1973.

ORTEGA_JA: What prompted you to move here?

GUTIERREZ: Was it ‘73? Well, my dad couldn’t find work over there, so he came over to work at the CF&I [Colorado Fuel and Iron (Steel Mill)] and my mom was always a homemaker, except she would work at bakeries. She was a good—my mom was also a poet and my dad was a musician. He played the saxophone with his brothers and oh, they were good. My God, they were good! And, you know, they played big band sound. We’d always be dancing in the kitchen, me and my sister, while they were practicing. [Laughing]

ORTEGA_JA: And you do poetry too, right? What kind of things do you write and have you written any short stories, books?

GUTIERREZ: I wrote a play that was performed at Quinto Sol and, you know, my friends were all involved. That’s when I wrote, “Yo Canto!” [I sing] Yo canto en Espaniol! Yo canto en Mexicano! Canto con todo mi corazón en mí [I sing in Spanish! I sing in Mexicano! I sing with all my heart in me!] [Smiling with pride.] I still have that on a video tape!

ORTEGA_JA: You wrote the whole play and song? Composed it and everything?

GUTIERREZ: Yes, it was like surrealistic! It touched on Vietnam, domestic violence, pregnancy, and humor. A lot of humor! A lot of stories from old, you know. A quité de era aquí! [It was removed from here--holding her head.] You know? It was in Spanish and in English. There was a lady there from the Sangre de Cristo Arts Center, Kathy Farley, and she
wanted for me to perform it at Sangre de Cristo Arts Center. Maggie Divelbiss told her no, “Are you kidding!”

**ORTEGA_JA:** Why did she say no?

**GUTIERREZ:** Because she’s prejudiced! She’s Clorox white! [Both laughing]

**ORTEGA_JA:** So, you’ve written plays. Did you write any short stories or anything? Have you had anything published?

**GUTIERREZ:** Ummm! I had some published in Denver, through the—it was a LULAC [League of United Latin American Citizens] chapter over there. But I never heard nothing from them, because—but it was a cultural, you know, like our own people. But I never followed up on it.

**ORTEGA_JA:** Okay, when did you become involved in *La Cucaracha*? How did that come about?

**GUTIERREZ:** Well, I used to—I was looking for a house—and they told me this one was going to be for rent, so I came in and David was here. David Martinez. And he goes, “What are you doing?” And I go, “I just came to see the house.” He goes, “Well, we’re trying to start a newspaper, *La Cucaracha*! And I was wondering if maybe, you would like to get involved?” And I go, “Let me see what it is!” At that time I was partying, having a good time, you know? Being single. I got divorced in 1971 from Danny Gutierrez. He was a musician, so you can’t stay married to a musician. [Laughing] Con a cola ver a por a quien? [With a tail see by whom]

**ORTEGA_JA:** Okay, so did you know David before that or Juan Espinosa or any of them before that?

**GUTIERREZ:** Uh uh! [Shaking her head side to side.]

**ORTEGA_JA:** So, did he know you were an artist or—?

**GUTIERREZ:** Yeah, I think he had heard that I was an artist, because I had been an artist all my life, you know, through the newspaper and things like that, where they would feature a story on me and stuff like that. But I got real involved with the *Cucaracha* right away and David told me what we were doing and he goes, “But we don’t have a cartoonist!” And I go, “I’ll try it!” And I knew I could do it.

**ORTEGA_JA:** Okay so, you were the cartoonist. What would that entail? What would you have to do to make the cartoon? What role did you have besides a cartoonist also?

**GUTIERREZ:** What do you mean?
ORTEGA_JA: Tell me a little bit about the process of making the cartoon, for La Cucaracha, for a weekly print out? So, how would you get your ideas? Where would they come from? What was the name of the cartoon?

GUTIERREZ: From inside my head. The Chitos—my grandpa was named Lenchito, so I dropped the Len and put Chito. And it featured a lot of my family members. You know, my sisters would say something and I would put it down. I’d get ideas from everywhere, but mostly from my own—you know. [Pointing to her head] From my own head.

ORTEGA_JA: What were some of your stories, personal stories? I know you said they involved your family, but were they anything personal that happened to you?

GUTIERREZ: [Shaking her head, no] No.

ORTEGA_JA: Or like you said, “You saw things.”

GUTIERREZ: No.

ORTEGA_JA: No?

GUTIERREZ: No, I didn’t want to lower myself to their standards and be like they are! Just leave them alone!

ORTEGA_JA: What kind of issues would you touch on, with your cartoon?

GUTIERREZ: Oh, political, cultural, mostly humor, and thinking on my own, but I would always come back with something. Something invented by me. Original.

ORTEGA_JA: Have you ever had any backlash from any of your cartoons? Has anybody ever given you any kind of—?

GUTIERREZ: Oh, one time I did one about some guys fishing and instead of going fishing, they went to the lake and they were swimming with girls, and messing around. Then on the way back, they had to stop at a grocery store and buy fish. So, they could tell their wives that they had gone— [excuses herself to take a drink of water.]

ORTEGA_JA: And what kind of backlash did you get from that?

GUTIERREZ: Well, they said that—this guy said—they’re right there in my papers. He said that I was, instead of putting up, you know, family values and everything like that. And, you know, that I didn’t have any respect for our people, for putting that in the paper, in the cartoon. I wrote back to him and I told him, “I spend a lot of hours thinking and my goal is to make people appreciate humor, and that we do have humor, and that we know how to execute it.
So, it’s just—I don’t know why, because everybody used to read it. It used to go to Walsenburg, Denver, New Mexico, all over Colorado.

**ORTEGA_JA:** And who would distribute it?

**GUTIERREZ:** The guys, they’d just put them in boxes and mail them. Sometimes they would take them in the back of Dave’s truck.

**ORTEGA_JA:** Would you ever deliver?

**GUTIERREZ:** No! Nope! Nope! Nope, I didn’t want to go with them!

**ORTEGA_JA:** So, were you involved with the process of making the paper or your role was just the cartoon?

**GUTIERREZ:** Just the cartoon. They did the layout and stories and things like that.

**ORTEGA_JA:** Were you here when they were doing it? Would you hang around?

**GUTIERREZ:** For a while. I had my kids little, so they were my priority.

**ORTEGA_JA:** Was there any other backlash, besides that. I mean, especially on the political ones or the cultural ones? Was there any other kind of backlash from the people that—either within your cultural background or outside of it?

**GUTIERREZ:** No, except for that one. And it was a Chicano too! We shouldn’t do that to each other. You know? That’s not good you’re trying to do something good and they pick on it.

**ORTEGA_JA:** So, instead of seeing the satire and the funny part of, it he took it seriously.

**GUTIERREZ:** He took it like he wanted to! He probably was guilty of doing that [what was depicted in the cartoon]. [Laughing]

**ORTEGA_JA:** Do you know if there was any opposition to the *Cucaracha* first coming out, within the community?

**GUTIERREZ:** Oh yes! Not in the community, the *Pueblo Chieftain*.

**ORTEGA_JA:** And what kind of things would they say or do?

**GUTIERREZ:** Oh, we’re just that whole bunch of Mexicans and stuff like that. You know? That we were trying to make something out of something that wasn’t happening. In other words, we weren’t appreciated.
ORTEGA_JA: Taken seriously?

GUTIERREZ: Uh uh! [Shaking her head, no] At all!

ORTEGA_JA: And what kind of stories would the Cucaracha do?

GUTIERREZ: Oh, about Kiko [Martinez] and when they killed the six in Boulder and that guy, Gloria’s brother [Ricardo Falcon] over there in New Mexico. The cops killed him when he stopped to get gas and they wouldn’t give him any water.

ORTEGA_JA: Oh, Ricardo Falcon?

GUTIERREZ: Yes! And I wrote a song about him.

ORTEGA_JA: Oh, really! What was it called?

GUTIERREZ: La Vida y mi Gente. [Life and my people.]

ORTEGA_JA: Oh, really! And what did you just make the song or was it for a specific play? Or something else?

GUTIERREZ: No, Gloria wanted me to write it for her, his sister. So, I wrote it and performed it at Bradford [Elementary School] where she was teaching.

ORTEGA_JA: Oh, at the school?

GUTIERREZ: Uh huh! [Nodding up and down, yes]

ORTEGA_JA: Oh, okay! So, what was his sister’s name?

GUTIERREZ: Gloria Falcon!

ORTEGA_JA: Gloria Falcon! Oh, okay! I’m not sure if I remember her.

GUTIERREZ: She was part of the La Cuna de Civilizacion [The Cradle of Civilization], was the [name] of the play. It was funny! I have one of those—what do you call them—that goes from one reel to the other?

ORTEGA_JA: Oh, the reel to reel?

GUTIERREZ: Uh huh! [Nodding up and down, yes]

ORTEGA_JA: Yes! [Both laughing] And you just have an audio recording of that?
**GUTIERREZ:** Uh huh! Audio and video.

**ORTEGA_JA:** Oh, really?

**GUTIERREZ:** Uh huh! [Nodding up and down, yes]

**ORTEGA_JA:** And when was that done?

**GUTIERREZ:** In ‘76 I think, I’m not sure.

**ORTEGA_JA:** And did it involve the kids and all that?

**GUTIERREZ:** Yes, they danced!

**ORTEGA_JA:** Oh, wow!

**GUTIERREZ:** I had been doing shows with the Cocas in San Luis and Alamosa, you know.

**ORTEGA_JA:** And that’s prior to moving here to Pueblo?

**GUTIERREZ:** No!

**ORTEGA_JA:** Oh, so that was after?

**GUTIERREZ:** Uh huh! [Nodding up and down, yes]

**ORTEGA_JA:** Okay. How did the community receive the newspaper?

**GUTIERREZ:** Oh, they liked it! They used to wait for it at Marco’s Tavern, cause we used to do it in Bessemer. We moved from here to Bessemer and we were right next door to Marco’s Tavern. Everybody would just come up to me and, “That was really good! That’s funny!” You know? [Laughing] It was very well received, over and beyond expectations.

**ORTEGA_JA:** And were you with the full run of *La Cucaracha*?

**GUTIERREZ:** Uh huh!

**ORTEGA_JA:** Yes?

**GUTIERREZ:** Yes!

**ORTEGA_JA:** What were some of your most memorable cartoons that you have put out? Were there a couple that stood out to your mind that you feel were the best ones?
GUTIERREZ: Yes, three or four. Or five.

ORTEGA_JA: And which ones were those? What did they touch on?

GUTIERREZ: Just humor.

ORTEGA_JA: Just the humor part of it?

GUTIERREZ: Uh huh! [Nodding up and down, yes]

ORTEGA_JA: And just like you said, “Just making up stuff and just for the laughter of people” is what you were doing this for?

GUTIERREZ: There’s one where Chito goes into a store, a meat market, and he was going to buy some brains. And the politician ones were nine dollars and the other ones were $1.98 and like that. [Chito says], “How come those are so expensive!” And the meat market guy, whose name is Tom, goes, “Do you realize how many politicians it takes to get that many brains?” [Laughing]

ORTEGA_JA: So, than more of your political kind of cartoons?

GUTIERREZ: Uh huh! [Nodding up and down, yes]

ORTEGA_JA: What about—you said your family was in there—was there one that dealt with your family that you thought was particularly funny?

GUTIERREZ: Uh huh! [Nodding up and down, yes]

ORTEGA_JA: And which one was that?

GUTIERREZ: I did one of my sister and a little girl comes over to her and she asks her, “You know what Auntie? My mom’s going to take off her DUI, so she could have a baby.” But she meant IUD. [Laughing] And there’s another one where my Brother Tommy’s little girl is having a birthday and they’re all singing to her all loud, “Happy Birthday to you!” And las Mañanitas [Happy birthday] and everything and she goes, “Make a wish, Hita!” And she says, “I wish you guys would quit singing!” [Laughing]

ORTEGA_JA: And how were those received by your family?

GUTIERREZ: Oh, they loved them!

ORTEGA_JA: Did they?
GUTIERREZ: They wanted copies of them, right away!

ORTEGA_JA: Nobody got mad or—?

GUTIERREZ: No! No! No, they were happy! [While shaking her head demonstrably, side to side and laughing.] They thought that I was—they put me on—up on a pedestal, because I was the only one in my family that was outgoing and was doing things. You know? And just sharing my talents. They were happy! The one I did with my sister, she passed away this Dec. the 28th.

ORTEGA_JA: Sorry to hear that!

GUTIERREZ: So, I’m not so very happy right now.

ORTEGA_JA: And that’s your only sister or did you have any other brothers and sisters?

GUTIERREZ: No, there was eight of us.

ORTEGA_JA: Oh, really?

GUTIERREZ: Five girls and three boys.

ORTEGA_JA: Ah, wow, so [you] have a pretty big family huh?

GUTIERREZ: Uh huh! [Nodding up and down, yes]

ORTEGA_JA: So, are they all here or do they live in New Mexico or here?

GUTIERREZ: No, we’re all here in Pueblo.

ORTEGA_JA: Oh, really! Oh, so they all probably came with you when your family came here?

GUTIERREZ: Uh huh!

ORTEGA_JA: Oh, okay.

GUTIERREZ: We got here July the 5th, cause we didn’t want to spend July the 4th over here. I went into cultural shock, cause I couldn’t stand the airplanes and the police with the sirens and the heat. And then housing was terrible, you know? We had to come to anything just to get started. Eventually we found a beautiful casita [little house] that my mom and dad bought. We were raised mostly in San Luis, cause I was already 14 [years old] when I came over here.
We were right there where Plaza Verde Park is at, but they threw all them houses down. And that’s where we lived.

ORTEGA_JA: So, your family came over—okay, so what other kind of culture shocks did you have when you came to Pueblo?

GUTIERREZ: The prejudice, you know, like going to stores and being accused of stealing. Stuff like that! Just because we were “so-called” Mexican. [But] they didn’t know us and they didn’t know me, because I was intelligent, you know. I’ve always been intelligent. I’ve always known about culture. I studied and I learned from my mom, dad, and grandpa, what the Native Americans went through, you know, the genocides and the ethnic cleansing and all that.

ORTEGA_JA: So, did you instill that culture in your kids and completely they knew who they were from the beginning?

GUTIERREZ: No, because they were—there was peer pressure, you know? They didn’t want to be left out of the going to school and wanting to be like them. And things like that. We were kind of downtrodden, you know, having to leave a beautiful, beautiful country [to come] to the hot asphalt blocks and, you know, house upon house, two story houses and we were used to our house. It was beautiful, with the commode outside. And flushing toilets. It was like, “What the heck is this?” [Laughing]

ORTEGA_JA: So, you were more used to wide open spaces and stuff like that and you came here and everything was platted in blocks, so that was incomplete?

GUTIERREZ: Las casita el va de ve alto! [The house sees the far top]

ORTEGA_JA: And it was just completely different for you?

GUTIERREZ: Yeah, Pepsi, heat, and murders. The first week we were here, some guy that we knew committed suicide. And I said, “Oh, Joe, what did you do?!”

ORTEGA_JA: So, even after that culture shock, what made you decide to stay in Pueblo this whole time?

GUTIERREZ: My family! I didn’t want to come! I cried for—I don’t know how many—I would write all the time over there to all my friends. But I knew I had to stay—eventually—it took me until now to get used to it!

ORTEGA_JA: Really?

GUTIERREZ: Yes, because I go outside and I walk. I wish I could just go to the river, go to the mountains and look for arrowheads, like we used to, play with the sheep and catch fish, go be in the stream.
ORTEGA_JA: So, you’ve just always felt trapped by the community and by everything around you—

GUTIERREZ: It was just real confusing to me!

ORTEGA_JA: It did feel like home?

GUTIERREZ: Nuh uh, it was just real confusing to me. The girls got adjusted pretty good, all of them, because my brothers were small when they came; they were about five and six. I was 14 and I knew I didn’t like it, you know, fighting all the time and everything, not as bad as it is now. Now it’s drugs and alcohol. We used to get a bottle of Walters beer, me and my sister. 3.2 [Percentage of alcohol per volume that use to be sold to those 18 years or older, in Colorado]. And we’d go walking in the night and pass it to each other. We’d think we were really cool! [Laughing] Fun! Fun! Fun! That’s the only time we had fun, when we were together. Then we met some pretty cool girls that were Pachucas. [A proud Mexicana; female zoot suiter] Pachucas and Pachucos! I saw my first Pachuco in San Luis, at the bus depot.

ORTEGA_JA: And how was that?

GUTIERREZ: I go, “What is that?” He had a chain, real shiny black shoes, a hat with a feather on it, and big jacket. It was quite the experience! It stays in my mind!

ORTEGA_JA: That was your first time seeing somebody like that and then you came to Pueblo and you found other people like that?

GUTIERREZ: No, it was a different—cause the guys here used to wear pink and black. All of them used to wear pink and black. There was only one guy that we knew that had marijuana, on the whole eastside where we were at and we’d go, “What is that?” [Laughing] Little did I know! [Laughing]

ORTEGA_JA: So, back to the Cucaracha. So, you said you were, kind of, there for when they were putting the paper together, here and there. What kind of meeting would you have? Would you discuss layouts? Would you discuss what you were coming up with or would you just submit it?

GUTIERREZ: We would discuss stories. We used to discuss politics mostly.

ORTEGA_JA: Where would this happen at?

GUTIERREZ: Right here! That’s before they moved to Bessemer.

ORTEGA_JA: Would you hang out in Bessemer also? Would you go over there and what was that like?
GUTIERREZ: Uh huh! I was there almost all the time, just—we used to start about 10 o’clock and finish about 6.

ORTEGA_JA: In just one day you got it all knocked out or?

GUTIERREZ: No, it would take about a week, because we were new. When you start something it’s slow, you know. It’s pretty slow when you’re starting something new and then going through it, it got easier as time went by. We got to enjoy it more and more and more. At that same time, I did a mural at the Zaragoza hall, dedicated to the Vietnam veterans. I had my friend Merty pose for it. But it’s got the mom holding her dead son, and it goes through the whole cycle of his life to his death and starts with the seed.

ORTEGA_JA: And how was that received?

GUTIERREZ: Real good from everybody, except the Mexican people from the Zaragoza, because they really don’t like Native Americans. I worked from 11 o’clock, some days, to 11 o’clock at night and sometimes 12 or 1.

ORTEGA_JA: Doing that mural?

GUTIERREZ: Uh huh! It is called “Poder [Power]!” It was, because they painted over it in about a year.

ORTEGA_JA: Do you have pictures of that and everything?

GUTIERREZ: Uh huh! [Nodding up and down, yes] I’ve had a fascinating life, gee.

ORTEGA_JA: Yes, it sounds like you’ve done a lot. Actually, and this is kind of off topic and I’m not talking on the interview right now, but I’d really like to do another interview with you for CSU. Not just about La Cucaracha. To see if we can do something about your whole life and all your experiences. And do something like that so we can preserve your story there. You know what I mean? Your whole story, not just focusing on the Cucaracha.

GUTIERREZ: Cause I learned a little bit of Indian, Native American language.

ORTEGA_JA: Oh, really?

GUTIERREZ: And I learned Spanish, but I didn’t speak Spanish until I was about eight and I didn’t comprehend until I was about 11.

ORTEGA_JA: So, it was all—

GUTIERREZ: Then I fell in love with books.
ORTEGA_JA: Was it just English that you first started out in or—?

GUTIERREZ: Oh, uh huh! [Nodding up and down, yes] And sign language, because my brother’s deaf. Ruben Atencio.

ORTEGA_JA: How did he become deaf? Was he born that way or no?

GUTIERREZ: No, he got meningitis when he was two and a half years old. We almost lost him. We lived in Laramie, Wyoming at the time, because my dad went to go work over there in the—they used to call it la redonda [round], where they used to manufacture steel. Why does that puzzle you?

ORTEGA_JA: Because I’m trying to think, what it is.

GUTIERREZ: Redonda is round, it was a round building.

ORTEGA_JA: And it was here in Pueblo?

GUTIERREZ: No!

ORTEGA_JA: Oh, okay.

GUTIERREZ: No, it was in Laramie.

ORTEGA_JA: Oh, okay that’s why I’m like—

GUTIERREZ: Yes, we moved over there.

ORTEGA_JA: [Laughing] I’m thinking, “Now where was it?”

GUTIERREZ: Uh huh, and we lived by the tracks and we’d always see tramps coming down, you know. There was about three families that, were related to us that lived right there.

ORTEGA_JA: Really, and you’d always see people coming off the trains or—?

GUTIERREZ: Hobos, they’d call them. Trampes [tramps].

ORTEGA_JA: Did they bother you?

GUTIERREZ: No, they just used to come and we’d give them food. My mom and dad would give them food. My mom and my Tia Lupita.

ORTEGA_JA: Were they all different kinds of races and stuff?
GUTIERREZ: Mostly gabachos [Chicano perjorative term for English-speaking non-Hispanic] and blacks.

ORTEGA_JA: Oh, really!

GUTIERREZ: I remember when I came over here I had never seen a black person. I was looking out the window and I go, “Dad, come over here! There’s a little boy out there that has hair like sheep and he’s dark!” [Laughing] We had never seen—we were so innocent, you know, to the big town, the big city. I was afraid to go down the block. [My parents used to say] “Don’t go anywhere! You stay over here!” cause I was always the one that was taking off and just wanting to explore.

ORTEGA_JA: What did your dad tell you, when you told him about that boy?

GUTIERREZ: He goes, “Oh, there’s a lot of them like that!” [Laughing] Because he hadn’t been out a lot [or] very far. [Both laughing] And he goes, “You’re the only one that asks! Everybody’s looking and you’re the one who asks! Don’t say that in front of them, because they’ll get mad!” [Both laughing]

ORTEGA_JA: So, were there any things that happened when you were putting the Cucarachas together that was funny? Any stories that happened either here or in Bessemer that just kind of always stick with you? Of certain things happening, while it was coming together or outside inside, whether it’s happy or sad?

GUTIERREZ: No, just happy stuff was happening. But it was like just too many people, I used to think! Too many people, too many blocks, too many airplanes, and too many police cars all over the place, you know, ambulances and stuff like that. And garbage disposals and everything. I go, “Wow this is—I don’t like this!” I wanted to go back where it was quiet. [Laughing] Just hearing the birds and the sheep, and tending the horses and goats, chickens. Going early in the morning to get the eggs and throwing out the bacine [bed pan or urinal bucket]? I was the designated bacine thrower! [Laughing] It was cold. The drifts would go up to almost three fourths of the house. Then me and my dad used to go for wood. En el monte San Antonio [On Mount San Antonio]. We used to go for wood early in the morning. We’d have two horses and I’d be on top of the wood looking at the cama de leones. My dad used to call them the bed lions.

ORTEGA_JA: And are you the oldest?

GUTIERREZ: No, I’m the second oldest. I’d go with him and we’d have so much fun, cause we’d be by the water. We’d talk all day long, see a lot of snakes, frogs, and all kinds of animals. All kinds of insects.

ORTEGA_JA: Did your parents always teach you about your culture or was that something you learned on your own?
GUTIERREZ: My grandpa did more. He used to tell me, “Esta tiro una piedra como indio!” “You throw rocks like an Indian!” Because I would throw a rock far—far! And a little bit of dust from the horse would go up.

ORTEGA JA: So, they would teach you about your culture or would they ever try to make you not follow your culture? Because, you know how—

GUTIERREZ: No!

ORTEGA JA: Americanized things were at that time.

GUTIERREZ: Uh uh! No!

ORTEGA JA: They always made you embrace it?

GUTIERREZ: Yes, my grandpa taught me Indian words like, “Ya ha te!” That means “greetings” and, “In con taun wan ne wa sha!”

ORTEGA JA: What is that?

GUTIERREZ: “Where are you going today?” And then I learned, “Co co nee nee!” From the Apple Valley. It’s when the girls get to be women, when they’re about 13 and they go from house to house. We didn’t live in the teepee, in the planes we lived in the—like Taos where they have the adobe houses. And I never! Never! Never forgot, because the houses used to have—used to throw beans on top of the—bean seeds on top of the house. And they would get crops from there, because the rain and the warmth wasn’t like scorching heat, so they would have ladders and chickens and everything like that.

ORTEGA JA: So, when you were doing the Cucaracha, who were the main players involved? Who were the people involved?

GUTIERREZ: More than anybody?

ORTEGA JA: Yes.

GUTIERREZ: Paul Mora, Juan Espinosa, and David. [In deep thought] And I don’t remember the other ones.

ORTEGA JA: Did you ever get paid for doing the Cucaracha?

GUTIERREZ: Yes, we got a stipend. We got a grant.

ORTEGA JA: What was that—weekly, monthly, yearly, or when they could?
**GUTIERREZ:** I think bi-weekly. I’m pretty sure.

**ORTEGA_JA:** What were those checks like? Do you remember, were they small, just a little something here and there?

**GUTIERREZ:** No, it was adequate for the work.

**ORTEGA_JA:** And that’s how they got funded, was through the grants? Were there any other ways, do you know, that they used to get funded?

**GUTIERREZ:** Uh uh!

**ORTEGA_JA:** No.

**GUTIERREZ:** No. I can’t say anything, because, you know, I’m a—I don’t want to say anything that I don’t know about. You know?

**ORTEGA_JA:** Right! Right! No, that’s understandable, because you were involved, but a lot of your time wasn’t spent there. It was here with your family? Right?

**GUTIERREZ:** Uh huh! [Nodding up and down, yes]

**ORTEGA_JA:** So, you did a lot over there, but a lot of it was outside of there too. Right?

**GUTIERREZ:** Uh huh! [Nodding up and down, yes] Mostly I was just newly divorced and I was taking care of my kids. And I was starting college at PCC [Pueblo Community College].

**ORTEGA_JA:** So, you did PCC and *La Cucaracha* at the same time or was that—

**GUTIERREZ:** No, PCC was first and then the *Cucaracha*.

**ORTEGA_JA:** And then you went to SCSC after *La Cucaracha*?

**GUTIERREZ:** I went eight and a half years to college. Four years one time and four and a half another.

**ORTEGA_JA:** And that was why you did all that too? What other things did you do while you were doing the Cucaracha? I mean I’m sure you did other paintings. I’m sure you did gallery openings. How did you find the time to do all of those things and be a mother at the same time?

**GUTIERREZ:** Huh! I don’t know. I was just good at it
ORTEGA_JA:  You had to spread yourself pretty thin, uh? And be everywhere?

GUTIERREZ:  Yes, and I still managed to take them on vacations and everything like that because I wanted them to see another side of the world. One time we stopped in Texas to get—me and Danny—and we wanted to get milk, because nothing was open, and my daughter was newborn. We were going over there to show them the baby, and we stopped at a place and they wouldn’t give us no milk. They were—oh, my God—you think there is prejudice in the college like now. It still is. It still exists. But they wouldn’t give us no milk.

ORTEGA_JA:  And was this a store that wouldn’t?

GUTIERREZ:  A store. We waited about two hours outside, to wait for it to open and we had to go to a grocery store and get canned milk and try to do with that.

ORTEGA_JA:  Sheez, and it was a small store. Was it a gas station or—?

GUTIERREZ:  No, it was a store where gringos lived, where gringos did whatever in the hell they wanted, with the Mexican people. We were all considered Mexicans. There was nothing—there was no such thing as Native American or Spanish or anything like that. Then another time I took the kids to Texas, to go visit. We went through Lubbock. There was a store there and we wanted to get something to eat and they wouldn’t wait on us. Then I ordered stuff for all of us and they wouldn’t bring it. Then I noticed that they were serving other people. We kept sitting there and the kids were [saying], “Mom I want to eat I’m hungry!” I went and got one of those napkin things, you know, there like a tin.

ORTEGA_JA:  Oh, like the dispensers.

GUTIERREZ:  I got it and I threw it like this [Displaying how she threw it] and I hit the glass and broke their mirror! And we took off!

ORTEGA_JA:  And what did they tell you?

GUTIERREZ:  I go, “You SON OF A—“Are you recording this?

ORTEGA_JA:  Yes.

GUTIERREZ:  Oh. “You SOBs!” You know? We had to go someplace and buy lunch meat and potato chips and go eat at a park.

ORTEGA_JA:  Sheez!

GUTIERREZ:  Constant, constant—all the way over there and all the way back. Then they used to treat Danny’s people—they would jive ‘em. They’d come in a truck selling linoleum and all that for 50 bucks, thin stuff, you know, that you couldn’t even—you could fold it like a
napkin. And they’d jive ‘em, but they’d buy it. But they were so good, so heart. Oh, my God! They’d be preparing food before we left from here and then they’d take us to the dances over there. Oh, we used to have a Fandango! So much fun! So much fun we had, so many good memories! I met so many good people. My son is named after Danny’s mom. Her name is Theodora and I named him Ted, Theodor.

ORTEGA_JA: Oh, wow. Okay, during the Cucaracha and—do you remember—cause I heard a story about the “fire drills” that they had over there? Do you remember the fire drills?

GUTIERREZ: At the Cucaracha?

ORTEGA_JA: Yes.

GUTIERREZ: Yes.

ORTEGA_JA: And what were the “fire drills” like?

GUTIERREZ: Get out of there!

ORTEGA_JA: Get out of there?

GUTIERREZ: Yep.

ORTEGA_JA: Okay, because I heard a different story about the “fire drills!”

GUTIERREZ: What?

ORTEGA_JA: I don’t know if you were one of them or not, but that everybody in there would say, “fire drill” and they would go outside to— [Referring to smoking marijuana.]

GUTIERREZ: Oh! [Both laughing] Spark! [Still laughing]

ORTEGA_JA: Yes!

GUTIERREZ: No, I don’t remember that.

ORTEGA_JA: Cause that’s one of the funny stories I tell everybody, cause Juan Espinosa was telling me that they would say, “fire drill” and they would all go outside.

GUTIERREZ: I didn’t used to smoke.

ORTEGA_JA: Oh, no.
GUTIERREZ: No.

ORTEGA_JA: And see, I told my Tio Esteban that same thing, right? And he was like, “Oh, yeah, we all went outside” and then I told him the story about—and he was like, “I was first in line!” [Both laughing]

GUTIERREZ: No.

ORTEGA_JA: So, you didn’t?

GUTIERREZ: No. [Still both laughing] Not me. I didn’t want to.

ORTEGA_JA: Yes, he [Juan Espinosa] wanted me to ask that question to see if everybody remembered.

GUTIERREZ: Uh uh! [Shaking her head, no]

ORTEGA_JA: What kind of things did you do after, when the Cucaracha was coming to an end? What was that like? Did you want it to come to an end? Did you want it to go further?

GUTIERREZ: We had been talking about it and we didn’t want to, but they quit the funding. I don’t know for what reason or what. There was not enough output. You know? Or they just didn’t have the money to do it. So, it was finished.

ORTEGA_JA: What do you remember about the final issue coming together?

GUTIERREZ: We were all real sad.

ORTEGA_JA: You knew it was the final issue?

GUTIERREZ: Uh huh! [Nodding up and down, yes]

ORTEGA_JA: Yes.

GUTIERREZ: I have the cartoon of the last issue.

ORTEGA_JA: And what was that cartoon like? Did it reflect on the last issue or was it just something different that you came up with?

GUTIERREZ: No, it’s about this. Chito goes into a store, to a flea market and he goes, “How much are your fleas??” And he goes—he gave him the price and he [Chito] goes, “Do you have a flea container??” And he comes with a dog under his arm. [Laughing] It’s on there. [Laughing more]
ORTEGA_JA: So, that was the final one that you did?

GUTIERREZ: Uh huh. [Nodding up and down, yes]

ORTEGA_JA: So, what did you do after the Cucaracha? What kind of jobs did you hold or did you get further educated also?

GUTIERREZ: Teaching.

ORTEGA_JA: Teaching what?

GUTIERREZ: Oh, BOCES [Boards of Cooperative Educational Services].

ORTEGA_JA: Doing?

GUTIERREZ: Teaching the kids from—the foreign students.

ORTEGA_JA: And that’s what you did—did you ever teach art or anything like that?

GUTIERREZ: [Shaking her head, no] Uh uh!

ORTEGA_JA: No.

GUTIERREZ: I didn’t actually go to school for art.

ORTEGA_JA: Oh, okay.

GUTIERREZ: I went for the credentials, cause I knew how to paint long before. Long, long before! Let me show you one.

ORTEGA_JA: Are you going to bring it in?

GUTIERREZ: Yes.

ORTEGA_JA: Okay.

GUTIERREZ: They say that it’s hard to do hands, but I did these in ‘73.

ORTEGA_JA: Wow! And it’s from 1973?

GUTIERREZ: Uh huh. [Holding up a drawing, of two hands with fingers clasped.]

ORTEGA_JA: Wow!
GUTIERREZ: They say that that’s the hardest thing—other artists have said that they can’t do hands. I’ve noticed from looking at even art in magazines and books and things like that. The ones who are the masters are Michelangelo and all them. You know? Raphael and them. Guy’s from Italian decent. They were masters!

ORTEGA_JA: What kind of memorabilia do you have from the Cucaracha? Do you have the original drawings? Do you have—?

GUTIERREZ: I have drawings and I have letters, you know, papers. And that’s about all.

ORTEGA_JA: Oh, really.

GUTIERREZ: There’s nothing else to bring you know?

ORTEGA_JA: Yes. And did you have any of the issues and stuff like that?

GUTIERREZ: Like?

ORTEGA_JA: Any of the actual newspapers. Do you have any of the copies and that kind of things?

GUTIERREZ: I have them all but I have them put away. These are individual ones that I did.

ORTEGA_JA: Oh, those are individual what?

GUTIERREZ: Those are all Chitos.

ORTEGA_JA: Oh, really?

GUTIERREZ: Yes.

ORTEGA_JA: Can you show us a couple on the camera?

GUTIERREZ: Let me see. There’s the one about the dogs. 10 fleas for a dollar.

ORTEGA_JA: And this was the final issue?

GUTIERREZ: Uh huh! [Holding up a cartoon strip of El Chito from the final issue of La Cucaracha] I like this one. This one’s funny—funny!

ORTEGA_JA: This is the actual drawing that you submitted?
GUTIERREZ: Uh huh!

ORTEGA_JA: Aw, Wow!

GUTIERREZ: I used to do them in pen. [Holding an El Chito cartoon strip from March 10, 1983, depicting a school crossing sign and a school with legs and arms crossing the road.] This is the one with my sister in it.

ORTEGA_JA: The one you were telling me about?

GUTIERREZ: Uh huh.

ORTEGA_JA: Let’s see that one?

GUTIERREZ: She’s the one that passed away. So sad! [Holding up an El Chito from April 10, 1983 showing a woman talking to friend, when a little girl says, “Hey Auntie Connie. Guess what? My mom is going to take out her IOU so we can have a baby boy!”] I miss her very much!

ORTEGA_JA: How do you think the Cucaracha influenced the Chicano Movement for the community?

GUTIERREZ: There was a big to do about it, because there would have never been a cartoon. You know, by a woman around Pueblo.

ORTEGA_JA: And what kind of impact do you think that had on people?

GUTIERREZ: It was good. They really liked it. Everybody was all disappointed, because it was cut off. This is one that I really like. Let me see if I could find it.

ORTEGA_JA: Did you think working on the Cucaracha influenced you in any way, for after the Cucaracha and your career or doing other things? Did it influence you to do anything else? Or was it like any—what good came of it from working there?

GUTIERREZ: Well, I got known more. I’ve always been a—check this one out. Their little heads. That was for Thanksgiving.

ORTEGA_JA: Wow. And how was something like this received?

GUTIERREZ: Good, you know they thought it was—it was real!

ORTEGA_JA: So, what other things do you—what other memories do you have of the Cucaracha that you can tell me? Was there anything else? Any other personal stories that you remember?
GUTIERREZ: Oh, we’d go—we never travelled or anything—but we were always together. You know, sometimes there were skirmishes between the—mostly the girls. The women.

ORTEGA_JA: What were those about, just different things?

GUTIERREZ: Oh, yeah. Getting there late and not doing what you’re supposed to do and stuff like that.

ORTEGA_JA: So, what other stories do you got for me? What else can you tell me about yourself, that you’d like to share?

GUTIERREZ: I’m still doing—I make Indian drums and I play them out here in the front. The neighbor’s kid—I know this girl that my granddaughter knows and she goes, “You were the one that was doing that,” because I was telling them about the drums. Because I played the drums. I put a candle in the middle of the lawn right there and I played and all the neighbors came outside. You could see their windows open and their doors. That’s the one about the fishing trip. [Handing José another El Chito]

ORTEGA_JA: Oh, this is the one you got backlash over, right?

GUTIERREZ: Uh huh.

ORTEGA_JA: And he just got upset, because it was like they were going out on their wives and having all these affairs and going back and saying that they had? [Laughing]

GUTIERREZ: Yes, right away they thought like I say, “Before our wives find out.” [Both laughing] And that guy—it’s on there too, the response.

ORTEGA_JA: And Chito was based off of your father—not based off of your father, but named after him?

GUTIERREZ: My grandfather.

ORTEGA_JA: Your grandfather. Oh, okay. And was the image that you drew of Chito of your grandfather too or was it just something you thought up?

GUTIERREZ: When he was young.

ORTEGA_JA: Oh, really?

GUTIERREZ: When he was young, cause he had a little moustache like that, the kind of moustach that, [was] real thin. My grandpa was beautiful, man. He was a beautiful man. Indian! Indian! Do you want to see a picture of him?
ORTEGA_JA: Uh huh.

GUTIERREZ: I think I have one. I can’t walk on this leg too good.