

# Chicano Youth Leadership Conference: Speaking Legacies of Leadership into the Future

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Official slogan of the Sal Castro Foundation. Photo Taken by Jasmin Temblador

## **Introduction**

In this reflection paper, I use the method of oral history to explore leadership through the Chicano Youth leadership conference (CYLC) over fifty-years. For this final capstone project, I have interviewed Charlotte Lerchenmuller, president of the Sal Castro Foundation, and Paula Crisostomo, board member of the Sal Castro foundation, and former conference attendee and student activist. I selected Paula and Charlotte because they are elders who hold leadership roles in the conference, and both have been longtime volunteers. The purpose of this project is to ensure that the narratives of elders within the conference are heard, seen, and recognized as a vital contribution to the sustainability of the conference, and to continue to empower future generations of Chicano/a youth. Through the oral history recordings, future generations of Chicano/a and Latino/a people will have access to learn about the experiences of people like Charlotte and Paula who have made incredible contributions to the CYLC over time. In this paper, I will introduce a brief history of the conference and the 1968 student walkouts, my personal narrative as a volunteer with the conference and how it inspired me to conduct this capstone. Finally, I will introduce the method of oral history, my process for completing the interviews for this project, and an analysis and interpretation of the interviews.

### **A brief history of the Chicano Youth Leadership Conference (CYLC) and the Walkouts of 1968**

As I write the introduction to the history of the Chicano Youth Leadership Conference, and a brief history of the 1968 walkouts, it dawns on me that although there have been people who have written and spoken about the walkouts and the CYLC, fifty-years later this important moment in history, and the conference itself, is still being discovered today by Chicano/as and Latino/as. In the 1960s there were major issues within the Los Angeles City school systems. The reports spoke to how the school system was failing Mexican American students who were

leading the nation with the highest dropout rates, with a low percentage of Mexican students attending college. Gilbert Gonzalez describes the injustices in the education system that Mexican American students were subjected to in the 1960s in the book *Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation*:

While the overall objective of the segregated school concerned the Americanization of the Mexican community, the more successful practice involved that of reproducing the class character of the Mexican community through the use of testing and tracking. Based upon prevalent social science and educational theory, schools slotted students upon a hierarchical scale, from superior intelligence to inferior intelligence. Their educational program reflected this hierarchy, and thus superior students received an academic preparation, while the inferior students received a preparation for manual vocations. In such an educational program, schools commonly slotted Mexicans en masse into the slow and inferior classes and based this practice upon the uncritical application of IQ tests for predictive purposes. To no surprise, therefore, the Mexican school became commonly known as the industrial school of the district. Within this setting, boys and girls received separate types of training. The former generally received traditional male training for unskilled or semiskilled occupations, while the latter received preparation for becoming a homemaker, mother, wife, or an employee in an occupation related to her domestic role, such as seamstress, laundry worker, and waitress.<sup>1</sup>

The major issues rising in the school system for Mexican American students prompted the Los Angeles County Human Relations Commission committee to create the first Mexican American Youth Leadership Conference in 1963, which is today known as the Chicano Youth Leadership Conference.<sup>2</sup> The focus of the conference was on the development of youth leadership among young Mexican American students, and its goal was change-- not only to improve things for an organization or group, but to contribute to the growth and development of every participant.<sup>3</sup> Sal Castro was a Chicano teacher who taught in the Eastside public schools of Los Angeles. Mr. Castro is known as the champion for educational justice for Chicanos who

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<sup>1</sup> Gonzalez, Gilbert G. 2013. *Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation* University of North Texas Press.

<sup>2</sup> *The Sal Castro and the Chicano Youth Leadership Conference: The Development of Chicano Leadership since 1963*. Directed by UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center (CSRC). 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Lerchenmuller, Charlotte. 2019. *Chicano Youth Leadership Conference Collection of Conference Agendas*.1965

supported the walkouts lead by Chicano/a youth in 1968.<sup>4</sup> In the book *Blowout!*, Mario Garcia recounts Mr. Castro's early experience of witnessing the issues within the education system that prompted him to become a mentor to the student leaders of 1968,

It was Sal-as he is popularly called-who, as a playground director in the late 1950s and then as a young teacher in the 1960s, recognized the problems affecting Mexican students in the schools: low expectations by teachers, a stress on vocational rather than an academic curriculum, high dropout rates, low reading scores, insensitive teachers and counselors, overcrowded classrooms and lack of ethnic and cultural reinforcement, among many other problems. Castro's own experiences attending public elementary schools in East L.A. during the 1930s and 1940s further added to his understanding that the schools had historically failed in teaching the Mexican American student.<sup>5</sup>

Mr. Castro became a volunteer with the Mexican American Youth Leadership Conference in 1963, when he was a teacher at Abraham Lincoln High School in Montecito Heights. Garcia describes Sal's early experience with the conference as a volunteer, and how the Chicano generation<sup>6</sup> began to plant the seed for the walkouts,

Beginning in 1963, he and other Mexican American conference leaders listened to student complaints about school conditions and developed dialogues with the students about how to change these conditions. Part of this empowerment process involved reinforcing pride in the students' ethnic and cultural backgrounds. These influences, in addition to the political climate of the 1960s involving civil rights, Black Power, and anti-Vietnam War movement, and a general counterculture in the country, all facilitated the rise of a more questioning and critical Chicano generation by the late 1960s.<sup>7</sup>

The conference of 1967 became known as the catalyst for the 1968 walkouts. The Mexican American Youth Leadership conference became the place where Chicano/a students could speak openly about the societal issues they faced in school, and in their community. The conference

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<sup>4</sup> García, Mario T. and Sal Castro. 2011. *Blowout! Sal Castro and the Chicano Struggle for Educational Justice* Univ of North Carolina Press.

<sup>5</sup> García, Mario T. and Sal Castro. 2011. *Blowout! Sal Castro and the Chicano Struggle for Educational Justice* Univ of North Carolina Press.

<sup>6</sup> The Chicano Generation is referred to as the generation from the 1960s to 1970s during the rise of the Chicano Movement.

<sup>7</sup> García, Mario T. and Sal Castro. 2011. *Blowout! Sal Castro and the Chicano Struggle for Educational Justice* Univ of North Carolina Press

was born out of a need for Chicano/a students to gather in a space where they could realize their educational goals, feel safe, and be proud of their culture. The conference of 1967 inspired a movement, led by Chicano/a students to advocate for their access to a quality education and to dismantle the harsh racism and discrimination they faced in their schools. With the help of college students and Mr. Castro, the high school students began to organize and developed a plan to create change within the school system. On May 1, 1968, students from Wilson, Lincoln, Roosevelt, and Garfield High Schools in Los Angeles, walked out of their classrooms to protest the poor education conditions at their schools.<sup>8</sup> The Walkouts was one of the largest high school student protests in the nation's history by Chicano/a students at the time. Following the protest which lasted for one week, students made their demands<sup>9</sup> known to the School Board about the changes they wanted to see in their education, but they were denied.

Overtime, things began to slowly change because students and community leaders continued to advocate for an equitable education. It has been fifty years since the walkouts, while some demands have been met, the Chicano community is still fighting today to realize the demands made by the student leaders of 1968. The existence of the conference alone is a perpetual reminder of the 1968 student walkouts that brought awareness to the change needed in the education system. The conference continues to keep this demand for equitable access to education for Chicano/a student's alive through its program.

Today, the conference is known as the Chicano Youth Leadership Conference (CYLC).<sup>10</sup> The CYLC is a three-day intensive conference, held twice a year, that brings eleventh grade

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<sup>8</sup> Rosales, F. Arturo. 1997. *Chicano! the History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* Arte Publico Press

<sup>9</sup> List of student demands can be found here: <https://www.unitedwayla.org/en/news-resources/blog/1968-walkout-demands/>

<sup>10</sup> Paula Crisostomo discusses the name change of the conference in transcript on pg. 78-79

Chicano/a and Latino/a high school students, from the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) to Camp Hess Kramer in Malibu. The conference serves about 200 juniors a year and focuses on five areas: college prep, healthy relationships, cultural connections, historical understanding, leadership and community service. While the conference has experienced at least three periods of hiatus due to a lack of funding sources, it has continued to return because of the efforts of volunteers and the Sal Castro Foundation. Student attendees are inspired by the stories shared at the conference that speak to the legacy of CYLC, to go to college and graduate, and to return to serve their communities.

For many of the students, this is the first time they are learning about the 1968 walkouts and being connected to college resources. While the conference serves Chicano/a and Latino/a students, the focus is still on Chicano/a students, Paula speaks about the population the conference serves and the reasoning behind this in our oral history interview, “Mexicans are still the largest Latino demographic here in Los Angeles, here in the U.S. and they’re still the largest demographic who are failing academically. So, that was the reason for keeping it that way. And of course, we accept other Latinos, but our focus should still be on who needs it the most.” CYLC has been successful in the advancement of Chicano/a students attending, and most importantly, graduating from four-year colleges and universities. According to a 2008 evaluation report of CYLC conducted by Principal’s Exchange, of the students who attend the conference, 94% of CYLC participants enrolled in a two or four-year college, with 71% enrolled in a four-year college, 23% enrolled in a two year college, and 84% of CYLC participants enrolled in a four-year university, and graduate from their university.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Avelar La Salle, Robin. 2008. *Evaluation Report: Chicano Youth Leadership Conference*: Principals Exchange.

## **The story of my participation**

In order for the reader to better understand my relationship to the Chicano/a Youth Leadership Conference (CYLC), and why I have chosen to write this reflection piece about the experience of elders in relation to the CYLC and its sustainability, I will share my own story of how I came to the conference, and the lasting impact it has had on my life. It is because of the Chicano/a Youth Leadership Conference, and the fight for equitable access to education, that I continued to pursue my master's degree.

I first learned about the CYLC in the Fall of 2014, I was 25 years old at the time. My colleague, Christina Garcia, with whom I worked at LIFT-Los Angeles, a non-profit organization focused on lifting families out of poverty, had been invited to volunteer for the CYLC by our Program Director at the time, Juan Aquino. His close friend, Araceli Lopez-Andrade was the former director of the conference, and she had put out a call for volunteer facilitators to participate in that year's conference. Both Juan and Araceli had been volunteers with CYLC for a long time. When Christina came back from the long three-day weekend, she walked up to me and said, "I thought about you all weekend. You need to volunteer next time. This is totally you." Christina continued to share with me what she learned about the history of the walkouts, the student discussion session, the cultural traditions, and the supportive environment she felt. She was so inspired and motivated to continue to volunteer that I could tell the conference had a big impact on her. I was inspired by her experience, when the time came to fill out the application for the Spring 2015 conference, I did not hesitate.

Submitting the application was the first step, then came the acceptance email, and a confirmation for the facilitator training which was an 8-hour commitment on a Saturday in preparation for the conference. I attended the training and met all the volunteers who would be

facilitating dialogue sessions with high school juniors over the three-day conference. Charlotte Lerchenmuller, President of the Sal Castro Foundation, gave the opening presentation for the day. She laid out the reason why we were there, what we would be doing, and why we were doing it. Then she played a video about the 1968 student walkouts, the story of Sal Castro, and introduced the volunteer facilitators to CYLC. I remember feeling a mix of emotions and reaction to what I was learning. The first was an overwhelming feeling of knowing that I needed to be there to support the next generation of students, the second was disbelief, “how did I not know about his piece of history until today?” And last, I felt warmth and content. I knew that there was a reason why I was there. I was searching to become more connected to my culture and heritage because I felt incomplete, and until then I had no other place or space that affirmed my existence as a Chicana. As the training went on, we participated in leadership building exercises and took time to network and get to know our fellow facilitators. We began to form a conference family, understanding that we would be volunteering together for something that was bigger than us, which is to honor the legacy of the student movement of 1968 by continuing to inspire future generations of Chicano/a youth to go to college and graduate, and return to their communities.

The week of the conference was intense. We were told to get a lot of rest in the days leading up to the conference. There would be a lot of walking around the conference venue, a lot of discussion leading, and we had to be “on” the entire time. We were taught that we needed to lead by example, that everything we did, the students would observe. We needed to be role models and model leadership for the students. As facilitators, we had a great responsibility to supervise the students, facilitate the discussion sessions, offer support and resources where needed, build healthy relationships in groups and beyond, lead the students from hall to hall, and work with the conference staff when we needed additional support. We were all college students, graduate

students, or degree holders, and we would be responsible for encouraging a positive college-going mentality. We were also all learning together, many of us volunteers did not attend CYLC as a youth, but we're coming to the conference with our own story and experiences of navigating the education system.

The conference had arrived, I had a 6:00 AM wake up to be dropped off by my father at the local high school, West Adams Prep in Pico-Union, which was where the bus would pick me up along with student attendees to travel to the camp. I was standing outside of the school wearing my white CYLC polo and looking around to see if any students were carrying duffle bags and camping gear. I rounded up students and spoke with parents who expressed concern. For many of these students, it is the first time they would be spending a weekend away from home and from their families. When the bus arrived, we counted all of our students, ensuring we had everyone on the list and then went from school to school, to pick up the next group of students and facilitators waiting for the bus until we were hitting the open road on the way to Camp Hess Kramer, along the Pacific Coast Highway with nothing but the most beautiful beach views to our left and grassy green Malibu hills to our right.

Getting to camp, the conference staff were there to meet us, and right away they had all 100 students and 16 facilitators participating in ice breakers until it was time for *La Bienvenida*, the welcoming. Heading towards the dining hall, the facilitators were ushered into the hall to line up on each side of the doors. As the students began to walk through the double doors and into the dining hall, they were greeted by a roar of applause from volunteers and staff accompanied by the boisterous sound of mariachi music as they walked down the aisle and into their seats. It felt like we were celebrating the fact that the students had made it to the camp and recognizing the work they did to be there. This was the first taste of culture at the conference that I recognized

right away, making me and others feel at home. The weekend was full of storytelling, history, empowering workshops, and a call to action. We all learned about the fight for equitable access to education for Chicano/as and Latino/as, the Walkouts of 1968 and the work that still needed to be done as we looked into the future.

On the first day, facilitators met the students in our groups, who we refer to as a nation<sup>12</sup>. The nations are designed to mix up the students for networking opportunities, so everyone is from a different school. During the first discussion group, I could tell there were feelings of awkwardness, curiosity, nervousness, and the students ask: “what are we going to be doing?” And, “why are we doing this?” The nation I was assigned to was the Olmec nation.<sup>13</sup> I decided we would begin the discussion by learning about our roots, beginning with an introduction to the nations that we were representing. No one in the group had heard about the Olmecs before that day. Together, we discovered that the Olmec is known as the oldest civilization in Mesoamerica, and so the students referred to them as the grandfather and grandmother of all the nations. When they found this out, they all lit up and were excited to know that this was their nation, and they became very proud of being part of this nation.

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<sup>12</sup> One of the frameworks utilized by the conference is the assigning of Meso-American nations to each discussion group. While I am unaware of the origin of this practice, it has been used in the time while I have been a volunteer. I am curious as to why these nations have been used for discussion groups.

<sup>13</sup> The most ancient Mexican civilization who established the first major Mesoamerican civilization is the Olmec.



Fall 2015 Zuni nation students and facilitator Jasmin Temblador. Photo Taken by Albert Jimenez

After the first nation discussion, we walked into Gildred Hall where Charlotte Lerchenmuller set the stage for the next session and introduced the movie *Walkout*. For the students, and many facilitators, this was the first time they were watching the HBO film and learning about the 1968 Blowouts. The movie ended, the hall was still for one second, and then we heard a slow clap beginning and starting to speed up into an exciting sound which filled the room. This was the Chicano clap, also known as the Unity clap, which was introduced by Filipino farm workers during the United Farm Workers movement in 1962.<sup>14</sup> There was not one dry eye in the room, clapping in unison felt good, it felt like we were all together in that moment appreciating what our elders had accomplished so that we could have a better education. Then suddenly, walking

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<sup>14</sup> The unity clap was also very significant as part of cross-ethnic solidarity during the Chicano Movement.

up to the front of the hall was Paula Crisostomo, one of the student leaders of the 1968 walkouts. I remember thinking, “Wow! A Chicana hero, here in front of us, alive, and we get to know her, speak with her, and hear her talk.” Paula is a great speaker, she talked about her experience at CYLC and how it inspired an entire generation of Chicanos and Chicanas to fight for equal access to education. For my nation, learning about the walkouts set the stage for the entire weekend.

As the conference went on, we traveled from workshop to workshop, ate family style meals together, danced, sang, created our own nation chant. Every single speaker that presented, echoed the message of love. They relayed to the students, that every single person in the room, every adult was there for them because they love and care for them, and because they believe in them. I witnessed my nation begin to flourish and open up like a flower blooming from a bud. Each day, they became closer to one another, they asked more questions, they lead their own discussions, and they became more confident. We laughed, cried, hugged, expressed feelings of frustration with issues in education, their schools, and in their communities. We talked about our goals, hopes, dreams, and how we would get there. The last day was very emotional. As a nation, we nominated two members to represent the Olmecs and speak about their experience at CYLC in front of everyone. I sat there listening to their words, becoming more and more inspired by them, in awe of them, and motivated to do more in my own life and for my community. The students voiced how they felt more connected to their culture and heritage and were even more proud of their roots. Everyone cheered the students on as they chanted, “Chicano Power! Chicana Power! Que Viva La Raza! Que Viva Sal Castro! Que Viva CYLC!” We hugged, said farewell to our nations, offered our professional emails for continued support, and wished for them that they continue on their path to college. The buses arrived, and we boarded for the long

ride home. After a long weekend, I sat and watched the never-ending ocean and felt the crisp breeze in my hair, realizing that we just experienced another Miracle in Malibu.

In the Fall of 2015, I returned to the conference as a volunteer facilitator again inspired by the students from the Spring conference. By the Spring conference of 2016, I was invited to join the CYLC conference committee, which meant that I would be working behind the scenes to put on the conference with other staff members. It was at the Fall 2016 conference, that I first began to think about the cultural sustainability of the CYLC. What prompted my interest was the fact that I was asked to MC the conference alongside my work colleague Christina because the usual MC could not make it that weekend. I remember asking myself, “Can I really do this? What did so and so say during this part? How do I make sure I relay the message of CYLC to the students?” I was frightened that I would mess it all up. So, I sat down with Christina and tried to write a script of what I could remember. I wanted the students to feel the same way I felt when I first learned about the conference which was shocked, proud, inspired and motivated. I wanted to do a good job because the students deserved the best. It was my first big challenge as a staff member, but the board members encouraged us all the way. So, Christina and I opened up the conference by welcoming the students and getting everyone grounded for the three days.



Christina Garcia and Jasmin Temblador first time MC, Photo by Albert Jimenez

That same conference, Christina and I had accidentally walked straight into a board meeting as we were walking back from our room. They had just completed a conversation about succession planning, and they ushered us over. The board member casually mentioned that we would be the next generation to move the conference forward. I remember feeling both excited and scared in that moment. Their words were filled with so much responsibility, they were entrusting us with something so big, so important, that they had worked on for so long, “how could I do this?” I had so many questions, and then I felt an eagerness come over me. I wanted to learn as much as I possibly could to ensure that CYLC would continue. I felt the need to answer the call to action, and to learn from my elders as much as I could.

The commitment of volunteers like Sal Castro, Rudy Monterrosa, Araceli Lopez-Andrade, Robin Avelar De Salle, Antonio Crisostomo-Romo, Myrna Brutti, Charlotte Lerchenmuller, Hugo Romo, and Paula Crisostomo, has shown me the importance of this conference. They never stopped giving of themselves so that the students could benefit and learn and feel good about who they are. Volunteers have supported the generation of Chicano/as as they move forward with their heads held high because they came to CYLC, and met these people, and felt their love, support, and unwavering belief that they could succeed in their goals and ambitions. These are only some of the people who I have had the pleasure to work alongside, and who have shared this part of their lives with me.

My personal experience as a volunteer with the conference has supported my growth and development over the last 3+ years. The conference has connected me to my roots, culture, history of Chicano people, it has given me a community of family and friends, mentors and role models, and ultimately motivated me to continue to further my education. This is the best team I have ever had the pleasure to work alongside, in the best environment where you are encouraged

to be yourself, where the leaders believe in feeding your growth. Everyone is volunteering to uplift the next generation of students, to build for the seventh generation. My belief in CYLC is strong, and I have personally gained tremendously from it. From my volunteer work with the conference I have been met amazing mentors and role models like Paula Crisostomo and Charlotte Lerchenmuller who continue to support me in my educational and professional goals. I will be introducing Paula and Charlotte, who I have interviewed for this oral history project, and their relationship to the conference in the next section of this paper.

### **Participants**

I first came to know of Charlotte Lerchenmuller and Paula Crisostomo, at the Chicano/a Youth Leadership conference in the Spring of 2015. When I joined the staff for the conference in 2016, I began to build relationships with these women who I had only, before then, seen working behind the scenes and leading workshop presentations. Charlotte always set the stage for the conference on Day One speaking about the legacy of Sal Castro, and Paula usually would speak on Day One after the screening of the movie Walkout. Paula always spoke about her experience of coming to the CYLC in 1967 as a student and what it meant to her, how the students organized together to lead the fight for equitable access to education, what it took to make a movement happen, and she issued a call to the present students to open themselves up to all that they would learn over the three day weekend.

Charlotte Lerchenmuller was married to Mr. Castro, and it is through him that she came to be involved with the CYLC. She first began as support staff, picking up and dropping off things for the conference whenever needed. After the death of Mr. Castro, Charlotte assumed the responsibility of carrying on his legacy and is now the president of the Sal Castro Foundation, and a frequent speaker at the CYLC. She organizes the career day that happens on Day Two of

the conference. She recruits Chicano/a leaders from different fields to come to the conference to speak with the students to get them thinking about possible future careers and to connect with mentors/role models who can support them with any questions they may have about their area of study. She also presents two workshops at the conference, the first is *Setting the Stage* which focuses on the origin and history of CYLC. Among the many teachings in this presentation, one that is very important is that of land recognition of the native Chumash tribe in the area. Land recognition is important to setting the stage for the three day conference, as a way to respect and appreciate the indigenous people and the territory where the conference is held.<sup>15</sup> The second is a presentation on the Blowouts which focuses on introducing the students to Sal Castro and his legacy, the 1968 walkouts, and Chicano/a history in America.

Paula Crisostomo was one of the student leaders of the 1968 walkouts in East Los Angeles, and a student of Sal Castro. She is retired from her role of Assistant Dean of Students for Intercultural Affairs at Occidental College where she worked for 19 years and is a board member of the Sal Castro Foundation. She first attended the conference as a student in 1967. Over the last three years, I have heard Paula speak a few times, specifically on the first night of the three-day conference after the movie screening of *Walkout*. This is the time in the conference early on when students begin to realize what the walkouts are, why they happened, how they are a part of the CYLC legacy today, and why the students are at CYLC. She stays for the remainder of the weekend, talking to students, sitting in on the workshops, and observing the staff and students. In 1988, Paula met with other student leaders of the walkouts to discuss ways to commemorate the 20th Anniversary of the student walkouts. She and other students' leaders, along with Mr. Castro, decided to revive the CYLC conference in honor of the walkouts. Paula

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<sup>15</sup> To know more about indigenous land acknowledgment visit <http://www.lspirg.org/knowtheland>

was part of the planning committee at that time to bring the conference back after many years of the conference being on hiatus. Paula has seen the conference over the span of 50+ years as a student, staff member, and board member. Paula is a significant figure in Chicano/a history, and at the conference the youth are in awe to meet and hear from her. She is a modern-day hero whom the students can relate to.

### **Background and Research**

This oral history project began with background research, which involved consulting books, archival recordings and websites to become familiar with pre-existing information about the conference. Then, I used this research to inform my work for the oral histories. Before developing my interview questions and conducting the oral histories, I referenced the following books and online resources to inform my approach: *Indigenous Methodologies (Margaret Kovach)*<sup>16</sup>, *Recording Oral Histories (Valerie Yow)*<sup>17</sup>, *Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance (Soyini Madison)*, and the *Principles and Best Practices for Oral History* webpage (Oral History Association)<sup>18</sup>. These sources offer a combination of guidance for conducting research and oral history through theories, methods, and ethics important for completing fieldwork, while also engaging with new ways of knowing, and provide a guide to analysis as a way to gain a deeper understanding of narrative text. Two oral history projects have been instrumental in learning about the people most involved with the walkouts, and the CYLC. The first is Dr. Dolores Bernal's *Grassroots Leadership Reconceptualized: Chicana Oral Histories and the 1968 East Los Angeles School Blowouts*, which focuses on the stories of the women as

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<sup>16</sup> Kovach, Margaret. 2010. *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* University of Toronto Press.

<sup>17</sup> Yow, Valerie Raleigh. 2014. *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences* Rowman & Littlefield.

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.oralhistory.org/about/principles-and-practices>

participants, activists, and leaders in the 1968 walkouts, including Paula Crisostomo. In my pre-interview with Paula I was able to ask her about her experience in the oral history project with Dr. Bernal, which helped me learn about what the narrator already knew about oral history and the process involved. The second oral history is *Blowout! Sal Castro and the Chicano Struggle for Educational Justice* by Mario T. Garcia and Sal Castro, which detailed Sal's life story in relation to the 1968 walkouts, and the CYLC. I located and watched a symposium about the CYLC hosted by UCLA's Chicano Studies Research Center in 2006 titled, *The Sal Castro and the Chicano Youth Leadership Conference: The Development of Chicano Leadership since 1963*. The symposium brought together CYLC alumni, CYLC volunteers, and scholars to discuss the historical and educational impact of the high school leadership conferences. This symposium was a gem to come across, because, for a person who has never heard Mr. Castro speak in person, it helped me understand more about him when the narrators would speak about him. I gained more insight into who Sal Castro was, his style of presenting, how he interacted with the audience, what he chose to share in his presentation, and how people interacted with him or spoke about him. Combining Garcia and Castro's oral history work, and the recorded symposium, I learned about Mr. Castro's life story and the reason for his commitment to the conference. This background research helped me develop questions for the interviews about how he transmitted and shared his vision with other leaders in the conference.

My original idea for this oral history project began during a Goucher College Oral History course in the Spring of 2018. To begin my fieldwork research, I began to attend events that commemorated the 50th anniversary of the Walkouts. I learned as much as I possibly could about the people involved with the conference and the walkouts, taking note of who was hosting these events, and who was invited to speak. I attended two academic conferences, The

Educational Legacy of the 1968 ELA Walkouts: Walk-in-to Cal State LA, and the 50th Anniversary of the East LA walkouts hosted by the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center. I also attended the 50th-anniversary re-enactment of the 1968 student demands to the LAUSD board of education. This re-enactment was hosted by the Los Angeles Unified Board of Education in collaboration with students and parent leaders in the Los Angeles Unified School District. Through this re-enactment, I learned more about the list of demands made by the students of 1968 to the Board of Education, and about the list of demands the youth of Los Angeles put together from 2018. The students in the re-enactment highlighted that although changes have slowly been made, there are issues that have not been resolved that continue to impact students today. During my observations, I took note every time someone mentioned CYLC on their panels, and I began to learn who had been involved with the conference and I learned about histories of the CYLC that were new to me. At both conferences, I heard Paula speak, and I learned more about her life growing up in the 1960s, and about her involvement in organizing the walkouts. I also attended a presentation where Charlotte spoke about the legacy of Sal Castro. That was my introduction to a more detailed account about Sal Castro, and how Charlotte continues to honor his legacy. Through this early fieldwork, I was able to develop a preliminary outline of questions based on what I had learned from the overall events.



Charlotte Lerchenmuller presenting at UCLA, photo by Jasmin Temblador

## Methodology

Oral history is a method of recording and preserving oral testimony that is grounded in reflections of the past. Inspired by the *testimonio*,<sup>19</sup> which Mario Garcia describes in his own work, I chose oral history as an opportunity to learn from the lived experiences of the elders from the conference and add to Chicano Historiography. This is important because Chicanos, Chicanas, and women in general are a group of people “whose history has been traditionally excluded or distorted.”<sup>20</sup> Oral history offers a way of breaking through the exclusion and erasure of Chicano/a voices, and to include the voices of those who want to uplift the CYLC mission. While the generation of elders from the walkouts, CYLC, and Chicano/a researchers continue the efforts to include Chicano history in the history books, my hope is that this oral history project supports those efforts of inclusion. Through the cultural sustainability program, I have learned from Margaret Kovach, that although today we have access to more methods of preservation in the form of digital tools and recording devices, “the act of listening to an elder tell a story, or share their narrative, is an ancestral way of knowledge passed down from one generation to the next.”<sup>21</sup> The stories become, or can become, a part of people’s lives and are carried forward to be shared with future generations. This act has been instrumental to me in my work as my elders are sharing with me their stories and knowledge to support the sustainability of the conference. Through this process, they are also teaching me the important lessons of how to continue their work.

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<sup>19</sup> Testimonio developed out of the Latin American political struggles by the people of that region to achieve liberation from political and military dictatorships, and is described as a liberationist texts seen as a tool of those struggles and to further encourage them.

<sup>20</sup> Bernal, Dolores Delgado. 1998. "Grassroots Leadership Reconceptualized: Chicana Oral Histories and the 1968 East Los Angeles School Blowouts." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 19 (2): 115

<sup>21</sup> Kovach, Margaret. 2010. *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* University of Toronto Press.

I was also inspired to use oral history because of Mr. Castro. Through my attendance at the conference, I learned that Sal always encouraged people to learn about their history, and he often taught people about their ancestry: he was a history teacher. From what has been shared with me from conference staff and board members, he would always share a bit of history with people wherever he presented, especially about the indigenous people to whom the land belonged to and about Mexican people in history who settled those lands. Mr. Castro knew the importance of having those stories told because he knew that representation of Mexicanos/as and Chicanos/as in history mattered. I believe that through oral history people can find a connection to the narratives of Paula and Charlotte as they share their experience in relation to the CYLC. Through oral history, we keep their memory alive, and we learn from them to support the development and growth of the next generation of Chicano/a leaders.

The oral histories I have recorded will be accessible to anyone who wishes to know more about the inner workings of the conference and about the stories of elders who are graciously trying to pass it on. Charlotte's words, "I won't be around forever," remind us that the stories of these narrators are very important to the life and sustainability of CYLC, because their lived experiences inspire people to return to the conference to keep it going. As the elders grow older, their stories are important to document and preserve so that their knowledge and wisdom about their own experiences and their intentional shaping of the conference are not lost. Paula and Charlotte's stories remind us why we continue to volunteer with the conference, and why it is important that it continue to be put on. Through these stories, we gain insight into what their experience has been like with the conference, how they feel about it, why it has been important to participate in it over time, and what impact it has for students and volunteers. We begin to learn both the triumphs and challenges of sustaining the conference through the stories of the

narrators and learn from them about the choices that people make when met with either. I believe that it is important and special to hear the story of our elders from their own personal experience.

In the book *Indigenous Methodologies*, Margaret Kovach reminds us that it is from stories that we learn about who we are, stories build relationships between people that form community, and inform how we continue to build our future, “Oral stories are born of connections within the world and are thus recounted relationally. They tie us with our past and provide a basis for continuity with future generations.”<sup>22</sup> This type of relationship to story reminds me to reflect on my position as an interviewer, as a conference committee member, and in my analysis of the interviews.

I have used the method of fieldnotes in my Cultural Documentation Field lab and Oral History classes where I learned to document my research encounters, the challenges or difficulties I experienced, the natural progression of my project, and to reflect on my own experiences and position within the work. For this oral history project, I have used field notes to both document my work throughout this capstone, and to explore my thoughts about what was coming up for me through the interview process. It has been an important part of my methodology to reflect on my own position in preparation for the writing and interview portions of this project. It helped me to process what I was learning. Post interview, I recorded myself reflecting upon the experience, and whenever inspiration struck, I turned on the recorder and shared new thoughts or ideas that came to me. The recordings and reflections helped me to share with the narrator's, personal aspects of my own experience within the conference and this oral history project. My relationship with the narrators has been one that has developed over the

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<sup>22</sup> Kovach, Margaret. 2010. *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* University of Toronto Press, pp.94

last three to four years into a mutually respectful appreciation for one another. Through this oral history process, I have realized there are challenges that can arise when navigating through a project where the interviewer knows the narrators personally. While I recognize that I had challenges with probing deeper on some topics or asking difficult questions, it was because these relationships are still very new for me, and I wish to maintain them. I am also a member of this community, and an active volunteer as one of two conference coordinators and I wish to continue with the conference long term. Some of the sensitive topics that I knew I could possibly run up against in the interview are related to the most recent Woolsey fire that burned down Camp Hess Kramer in November 2018, and the return of the conference in 2014 after the death of Mr. Castro. My understanding from the interviews with both narrators was that these were topics that were sensitive for them personally or others closely connected to the conference.

When I was preparing to invite Paula and Charlotte to participate in the oral history project, I knew that I had to be clear and respectful in my request. It is important that my pre-existing relationships with the narrators are based on trust because I was asking them to share their personal narratives. In doing so, this required me to share my story as well, which I have been able to do with the narrators through this project. Kovach talks about the importance of this exchange of stories in indigenous research in the book *Indigenous Methodologies:*

In asking others to share stories, it is necessary to share our own, stating with self-location. For many active in Indigenous research, this comes naturally, as a part of community protocol. The researcher's self-location provides an opportunity for the research participant to situate and assess the researcher's motivations for the research, thus beginning the relationship that is elemental to story-based methodology.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Kovach, Margaret. 2010. *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* University of Toronto Press. pp. 98

Through my volunteer work with the conference, Paula and Charlotte have been able to learn more about me. In my communication with them, I shared my intention for this research, and how I aspire to positively support the conference in any way that I can through this work. Unfortunately, in the past, there have been times where researchers have attended the conference for the sole purpose of wanting to interview people for projects they are working on which felt very transactional. Trust is important for this community of people, and any work focused on the conference should serve in a way that benefits its sustainability. Over the years, I have learned the culture of the group and the values that are shared. This insight has helped me along my way to developing the oral history project and outlining my approach to working with the narrators involved.

In preparation for contacting Paula and Charlotte, I used training I received in my Oral history class in the MACS program, which included are doing oral history, interpreting oral history, and using oral history. I began with an email to both narrators letting them know that I would be graduating soon and explaining to them that I am working on a Capstone project for my master's degree in Cultural Sustainability at Goucher College and that I would be focusing on interviewing them about their experience with the CYLC. In my email I explained the oral history project, what participation in the project would be like, outlined my deadline to complete the interviews, how many interviews I would be conducting, and that the interview would be recorded. I continued to share that the length of the interviews would be no more than two hours. Finally, I explained to Paula and Charlotte that the result of the project would be a recorded oral history of their experience in relation to the conference and my plan to deposit the interviews in a community accessible repository. I then offered to set up a phone call with each

to tell them more about the project and answer any questions. The responses I received from Paula and Charlotte were genuinely positive; they were happy to participate. I proceeded to set up the pre-interviews with these two narrators.

I created a script for the phone calls to ensure I was covering all important details including a brief overview of oral history methodology, the scope of the project, why I want to interview them, what the final product would look like, and where it will be deposited for preservation and access. Once I covered the logistics, I confirmed the participation of both narrators and proceeded to set up the pre-interview. It was necessary to communicate oral history's purpose and procedures with the narrators to ensure that the participants fully understood my endeavour. For this oral history project, both narrators voluntarily participated. I reviewed their copyright, confidentiality, and anonymity. I reminded both narrators that they could choose to close parts of the interview if they wished. Their responses echoed no concern with the recording nor an anticipated need to close any portions.

My first pre-interview was over the phone with Paula Crisostomo, and a week later I met with Charlotte in her home for an in-person pre-interview. I began both pre-interviews by checking in. I had not seen or spoken to either narrator since the Fall 2018 CYLC. Paula and I talked about graduation, she was very interested in my career path and she gave me valuable advice. We laughed a bit, she really showed interest in what I was doing at work and in school and then we proceeded to talk about her family and then the conference. When I met with Charlotte, she had just gotten home from shopping for plants for her garden. We bonded over plants because I have a love for gardening, and her patio is full of plants and the interior of the home is filled with flower arrangements in each room.

The pre-interviews were very informative, both narrators shared a lot of historical information about the conference. A lot of the information I had either heard once before or did not know about. Charlotte had compiled a bag filled with archival material from past conferences, including agendas dating back to 1963 through the 1990s, and a CD with a PBS recording describing the conference in the 1960's narrated by Clets Roberts, a former news reporter. Charlotte also shared a recent video recording of her at Camp Hess Kramer after the Woolsey fire titled *Up from the Ashes*,<sup>24</sup> which was produced by UCLA's newspaper the Daily Bruin as part of a mini-series covering communities who have been directly impacted by the fire. I had learned much more than I thought I was going to learn about the historical content from both pre-interviews.

After the pre-interviews, I used my notes to edit the interview outline, which I tailored to each narrator. I created a check-list for the in-person interview to ensure that I covered all the important elements for each narrator, and to remind me of small things I needed to do like bring extra chargers and copies of the release forms. After setting up a date and time for the in-person interviews, I arrived early to test the sound levels in the rooms in order to achieve an optimal recording. We then chatted a bit while I tested the volume to capture a clear recording of the narrator's voice, but also to break away any tension so the narrators felt comfortable. I let the narrator know what they could expect, that they could stop at any moment during the interview or decline to answer any questions. I let them know that they could ask clarifying questions if anything was unclear, and we could take breaks if needed. I also reminded the narrator that we would review the release form at the end of the interview. Before beginning the interview, I asked the narrators for their informed consent to being recorded via audio. At the end of the

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<sup>24</sup> <https://features.dailybruin.com/2019/up-from-the-ashes/feature/Charlotte>

interview, I asked the narrators for their permission to use the recorded interviews for this reflection paper, both granted me permission.

After the interviews, I sent the narrators an email thanking them for their time, along with a copy of the audio and the signed release form to keep for their records. I moved into transcribing right away by using an online transcription tool called Trint.<sup>25</sup> Since this system doesn't accurately capture any mumbled speech, it required me to go through and listen to the audio and make edits to the transcripts. This was a really helpful process for me because the familiarity with their voice and speech patterns helped me edit the transcripts in a more nuanced way. When I printed the transcripts to begin analyzing the content, as I read through, I felt like I could hear the voices of the narrators clearly. This allowed me to make corrections to the transcripts in greater detail. For the analysis portion, I assigned a theme to a specific highlighter color and I went through the pages of transcripts highlighting how many times the narrators spoke about the following themes: relationships, cultural sustainability, culture and traditions, youth participation, the walkouts, and leadership.

## **Equipment**

The first time I used audio recording equipment was for the interview I conducted as part of a class project for my Oral History course in 2018. I used the same Tascam recording device for this oral history project. It was important for me to practice and master using the recording device, so I could capture the best quality audio during both interviews. I learned, from the interview I conducted during my course, to be clear with the narrator about the need to record in a quiet place where they feel comfortable. I tested the recorder in my own home prior to the in-person interviews. I had been to Paula's home once before, so I knew the layout pretty well. I set

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<sup>25</sup> <https://trint.com/>

up the volume levels to where the narrator's voice would be loud enough to hear on the audio recording. It was especially important for me to practice pausing the recording in case the narrator needed to stop for any reason. Valerie Yow emphasizes the need for consideration of places to record, and how the environment can impact the way the narrator presents themselves, "The place where you meet the narrator to record makes a difference. An individual who meets you in his office will present himself differently in the conversation and will emphasize different things from the way he would if you recorded in his living room at home."<sup>26</sup> With this in mind, I arrived early for both interviews and let the narrator know that I was going to test the sound in the space. We chatted a bit while I was setting up and testing the sound levels. For the interview with Paula, we sat at her dining room table in an open space located in the center of the home which was nice because we were in the center most room in the house away from noise coming from the street, or Paula's dog in the backyard. She chose this space and seemed to be the most comfortable there. For the interview with Charlotte, her home is located on a hilltop where the sounds of traffic from below and helicopters above can be heard inside the home. We sat in her front living room which was exposed to all of these sounds. However, this seemed to be her room of preference, which was widely decorated with flowers in vases, and on tapestry hung on the walls. All in all, the recording was still clear, and I set the recorder on the coffee table between us.

### **Archiving**

When thinking about preserving these oral histories in an archive, I knew I wanted the interviews to be stored in California where they can be accessible to the Chicano/a community, and where the history of the conference is rooted. I will be submitting the interviews for

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<sup>26</sup> Yow, Valerie Raleigh. 2014. *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences* Rowman & Littlefield. Ch. 11 Interviewing techniques and Strategies.

preservation to Goucher's Library to be kept with the Master of Arts in Cultural Sustainability capstone collection. However, in my pre-interviews, I asked the narrators for their recommendations as to where in California the interviews could be stored. Both of the narrator's recommended the UCLA Chicano Studies Research center where the Sal Castro Collection is stored, and Paula recommended the Southern California Library,<sup>27</sup> which is a small independent community library in South Central Los Angeles whose mission is to make accessible the histories of struggle that challenge racism and other systems of oppression. While I have not made contact with both recommended places, I plan to set up meetings for follow up during the summer of 2019. It sounded like the narrators have a good relationship with both repositories and felt they would be trustworthy places to store the interviews. It is important for me, as a researcher, to ensure that these oral histories are accessible. The decision on where to deposit the oral histories outside of Goucher College, will be based on conversations of capacity to manage the digital assets and if the Goucher release form will be honored by either UCLA or the Southern California Library repositories. I want the stories of the narrators to be accessible to everyone so that future generations of Chicano/as can listen to the voices of our elders, and I want the knowledge of the CYLC to continue to be shared. This is why a partnership with a local repository is important. I let Paula and Charlotte know that if they planned to use the oral histories in the future, I was happy to help in any way.

### **Limitations**

Some of the limitations I faced for this oral history project included: sample size, the scheduling of interviews, and difficult topics and themes.

- **Small Sample:** I was working with a small sample of two narrators for this oral history project. Two interviews are not considered a collection, but I made the decision to focus

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<sup>27</sup> <http://www.socallib.org/>

on a smaller group of participants. The choice came from my understanding of the amount of time and energy that goes into an oral history project. I knew that it would be difficult for me to interview a large group within my proposed timeline. I specifically chose to interview Charlotte and Paula because they are two of the people in the CYLC family who have been involved the longest who could relate their story to the conference over time.

- Time: I have learned through this capstone project that a timeline can change if the potential narrator's schedules have conflicts. I began the interviews for this capstone mid-March. I had hoped to complete the interviews by the end of February, early March so I would have more time to sit with the recorded interview. Due to busy schedules, I adjusted to the changes by communicating with the narrators the timeline that I was working towards.
- Difficult topics/themes: The Woolsey fire is known as the worst wildfire in modern day history that devastated Ventura County, including Camp Hess Kramer. The CYLC staff and board members shared an exchange of messages in response to the fire that were both feelings of sadness and hope. For me, the loss of the camp was really hard to process. I cried as I heard about the news and sought comfort in my committee who shared similar feelings. If the committee was feeling pain I thought that for people like Charlotte and Paula, who have had a long relationship with the camp and their staff, it would possibly be a topic that could cause a lot of emotions and one of which one or either of them would be able to address just yet. I had one question about what makes the camp special in my interview outline, and my hope was to learn more about the physical place of the camp. However, in my interview with Paula she began to cry as we spoke about the camp and I paused the recorder to give her time until she was ready to keep going. The narrator shared that she was deeply impacted by the loss of the camp. I did not want to cause too much stress about the topic given that the Spring conference had just been canceled after it was scheduled to be held in April 2019.

### **Analysis of Content**

I had the pleasure of interviewing Paula Crisostomo and Charlotte Lerchenmuller, board members of the Sal Castro Foundation who were endowed by Mr. Castro with continuing the legacy, and program of the Chicano Youth Leadership Conference. It was incredible to hear the many layers of knowledge that Paula and Charlotte shared in the interviews. I learned that the narrator's have a clear understanding of the inner workings of the conference, and deep knowledge about the conference's history and impact over the last 50+ years. While there are experiences that the narrator's share through the conference, their relationship to CYLC is unique to each of them. The way in which the narrators recount their stories highlights both community

and individual narrative. The narrators speak about group memory when I ask about conference structure, changes overtime, and conference history. The narrators speak to their individual memory when asked about their personal connection to the conference, their thoughts on leadership, Camp Hess Kramer, and what they observe while at the conference.

Leadership building within the CYLC has been a form of cultural sustainability among the youth, volunteers, and the conference committee. As youth and volunteers participate in the program of the conference, they are inspired and motivated by the emphasis on culture and identity as a form of empowerment, the messaging of going to college, graduating, and returning to their communities to be change agents. The conference has invited Chicano and Chicana graduates and professionals to the conference to serve as role models for the youth. The elders know that in order to build leadership, people have to feel good about themselves, they need to know that they can succeed, they need to see themselves represented in the professionals and speakers at the conference, they need to be encouraged to take steps in the directions of their goals, and they need to be allowed the space and time to develop their skills.

The following examples highlight how leadership building has been a concrete guide to maintaining the cultural sustainability of the conference. One thing that is apparent is that people keep coming back to volunteer, which demonstrates that volunteers have developed a commitment to CYLC. In Paula's interview, she shares that although the conference has experienced hiatuses, it returns because of the people who continue to be involved and the impact that it generates.

**Paula:** [00:12:47] The thing that wouldn't leave huh? Yeah, and again, it's the folks who are involved in it. They won't, we can't let it die, but it's because it's that important. I, and I get emotional. I benefited personally, my children have benefited, and so we know we're just a few of the folks who really have benefited from this conference, from that weekend miracle. So, why wouldn't it need to continue? It should be replicated, you know? I mean with the numbers that we've gotten from that independent study. From you

know, everyone we've talked to who have attended, who has attended, the difference in their lives. Talk about the quality of, the impact, quality of lives we've touched. And this should be replicated, you know? So, I think that's why it goes on hiatus, but it always finds a way to come back. Just like the cream always rises to the top. It's that important.

There are people like Paula who have gained on a personal level, and others who have been inspired by the conference, and they continue to volunteer so that the conference continues to create impact for more people. In the book, *The Gift* Lewis Hyde reminds us a gift can only be passed on when that gift has been transformative in your own life, “With gifts that are agents of change, it is only when the gift has worked in us, only when we have come up to its level, as it were, that we can give it away again. Passing the gift along is an act of gratitude that finishes the labor.”<sup>28</sup> The way Paula describes the impact on people’s lives sounds like the gift is being passed on through all the different levels of attendees in the conference. The first, is from the elders to the volunteer facilitators. In the interview with Charlotte, I mentioned to her that I observed she puts the names of student participants who have returned to the conference as facilitator, on her powerpoint presentation. She presents this powerpoint at both the facilitator training, and to the students at the conference. Her response was about the importance of students being able to know that their names could be placed on that powerpoint as well, if they returned.

**Jasmin:** [00:57:44] I have noticed you add all the names on your presentation.

**Charlotte:** [00:57:46] Oh absolutely. So, they can see that your name can be here. Because that speaks volumes, that that speaks volumes.

**Jasmin:** [00:57:59] And you know that those students went to college and graduated and came back.

**Charlotte:** [00:58:02] Oh absolutely. And here we are, “and I was a facilitator. I still may be in college but I'm going to college.”

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<sup>28</sup> Hyde, Lewis. 2009. *The Gift: Creativity and the Artist in the Modern World* Vintage. pp. 60.

The fact that students had returned to volunteer was exciting for Charlotte and is an indicator of the success of the conference in the lives of the youth. What I hear in these responses, is that Charlotte is modeling leadership by listing the names of the people who have returned, and she uses this as a way to let the individual and others know that they are seen, and that they are fulfilling the vision of Sal Castro and the conference. It in turn inspires the youth who see their facilitators names on the presentation to also think of one day returning to serve the next generation. Paula highlights that the impact in the lives of volunteers from the conference has created a commitment from people to keep it going.

Through the interviews, I also learned that there are layers of leadership within the volunteer structure. These include: the facilitators who are leading discussions with the students over the three-day weekend, the conference committee in charge of the structure of the conference, the professional speakers who lead the workshops, and then there are the foundation board members who support the efforts of the conference on a macro level. All of these volunteers are essential to the success of the conference, which is why leadership and capacity building are important elements to the progression of volunteerism encouraged through the conference. What I am also learning as a committee member and a master student, is that this oral history project is adding to the cultural sustainability of the conference because I am listening to the elder's stories so that I can continue to develop my own leadership to support the conference. I hear this messaging of capacity building and sustainability, in the interview with Charlotte,

**Jasmin:** [01:02:10] Thinking about sustainability has really been coming up in our conversation a lot. When you think about the future, how do you see the legacy continuing through CYLC?

**Charlotte:** [01:02:25] People like you, because I ain't gonna be around.

**Jasmin:** [01:02:29] People continuing to stay involved.

**Charlotte:** [01:02:30] Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Hear, the oh the buzzwords capacity building, ok? Sal, I remember, people were, he, he would get phone calls. Can you come and speak? Can you do this? Can you do that? And he would say, 'I think it's more important that you do it because I'm going to come and I'm going to leave, you're gonna be there.' And, so that was his way. He wasn't shirking it. He was listening, he was giving ideas, but building capacity so that you know there was only one of him... And you know building other people to do [this work], and to continue. So yeah capacity building and, that's what you guys are with the facilitators and the staff. That, that's our lifeblood because I'm aint gonna be around... The need is going to be with those folks who have the same vision and belief system.

In some ways, the mission of CYLC is transmitted to all who attend, and it becomes deeply rooted in the value of volunteerism. The conference creates the call to action to come back and make a contribution to your community for those who have experienced, what the elders call the "Miracle in Malibu."<sup>29</sup> Through this messaging, I see that the elders have created a cycle of volunteerism where people are going out into the world and returning to CYLC, and to their communities to pass on the gift. This is especially present in the messaging shared with the students, Paula speaks to why leadership building has been an important part of the conference, "Because we want them to be change agents, and because part of the purpose is so that they will come back to the community and do what they can. To contribute back."

Leadership development for student attendees has been the theme of the conference since the beginning, and Chicano heritage is at the center of it as a source of empowerment. Both narrators are that the vision of the conference is rooted in the use of culture to affirm the shared identity that brings Chicanos/as together. Intensional cultural infusions include music, oral traditions, art, and the teaching of community histories. Culture is used as a way to empower the students to value who they are, where they come from, and to build self-esteem to inspire them to continue

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<sup>29</sup> Conference elders use this phrase to describe the impact that the students experience in only two and a half days at the CYLC, which is demonstrated on the last day when students share their testimonials about their experience with camp attendees.

to move forward. It is an effort within the conference for the students to maintain their culture. By teaching the students about their culture, combined with college access workshops, and a call to lift up their voices and contribute back to their communities, students may, indeed, feel proud of who they are. With this confidence they may go into the world to fulfill their goals and become leaders. The program of the conference meets the students' needs by providing a culturally rich experience where they hear music that their parents listen to at home, learn how to dance to Latin music, are assigned to an indigenous nation for a discussion group, and attend workshops where the speakers are all Chicano/a Latino/a educators, professionals, and doctors. All of these ingredients feed the cultural sustainability of the Chicano/a Youth Leadership Conference as the workshops build to inspire a sense of belonging, community building, and leadership development for the next generation of college-bound students.

The CYLC is a prime example of a group of people working together to protect, enhance, and advocate for the cultural assets that are important to the Chicano community. From the interviews, both narrators share that the way they are able to do this is through building relationships with allies and volunteers, offering workshops and opportunities for the development of leadership at every level of the conference, uplifting identity and heritage, and honoring the environment of the camp which contributes to the cultural sustainability of the conference. The reason for continuing to do this work is because both narrators recognize that there is still a need for a conference like CYLC. Some of those needs may be related to the issues in the education system today, that still impact the youth, such as the lack of resources for them to go to college and graduate. I learned through the interview with Charlotte, that the sustainability of the conference is important, not just in the education system, but to

“counteract”<sup>30</sup> the issues on a larger scale that target Chicano/a and Latino/a students and their communities. In the interview with Paula, she shares why the CYLC has a continuing resonance today, “Because unfortunately, it’s still needed. It’s sad but true. After all of this time. But of course, demographics change. You know, we come and go. It’s still needed, and there’s a lesson in that. We still have to remain vigilant and continue to fight.” My interpretation is that as long as there is a need, the conference will continue to serve that need and people will heed the call because the issues in society impact the youth being served through the conference.

Cultural assets are being protected through the strong relationships and allies that have been cultivated overtime. These relationships are with volunteers, students, speakers, staff, board members, extended networks with organizations who fund and host the conference like LAUSD, Beyond the Bell<sup>31</sup>, and with allies like Camp Hess Kramer. Relationship building is an important part of the sustainability of the conference because there is a need to work together and collaborate to support the advancement of Chicano/a and Latino/a students as they emerge from the conference and out into the world. Through the interviews, I’ve learned about this group of like-minded people and organizations who are working to support the youth. In the interview with Charlotte, she shares that relationships have been, “aspects that have continued from the very beginning.” For Paula, one of the most fundamental relationships has been with Camp Hess Kramer, and the camp staff. The narrators both expressed a strong bond with the camp and the staff. Paula went on to say that the staff at the camp are allies and that it is important to have people who recognize the value of building up youth leadership and the work of the CYLC. This is evident in the communication between the two groups after the Woolsey fire that burned down

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<sup>30</sup> See pg. 74 In transcript for quote.

<sup>31</sup> Beyond the Bell is a organization that provides access to high quality, safe, and supervised academic, enrichment and recreation programs for youth in the Los Angeles Unified School District beyond the regular school day.

the camp, Paula shared, “the director John texted Myrna and said, ‘We’ll be back, but in the meantime, you might want to call these different places because it’s important that you guys keep doing what you’re doing.’ So, it’s like they understand the importance of sustaining what we’re doing.” Camp Hess Kramer and CYLC have been allies for over 50 years.

The notion of cultural sustainability can be found in the way that board members make decisions about the conference and the influences that inspire those decisions. Both narrators talk about the cultural content of the conference, specifically about the use of music, art, and dance as an intergenerational approach to connect the students to their parents and to their ancestral history. Decisions around the cultural content of the CYLC, are based on traditions that are participatory and build a sense of belonging among the youth. One example of how the elders add to the cultural content of the program, is through the use of music. In the pre-interview with Charlotte, she mentioned that Castro was a big fan of music and that he kept cassettes of music all over the place, and that it was important to him to include music at the conference for the students that reflected the interests of the students, and traditional music. Paula speaks about this love for music when talking about the morning wake up, which we call Las Mañanitas, where staff go cabin to cabin with music blasting to wake the students up and get ready for the day ahead. She says:

Sal used it as a way to introduce them to the kind of music that their parents probably played on the weekend, that not necessarily they would play themselves. And I know that some of the comments we got back, or we would be told by the end that they never listened to that music before because it reminded them of their parents. But now, they really appreciate it.

I learned that the use of music is multilayered, not only was it for fun and to liven up the mood, it was so that students could be proud of the music that their parents listened to and creates a

connection between parent and child, and it may also contribute to creating a familiar and safe place for the students at the conference while they were away from home.

The conference is a shared responsibility amongst elders, and they operate in an egalitarian way. I learned that the board has made specific decisions about functionality to uphold the ways of doing things laid out by Mr. Castro. It's clear that Sal Castro left behind instructions, a sort of blueprint for how the conference would be maintained, as Paula clearly states in the interview: "When Sal was home sick, he sat Charlotte down and said: 'This is what's going to happen.' And he planned it out, exactly who he wanted on the board and what he wanted them to do."

There were systems in place to encapsulate and pass on the knowledge of how things are done from one elder to the others. It sounded to me as if Mr. Castro had confidence in the people who he chose to lead the conference and, based on the way the conference builds a commitment to contributing back to the community, he may have trusted that the people he chosen would fulfill the mission. In order for the systems to continue to function, there is a need for committed volunteers who believe in the vision, and above all want to support the students.

I gained a deeper understanding about what inspires the planning and decisions making of the conference by the elders from Charlotte's interview. She discusses the importance of the seventh generation:

One other thing Rita Ledesma in her Sunday morning, as part of the reflection, talks about the seventh generation. That when you're doing something, yes, it's now, but you have to think in the Native American thinking pattern is that what you're doing now is impo[rtant]- but you're also doing something for the seventh generation. It's just not now it's further on down.

It was Sal who believed in the seventh generation principle because he saw how transformative the conference was for the students of 1968, and this principle based on the Iroquois

Confederacy of the Great Law of the Haudenosaunee which states that, “In our every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations.”<sup>32</sup>

What I hear through the interviews is that elders pay special attention in the decisions they make about the conference because they are planning with the the seventh generation in mind. The conference structure works, and they are actively thinking about the past and the future as a way to continue the successful advancement of college access for Chicano/a students through CYLC.

### **Analysis of interview**

In this oral history project, there is an individual memory and a collective or social memory. Personally, I have heard both narrators speak in front of an audience at the CYLC and at events hosted at local universities. It was interesting to hear how each narrator told their story, how they responded to my questions, and the similarities and differences between both when asked about certain topics. Board members especially have both a shared and individual memory of their time with Sal Castro, and of their time within the conference. Sharing these memories, and continuing to talk about them, has created a close group of people. While some some of the oral histories reveal deep, rich experiences that are emotional, historical, sad and happy, some of the stories can also become codified from being told and retold. While I am aware that the narrator's respond to my questions, they each respond to it in their own way.

Charlotte and Paula have held different roles, at different times in the conference’s life, and while both share a deep commitment to the conference, their experiences with the conference are very different and unique to each of them. Paula tells her story through the lens of a Chicana Filipina growing up in the projects of Ramona gardens in Los Angeles during a time of segregation and social movements in the country, and as a woman of color working at a

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<sup>32</sup> 7genfoundation.org. "7th Generation Principle.", <http://7genfoundation.org/7th-generation/>.

university where people of color were not often represented. She has experienced some tough things in her life, and she has also experienced the fulfillment of the vision of CYLC as a leader. Charlotte is not a Chicana, she tells her story through the lens of her experience of attending many of the schools in Los Angeles, as an educator throughout the county, as a person who has embraced CYLC through her husband Mr. Castro to carry his legacy forward, and through her role as a foundation board member. The conference has impacted the lives of both Charlotte and Paula and holds great value for them as they work to ensure that it continues into the future. Their stories are socially constructed by the experiences they have had in society. It is clear to me that the relationships that both narrators had with Mr. Castro inspired them to stay involved in the work of the CYLC. By the way the narrators speak about the conference, I can clearly hear their passion and commitment to the conference.

The start of the interview with Charlotte, I began by asking her about herself, family, where she grew up, her experience and she proceeds to discuss growing up in Los Angeles, briefly mentions parents and brother, and the bulk of her response was a quick and confident response listing all the schools she attended and her extensive resume of jobs within the school system over 38 years. I ask about her relationship to CYLC her answer includes clarifying information about her role and positionality within the conference, offers examples of how she would support in the early years, she brings up other board members, the development of the foundation, and ends with a brief commentary about people returning to the conference after the death of Mr. Castro, offers a quick snapshot of the conference hiatus, and ends with being even more involved after his death. I follow up with a clarifying question to include her role as president of the foundation, and she quickly respond with light sarcasm, “you know widow Castro gets to be the president” and she proceeds to talk about the foundation board members and all of their roles and

responsibilities. As the interview continues, Charlotte describes her involvement as being “on the outs” in the early stages, so I notice that in many of her responses she references Mr. Castro when she talks about the conference. While ultimately, she did not envision herself being as involved as she is today, she is invested and committed to keeping the CYLC and Sal’s legacy alive.

Charlotte frames her oral history on factual information of accounts that occurred in the conference, statistics, and references important people involved in the early years. When speaking about the traditions and culture of the conference, she often referenced examples of what the students of today have access to, comparing it to what was happening in the 1960s and what the students experienced during those times. She makes sure to situate her positionality early in the interview about her story in relation to the conference. It is important to Charlotte to make the distinction that her role within the conference began in 2014. This was especially prevalent when I asked her questions about her relationship to CYLC, and the revival of the conference. When asked about reviving the conference after Mr. Castro died, I could hear in her voice that it was a difficult time by the way she enunciates certain words to describe how hard it was for the group, but she never talked about how she felt. In her responses to the question about her relationship to the conference, she commonly used the words “we” to describe the work the group did together. I am not entirely sure why this is, but she makes it a point to highlight the fact that there were people who were doing the work before her, to put on the conference. Although from the beginning of the interview, Charlotte positioned herself as someone on the periphery, it was later on in the interview that I got to see a bit more about her opinions, beliefs, and the knowledge she possesses about certain periods of time. In all her responses, she ties the lessons learned into a positive response.

Charlotte's tone sounds very professional. I know that she is used to speaking with elected officials and I think this informs the way she naturally speaks in the interview. I can tell that she has a more direct approach when she responding to the questions, she often got straight to the point. When she answered questions, she always had a response ready that was coupled with historical information, dates, and years. There were times where she would forget something until her memory was jogged, then she would be jumping back and forth because she was inspired by her response to other questions that helped her remember.

For Paula, she has had a long relationship with CYLC, one from which she and her family have personally benefited. The conference has been a huge part of her life for over 50 years, and she tells her story in a personal way, sharing how it impacted her life at such a young age. When asked about topics related to family, Paula replied with "You've heard this so many times before." Paula notes that she is aware I have been present at events where she has shared her story. She then goes on to summarize where she grew up, her parent's occupations and shared more about her mother's commitment to volunteerism where she learned the value of community. As a committee member for the conference, I have heard Paula share her family story before, but I also learned more about her relationship with her mother that I did not know before. Paula is someone who is sought out to present at events and symposiums about her experience, I noticed that the way she tells parts of her story is almost script-like or rehearsed. This indicates that it may be possible she has rehearsed her family story many times and has presented it orally in front of audiences many times. She frequently shares her story of being a teenager in the 1960s, and the mistreatment, racism, and discrimination that she and her peers faced as Chicano/a students. These experiences or stories allude to what David Dunaway

describes as “set pieces,”<sup>33</sup> which are rehearsed anecdotes of the past. She is a prominent student activist from the East Los Angeles Blowouts and has been involved with the conference since she was a youth. Her story was chosen to be the lead storyline in the movie *Walkout* which is screened at the conference for the students. Although she has had many years to construct and build her narrative, these staple pieces of her story are also carefully curated because it is important to the narrator to share them each time she speaks to a group or individual.

The way Paula tells her story shares insight into why she continues to advocate for the CYLC as an adult. She shares early on in the interview, that her relationship to the conference was very long but she began with her 17-year-old self, describing the conference as a life-changing experience where she met like-minded students from all over Los Angeles County, who she felt she could relate to. She ended by sharing how CYLC was where she felt empowered and encouraged to believe in herself, and where she learned how to use her voice to be a change agent in her community. I could tell that the way she described that initial impact left a lifelong resonance on Paula. I then continued by asking questions about her board position, and she responded with some background history including dates and years on who ran the conference, the hiatuses, and gathering with other CYLC alumni and Mr. Castro to revive the conference, and how they did it. It was great that she responded with this history because I was able to ask follow questions about the revival, the conference structure, and why the conference has continued to return even after a hiatus.

Paula is a great speaker, and her ability to recount memories from her past is clear in the details she uses to explain moments that were life-changing for her. She connected her story to a life lesson or themes important to her, and observations that she has made based on her

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<sup>33</sup> Dunaway, David K. 1992. "Method and Theory in the Oral Biography." *Oral History* 20 (2): 40-44.

experience with the CYLC. Paula expresses how she made this connection to her adult life in the interview,

It's always been very important. And again, when I was working it, it meant it was big, grounding for me and letting me know why I was doing what I was doing at Occidental College. Because that was always a struggle, to be a woman of color. You know, in a managerial white ivory tower. But it was also important for me to, to let the students know that were there.

The conference has continued to be an important part of her life as an adult, especially in her work as a woman of color in higher education. The CYLC has been a personal source of inspiration for Paula and a reminder of the work that still needs to be done within the education system for students of color. In speaking about what the conference has meant to her, Paula adds how she hopes that her continuity with CYLC inspires people to understand the importance of the conference, and why it needs to continue. Paula is very soft spoken; it was very easy to follow her, and she always stayed on track with her responses. Her story flows well when she speaks, and she laughs often which added to the genuineness of the interview and comfortability for both narrator and interviewer. She narrates her story as if she was back in that moment, in a sincere and confident tone, filled with emotion and connectedness.

Along with being known as a prominent figure in the Chicano/a community, Paula shared with me, in the pre-interview, that she feels uncomfortable with this type of almost “celebrity” status. In her pre-interview, Paula shared that she was doing what she knew needed to be done. As Chicano/a students in the 1960s, she and her fellow classmates were living through tough times and they took necessary steps to make changes. I think the fact that she is praised makes her feel uncomfortable, not because what she did as a student wasn’t important but because what the collective was fighting for was more important. In the interview, she expressed that she wants to speak with the students, but post movie the students become too shy or nervous because

they think she's a celebrity. When I bring up how the students must be excited to see a modern-day hero, she makes a joke about it and then refocuses the interview away from being the center of attention. Although she understands that this is important for the students, I think to her what is important is the vision and mission of the CYLC.

There were moments in the interview that emotionally impacted Paula related to recent news of Camp Hess Kramer burning in the Woolsey fire and when she spoke about how she and her family have personally gained from the conference. When I asked Paula about the significance of Camp Hess Kramer, she began to tear up. I could tell that her longtime history with the camp has been a valuable and important part of her experience and that it was still too soon to discuss the topic. The other moments where an emotional response came when speaking about how she and her family have personally benefited by participating in CYLC. There were a few questions during the interview that prompted Paula to think about the response, or perhaps the question caused her to go into the archive of her memories to really respond in the way she wanted to. To these specific questions, she always responded by saying, "WOW" as if a bit surprised. The questions that prompted this response were about Paula stating in her own words Sal Castro's vision, how her role has changed within the conference, what the conference has meant to her, and about her relationship to CYLC. These are big questions, respectively, meant to engage the narrator in deep thought. When responding to these questions, she paused and spoke very slowly as if choosing what to say, especially when she was being asked to interpret something, like the vision, in her own words. There were moments where she emphasized certain words from the questions that I asked, such as "common" or "meant" which are words that I used to identify if there were underlying themes that would surface from certain topics.

## **Conclusion**

During my time in the MACS program I have come to understand the practice of cultural sustainability as a way of honoring and engaging in ethical partnerships to effect positive change with individuals and communities. The change comes from working alongside community members to uplift their concerns, challenges, successes and stories. Through this oral history project, I have learned more about the choices individuals and communities make to create sustainable systems that enhance the well-being of all participants. By sitting with my elders to listen to their stories, I have gained a deeper understanding of how cultural knowledge and practices have supported four generations of Chicano/a students on their path to college. I see this highlighted in how the elders are effecting positive ,community-driven change within the CYLC and building systems of sustainability that encourage an ethic of service to the community. As the youth are going out into the world and pursuing college, Charlotte speaks to the need for volunteers to step into leadership roles to maintain the legacy of the conference and of Sal Castro, “And you know building other people to do, and to continue. So yeah capacity building and, that's what you guys are with the facilitators and the staff. That’s our lifeblood because I ain’t going to be around, and the need is going to be with those folks who have the same vision and belief system.” Through this oral history project, I’m reminded that people are working hard to sustain their culture, and they are thinking critically about how to do this. These oral histories offer the perspectives from the experiences of women, Paula and Charlotte, in relation to the CYLC. It is a story that provides a different perspective from a different period of time in the life of the conference. Their stories share how a group of women came together to carry on traditions and the legacy passed on from Mr. Castro and how they use their knowledge to continue the conference today through the creation of the first ever Sal Castro Foundation and a foundation board. The conferences success is inspiring, and the most rewarding part is to hear

the students share their testimonials about their experience at CYLC on the last day of camp. Their words remind me why I volunteer, and why myself and other volunteers are motivated to continue to support the sustainability of the CYLC. We do it because we come from a rich legacy. Students walked out of their schools in 1968, so that today we could walk into the university and walk out with a degree in hand.



CYLC Committee members Luis Ramos, Christina Garcia, Gabby Hernandez, Sergio Hernandez, Tilo Lopez, Antonio Crisostomo, Jasmin Temblador, Mauricio Amaral-Vasquez, Alberto Jimenez, Melissa Arevalo  
Photo Taken by Alberto Jimenez

## Bibliography/Literature Review

7genfoundation.org. "7th Generation Principle.", <http://7genfoundation.org/7th-generation/>.

The Seventh-Generation international foundation is an organization that creates global partnerships with first nation peoples to provide culturally appropriate services for communities around the world. The webpage has the 7th generation principle outlined which is about the choices and decisions that are made today for the sustainable relationship to continue into the future for the seventh generation. This principle is important to understanding the decisions and choices that conference members make, and to think about the ways in which it is presented within the conference to the students.

Arellano, Gustavo. 2018. *The East LA Blowouts of 1968, Mapped* Curbed Los Angeles.

Gustavo Arellano developed a map that chronicled "pivotal" locations from the early beginnings at Camp Hess Kramer, places important in the planning of the 1968 student walkouts, to the Los Angeles Board of Education Chambers to support Mr. Castro in being reinstated as a teacher. The map is so detailed, it walks you through step by step taking you into the places that encapsulated important moments in the decision making of the students, community, and college students involved. The very first location is Camp Hess Kramer, the place where the students first began to discuss the injustices with other peers that they were seeing and experiencing in their schools. Arellano notes on the map, that student leaders in the walkouts had attended the Chicano Youth Leadership Conference at least once.

Avelar La Salle, Robin. 2008. *Evaluation Report: Chicano Youth Leadership Conference: Principals Exchange*.

Dr. Avelar's evaluation is the very first report conducted for CYLC. The research the report captured was the impact and reach of the conference concluding that 84% of high school students who attend CYLC go on to gain university admission and graduate from college. The results highlight that student participants are succeeding because the conference provides all of the necessary elements for students to succeed.

Bernal, Dolores Delgado. 1998. "Grassroots Leadership Reconceptualized: Chicana Oral Histories and the 1968 East Los Angeles School Blowouts." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 19 (2): 113-142.

Dolores Bernal's approach to oral history focused on the gender analysis of women activism in the Chicano student movement and provides an epistemological perspective grounded in critical feminism influenced by women of color, and by people who have been traditionally excluded.

Block, Peter. 2008. *Community: The Structure of Belonging*. A BK Life Book; BK Life Book. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

The book informs the way the CYLC has structured the program. The book enhances the process of small and large groups, the significance of convening, and the demonstration of leadership that is intended to create a communal transformation.

Dunaway, David K. 1992. "Method and Theory in the Oral Biography." *Oral History* 20 (2): 40-44.

Dunaway discusses how interviews have their own unique performance and the issue with analyzing this, is interpreting set pieces from those interviews. The set pieces are anecdotes that are rehearsed by the narrator, especially if they are someone who is sought out often for interviews or if they are public figures. This reading helped me understand that people do create set pieces in their narratives whether they are aware or not, and that it shows a lot about what a narrator chooses to reveal to the interviewer.

Espino, Virginia. 2013. "*La Batalla Esta Aqui*": *The Chicana/O Movement in Los Angeles - Interview of Victoria Castro*. Anonymous UCLA Library Digital Collections. (Interview).

The interview series is focused on the ideological transformation of Chicano/as in Los Angeles. Victoria Castro's oral history captures her experience with social justice struggles for educational improvement. The recording is an example of an oral history conducted from beginning to end, and an interview with a prominent figure of the student blowouts who also participated in the first CYLC conference. Victoria speaks about her experiences while at the conference, the observations she made, and she describes the leaders present.

Feintuch, Burt. 2010. *Eight Words for the Study of Expressive Culture* University of Illinois Press.

In this book, Dorothy Noyes writes about the group, Henry Glassie about tradition, and Roger Abrahams about identity. The authors discuss the realities of all of these important words describing how groups demonstrate their culture, how traditions are creations of the future that come from the past, and how identity has been used to describe the cultural, social, and spiritual. These chapters are foundational to understand cultural sustainability providing knowledge and breaking down basic concepts of the master program.

García, Mario T. and Sal Castro. 2011. *Blowout! Sal Castro and the Chicano Struggle for Educational Justice* Univ of North Carolina Press.

*Blowout!* provides background about the student blowouts of 1968 and the CYLC. The book provides guidance for an oral history/autobiography which focuses on the life and struggles of Mr. Castro, placed in the context of the Chicano struggle for educational justice. The book helps to gain a deeper understanding of Mr. Castro's vision, mission, and life story important to the CYLC.

Gonzalez, Gilbert G. 2013. *Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation* University of North Texas Press.

Gonzales details the social functions of the institution of education during the 1960s and how migrant children were denied a constitutional right to an equal education. He describes how the Americanization of Mexican students was the primary activity to eliminate their culture and substitute it with a white middle-class culture. Gonzalez goes on to discuss how the school system treated the Mexican students and the use of

the infamous tracking system that separate students into inferior and superior standards according to this system.

Kovach, Margaret. 2010. *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* University of Toronto Press.

Kovach is intentional in writing about how story is an indigenous methodology which describes who we are. She teaches the reader to respect the use of that cultural knowledge system and to learn and acknowledge Indigenous methodologies, which is a huge contribution to our learning to sustain culture in a respectful and responsible way.

Lerchenmuller, Charlotte. 2019. *Chicano Youth Leadership Conference Collection of Conference Agendas*, edited by Jasmin Temblador.

Charlotte has kept an archive of conference agendas dating from 1963-1990. The agendas outlined conference schedules, staff and committee members, descriptions of the conferences purpose, worksheets used for facilitating discussions, and job descriptions.

Madison, D. Soyini. 2011. *Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance* Sage publications.

This book helped me begin to discover what it is that I wanted to focus on for this work. I utilized Madison's approach to critical ethnography to develop a framework for my oral history project. Madison describes process and approach to the research design, the process of doing research before creating a plan, getting to know yourself and the community in which you are proposing to work alongside. I have referenced Madison's lay summary to create a plan for my work.

Oral History Association. "Principles and Best Practices for Oral History &nbsp;"; <http://www.oralhistory.org/about/principles-and-practices.>, last modified October.

The webpage was guide for me in following the protocols and procedures of oral history. I used the guidelines as a roadmap to inform the interview checklist and all of the templates that I used. I also learned about the ethical considerations when doing oral history referenced on this site, and the necessary communication of legal rights involved when working with a narrator.

Rosales, F. Arturo. 1997. *Chicano! the History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* Arte Publico Press.

This work highlights the Mexican Civil Rights Movement including the many decades of fighting for education reform for Mexican students. Rosales specifically highlights the student's groups that advocated for education reform like the Brown Berets, MECHA, United Mexican American Students, La Raza Unida Party, and others leading up to the 1968 student blowouts in East Los Angeles. Rosales details the impact that the walkouts had in the community and the school system.

The Educational Legacy of the 1968 ELA Walkouts: Walk-in to Cal State LA Academic Conference. *Panel Women as Participants, Activists, and Leaders in the 1968 Blowouts*.

The conference celebrated the 50th anniversary of the student walkouts and had a full day of panels on several different topics. The two I attended was Women as Participants, Activists, and Leaders in the 1968 blowouts, panelist were women student leaders which included Paula Crisostomo. The second, was a The Legacy of Sal Castro that was led by Charlotte Lerchenmuller. I used this conference as part of my background research.

*The Sal Castro and the Chicano Youth Leadership Conference: The Development of Chicano Leadership since 1963*. Directed by UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center (CSRC). 2006.

The UCLA symposium of 2006, The Sal Castro and the Chicano Youth Leadership Conference: The development of Chicano leadership since 1963, is a recording of Chicano researchers like Rudy Acuna and Dolores Bernal, as well as Sal Castro, Robin Avelar, and Mirna Brutti discussing the development of the conference over time with a focus specifically on leadership.

Yow, Valerie Raleigh. 2014. *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences* Rowman & Littlefield.

Valerie Yow walks the reader through a step by step approach to the fundamental process of preparation for everything prior to conducting the interview. From building relationships with your narrator to being aware of how to respond to the narrator and developing the listening techniques to dive deeper with the narrator through the questions you ask. The essential process of preparing for the interview, providing a human element to understanding the necessary staple procedures before the interview.

## Appendix

- A. Initial Contact script
- B. Template Preparation for Pre-interview & In-person interview
- C. Notes for interview prior to recording
- D. Interview protocol
- E. Interview outline
- F. Transcripts

## A) Initial Contact script and guide

Hello Paula/Charlotte,

I'm happy to speak with you today about my final capstone project. As I mentioned in my email, I am in my final semester of graduate school. I have been in my program for 2 yrs. and I will be graduating in May of this year with a Master of Arts in Cultural Sustainability. I just wanted to begin by sharing what oral history is and briefly explain what my project is about and then talk about the next steps.

**What is oral history?** A method of recording and preserving oral testimony that is grounded in reflections on the past. It is a way of connecting one person's story to the larger historical narrative.

**What:** The capstone is an oral history project focused on the experiences of elder's in relation to the Chicano/a Youth leadership Conference over time. Some of the subjects I wish to interview about are reflecting on leadership, oral traditions (music storytelling), and cultural transmission within the conference (generation to generation) that have contributed to its sustainability for over fifty years. I think it is interesting to see how people use the past as a way to sustain events like CYLC so that it continues into the future and I would really like to know more about how you have experienced the conference over time.

Last year, I interviewed Robin and it was a great experience because I got to learn more about how people tell their stories and how they talk about their experiences of coming to the conference and how it made them feel. When I asked folks who I could interview for this project they recommended I interview you about your experience with CYLC. I think for someone who attended the conference as a student (who has seen the conference over time, and as the president of the foundation) in the '60s and has been involved in different capacities with CYLC overtime, it would add so much value to have you participate in this project because you have seen the conference at different times of its life.

**Final Product:** The interviews will be recorded on audio, and upon the completion of the interviews, I will be writing a reflection piece about what I learned through oral history and the themes that resonated for participants in the interviews.

**Deposit:** I am working with my school's library at Goucher to archive and preserve the oral histories and they have their own release form that I will be using. And in the near future, I would like to deposit them in a Los Angeles Based repository where community members can have access to them, and I would love to know if you have any ideas of places I can contact to see if they will be a great fit.

**Timeline:** My goal is to complete the interviews before the end of March. I will need to schedule a pre-interview and an in-person interview in the next two weeks. I have capped the interviews at 2 hours.

**Questions/Confirming participation:** I just wanted to leave room for any questions you might have. Lastly, I want to confirm that you are still interested in participating in my oral history project.

**Setting up the pre-interview:**

- Set up pre-interview meeting preference and time to begin, ask if can arrive early to set up equipment and chat prior to clarifying any lingering questions (space/especially the time allocated/location)
- What to expect: This pre-interview session will allow an exchange of information between interviewer and narrator on possible questions/topics, reasons for conducting the interview, the process that will be involved, and the need for informed consent and legal release forms.
- During pre-interview discussion, we will discuss \*oral history's purposes and procedures in general and of the anticipated uses.
- Their rights to the interviews including editing, access restrictions, copyrights, prior use, royalties, and the expected dissemination of all forms of the record, including the potential distribution electronically or online.
- \*that his or her recording(s) will remain confidential until he or she has given permission via a signed legal release.
- The interviews will be recorded on audio, and you will be asked for your informed consent prior to recording, and a release form will be signed at the conclusion of the interview.

**Where:** The location will be decided by participants, preferably in a space that is comfortable for you and a space that is quite free from any noise or loud sounds for the quality of the recording.

**End product:** The end product is an oral history project, with two interviews and a reflection paper.

- Review recording and content use
- Ask if the narrator has any photos that they can bring to the pre-interview (memory to support with the year/s they were involved) Conference agendas?
- I will be explaining the consent and release forms

**Next steps/ Wrap up:** Of course, all of these steps will be with your consent, and I will have documentation release forms and a consent form for all participants in the oral history project. My approach is to work with you to ensure that you feel comfortable with the recording, and if there are any parts that you wish for me to close, then we can work together to ensure that.

## **B) Template Preparation for Pre-interview & In-person interview**

- Create check-list of technology needed
- Test technology one or two weeks prior to the interview
- If allowed to use photo or video, ensure that technology can be set up properly and functions as needed
- Assuming the pre interview will take place at the same place as the actual interview, you'll want to scope out the location – where you can conduct the interview, the seating arrangement, location of the microphone and/or camera, etc.
- Review outline
- Practice scenarios if challenges arise and provide solutions
- Ensure that you know how to travel to the location to arrive on time
- Make sure to have a notepad to write down observations or notable topics to bring up in the interview

### **Pre-Interview**

- Review the purpose of the project
- How the interview will be used, where it will be archived
- Review release form
- Asking about what the narrator knows about the type of research which has been conducted on the conference and the walkouts (checking for knowledge)
- Address topics found in other research to ask questions about their thoughts on the topic.
- What they know about the conference from the early years
- How they got involved with the conference
- When they became involved
- In what capacity have they been involved

## **C)Notes for interview prior to recording**

Before recording

1. Explain the purpose of the project
2. Let narrator know they are not obligated to answer all the questions
3. A release form will be read and signed at the end of the interview

Begin:

1. State the name of the interviewer (Jasmin Temblador) and Narrator (Paula Crisostomo/Charlotte Lerchenmuller) State the location of the interview \_\_\_\_\_Date \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Explain briefly the purpose of the interview
3. State the narrator and interviewer have known one another going on three years
4. Ask narrator to state that they are aware of and consent to being recorded
5. Begin with routine questions
6. When changing topics: explain the connection there is to the previous topic and how it fits into the overall plan of the interview
7. 10-second pause between the questions

8. Thank narrator for clear explanations, don't say "uh huh," nod and smile
9. Probing: asking for the meaning of words if needed
10. Ending: Thank you, stop recording, review release, if there are no restrictions; the narrator writes "none" and signs.

Recording:

- Press record twice to begin- when the red light is solid then it has begun recording
- To adjust the level of volume, press record then use the arrows to adjust the level, you want it to be close to the top arrow
- To stop press pause

*Release form:*

*Here list any conditions, e.g. portions of the interview to be closed for a given period, interviewee to remain anonymous, etc. Don't encourage conditions - you don't have to list any. But the narrator does need to know the options.*

*If the narrator refuses to give you copyright and/or wishes you to return the interview to them, you can simply get permission to use the interview for the purpose of this capstone project, adjusting language accordingly.*

Release form: Develop a release form or other materials to allow access to the interview.

According to copyright law, the interviewee owns the creative work that is an interview, and no one else can use it in any way without the narrator's expressed permission. Most projects seek a transfer of copyright to the interviewer, sponsoring organization, or final repository via a release form, in which the narrator defines terms and conditions for use, as well as transfers ownership of the actual recording. But a narrator may retain copyright and still allow use by others. For institutionally sponsored projects, it is generally good to consult with the institution's legal counsel.

**D) Interview protocol**

- 1) If allowed, arrive 30 minutes prior to the interview start time to check in with the narrator
- 2) Chat with the narrator to reduce any tensions prior to the interview start
- 3) Set up equipment, A place to record \*- ensure that Paula has a space to record without noise
- 4) Explain the purpose of the project, let the narrator know how it is coming along.
- 5) **Explain purpose of project:** The purpose of this project is xyz and the reason for this interview is to ask you about your experience with the Chicano/a Youth Leadership Conference over the last 50 year. The interview will explore your personal experience participating in CYLC and we will talk about topics of leadership, cultural transmission etc.

- 6) You are not obliged to answer each question; you can decline to answer if you wish. Or withdraw from the interview at any time. You can ask for clarity if needed.
- 7) Inform the narrator that I have a release form that I will ask them to sign at the end of the recording session – explain the terms of the release the narrator has the rights to refuse to discuss certain subjects, to restrict access to the interview, or, under certain circumstances, to choose anonymity.

**Introduce the audio:** For this interview, I will be recording audio and with your permission, I will take one portrait photo at the end. The interview will be recorded on audio, and you will be asked for your informed consent prior to recording, and a release form will be signed at the conclusion of the interview.

**Copyright/usage:** The material in this interview may be quoted, reproduced for educational purposes for a reflection paper for the MACS program in C.S. I will send you a copy of the recorded interview and the transcription, let me know if you are okay with the recording, you will have an opportunity to review and amend the transcript if needed. If you have any questions, you can give me a call and we can discuss it. If you wish to close a certain portion of the interview, I will note it on the release form.

## **E) Interview Process**

### **Start of interview Step by Step:**

- 1) State interviewer name: Jasmin Temblador
- 2) Name of the narrator:
- 3) location of the interview:
- 4) and date:
- 5) Purpose: A brief scope of the interview, I will be asking you about your experience in relation to CYLC overtime and about topics of leadership, cultural transmission, and of traditions within the conference that contribute to its sustainability. The interview is being conducted as part of the Goucher College Master of Arts in Cultural Sustainability capstone project.
- 6) The narrator and interviewer are have known each other for 3-4 years through the Chicano Youth Leadership Conference.
- 7) Ask for the narrator's oral consent to the recording of your conversation: I would like to ask you Paula/Charlotte to state for the recording that you are aware of and consent to being recorded.
- 8) The interviewer should express appreciation that the narrator is offering their time to answer questions.

### **9) Begin interview**

- 10) **End Of interview:** Now I will ask you to state for the recording if you give me permission to use the recording of the interview to write a reflection paper for the capstone project. I may, with your expressed permission, deposit the records of our

conversations in a repository that feels relevant to the community. Should I desire to do this, I will return to you to explain more about this and to ask for permission." Then sign a release.

## **F) Interview Outline**

- 1) Tell me about where you grew up?
- 2) What were your parents like, family?
- 3) What is your relationship to CYLC?
- 4) How did you first come to know of CYLC?

### **Conference History:**

- 1) Tell me about the structure of the conference in the early years when you first attended.
- 2) Traditions of the conference and their importance: What do you think are the traditions which have continued to today? Why are they important?
- 3) Why has it been important to celebrate and have workshops about identity, culture, and heritage?
- 4) In what ways does the conference support this connection to the culture and heritage of its attendees?
- 6) The conference has been sustained on the backs of volunteers for over 50 years. Why has it been important to have an all-volunteer based conference?

### **Conference changes over time:**

- 1)The conference was put on by LA County human relations commission the early years and now it is put on by the Sal Castro Foundation. How has CYLC changed from that era to today's conference?
- 2)Have there been any changes in the structure and content of the program?
- 2) Has the mood or tone changed? What have been the reasons for these changes?  
And how do you feel about them?
- 3) What are the factors that were causing it to change?
- 4) Consistency: What has remained constant? Why do you think this part of the conference has remained?
- 5) What are the challenges that the conference has faced over time; and how have they been resolved or not? (hosting it in different locations Ex: SOCA)

### **Sal Castro's Vision**

- 1) Has the conference remained true to Sal Castro's vision over the years?
- 2) Purpose of the conference in your own words
- 3) Why Camp Hess Kramer? What contributes to the power in this place?

### **Needs of the conference:**

- 1) What do you believe are the important ingredients that make up the program of the conference?
- 2) Did your role within the conference change over time?
- 3) What are the different systems involved in ensuring the continuation of the conference?

4) Why are these ingredients essential to the longevity of the conference?

**Conference volunteer involvement:**

- 1) What inspires people to come back to CYLC and volunteer?
- 2) Why are the speakers important? What significance do they have at the conference?

**Narrator's personal connection to the purpose of the conference:**

- 1) What was it like bringing the conference back in 2014?
- 2) Memorable stories, favorite stories
- 3) When is the aha moment for you when the purpose manifests itself?
- 5) What has your participation in the conference meant to you over time?
- 6) Tell me about what makes CYLC meaningful to you?
- 7) What do you see at CYLC'S legacy, and how have you seen the legacy be sustained?
- 8) Why have you stayed involved with the Chicano Youth Leadership conference?

**The essence of the conference:**

- 1) When you are observing the conference and attending the different workshops at CYLC, from your perspective, what do you notice going on? What are you thinking to yourself?
- 2) What's the key? What above all else defines the conference, makes it special?

**Leadership:**

- 1) What is leadership in your own words?
- 2) Why has leadership building been an important part of the conference?
- 3) How do you see leadership modeled within the conference?
- 4) How does encouraging leadership development build a sustainable future for the conference?
- 5) Why is it important to invite Chicano/a Latino/a workshop presenters/speakers?

**What is happening now:**

- 1) What are some of the Issues that you see impacting students today?
- 2) Are there traditions of organizing passed down within the conference? Do you see parallels between the needs of today and the needs and concerns you voiced as a student participant in CYLC in 1967?
- 3) The conference has been around for over 50 years. Has the conference adjusted to suit the needs of students today?
- 4) What do you believe is the reason why an event that happened a half-century ago, still has a continuing resonance today?

**Cultural Sustainability within the conference**

- 1) Continuity of conference legacy into the future: When you think about the future, how do you see Sal Castro's legacy continuing through CYLC?
- 2) In your experience, how has the conference been able to sustain itself?
- 3) It's clear to me that the conference is a source of empowerment, identity, culture, and education. What is your view on that?
- 4) Why is the sustainability of CYLC important to future generations?

## Transcript

Audio: 2019CYLC002.mp3

### Interview with Charlotte Lerchenmuller

**Jasmin:** [00:00:01] My name is Jasmin Temblador. I'm the interviewer and I'm here with Charlotte Lerchenmueller who is a narrator. Today we're meeting at Charlotte's home in Silver Lake, and the date is Saturday, March twenty third, two thousand nineteen. Just a brief scope of the interview, so I'll be asking you about your experience in relation to the Chicano Youth Leadership Conference and talking about topics of leadership, culture, and traditions, and the legacy in the conference. And the interviews being conducted as part of the Master of Arts in Cultural Sustainability from Goucher college for this capstone project. So, Jasmin, myself the interviewer, and Charlotte have known each other for about four and a half years through the Chicano Youth Leadership Conference. So, now I'm just going to ask you Charlotte to the recording, to state for the recording that you are aware of and consent to being recorded.

**Charlotte:** [00:01:05] I am aware of, and I do consent to the recording of this interview.

**Jasmin:** [00:01:11] Great. So, first I just want to thank you for meeting today. And I really appreciate your time, and I'm really excited to learn more about your story and your experience in relation to CYLC.

**Charlotte:** [00:01:25] Well, I'm, I'm honored to be able to continue the legacy of Sal Castro and the Chicano Youth Leadership Conference and the importance that it has played, it plays, and will continue to play.

**Jasmin:** [00:01:40] Great, so let's get into it.

**Charlotte:** [00:01:41] Go for it.

**Jasmin:** [00:01:42] So, let's start off with just a little bit more about you. So, if you can tell me more about where you grew up, your family, your experience.

**Charlotte:** [00:01:53] I'm born in Los Angeles. My parents were both born in Germany. My brother I had, had, a past tense one, older brother 11 years older. I grew up in what is now called Montecito heights, it's actually Lincoln Heights. I went to public school a Los Angeles Unified, La Tona Avenue, Luther Burbank Junior, and Franklin High School. I went to, I started at L.A. State. I continued at California State College at Los Angeles. I graduated from California State University at Los Angeles. I've got a B.A. in social science, history option, a minor in physical education so I could get a job. I wanted to be a teacher from the 5th grade on, and I started everything with the focus of being a teacher. I taught at El Sereno junior high. I taught girls P.E. because I could get a job. I couldn't get a job as a social science history teacher. I have been a counselor, grade level counselor for Los Angeles Unified, three different types of assistant principal and I retired as a middle school principal. I have a master's in Counselor Education, and I've got three different types of credential teaching, counseling, and administrative. And, I work

for LAUSD (Los Angeles Unified School District) for 38 years. So, I've been on the public dole since the age of four and a half.

**Jasmin:** [00:03:47] Wow, that's an extensive experience you have there.

**Charlotte:** [00:03:51] Yeah, I guess so. I've been at, Jesus, I've taught on the Eastside, I've taught in South Central and I've worked on the west side. So, the only although I did work in the valley when I was working youth services. So, I guess I've covered almost all of east of Los Angeles Unified. Right now, I am retired but I work as a consultant for the Associated Administrators of Los Angeles which is the administrator's union.

**Jasmin:** [00:04:26] Amazing. So, what is your relationship to the Chicano Youth Leadership conference.

**Charlotte:** [00:04:32] I hung out with a man named Sal Castro. And it was through him that I became involved with the Chicano Youth Leadership Conference. I was on the outs. I was, I was on the periphery. I was not as involved during Sal's lifetime as I am now that he is, well he's dead. I'm not going to say passed on, he's dead. And I would be the person, when he was still alive and it was still going strong, I would be the person that would, "I need such and such" so I would go get it and make sure he had whatever it was he needed to help put on the conference. I had no involvement whatsoever with the actual putting on of the conference, that was Sal, and that was the board, that was all of the volunteers. They did all the heavy lifting. I was the one that if you needed to have something run off, I ran it off. If we needed this, I went and got that. So, it wasn't until after Sal died that I really, really got involved. We started about probably, maybe nine months after he died. We started the process of developing the Sal Castro foundation and it was very, it was a very deliberate process. We had a facilitator who worked with Robin Avellar La Salle, Myrna Brutti and Paula Crisostomo. The four of us were the core, and a woman named Marty Maya was our facilitator who walked us through the steps. And we, it, and we have four areas, one is legacy. The major focus of the foundation is the Chicano Youth Leadership Conference, another aspect is fund raising and then the fourth aspect is communication. Each one of us, Robin, Paula, Myrna and myself were in charge of those, one of those four areas and we had a sub-committee made up and everything is very specific in the bylaws, in the focus, in the what we're going to do. And it was from there that we were then able to go and. Well I guess it was probably October, October. Well let's go let's go September, August of 2014 where we got funding. My belief is people were feeling a little guilty because Sal was dead and so was the conference. And it's a shame that his death is what spurred people to get back for the conference, and then we had the first conference in October of 2014. It had been dark from about Spring of 2009, and then we've, then I've become much more involved with it, and that's a long answer for a short question.

**Jasmin:** [00:08:11] And you're also the President of the Foundation.

**Charlotte:** [00:08:12] I'm also the, you know widow Castro gets to be the President. Paula is the Treasurer, Myrna is the Secretary, and Robin is the I guess we're going to say the Vice Chairperson of it so, it's all. We were in charge of four different things and now we're the, and

the Board of Directors consists of the four of us, Armando Duron and then Sal's two sons Gil Castro, Jim Castro.

**Jasmin:** [00:08:51] Wow, so what was the experience like starting the conference back up in 2014.

**Charlotte:** [00:08:56] Well, the, we were very fortunate in the fact that there were people who had still, who were around who knew what to do and we didn't change one form, one bit. The format, this has had been successful for when Sal was running it, so we stayed with the same format. The, the faces may change a little bit but what is done on each day of the conference continued. And... the decision from the board of directors was that keep it the way it is and will con- if it needs to be tweaked, we'll tweak it. But, and the first conference in October of 2014 was a little squeaky and a little bumpy because there was a tremendous amount of grief associated with that conference. Hey this was the first one that was being done without him (Sal). And WHOA, a that was a little tough, a lot tough for folks. And it was bumpy, but the strength of what we were doing and the strength and the belief in what we were doing got us through it. And we came out on the other end much better and, start you know. Well we're not going to, with some of the bumps well we're not going, we're going to smooth this out, we're going to smooth that out and it's now a very well-oiled machine.

**Jasmin:** [00:10:39] I think you all did a really great job.

**Charlotte:** [00:10:42] Well it's you know; it was one of these things that if it ain't broke don't fix it. And Sal had, Sal had really, really put it into good order. And so, I think that's a, I'm going to, I want to use the word complement. Yeah, I'll use the word complement, to his belief in keeping it and doing it the way he felt it should be done. And so were, were. Plus, I don't want to listen to him if we change anything and come back and haunt.

**Jasmin:** [00:11:24] So, you talked a little bit about there is a structure there's a format to the conference. Can you tell me a little bit more about what that looks like?

**Charlotte:** [00:11:30] Well, Friday is you know, icebreaker, kids don't want to be there, "what the heck did I get into?" So, it's, it's sort of easing them into. And, so Friday is just sort of more general about what. And there's a little cultural, there's a little historical, but it's easing into the, the conference itself. Saturday is devoted specifically, the whole, the, the theme of the conference is, don't be, you know "*No sean mensos, go to college and graduate.*" So, the focus is truly, truly, truly college. We've got five strands. We've got a cultural strand, we've got a historical strand, we've got a networking strand, we've got a coll-, a college strand. And for the life of me, I cannot remember the fifth strand, it will come to me. But, and each thing, everything we do falls under one of those strands. And, so the, but the real, real push is to go to school and to graduate and the other thing is, by the time you hit a kid in the in the 12th grade it's too late. The 11th grade is, in the Principal's Exchange Report says it's, the right time, with the right push, with the right emphasis, with the right presentations to hook kids into. So, 11th grade is, they're smelling graduation. They're not there yet in, and this gets, this plants the seed so that college and doing what you need to do, and it's not too late to change if you need to change what you're doing in school and become more committed with a much better focus. So, that's, that's the

format at, on Saturday and then there's always cultural there's always fun stuff. There's reflection and that's why the facilitators are so very important. That they are able to bring the kids into and hold on to discussions. And then, Sunday is sort of culmination and summing up of what went on. And those kids that didn't want to you know (growling noise) are growling "why am I here," are crying, "I don't want to go." So, it's, we call it the Miracle of Malibu, and it truly is. And we're only doing it in two and a half days, not even a full two and a half days. We don't spend a week, some of these conferences go on for a week. We're, we're doing it in two and a half days. And it's in and out real fast, real concentrated and a barrage, a total barrage from all angles, all angles. And don't let kids be in the same groups that went to, that are at the same school, break them up so they can start that networking, so they can find out who else is around, and what they're going to be embarking on is not easy. Life ain't easy. It's a contact sport.

**Jasmin:** [00:15:23] Sounds like there's a lot of trust that happens in that short amount of time.

**Charlotte:** [00:15:27] I think so. I think so. And it's, it's see; well we refer to it as they're drinking the Kool-Aid. It happens each conference, it happens earlier and earlier and sooner. Sometimes, the first couple conferences it took them until Saturday to start drinking the Kool-Aid. But the last few conferences it's almost as if they've started drinking the Kool-Aid as they're walking into the conference because they're ready to go and they're, they're onboard, they're onboard. And, it's like you know, "show me more, show me more."

**Jasmin:** [00:16:17] So in thinking about traditions of the conference some things that have continued. What do you think are the traditions that have continued and are still being continued today in the conference?

**Charlotte:** [00:16:28] Well, the focus of going to school. That's proven with the Principal Exchange Report where 84 percent of the kids, and we're talking to 11th graders, that go to the conference, go to, and, more importantly, graduate from college, eighty four percent. That's a big deal. That is a real, real big deal. The cultural of being proud of who you are, and being taught who folks are, and names that they may not know, but by the time they leave, they know. The fact that they're, they're in a historic spot with California history and with United States history, so that. There's the historical concept, there are the, the, the music the, the, and I talk about, in that UCLA things. 1968 kids wouldn't be caught dead speaking Spanish. Now, it's back in for, it is a truly bilingual bi-cultural. Kids are comfortable and they are more comfortable in their skin when they leave. And OK, here's the fifth strand, community responsibility, that's the fifth strand. Yes, it's fun to go and be around people, but you have a responsibility to come back to your community to make your community a better spot, and there is a responsibility. It's just not, your, it's, there's no free lunch when you go to the Chicano Youth Leadership Conference.

**Jasmin:** [00:18:29] So, why has it been important to celebrate or have workshops around identity and culture?

**Charlotte:** [00:18:34] Because they don't get it in school. There used to be Chicano studies or Mexican-American studies in high school, Black Studies. And then they went, it went by the wayside. Now, it's called ethnic studies coming back. It will be very watered down. It will, I guarantee you it will be very watered down. United States history is not taught with all of the of

the different strands the different streams that come into making it. My good God. You know fighting Nazi ism in Orange County, people thought that was over. Oh no it ain't, the racism that is so prevalent especially now. You, you can't like other people unle- until you like yourself and when you like yourself then you can like and be open to other people. So that's, that's one of the important aspects of what we do. So, we're not we're not we're not we're not speaking to only you, but what we're saying is open up and be aware and be accepting of others as once you have accepted who you are.

**Jasmin:** [00:20:14] It seems to be something that is also shared early on. Do you think that that contributes to students today drinking the Kool-Aid sooner?

**Charlotte:** [00:20:25] You know, I think it's because they're thirsty and they're hungry, because they don't have it. And we're, we're fulfilling a need that the school district hasn't recognized and we're giving kids an avenue to be able to be proud of who they are and walk in to it with heads high and walk out of it with heads even held higher.

**Jasmin:** [00:21:05] That's wonderful.

**Charlotte:** [00:21:07] I think so too, it's when you listen at the end to what, when they're, when their nations are reflecting on what it had meant, what it meant to them, they'll say, "I didn't know this," and "I didn't know that. Now I do, and I'm very proud of who I am." And you know, "Viva a La Raza! Chicano power!" The hills in Camp Hess Kramer echo with it. The Jewish camp is contributing to Chicano power and Viva La Raza. So, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, it's a, it's a heartwarming mind-boggling experience to listen to the kids talk. And they leave out like I said they leave out of there, better about who they are and what they are and how they can become contributing members of society. And I going to, one other thing Rita Ledesma in her Sunday morning, as part of the reflection, talks about the seventh generation. That when you're doing something, yes, it's now, but you have to think in the Native American thinking pattern is that what you're doing now is impo- but you're also doing something for the seventh generation. It's just not now it's further on down. And I would say we're probably in the fifth generation from when the conference started in 1963 and it's the granddaddy of all conferences. There are others around but this one, got is the original, and so probably in the fifth generation. So now we're, we're almost to the seventh generation.

**Jasmin:** [00:23:18] And more planning to go.

**Charlotte:** [00:23:19] Oh God yeah. Oh God yeah. And that's the cool part of it. The sustainability that there are people who still come, are still coming in, and it's not a hard sell. I don't have when I'm getting people to come for the. Here, here's a tweak that we did the career fair. We talk about on Saturday college, financial aid, filling out an application, where do you want to go? But more importantly is what do you want to be when you grow up? And so that was, that was a tweak that I added with the career fair. I don't have problems getting people to come. I don't have problems to get the people to speak there. They're in. The adults are in. And I think that's communicated to the kids when they're, when the adults are talking to the, that that the that the kids can see that these are people, and I'm talking about both speakers and career fair presenters. These are people that look most importantly, look like the kids who have got, and the

kids can see that these people went through. And so, I've got some folks that are my, well, images that I can identify with and they can identify with me which is really a thumbs up really a thumbs up.

**Jasmin:** [00:24:59] So the, the career fair is an addition to the conference?

**Charlotte:** [00:25:02] Yeah. Yeah. That that's, that's. It's probably about three years old.

**Jasmin:** [00:25:07] Wow.

**Charlotte:** [00:25:07] Yeah. So yeah.

**Jasmin:** [00:25:09] So what was the thinking behind bringing the career fair into the conference?

**Charlotte:** [00:25:13] Well again its, we talk we tell you about college but now you need to know what you can do with mayb-. Maybe you never thought, you know doctor, lawyer, Indian chief, those are real common. But when you have somebody who is a screenwriter, when you have somebody who comes in and is a dentist, and looks like you, and a screenwriter that looks like you and he's got a last name similar to yours that opens up and gives you other avenues to think about. So that you could, piquing their interest and again their 11th graders things aren't in cement yet, things are in sand, fluid.

**Jasmin:** [00:26:09] So, everyone in the conference is a volunteer.

**Charlotte:** [00:26:12] Absolutely.

**Jasmin:** [00:26:13] So, it's been sustained on the backs of volunteers for over fifty years.

**Charlotte:** [00:26:16] Yes. Since the very beginning.

**Jasmin:** [00:26:19] Why hasn't been an important for it to be an all-volunteer based conference?

**Charlotte:** [00:26:24] Because if you're paying somebody, they're doing it for money. And there's a big difference between doing something for money and doing something because you're committed, and you believe in it. And besides there's no budget. But no that's the commitment, and the belief. I of, of doing it. And, and it's that's, that's what really, really makes it phenomenal.

**Jasmin:** [00:27:02] And I, I know that the students also know that everyone is there voluntarily.

**Charlotte:** [00:27:07] Because their, they want to be there. They're not there because you have to be there. They're there because they want to be there. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

**Jasmin:** [00:27:15] Such an important thing to have volunteers who are committed and want to be there for the students and I'm sure everyone gains in some way shape or form.

**Charlotte:** [00:27:24] Well you know we get; we probably get more out of it than the kids do. Just for the fact that we can see, when we, we can see the light go on and we can see the spirit that and the fire in the belly that's lit. That is really, really, really satisfying and, keeps you going keeps, sustaining, keeps you going.

**Jasmin:** [00:27:55] So it seems that there are so many great things that have been happening since the conference started back up again in 2014. Have there been any. Has the conference ever faced any challenges over time that you know of?

**Charlotte:** [00:28:10] The challenges have always been, is there going to be a conference? And the, the monetary support, that's been, that's been the big challenge. You know, I've only been doing this now for four years five years and, sometimes it's very, very frustrating. Sal did this for 50 years plus. And butt your head up against the wall every so often, and the bel-. The, that's that is what, really, really, is indelible in my mind about his total commitment to this. And in it in adversity the stick to itness that he had, because he knew he was right. And he believed in it. And you just did it. And we've, we've run into some problems, but you know. We have no problem. We have no problem getting kids to go to the conference. We have an abundance. There were conferences when he (Sal) used to have to call, "Don't you have a Mexican that you can send?" You know, I'm sure my girl, my, I have a friend, a girlfriend who was a principal at Franklin, and she says, "I got a phone call from Sal Castro, and he says, and he said," "Oh Sheridan come on, in Highland Park you can't find me two Mexicans?".

**Jasmin:** [00:29:56] So interesting.

**Charlotte:** [00:29:56] And no, and but sometimes there were as, as few as 70 kids. We have no problem getting a. We have to sort of cut it off because we have hit a nerve. And that nerve says we're needed.

**Jasmin:** [00:30:15] Why do you think it was so difficult to get more students back then?

**Charlotte:** [00:30:18] Well at. At one time it was it wasn't cool. And, Sal is now an accepted person. We laugh when we did a thing on the walkouts. He was referred to as legendary teacher Sal Castro. Legendary teacher Sal Castro wasn't always viewed as legendary teacher Sal Castro. Rabble Roussel, troublemaker, Sal Castro was more of the view at, at one time and, so that might have been part of it. But you know, God knows, God knows stupidity has no explanation.

**Jasmin:** [00:31:12] Now you have so many students who are applying for the conference. There's about, what 100 students coming?

**Charlotte:** [00:31:18] We go, one hundred and 100 to 110 is an ideal number. One hundred and twenty were pushing it. It's just. And you wonder what's the difference of ten more kids? The difference is ten more kids. And so, but it's kids and the decision as who can go and who can't go, and the other thing is where we're drawing kids from all over the school district which is excellent. Whereas at the beginning it was sort of like just an East Side thing. So now it's a, it's total Los Ang-. We've got kids from the Valley, we've got kids from the harbor, we've got

Eastside, we've got central city we've got Northeast. So yeah, we're, we're able to pull, west side also. So yeah.

**Jasmin:** [00:32:21] In our pre interview you mentioned that the conference is like a mom and pop.

**Charlotte:** [00:32:27] Yeah, mon and pop. Because we're, everybody's free. Other than the cost of camp Hess Kramer. Other than the cost of the. Now we've got flash drives. Other than the cost of buses, other than the cost of the people who are working beyond the bell or on Beyond the Bell salary when they're doing it. So, it. We don't have an office. We're doing things. In addition to what we're normally doing in life. So, it's not it's not, 'OK now I'm, I'm going to go to work for Chicano Youth Leadership Conference,' it's filling it in. And so that that's the mom and pop aspect of it. If we were corporate, meaning that there was a paid director that there was a paid staff. I don't know if it would change, but and then you would have to be beholden to whoever was paying. So, you would, you would lose control of what you do and how you do it. And when you do it. Makes sense?

**Jasmin:** [00:33:53] Definitely makes sense. Yes. It's provides more understanding on why Castro didn't want to go corporate.

**Charlotte:** [00:34:01] Yeah.

**Jasmin:** [00:34:04] So I'm thinking now about Sal's vision for the conference. Has a conference, would you say it remain true to Sal's vision?

**Charlotte:** [00:34:12] Oh absolutely, absolutely. I think that when you looked at the various agendas, programs. The set. We're doing what got probably instituted in the late 90s and, it's got his fingerprints all over it.

**Jasmin:** [00:34:36] I noticed that at different times of the conference. Sal sat on different committees.

**Charlotte:** [00:34:44] Yeah.

**Jasmin:** [00:34:45] As it, as he kept being involved.

**Charlotte:** [00:34:49] Yeah, he would. He started as a facilitator back in 1963 and he was always a part of it. Always a part of it. And it was important. It was very, very important to him. And yes, he's, yes, the walkouts were, important. I'm not going to, but CYLC was more important to him because of the Seventh-Generation aspect of, of the of the change within the kids who went there. Walkouts were important. There were tremendous changes and it took 50 years for some of those changes. But you've got it, you've got kids that are going to college. That change is much more immediate.

**Jasmin:** [00:35:51] So how would you describe the vision in your own words.

**Charlotte:** [00:35:56] My word. OK. Let's see. It's, well number one legacy of Sal Castro CYLC is his baby his legacy. But the awakening in kids of who they are and what they can become and carrying what they can become by maintaining and respecting who they are. Does that make sense?

**Jasmin:** [00:36:30] Yes, it's beautiful.

**Charlotte:** [00:36:37] And a little bit of Sal is in all of them.

**Jasmin:** [00:36:45] In all the students or all the conferences?

**Charlotte:** [00:36:46] No. In all the students, because what they come out with is because of what he did, and is, and was.

**Jasmin:** [00:36:58] I have definitely heard students share they, they feel like they've got to know Mr. Castro. They feel like they got to know more about the students in 1968.

**Charlotte:** [00:37:12] Yeah.

**Jasmin:** [00:37:12] They feel a grander connection and gratitude for learning that.

**Charlotte:** [00:37:17] Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Because, stuff that everybody takes for granted now didn't exist and it was through. Sal talks about the kids if 1968 that they were not doing it for themselves. They were doing it for future. And again, I'm going to cut tie it back to that seventh generation that there was a focus and a belief in the future and hey it didn't happen overnight. You know things that happen overnight usually don't last. The slow incremental change is the lasting change. Is this sustainable change.

**Jasmin:** [00:38:06] So why Camp Hess Kramer? What contributes to the power of this place?

**Charlotte:** [00:38:15] Well it's my understanding that, well the first conference happened on Palm Sunday. And, the joint was open and they, they were there and then it just continued. And I think I, it, it, the, the roots of the conference started in Camp Hess Kramer and continued. The one year that they didn't go there, and that was in the 90s sometime Paula will know more. But I do remember SOCA University and it's off of Malibu Canyon Road. It's to the left. It just wasn't the same. And Sal said Our spirit is at. So, we, you know the belief, and this is where we started and our roots are here, so that's why a Camp Hess Kramer and the importance of it. And so, and it's a mutual admiration society of the folks at Hess Kramer that we were dealing with, easy peasy, back and forth. They knew what we were doing and what had been done and it just continues it just continues. And that's also a good thing because, the folks up there, Patty who run ran the cafeteria. John Bard who ran the camp, Marie Brewer they all had worked with Sal and so it was just you know keep on stepping and just it wasn't anything that had to be reinvented. It just continued. So, there's, there's, there's something, something about tradition and ritual and it's rather traditional and rather ritualistic. And so, but it's, it's not all in cement, changes can happen. And an ebb and flow, I guess is the best way.

**Jasmin:** [00:40:31] It sounds like there's a really great relationship that's been built over time with the camp staff.

**Charlotte:** [00:40:36] Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. And, Sal, Sal was a real people person and a very, very personable and. But if things didn't go right you knew it. But he never, he never accepted half assedness. It always had to be the very best and top drawer. Class act.

**Jasmin:** [00:41:01] Do you think that translate it over to everyone who is working at the conference as well?

**Charlotte:** [00:41:06] Of course. But if he wasn't pleased, he didn't berate publicly it was behind the scenes. Never, never chewed anybody up publicly, if they needed to be chewed out. But were spoken to and. Changed.

**Jasmin:** [00:41:28] So how has your participation in the conference changed over time? I know in the in the early days you we talked about you creating power points for some of the presentations.

**Charlotte:** [00:41:40] Yeah, the well technology. Here, here, I'll show you how. This is one of the things, music was always very important and Sal's life and there are tapes, tape decks, and real to real stuff over the over time. And there was music always music, music of if it was nineteen ninety-four there would be nineteen ninety-four music along with traditional music. So that was one of the first things he would do. And it went from real-to-real, to cassette, to CD, and now everything is off of somebody's phone.

**Jasmin:** [00:42:25] Digital.

**Charlotte:** [00:42:27] Yeah, so that's one change. They used to drive around on. I mean the, the, the, the, the A.V. stuff. There's this huge old television in storage that I'm going to have to ask somebody to throw away in some dump. Just, just the those, those notebooks that they were bent over carrying, now everything's on a flash drive. Those are those are real obvious. The, the, the belief system, the why we're doing it, what we're doing, has been consistent all the way through. How we're doing it is how is what's changed. And that's through technology and that's through coming into the 21st century.

**Jasmin:** [00:43:24] It's much needed. Small changes.

**Charlotte:** [00:43:26] Yeah, yeah. And nobody gets pissed off over that. Nobody gets pissed off over that. Because it makes the delivery much. But there's also the something else it doesn't change is the, the touching, the human relationships, the and I'll use the relationship building. Those are aspects that have continued from the very, very beginning. There is one of the, there's a guy named Armando Duron, who is, he went there, he went to the conference in 1972. He went to Garfield High School, and he'll tell you, "this changed, was life changing for me". And he is a commissioner in the Superior Court. And of folks a, folks will tell you it was like a truly life changing, truly life changing.

**Jasmin:** [00:44:36] What would you say are the ingredients that are essential to longevity of the conference.

**Charlotte:** [00:44:46] A belief, knowing who you are, a commitment and use the word trust. Oh and no egos. No egos because egos can't. If somebody's ego gets involved, and relationships. That, I think is what keeps it going. And, people like each other. You can't cut, you can, you, you can't beat that with a stick.

**Jasmin:** [00:45:37] There seems to be a real sense of connection.

**Charlotte:** [00:45:40] Yeah.

**Jasmin:** [00:45:41] Of everyone who's working. It's just synchronized.

**Charlotte:** [00:45:42] Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And just in and out, in and out. It's, I can't do such and such, but you can. You can't do so and so, but I can. So, you do such and such, and I do so and so, and we get it done.

**Jasmin:** [00:46:00] And everyone's happy.

**Charlotte:** [00:46:03] Yeah, I think so. I think so. And everybody I believe feels comfortable to be able to express opinions and beliefs. And, like I said I don't think everything is in cement. Now, there are some things that are in cement that we're, we're we do this because, and if, if you don't have the belief and if you don't have the trust if you don't have the commitment, have a nice time, go someplace else. But they're, they're, wait we didn't think such and such. We didn't think this worked so well. How can we tweak it? Let's figure it out. And if it can't be tweaked then why are we bothering? And what we do, is proven its successful and it's proven.

**Jasmin:** [00:46:57] You see it on the student's faces.

**Charlotte:** [00:46:58] Oh goodness. Absolutely. Absolutely.

**Jasmin:** [00:47:02] Are there any memorable stories that you can share from your time with CYLC, or any favorite stories that you have?

**Charlotte:** [00:47:13] Well jeez, favorite stories. I, you know, I get, I guess, I guess the favorite thing is the fact that I'm. I wish I wasn't doing it. Let's just be very obvious. I wish I wasn't doing this. And the reason I am doing it is because Sal's dead. If I wouldn't be doing this. If he were still alive. So, I wish I didn't have to but I, and it's truly I have to because I owe it. It's my responsibility. And I would prefer if I weren't, but I'm doing it and I'm loving doing it. So that's the personal side of it. And, I, I enjoy being around people who are like minded and that's another thing that is so cool is that we're like minded. We're, we're, we're, if we're talking it's like we're talking to the choir. Preaching to the choir, and the choir doesn't need to be preached to because they're believers.

**Jasmin:** [00:48:45] So it sounds like every conference is a memorable fun conference.

**Charlotte:** [00:48:48] Every, every conference is, every conference. Like I said it's a well-oiled machine now. And you want to be there because you want to see something that works. And the beauty of it. Now, we got to, we've got to figure out what we're going to do in fall and that's something that we will. We're looking we're working and will make it we'll make it happen. And we may not have it at Hess Kramer, but wherever we have it will be as good as we can get it, without being it Hess Kramer. And, we'll figure that one out. And it, it always seems to, it will it will happen because it has in the past and it will continue. But we can't take anything for granted.

**Jasmin:** [00:49:58] What was it like to be back at Camp Hess Kramer after the fire? What was it like to walk through?

**Charlotte:** [00:50:05] Very sad very, very sad. And the sadness was knowing that what we were doing couldn't be done. That's, that was the sadness. That was the sadness, but also knowing that we weren't dead. We just, we were on pause. We were on pause. We will start again. The pause button was pushed and not because of anything that was done purposefully it was pushed because of circumstance.

**Jasmin:** [00:50:49] But it shall continue.

**Charlotte:** [00:50:51] Yeah well absolutely. Phoenix from the ashes.

**Jasmin:** [00:50:56] So the students go through so many different workshops and a lot of relationship building with each other. And you mentioned you know its people start to get it sooner and sooner.

**Charlotte:** [00:51:08] Yeah.

**Jasmin:** [00:51:10] When do you think from what you've seen is, is that moment that aha moment where the students get it?

**Charlotte:** [00:51:16] Probably when they see the movie walkout.

**Jasmin:** [00:51:18] What do you see in their faces?

**Charlotte:** [00:51:23] I don't watch the movie. I can't stand the movie.

**Jasmin:** [00:51:27] And why do you think it's after the movie?

**Charlotte:** [00:51:29] Because they can see kids who are like them who have done something. And that the realization that kid power is powerful.

**Jasmin:** [00:51:48] And their voices are important. That does make a lot of sense because for some of the students it might be the first time that they're hearing about this part of history.

**Charlotte:** [00:51:58] Oh, oh maybe is. I was talking to a woman who works as a field rep for Sheila Kewl the supervisor, and the woman's name is Benita Trujillo and she had seen something on PBS. And she said, "You know I never knew this happened" and this woman is 59 years old.

**Jasmin:** [00:52:33] Wow.

**Charlotte:** [00:52:33] And she says, "Now I want to know more." Okay. Guess what? Came to the right place. Came to the right place. Yeah.

**Jasmin:** [00:52:42] Will we be seeing her involved in the conference?

**Charlotte:** [00:52:44] You know you will. You know you will.

**Jasmin:** [00:52:48] So, what has the conference meant to you?

**Charlotte:** [00:52:54] Well I'm keeping Sal alive. His legacy alive and doing what he once wanted to be done. Doing what he wanted to be done and continuing what he wanted to be done.

**Jasmin:** [00:53:12] When you're observing the conference and attending some of the workshops or even presenting, because you present at the conference. What are you observing, what do you see happening?

**Charlotte:** [00:53:24] I've seen some, as you refer to it lights going on, kids being more comfortable about being who they are. Learning about who they're, who they are. And knowing that we're doing God's work.

**Jasmin:** [00:53:44] So what's the key. What above all else defines the conference? What makes it special?

**Charlotte:** [00:53:53] The spirit and the people. The spirit that is in the people that the common link is the belief in what we're doing is important but more importantly worthwhile.

**Jasmin:** [00:54:15] What would you say leadership is in your own words?

**Charlotte:** [00:54:21] Leadership is not being afraid to do something that may not be totally accepted but you know it's right and you do it. And also, leadership is knowing that something isn't working. And trying to fix it. Or this isn't what we want so we're not going to do it.

**Jasmin:** [00:54:59] It takes a lot of, a lot of.

**Charlotte:** [00:55:03] And not being afraid to continue to do what it is you're doing. Because sometimes it takes a while for whatever the idea is to take root and to spark.

**Jasmin:** [00:55:21] So why has leadership, it's the Chicano Youth Leadership Conference. Why has leadership building been an important part of the conference?

**Charlotte:** [00:55:30] Because, there is a void of brown faces in decision making. And we need brown faces to be decision makers, and to be proud of being a brown face.

**Jasmin:** [00:55:52] There's a lot of inspiration and a lot of, well the students.

**Charlotte:** [00:55:57] Yeah.

**Jasmin:** [00:55:57] Become inspired. They're seeing brown faces at the conference.

**Charlotte:** [00:56:03] Exactly.

**Jasmin:** [00:56:03] They're seeing people in high positions sitting there at the career fair with them. So, they're, they're seeing that representation.

**Charlotte:** [00:56:13] They're able to see people that. Wait a minute, Rudy Monterosa, when he's there will say you know, "I'm able to, I was able to see people whose last names ended in a vowel." And, that they're to add, add to the number of brown faces and brown faces who believe in what of who they are and why they are and that they count.

**Jasmin:** [00:56:49] How do you feel when you start to see people return to the conference as volunteers?

**Charlotte:** [00:56:55] Oh that was the best thing in the world. That's the best thing in the. This past time we had Savannah Pierce, nurse Pierce's daughter. She was kicking and screaming when she came as an as a student as an 11th grader. Oh, and now she's back. Oh, my goodness. That is so. And to have the have the, we had three or four kids from four years ago come back. Oh my God. They drank the lemonade. They drank the Kool-Aid and now they want to pass it out, couldn't it. That's. That's the best. That is absolutely the best.

**Jasmin:** [00:57:44] I have noticed you add all the names on your presentation.

**Charlotte:** [00:57:46] Oh absolutely. So, they can see that your name can be here. Absolutely. Absolutely. Because that speaks that's volumes that that speaks volumes.

**Jasmin:** [00:57:59] And you know that those students went to college and graduated and came back.

**Charlotte:** [00:58:02] Oh absolutely. And here we are, "and I was a facilitator. I still may be in college but I'm going to college." OK. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Jasmin:** [00:58:14] So now thinking about today what's happening now. What are some of the issues that you've noticed, or that you've heard you know the students talk about that are impacting them today?

**Charlotte:** [00:58:27] Well, the fact that they're that the president of the United States considers them rapists and murderers and drug dealers and have no worth whatsoever. And it's being

lapped up by all of these, white supremacists. And you don't have to be a white supremacist, it's being lapped up by as an easy out as to why I don't need to do something. After Rita did her presentation, in this the, the, oh God I guess it was the spring conference. No, the October, the October two thousand eighteen conference. Right after she was done, I went up to her and Robin went up to her and said, "I'm afraid, I haven't been afraid in I don't know how long. And I'm afraid." And I'm the last person in the world who needs to be afraid, and I'm afraid. Because, now it's, it's a scary, scary world a very scary world. And these young folks, are probably innocent enough not to know to be afraid. But oh, my goodness. This is not, this is, these are not good times. These are not good times.

**Jasmin:** [01:00:15] It sounds like it's been a great opportunity, even during these times for the students who have come to the conference in the last couple of years.

**Charlotte:** [01:00:21] Yeah, oh again because they're, they're getting an inner strength of knowing who they are and being proud of who they're, who they are. So, they don't have to question themselves. They can utilize that strength to overcome. You're not going to overcome, but to help get through, that to get through.

**Jasmin:** [01:00:51] Especially in these times.

**Charlotte:** [01:00:52] Yeah. Yeah.

**Jasmin:** [01:00:54] They're able to network with other students.

**Charlotte:** [01:00:55] Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. There's strength in numbers. There's strength in numbers.

**Jasmin:** [01:01:03] What do you believe is the reason why an event that happened half a century ago still has a continuing resonance today?

**Charlotte:** [01:01:14] Because there's a void. And it fills a void and it helps, guide, and it helps motivate. And just because it's 50 years old doesn't mean that, well it's more than 50 years old. Sixty-three. What are we talking about? I can't do that math. So, it's close to 60 years. Let's just use that, it's more than 50. It it's a it's a continuity and it, it also it's a motivator, it's a motivator.

**Jasmin:** [01:02:10] Thinking about sustainability is really been coming up in our conversation a lot. When you think about the future, how do you see the legacy continuing through CYLC?

**Charlotte:** [01:02:25] People like you, because I ain't gonna be around.

**Jasmin:** [01:02:29] People continuing to stay involved.

**Charlotte:** [01:02:30] Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Hear, the oh the buzzwords capacity building, ok? Sal, I remember, people were, he, he would get phone calls. Can you come and speak? Can you do this? Can you do that? And he would say, 'I think it's more important that you do it because I'm going to come and I'm going to leave you're gonna be there.' And, so that was his way. He wasn't

shirking it. He was listening he was giving ideas but building capacity so that you know there was only one of him. But, and, and that's the other thing. One of him. And you know building other people to do, and to continue. So yeah capacity building and, that's what you guys are with the facilitators and the staff. That, that's our lifeblood. Because I'm aint gonna be around. And it's gonna be. The need is going to be with those folks who have the same vision and belief system.

**Jasmin:** [01:03:57] And why is sustainability of CYLC important for the future generations?

**Charlotte:** [01:04:03] So that the mistakes of the past aren't made, and we're seeing many of those mistakes from what we've got in the White House right now. And they're not mistakes. These he's not he's, he's not doing it. These are not mistakes. These are carefully thought out and I sound like a conspiracy theorist. But no these are earmarked to breed discontent and to just turn something good like a democracy and a constitution into something bad. And CYLC needs to continue to counter act evil and that's its evil. I'm sorry. I sound, now I sound.

**Jasmin:** [01:05:00] So it's clear to me that the conference has been a source of empowerment, motivation, connecting people to their identity, culture, and also for educational opportunities. What is your view on that?

**Charlotte:** [01:05:18] Say that again I didn't hear that. What is my what?

**Jasmin:** [01:05:21] What is your view on that?

**Charlotte:** [01:05:24] The fact that, all right. I'm just gonna be real, real materialistic. Somebody who's got a college education makes more money than somebody who doesn't have a college education. Just like, a high school diploma is, is something that you want to have. But it's only a ticket to get into something else. And when you have the, a democracy is dependent upon an educated electorate. And if you keep people dumb and you keep people poor then you're never going to be anything. You'll, you'll be the downtrodden and you'll be the service industry. But if you've got a college education, you will be able to have more money to contribute to the betterment of yourself, of your family, and society. So, it's, it's Moni-, and you can't take knowledge away from people. That's something, once you've learned something it's yours. And you can't it just, it's something that keeps you ridge. I talked about Mother Nature with the green, knowledge keeps regenerating and keeps you alive and keeps you regenerating and keeps you contributing. You know, lifelong learners all that stuff. Yes, it's absolutely true. The more you know the more you want to know and the more you are able to contribute to it around you. And so that's why the education is so important but also the networking. Also, the community involvement also the cultural also the hister-, historical not hysterical, historical. All of that is what keeps and makes C.Y.L.C. so important. And so, there's a constant rebirth. There's a constant rebirth.

**Jasmin:** [01:07:48] It always comes back.

**Charlotte:** [01:07:49] Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

**Jasmin:** [01:07:53] Well we've reached the end of our interview today and I just want to again thank you. Thank you so much for your time today. Before we click the record button off. I just want to ask for your permission to use the interview today to be able to write the reflection piece.

**Charlotte:** [01:08:20] Certainly.

**Jasmin:** [01:08:21] Thank you so much Charlotte. I'll go ahead and turn it off.

## Interview with Paula Crisostomo



Paula at her home in South Pasadena. Photo taken by Jasmin Temblador

### Transcript

Audio: 2019CYLC001.mp3

**Jasmin:** [00:00:01] So this is Jasmin Temblador. I am the interviewer, and I'm meeting today with Paula Crisostomo who is the narrator. We're meeting today at Paula's home in South Pasadena. The date is Friday March 15th, 2019. So just a brief scope of the interview. I'll be asking you about your experience in relation to the Chicano Youth Leadership conference over time, talking about topics of leadership, of cultural transmission, and of traditions within the conference that have contributed to its sustainability over time. The interview is being conducted as part of Goucher college Master of Arts in cultural sustainability and the capstone project that I'm working on. So myself the interviewer and the narrator Paula have known each other for three years through that Chicano Youth Leadership Conference. And so, at this moment when I'm going to do is, I'd like to ask you Paula to stay for the recording that you're aware of and consent to being recorded.

**Paula:** [00:01:08] OK. I'm aware of and consent to being recorded.

**Jasmin:** [00:01:13] So, first of all I just want to thank you for the opportunity today to be able to sit down with you and talk about the conference in your experience. Let's go ahead and begin.

**Paula:** [00:01:23] Sure.

**Jasmin:** [00:01:24] So can you tell me a little bit about where you grew up and a little bit about your family.

**Paula:** [00:01:33] You've heard this so many times before. I'm from a family of eight children. I grew up in Ramona Gardens public housing the housing project in Boyle Heights, Lincoln Heights. I'm the oldest female child, so I was assistant mother. My father was a janitor. My mother was a stay at home mom and was really involved in community activities. And as I grew older, I, she would, older meaning by, ten eleven twelve years old she would enlist my help in

organizing various little events for the parents and the families. And I think that's where I started to learn my know the value of community, the value of volunteerism and just how to organize.

**Jasmin:** [00:02:32] So what were some of these events that you were helping to organize?

**Paula:** [00:02:37] Talent shows, little Christmas parties, stuff like that. Halloween parties.

**Jasmin:** [00:02:45] What was your reaction to, you know, being a part of these events?

**Paula:** [00:02:53] Well, I remember first being very shy because a lot of it, not a lot, but some of it entailed going door-to-door to promote the event itself and inviting people over. And I was a shy kid but, my, you know, my mother would come with me and she would take a turn knock on the door introduce herself and say why we're there and, and I would listen and then when I went to the next door, she said 'Okay, it's your turn, you heard what I said. Now you do the same thing,' and so I would do it and that would be the same on the phone. She would solicit donations; I remember particularly for Christmas parties. She would try and get free toys. There was Mattel toys where it was located here in Southern California somewhere. They may still be here, I don't know. And she would always call them. She would call them and ask for toys. Or she would call a large company, or, or a department store and asked for toys, and tell them who she was, and blah blah blah. And then she would have like a script of sorts for me, 'Dial the next number and say, okay you do it.' And, and again I was very shy, but I did it because she would be there. Egging me on, 'You could do it. You can do it.' Encouraging me. And when I started to get, 'Sure okay, where do we send it' That's when I got really, 'Oh wow. I could do this.' You know? So.

**Jasmin:** [00:04:21] Amazing.

**Paula:** [00:04:21] Yeah it was. It was. And then, to see it all come together, you know, after several weeks of making phone calls. And my mother sending letters because there was no e-mail or anything like that. And helping my mother, you know, address the envelopes and stamp them and stuff like that.

**Jasmin:** [00:04:36] Were you the only one of your siblings working with your mom?

**Paula:** [00:04:40] I think so. I think so. I think I was I was known as, besides being the assistant mother, I was also the most book wormy, me you know. Instead of going out to play I wanted to stay home and read and do homework and read my books. So, I was around while everyone else was running the streets, I guess.

**Jasmin:** [00:05:02] So what is your relationship to CYLC?

**Paula:** [00:05:05] Wow. It's a long one. I was invited in 1967. I was invited by Sal Castro, encouraged to fill out some paperwork to go to this weekend conference on the beach. Now I'm from a very strict family and I was like I said I was very shy. My world was very small. I knew, I wasn't going to be able to go. But he encouraged me. By that time, he knew my mother because my mother was active, and she went to all the meetings and stuff. And he encouraged her to and

told her how much I would get out of it and blah blah blah. So, my mother signed the form and let me go and it was eye opening to me. I had never been, at the time it was sponsored by the Los Angeles County Human Relations Board. So, it took students from all over the county, and there were place, students coming from places that I had never heard of. And you know they might as well have said 'yeah, I go to high, I go to high school in Jupiter.' That's how, you know eye opening it was for me. My world was very, very small. So, exposing me to not only you know different people, different kids my age, who were good students and book wormy (laughs) like me, from all over the place was really, I don't, it was really, really lifted my self-esteem and confidence I'm sure, at that time. Because I was being, I was always teased as being the bookworm and all, you know, being shy and quiet. But here was a whole bunch of other kids who were just like me, "I'm not that weird after all (laughs)." And then, to be able to meet college students because the model was the same high school students, college students, teachers. Then it was mostly all teachers who were like professional staff and facilitators. And then the, whatever speakers they brought in. To meet them, and to hear from them, and to realize that they were giving of their time just to spend an hour or two with us was again really encouraging and just really lifted my self-esteem. And I think that was most of it. So, a stronger belief in myself as a person, as a student, and as someone who could make a difference because that's what I kept hearing all along, is that you have this personal power. You know, that was like the message. You have this personal power, not only to you know do something better for yourself but for your family and your community. So that's what empowered me.

**Jasmin:** [00:08:17] Wow, and you serve on the board right now?

**Paula:** [00:08:19] I serve on the board right now. So that was, I started my first time was as a high school student in 1967. I didn't. I. And I know that the human relations board ran it from 10 to 12 years. And then the human relations board was dissolved for lack of money. And then it went on hiatus. It was then called a Mexican American Youth Leadership conference. It went on hiatus for probably another 10 years. A group of us, all including Sal Castro and a lot of them (student leaders from 1968), a lot of the group wanted to get together to restart it because we all realized how much we got from it. It's one of those things there, you don't realize how valuable it is until you're apart from it. And looking back I think, 'hey I learned that there. Oh wow, that's what they meant when they said this,' you know? So, we started meeting every week to try and put it together and I think it was during at the same time for the 20th anniversary of the walkouts, around then. So, we, we raised a lot of money to put it together and we brought it all together again. All of, all of us grown up [laughs]. We begged borrowed and stole from everyone we knew. We wrote a couple of grants, got a couple of small grants, raised a lot of money through an HBO concert at the Biltmore and we restaged it, and we had it going for, I don't know, a little bit more than five years I'm sure.

**Jasmin:** [00:10:18] When you all came together to, I know you used the word revive, to revive the conference and commemorate the 20th anniversary, was it a different structure to the conference? Or, was it very much modeled the same?

**Paula:** [00:10:34] It was very much modeled the same way, yeah. The model still worked. Yeah, yeah. The topics that we talked about, or that we chose to present were different because it was a different generation and issues were different, and we also changed the name because it start,

started as the Mexican-American Youth Leadership, and changed it to Chicano Youth Leadership.

**Jasmin:** [00:10:59] And so the name change was also because of the different issues or the time?

**Paula:** [00:11:04] Yes, correct. Right. Right. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Jasmin:** [00:11:08] And who. How did that conversation start about changing the name?

**Paula:** [00:11:11] I don't remember. I don't remember. And I'm sure it wasn't like a long drawn out conversation. It was just sort of, "well of course we're going to change it," you know? That sort of thing. Everyone just kind of assumed it was now going to be called the Chicano Youth Leadership Conference. And of course, over time there was questioning about "should it be the Latino youth leadership conference? Should it be the Chicano slash Latino youth leadership conference?" And I'm sure there's some, "Should it be the LatinX Youth Leadership Conference?" And, and, some of the discussion around that, because there has been some discussion around that over the years especially with Sal, is that it was, Mexicans are still the largest Latino demographic here in Los Angeles, here in the US. And so, and they're still the largest demographic who are failing academically. So that was the reason for keeping it that way. And of course, we accept other Latinos, but our focus should still be on who needs it the most. Okay?

**Jasmin:** [00:12:34] So, you mentioned in our print interview and I quote you said, "the true beauty of the conference is that it has gone on hiatuses, but it always comes back."

**Paula:** [00:12:44] It always comes back.

**Jasmin:** [00:12:45] Can you elaborate more?

**Paula:** [00:12:47] The thing that wouldn't leave huh? Yeah, and again I, it's the folks who are involved in it. They won't, you know, we can't let it die. It's, but it's because it's that important. I, and I get emotional [crying][laughs]. I benefited personally, my children have benefited, and so we know we're just a few of the folks who really have benefited from this conference, from that weekend miracle. So, why wouldn't it need to continue? It should be replicated, you know? I mean with the numbers that we've gotten from that independent study. From you know, everyone we've talked to who have attended, who has attended, the difference in their lives. Talk about the quality of, the impact, quality of lives we've touched. And this should be replicated, you know? So, I think that's why it goes on hiatus, but it always finds a way to come back. Just like the cream always rises to the top. It's that important. And Hess Kramer has always been wonderful to us.

**Jasmin:** [00:14:20] That's beautiful. So, the conference has been sustained on the back of volunteers for most of, for all of its life for 50 plus years.

**Paula:** [00:14:32] Yeah.

**Jasmin:** [00:14:32] Why has it been important to have an all-volunteer based conference?

**Paula:** [00:14:39] I, you know. It's important for. Be-, well first of all because labor is always the most expensive budget item [laughs]. Also, because I think it's nice for the student, it's important for the high school students and the college students who are involved, to know that all of these people have given up their weekends no matter what, you know, what is going on in their lives. You know we leave our families; some people give up work, some you know, whatever. Or just to stay home and watch football. But to know that you guys (students) are more important than whatever it was that was going on in our lives, that we come and shared our time with you (students). I think that was important, and I think that was important for me too. When I was a high school student, I begin to realize like, "what" [laughs], you know?

**Jasmin:** [00:15:41] So, in thinking about how the conference has changed over time, I'm sure that there's been a couple of changes, and as you mentioned already. Different eras, different times, different issues happening. Have there been any changes in the structure or content of the program?

**Paula:** [00:16:02] Yeah, the career fair was an addition. Adding more music to it but that was part of trying to add more to the cultural content. The fashion show is something different. And so those are mostly. Yeah, those are mostly the biggest changes that I see.

**Jasmin:** [00:16:37] Why have those, how do you feel about those changes? Like why have those changes been added or made?

**Paula:** [00:16:44] Well there's always group consensus. As you know, we're a very Democratic group. And it's been for various reasons. We, we saw that for the musical stuff. We sa-, we realized that maybe we were hitting them too hard with academic issues, or other stuff and there needed some lightening up, I guess. And to use music as a cultural base was a good idea. The other stuff I think the career fair that was. Charlotte took that on because she was hearing from, this is my understanding or my memory she may tell you differently, that, of course, our students need to know what they can do once they graduate from college. Or they need to know if college is not for you because we know college is not for everyone, "Maybe you can look into these kinds of careers?" And I know that some board members were kind of questioning that. So, that was the reason for the career fair. And it was also a way to involve other professionals, working people. And the addition, oh, that was another cultural thing, was the addition of an art sort of thing, art exhibit.

**Jasmin:** [00:18:10] The Art exhibit walk through.

**Paula:** [00:18:11] Yeah, yeah, that was nice. Yeah.

**Jasmin:** [00:18:14] So, thinking about traditions. Are there traditions of the conference, that have continued since the very beginning of the conference?

**Paula:** [00:18:26] The dances.

**Jasmin:** [00:18:29] Say a little more.

**Paula:** [00:18:31] Well you know, were a bunch of high school students. They wanted to get together and network and dance and stuff so. And it was also, I remember when we were when I was really deep in the weeds and planning was like Oh my God how are we going to get them tired? They're going to be excited the first night. How we're going to get them tired out enough? So, it was doing the dance. The morning wake up with the music that was a big thing with Sal especially in the beginning. That's continued. The Sunday morning prayer thing. That's continued and that's important to keep too because a lot of parents do look at that and then look at the students to, I understand that. But basically, you know I see it as just kind of typical conference model. You have a keynote speaker. You get to break out in groups and talk about it and then come back and say.

**Jasmin:** [00:19:33] Dialogue that happens with the students. The morning I wake up.

**Paula:** [00:19:38] I'm sorry go ahead.

**Jasmin:** [00:19:39] The morning wake up. Why is that important?

**Paula:** [00:19:44] Well to get you get to get the students out of bed early enough. To get the place, to get this conference started. And it's always really early in the morning. I know. And that was to make sure that they would realize that oh my god it's 3:00 in the morning we better fall asleep because they're going to be playing that loud ass music at 530. So that sort of thing. But also, again it was, Sal used it as a way to introduce them to the kind of music that their parents probably played on the weekend, that not necessarily they would play themselves. And I know that's some of the comments we got back, or we would be told by the end, that they never listened to that music before because it reminded him of their parents but now, they really appreciate it. So that was really nice.

**Paula:** [00:20:36] Can we be excused I can blow my nose.

**Jasmin:** [00:20:41] OK so has the conference remained true to Castro's vision over the years?

**Paula:** [00:20:49] Yes. Yes.

**Jasmin:** [00:20:51] Can you tell me a little bit more?

**Paula:** [00:20:54] And you may have heard this story too when Sal was home sick, he sat, sat Charlotte down and said, "this is what's going to happen." And he planned it out, exactly who he wanted on the board and what he wanted them to do. And what. You know the, the gist of the conference was, I think we've, we've stumbled a little with some speakers, but you know, we can't find. You never know what people are going to say when they get up to the mic, unfortunately. And if they're volunteers it's even harder. And if you're asking them to drive two hours from home you know all of that. But in trying to identify other folks and, I think we've done OK. I mean I wish we could find another Sal Castro. Did you ever hear him speak?

**Jasmin:** [00:21:53] I did not. Only in Charlotte's recordings shared at the conference or the recordings online.

**Paula:** [00:22:02] He gave his best at the conferences. But yea.

**Jasmin:** [00:22:06] So how would you describe Castro's vision for the conference?

**Paula:** [00:22:13] Wow, that's a big one. Mm hmm. His vision was huge. And it was multipronged. And it was. To instill pride in, in these student's heritage, their cultural and historical legacy, and to do that by teaching them more about it. As much as we could in the short time that we have with them. Which is why it's hard to find a speaker who can do all of that. To make them feel proud of themselves and their families and their communities. To make sure they believe they can go to college and graduate. To make sure they know that once they do that, they owe it to themselves and their communities to come back to the community to give back however way they can. And it's like, do ABCD repeat ABCD repeat. So, it becomes this cycle sort of thing.

**Jasmin:** [00:23:42] The circle.

**Paula:** [00:23:43] Yeah.

**Jasmin:** [00:23:48] So we talked to a little bit about Hess Kramer, Camp Hess Kramer. I remember in the conference Rita always says that Hess Kramer is a very special place. So, what contributes, what, in your experience, what contributes to the power of this place?

**Paula:** [00:24:09] I think the distance from the communities that we're from, and the beauty of the site that we're in. And to know that, these people have welcomed us (pause). Have encouraged us to come back so often. It's like everyone who's a volunteer. You know, what does what does that mean? You know the students may not realize that, but for staff, we all realize that. That's huge, because the place is gorgeous. It's such a, it's a free weekend on the coast (pause). So, everything that it has stood for, you know.

**Jasmin:** [00:25:07] The location, the place, being somewhere different.

**Paula:** [00:25:12] Everything, yeah [crying]. I'm still devastated by its loss. I cried out loud. Like right now.

**Jasmin:** [00:25:30] We can take a couple of minutes.

**Paula:** [00:25:34] Typically in my room I need a big leather chair and a recliner, and my own refrigerator and it would be there. It's amazing. No questions asked. Okay. You know.

**Jasmin:** [00:25:48] You've always worked well together there.

**Paula:** [00:25:50] Yeah. Yeah. Yes.

**Jasmin:** [00:25:52] The staff there (Camp Hess Kramer).

**Paula:** [00:25:52] Very accommodating all the time. You know I don't know what your experience has been but I know when I was working closely with all of the different staffs they did and even after, you know after the fire loss, they know that, they, the director John text and Myrna and said well be back. But in the meanwhile, you might want to call these different places because it's important that you guys keep doing what you're doing. So, it's like they understand the importance of sustaining what we're doing.

**Jasmin:** [00:26:29] So that's amazing. And there might even be some, some crossover there too because they're also working with youth, right?

**Paula:** [00:26:39] Yep, yep, yep, yep.

**Jasmin:** [00:26:42] It's like there's a great relationship there and understanding and appreciation for the work that everyone is doing.

**Paula:** [00:26:51] That all helps, you know?

**Jasmin:** [00:26:53] Supporters.

**Paula:** [00:26:55] Allies.

**Jasmin:** [00:26:56] Allies. So, what do you believe are the important ingredients that make up CYLC?

**Paula:** [00:27:05] Oh my God. The staff absolutely especially the facilitators because they're the ones who spend the most time with our high school students. Because no matter what's going on the end of the day, and I hate that cliché, is what's important is the experience that the high school student gets from what we're providing. And it's the facilitators, who are really creating that experience with them one on one. You know we do the macro stuff, the big picture, important stuff. You know, but it's the facilitators who do the hands on, you know. And that's why when I spoke to you earlier, it's like I wish we could do more for the facilitators.

**Jasmin:** [00:28:01] They're doing a lot of heavy lifting.

**Paula:** [00:28:03] They're, they're all of it. Yeah. Yep, yep, yep.

**Jasmin:** [00:28:07] And it, helping to shape the minds of students.

**Paula:** [00:28:11] So they're training is really their training and their commitment and their passion about this is really, really crucial, really crucial. And I know that even though we don't spend time with them and help them navigate college that they're still getting inspired and motivated by what they're hearing and, and by working with the students. You know it just, just. Tangentially.

**Jasmin:** [00:28:42] Is like that knowledge is being transmitted to both the students and the facilitators.

**Paula:** [00:28:50] And the facilitators, and you know they might need it up notched up a level but they're able to do that themselves. You know?

**Jasmin:** [00:28:58] So has your role within the conference changed over time? How many different hats have you worn?

**Paula:** [00:29:07] Wow. Yeah. My role has changed a lot. I know it at one point it was my house that was where we kept all the boxes and did all the planning. And this was pre computer stuff and trying. I remember Hugo and I sitting at the dining room table and having the lists of students that we had just gotten from the schools. That was all mailed to us and I was going to the P.O. box to get all the mail and the applications and then OK. We have our list of 100 students. How are we going to break them up into 10 different groups you know? One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. One, two, three. All the ones are in one group, all the twos are in another group that sort of thing. So, doing a lot of, just the everyday hands on staff, and the logistical stuff. To now being a lot more macro sort of stuff and, and it's been really interesting. And I guess that's a natural progression. That's a natural progression.

**Jasmin:** [00:30:17] Do you feel like that's also part of the conference of everyone who participates. Is that they start in a certain, they're facilitator?

**Paula:** [00:30:27] Yeah.

**Jasmin:** [00:30:28] And then you can be in a different position?

**Paula:** [00:30:31] Yeah, I think you need to learn or be around it before you can really understand how it goes and why it goes and how it can get better you know? You can't step into something and assume that we're going to make it this way now because I know it will be better. Maybe it was trying that way. Maybe it will work with this group you know. So, yeah, I think there's, there's some progression, of volunteerism that needs to happen.

**Jasmin:** [00:31:05] So what are the common reason is that you think or that you've heard that keep volunteers coming back to CYLC?

**Paula:** [00:31:12] Common? The students that they know they're making a difference with the students. When you look at the larger picture on the outside what the students are hearing and to again be told over and over again by grown-ups who look just like you who made it through, that everything's gonna be OK. It's going to be hard but it's going to be OK. That's important. I think those are the reasons. Those are the reasons; I'm told by colleagues and friends who have come back to either to be speakers or at the Career Fair or whatever. That's why they'll come back.

**Jasmin:** [00:31:59] Have you ever spoken with the facilitator or a student that's come back and they've shared with you their reason of coming back to the conference?

**Paula:** [00:32:08] Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. You know what. What's nice to hear is that, I get more out of this than they do. Because again I know the facilitators are getting inspired. Yeah, and I know that when I was working in higher education part of it was keeping me going was keeping me grounded. And making me realize OK this is why you're going through hell Monday through Friday. This is why you're going to go to that next board meeting and raise hell. For students of color. So, it's, it was motivating for a lot of the professionals to, you know. And again, in another and another level and tangentially. But it's the high school students you see they're so eager and they're bright eyed and bushy tailed, and they're just so needing to hear that everything's going to be OK. And if you ever you know I've I haven't had a lot of opportunity unfortunately to speak one on the one with high school students. Since the walkout movies, they think I'm sort of some sort of celebrity. And so, you know they get kind of, "oh there she is." And they don't really want to approach me, or if I approach them, they could really shy. So, you know I have to respect that and I don't want to push them and stuff, but I understand. But I'd like to.

**Jasmin:** [00:33:34] With time.

**Paula:** [00:33:35] With time maybe, huh? But then I'll get older and they're who's this old lady?

**Jasmin:** [00:33:42] We'll keep screening the movie. So, you mentioned speakers and the professionals that come to the conference. What significance would you say that they have in the conference. Why is it important for professionals and speakers that are Chicanos and Chicanas to come to the conference?

**Paula:** [00:34:08] It's really important for the students to see people who look like them who went to their high schools who suffered with their same issues who are now successful, and successful enough to be invited back and I'm standing in front of all of you and you should be listening to me. And it and also, we have found some great speakers Robin especially who has her, that used to be called gender issues. You might remember, and we also we used to have a UCLA professor due for the boys and then female for the girls but there was some friction where it didn't quite mesh. You know we struggled with it for a while. Robin struggled with it for a while, but you know Robin has just this, she's an entertainer to begin with. She loves being onstage, and that's good. But she just has this incredible story and she knows how to deliver it. And she worked you know how she was going to present it was, took her a little while, you know, and I love how she finally came up with oppression. Because for a while she was building it, here's the how to have a healthy relationship because that was the issue then with all that sexual assault stuff going on. But how she frames it as oppression has really, really hit home a lot more. So, did I answer your question, I know I went all around it.

**Jasmin:** [00:35:49] Yes, thank you. So, what would you say in your own words and your experiences is the purpose of CYLC for you?

**Paula:** [00:36:04] The same as Sal Castro's, that's what I would say. It's the same as Sal Castro's, it's to make these students believe in themselves. To let them know they're very much loved and expected to do well. We have to let them know that we have high expectations of them. And we know they'll reach them.

**Jasmin:** [00:36:32] Are there any favorite stories that you have of your experiences with the conference? Anything memorable?

**Paula:** [00:36:40] Oh I don't know I should say any of them.

**Jasmin:** [00:36:45] And when you feel comfortable sharing.

**Paula:** [00:36:47] I know that. No, I don't, none that I can tell you on tape. None that I want to live on in history. But I will tell you off line.

**Jasmin:** [00:37:00] What does it feel, well how does it feel to be at the conference as an adult, as a, not as a participant but as you know behind the scenes now? And do you ever reflect back on or remember how it felt for you as a student?

**Paula:** [00:37:23] The first part of your question. It's, it's cool you know to be sort of looking back and, and I and I try not to be overly critical because that's so easy to do. Well I'm sitting down having my cup of coffee and looking at you guys running around and doing all the work, "Oh they should do it this way. They shouldn't do it that way and how come they did it that way?" But you guys have walkie talkies and you have golf carts. We didn't, you have cell phones. We didn't. We were running over all over the place. So. So yeah, it's cool. It's nice sometimes I feel guilty. Sometimes I do feel guilty that I'm not doing enough that I'm just taking here taking up space and you know being this historical icon you know, and I know how to do this I can do that I can do it. But again, it's about developing leadership for you guys too. And I was, one of my very early mentors told me that a good leader knows when it's time for them to step aside and let new leadership develop. And so, I remembered that. And I thought that was, that's pretty good. That's a good, a good reason to sit here and get another cup of coffee. And what was your second question?

**Jasmin:** [00:38:49] Do you ever reflect back and just remember how I felt for you as a student?

**Paula:** [00:38:53] Oh I do. Especially when I speak after the walkout movie. I really do try and remember that. It's Friday night the students have just gotten there, and I try to remember. What was it like on my Friday night? You know. And that's what I try and speak to not necessarily about the walkout, but this is what you're going to see, this is who you're going to hear. And this is why it's important to be here.

**Jasmin:** [00:39:19] And what a grounding moment for the first day.

**Paula:** [00:39:24] Yes, I hope so. Yeah, I hope so. To set it up because again you don't know what they got themselves into and why. You know my boyfriend's mad at me because I'm here and I was supposed to go to the football game or in the stands with my girlfriends but I'm here. My cousins quincenera, I'm missing it cause I'm here. You know.

**Jasmin:** [00:39:45] In thinking about you know setting the stage for the students they may experience a lot of different workshops throughout the weekend so many different topics. But

what would you say in your experience, when is that aha moment that happens, the moment where it just clicks?

**Paula:** [00:40:06] Saturday afternoon.

**Jasmin:** [00:40:08] And what workshop do you think that is?

**Paula:** [00:40:10] I don't, I don't think it's necessarily a certain workshop. I think it's just a cumulative effect, cumulative effect. It's usually Saturday afternoon.

**Jasmin:** [00:40:21] I've heard sometimes it might be the at the bonfire.

**Paula:** [00:40:27] Maybe.

**Jasmin:** [00:40:28] The Camp Fire.

**Paula:** [00:40:29] I think that might be a little too late. Actually, yeah. Yeah. But that's the bonfire is a real bonding, bonding experience and that's important to.

**Jasmin:** [00:40:42] So, day two of the conference it just starts to manifest for people.

**Paula:** [00:40:47] I think so, has that been your experience, or? Yeah.

**Jasmin:** [00:40:52] So, what has your participation in the conference meant for you over time?

**Paula:** [00:41:01] Wow. What has it meant? It's always been very important. And again, when I was working it, it meant it was big, grounding for me and letting me know why I was doing what I was doing at Occidental College. Because that was always a struggle, to be a woman of color. You know, in a managerial white ivory tower. But it was also important for me to, to let the students know that were there. And I think my continuity kind of surprises people, you know when I come in and I say, "I was first here in 1967, and I'm still here believe it or not. You know. and they say wow, you know. And then, that I'm not. It's not because I don't have anything better to do it's because I really believe in this. So that continuity is, I think inspired students, I hope, has helped to teach students and everyone else how important it is.

**Jasmin:** [00:42:20] And I think it's not every day where the students of today get to see someone that they can relate to that looks like them.

**Paula:** [00:42:28] Right. Right. Yeah. Yeah.

**Jasmin:** [00:42:31] That is the person that created change with other people.

**Paula:** [00:42:36] Oh OK here we go.

**Jasmin:** [00:42:39] But.

**Paula:** [00:42:39] I'm all of that in a bag of chips.

**Jasmin:** [00:42:40] All that and a bag of chips. But, but I can see that you know that it is important for them.

**Paula:** [00:42:50] Yeah, I understand. I just.

**Jasmin:** [00:42:53] And the continuity is important. So, so another, another question.

**Paula:** [00:43:06] Uh oh.

**Jasmin:** [00:43:06] So when you're observing the conference and attending the different workshops from your perspective what do you see going on? Like what's going on in the workshops? What's going on with the students?

**Paula:** [00:43:21] I, I like to try and see the facial expressions of students.

**Jasmin:** [00:43:28] What are some of the expressions you're noticing?

**Paula:** [00:43:33] Most of them are very interested, wide eyed like some in disbelief. A lot of them are hearing a lot of the stuff for the first time. That's what I like to see most of, not only this, but the facilitators to especially if they're first time facilitators. Like how are they receiving this? I like to see their, not only facial expressions, but body language to.

**Jasmin:** [00:44:06] And so what are you thinking to yourself when you're seeing all these expressions?

**Paula:** [00:44:10] I'm trying to key in and say Oh they like that. OK. That's a, that's an important topic. Wow, Oh I didn't think that joke was that good. You know, to whatever it is that I'm seeing people react to.

**Jasmin:** [00:44:24] Observing.

**Paula:** [00:44:25] And then yeah. And then, because you know the four of us or sometimes five or six depending on how many of us are there. We'll we will always get together and meet. And that's the sort of stuff we'll share.

**Jasmin:** [00:44:38] And so what, what, what's the key? What's the key what above all else defines CYLC, that that makes it special? What's the key that makes it special?

**Paula:** [00:44:52] As corny as it sounds, I think it's just the love that they feel that we all feel the entire weekend. You know the togetherness the unity, the knowledge that it's safe because we try. And I remember that was very intentional to make this a very safe space. You can be whoever you, you are, and say whatever you believe, and know that it's not going anywhere.

**Jasmin:** [00:45:22] So in thinking about leadership we talk a little bit about leadership in your pre interview about people saying that you're a leader and your reaction to being a leader. But how do you describe leadership?

**Paula:** [00:45:39] Oh wow. I don't know.

**Jasmin:** [00:45:39] What are some examples of leadership?

**Paula:** [00:45:48] I think realizing or seeing an issue or a problem that affects you or your family or your community. And doing whatever you can to solve it. Make it better. And for me it was being all in. You know, cause as a high school student I could have walked away many, many, many times. But when I realized that it was this important and we weren't asking for anything crazy we were asking for better education, isn't that something we were supposed to be asking for? So yeah realizing how important it is and maybe how broad ranging it is. You know?

**Jasmin:** [00:46:42] So why has building leadership been an important part of the conference. It's called the Chicano Youth Leadership Conference. Why has that been important?

**Paula:** [00:46:51] Because we want them to be change agents, and because part of the purpose is so that they will come back to the community and do what they can. To contribute back.

**Jasmin:** [00:47:02] To contribute to contribute back.

**Paula:** [00:47:05] Yeah, and to be a leader.

**Jasmin:** [00:47:07] And how do you see leadership being modeled at the conference?

**Paula:** [00:47:12] I think that facilitators, staff, and board members and other volunteers are all, we're all seen as being a leader, leadership positions there at the conference. Again, it's the experience and the eyes, through the eyes of the high school students that's utmost important. It has to be at all times. It's what we know will work to develop these young leaders, and to inspire them.

**Jasmin:** [00:47:48] We move on to the towards the interview. So, when you think about the present what are some of the issues that you see today that are impacting the students who are coming to the conference?

**Paula:** [00:48:03] Oh absolutely. The immigration issue. You know that wasn't something that was something that we never had to deal with second generation Mexican Americans never had to deal with that. So absolutely the immigration issue and if it's not happening inside their home, it's happening on their street, in their school people around them. And that is very stressful. And given all of that climate, it's also playing out in school as we see all the time, you know with other students.

**Jasmin:** [00:48:42] And how, I know that there's been some additions scholarships section about support for DACA students. And so, there's been some additions in the conference to be able to

support those issues. So, are there traditions of organizing that are passed down within the conference?

**Paula:** [00:49:09] Traditions of organizing. What do you mean?

**Jasmin:** [00:49:13] So we talked about the blowouts very early on in the history of students coming together and organizing at the conference and then coming back out into the community and continuing that. How do you see that coming through in the conference?

**Paula:** [00:49:34] Oh I think with showing the movie and having me speak and then having me there all weekend helps with that. But I think it's repeated in different ways and in almost every strand that we go through. The importance of giving back and being a leader in solving the myriad of issues that our communities and those families face. I hope we're doing that. I don't know. Again, I'm just sitting back drinking a cup of coffee. Well, while you guys are doing all the work.

**Jasmin:** [00:50:10] Writing notes. So, what do you believe is the reason why an event like CYLC that happen a half century ago still has a continuing resonance today?

**Paula:** [00:50:27] Because unfortunately it's still needed. It's sad but true. After all of this time. But of course, demographics change. You know we come and go. It's still needed, and there's a lesson in that. We still have to remain vigilant and continue to fight. That's part of leadership too.

**Jasmin:** [00:50:57] There's different issues coming with every generation and some who, that have remained.

**Paula:** [00:51:03] Yeah or some that have gotten better and then are coming back. I mean this whole affirmative action with, Oh my God. Yeah.

**Jasmin:** [00:51:13] So I'm thinking about cultural sustainability within the conference. Sustainability at the conference. When you think about the future, how do you see the legacy of the conference continuing?

**Paula:** [00:51:26] That's a big one. I don't know because, you know the first thing comes to mind of course is economics. And we're good with the school board but we don't know for how much longer. So, but there's also again the need and the folks who have always been there too. I mean if we have to go on hiatus again maybe in five years you and your cohort will sit down and say, "how could we bring this back?"

**Jasmin:** [00:52:12] We call you.

**Paula:** [00:52:12] Thanks, I'll be in a nursing home by then.

**Jasmin:** [00:52:21] Well in your experience. Well it's clear to me that the conference has been a source of empowerment. It's been a source of helping people connect with their identity, and

their culture, their heritage and also about connecting to equitable access to education. What is your view on that? Do you believe that, that's very much as well true?

**Paula:** [00:52:46] Oh that's very much as well true. Yeah. Oh yes. Educational Justice is still necessary and cultural identity and pride is still necessary for all of our high school students and continues to be. And if that's our job that's our job. We accept it.

**Jasmin:** [00:53:08] So why is the sustainability of CYLC important for the future generations?

**Paula:** [00:53:15] Because it's still necessary, because although we're getting great, great numbers we're still only doing 100, 200 students at a time. I personally don't think we can do any more than that a year as volunteers. But we could probably do. I mean if it can be replicated once a month it would help. We would see a much more empowered cut group of youth coming up. But if we can only reach two hundred a year, you know that's the tip of the iceberg. That's just, scratching barely, scratching the surface.

**Jasmin:** [00:54:08] It sounds like there's a lot of great work that still continues and will continue.

**Paula:** [00:54:13] Yeah, and I'd like to see. You know unfortunately other school districts haven't replicated it or other.

**Jasmin:** [00:54:21] You think there could be an opportunity for collaboration in the future?

**Paula:** [00:54:26] Sure.

**Jasmin:** [00:54:31] Well we've reached the end of our interview and I just want to say thank you so much for your time today. And the final thing is I just want to ask you to state for the recording if you grant me permission to use a recording of the interview to write a reflection paper for the capstone project.

**Paula:** [00:54:48] Yes you can use this recording Jasmin to write your reflection paper.

**Jasmin:** [00:54:53] Thank you so much.

**Paula:** [00:54:54] You're very welcome



Student attendees, staff, and facilitators from the last conference at Camp Hess Kramer before the Woolsey fire  
Photo by Albert Jimenez

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QUE VIVA CYLC!