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INTERVIEW SUBJECT: **Jesús Salvador Treviño**

Biography:

Jesús Salvador Treviño began his career in film and television as a student activist documenting the 1960s Chicano civil rights struggle with a super-8 camera. Throughout the late sixties and early nineteen seventies, he was both a participant and a chronicler of the events and issues of the day. His national PBS documentaries about Latinos and the Chicano struggle include AMERICA TROPICAL, YO SOY CHICANO, LA RAZA UNIDA, CHICANO MORATORIUM, THE SALAZAR INQUEST and BIRTHWRITE. He was Co-Executive Producer of the PBS documentary series, CHICANO! HISTORY OF THE MEXICAN AMERICAN CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT. He wrote and directed the Mexican feature film RAICES DE SANGRE (ROOTS OF BLOOD) and SEGUIN, an American Playhouse drama of the Alamo saga told from a Mexican American point of view. More recently, he has served as Co- Executive Producer of the SHOWTIME series, RESURRECTION BLVD.

Mr. Treviño has won dozens of national and international awards and recognitions including (twice) the prestigious Directors Guild of America award and an Alma award for Outstanding Director of a Television drama and an Alma award as Co-Executive Producer of Resurrection Boulevard, Best Prime-time drama series. In 1991, his film, RAICES DE SANGRE (ROOTS OF BLOOD), was included in an anthology of the 25 Most Significant Films of Latin American Cinema at the 36th Annual International Film Festival of Valladolid, Spain. In 1993 he was honored with an homage at the Montevideo International Film Festival in Montevideo, Uruguay.

Mr. Treviño is also a writer. His collection of short stories, THE FABULOUS SINKHOLE AND OTHER STORIES was published in 1995. His memoir, EYEWITNESS - A FILMMAKER'S MEMOIR OF THE CHICANO MOVEMENT was published in 2001. The book chronicles his experiences as an activist filmmaker during the turbulent 1960s and also addresses the status of United States Latinos in the next millennium. His latest collection of short stories, THE SKYSCRAPER THAT FLEW, was published in November of 2005.

Mr. Treviño is writer/director whose television directing credits include THE UNIT, LAW AND ORDER CRIMINAL INTENT, CRIMINAL MINDS, PRISON BREAK, BONES, E-RING, CROSSING JORDAN, NYPD BLUE, THIRD WATCH, ER, THE PRACTICE, CHICAGO HOPE, DAWSON'S CREEK, NEW YORK UNDERCOVER, THE PRETENDER, NASH BRIDGES, MARTIAL LAW, BRIMSTONE, SEAQUEST, STAR TREK: VOYAGER, BABYLON FIVE, STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE, SWEET JUSTICE, SPACE: ABOVE AND BEYOND, THE BURNING ZONE and HAWKEYE.

- From Jesús Salvador Treviño's website www.chuytrevino.com

Filmography:

1979 ONE OUT OF TEN (Documentary) (Producer/Writer/Director)
1977 RAICES DE SANGRE(ROOTS OF BLOOD)(Feature) (Screenplay/Director)
1972 LA RAZA UNIDA (Documentary) (Producer/Writer)
1972 AMERICA DE LOS INDIOS (Special) (Producer)
1972 YO SOY CHICANO (Documentary) (Writer/Producer)
1971 AMERICA TROPICAL (Documentary)(Producer/Writer)
1970 SOLEDAD (Documentary) (Co-Producer)

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Cameraperson: Laura Bouza

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Cameraperson: Laura Bouza

Transcript Reviewer: Tuni Chatterji

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Interviewer: Stephanie Sapienza

Cameraperson: Laura Bouza

Transcript Reviewer: Tuni Chatterji

TAPE 1: JESUS TREVINO

00:01:54

STEPHANIE SAPIENZA

So just start a little bit by talking about where you grew up and your environment in your household, your mom and dad, you know, those experiences.

00:02:00

JESUS TREVINO

Okay. My background-- I was born in El Paso, Texas. When we moved to Los Angeles I was very young, I was about three years old, we moved to Los Angeles, to the East Side and I was pretty much raised in the East Side of Los Angeles, Boyle Heights, Lincoln Heights, high school in El Sereno. I attended Occidental College, got a BA in Philosophy of all things, but my background early on was--one of the things I remember growing up in East Los Angeles, was the poverty.

00:02:39

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And I think it informed my sense of self in a very profound way. By the time I was in junior high, I was very hateful of myself for being Mexican. All I saw around me were the Mexican day laborers, the gardeners. There were so few positive role models of Mexicans or Mexican Americans that I began to seriously believe that we were an inferior people and that therefore I was inferior to anyone else.

00:03:11

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

So I grew up with a profound sense of basically hating myself for being Mexican. And it wasn't until the late '60s with the advent of the Chicano Civil Rights Movement that my eyes were opened and I began to see that the poverty in which Chicano's lived was a function of 100 years of colonial conquest by the United States over Mexico going all the way back to 1848 and I was the end of that trajectory.

00:03:43

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And so it also made me aware, the Chicano Civil Rights Movement, made me very much aware of the conditions that had to change and we began to actively work to change these social conditions.

00:04:05

STEPHANIE SAPIENZA

Let's go back a little bit though and talk--just kind of open up a little more about your house, your mother, what kinds of films or art maybe you were exposed to early on, what the area was like in East LA that you lived.

00:04:19

JESUS TREVINO

My early years were raised in East Los Angeles. It was a community that was very poor. We didn't have too much exposure to art per se. We had--my step father who raised me worked as--at the concession stand of the Floral Drive-in and so my early recollections of cinema were, he would borrow a neighbor's car and we would drive to the Floral Drive-in and he would go work and I would sit in the car and watch the movies.

00:04:56

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And so my very early recollections, I must have been maybe six, seven years old, was watching, you know, *THE MUMMY* and *THE WEREWOLF* and all these early '50s science fiction, horror movies, there in the car and my dad would, when he had his lunch break, he would come and he would sit with me and we'd have lunch together and then at 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning, by then I'd fallen asleep, he'd bring me home.

00:05:21

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

So this was my very first recollection of cinema, per se. Very crucial to my growth in East Los Angeles and very crucial to who I became-- was that at nine years old, I was stricken with rheumatic fever and when they took me to the hospital, all the doctors thought I was going to die. I was in the Children's Hospital in the convalescent home there for 11 months and during that time when I first went in, I was nine years old, and I could not read at a first grade reading level because of the inferior education we were receiving in the East Los Angeles schools.

00:06:04

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

I went to Breed Street school and I was in the ninth grade and couldn't read at a first grade reading level. However, when you're a young boy with a vivid imagination, and you're nine years old, and you're bedridden, I literally could not get out of the bed I was so weak, the only thing I could do was read. And so the candy stripers would come with different books and I picked up a copy of the first grade primer and it had questions to answer and vocabulary to learn and I basically taught myself through the first grade primer and when that was done I went onto the second grade primer and then the third grade primer and then the fourth grade primer and then the fifth grade primer.

00:06:46

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And by the time 11 months had passed, I was ten years old and I was reading at probably, you know, 12 or 13-year-old reading level. And this opened the world to me because now I knew that there was a world, that it wasn't just *LA BARRIO*. And so when I came back to East LA, as I recuperated from my illness, all my old buddies were just at the age when they were beginning to get involved in gangs.

00:07:16

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And so they were breaking into houses and things like that and they wanted me to join them. And I didn't, and the reason I didn't was because I knew there was other worlds, and the other worlds were fantasy and science fiction and it was--I was 10, 11 years old and instead of breaking into homes I was at the library reading what I call the ABCs of science fiction, Asimov, Bradbury and Clark.

00:07:37

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And so I kind of--the world was open to me and I began to see that there was really many, many things beyond *LA BARRIO* and I think this was very key to my development because it kept me out of gangs and it allowed me later on to go onto college.

00:07:57

STEPHANIE SAPIENZA

So talk a little bit about how you chose to go to Occidental College.

00:08:04

JESUS TREVINO

I was advised by my counselor in high school that I really was incapable or not qualified to attend a four-year school. He was advising as he did, I think, many of the Mexican American kids that you should go to a two-year college and maybe if you were good enough perhaps you could then graduate onto a four-years school.

00:08:27

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

Well, I didn't listen to him. I had a bunch of friends, all of them were Anglo, were Caucasian. I had very few Mexican friends because during that time I was--I wanted to be--I wanted so desperately to be American that I shed myself of my Mexican friends and I tried to pretend that I was a true American. I wore white shirts and I changed my name from Jesus to Jess because I thought Jess sounded more American.

00:08:55

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

So from my friends I learned that there was colleges to apply to and they helped me apply to school and I was accepted at Occidental College and it was very, very early on when they were just doing scholarships for the first time and I received a scholarship.

00:09:24

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

Bring you up to the 40th Anniversary of the moratorium and so I made a little--I compiled a little three minute vignette of clips from my archival footage of the events, the important events in Chicano History from 1965 to 1975, a little piece I call *A DECADE OF STRUGGLE*. And Salio was using it as an organizing tool to get the people to come out on August 29th of this year to celebrate the 40th anniversary. So that's what that was all about.

00:09:53

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

All right, I was back in--how I got to Occidental College. When I was in high school, I, as I mentioned before, I was very convinced that I was inferior. This attitude that I was not good enough was reinforced by my high school counselor who told me that I was probably not qualified to attend a four-year school, that I should apply to a two-year school and maybe get in and maybe if I was good enough, move onto a four-year school.

00:10:26

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

Nonetheless, I avoided his counsel, and through my friends who knew all about college, I learned that you could apply for schools and I did. And to my surprise I was accepted by Occidental College in Los Angeles and they gave me a four-year scholarship. And so I went to Occidental College and proved my counselor wrong. I did survive four years of it and graduated with a degree in philosophy.

00:10:56

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

During my early year, in my first year at Occidental College, it was a very troublesome year because I was in a very privileged school and I was one of maybe ten Latinos, Spanish surname kids in a population of maybe 2,500 so I felt very much out of place. I was convinced that I was in over my head.

00:11:35

STEPHANIE SAPIENZA

Can you talk a little bit more about what that environment was like at Occidental? You had started to say that you were the only of ten Latino.

00:11:42

JESUS TREVINO

When I arrived at Occidental College, it was a bit of a shock because there were--it was a virtually all Caucasian school. I think I was one of maybe ten Spanish surname people out of maybe 2,500 student body. I found out that I hadn't gotten the education I thought I had at Wilson High School. I had gotten A's and B's but that didn't mean anything because I had to take a remedial English course at Occidental College that was offered to freshmen who hadn't--who couldn't come up to par.

00:12:21

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

In any case, the first year at Occidental College was a real struggle for me. It was a real culture clash. I felt I was in with--it was students who were--who had money, whose parents were professionals, who basically were a world that I had not known and so I went into a deep depression and I almost flunked out of the first year.

00:12:53

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

What kept me going was embracing my own culture. When I'd go to school, I would feel out of place and the only thing that would make me feel kind of like I belonged or like I had value was going back to Chicano culture and so I started getting into Chicano music, into Chicano history and so I did my own kind of independent study concurrent with what was going on at Occidental as a student.

00:13:20

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And this is what kept me going and why I didn't drop out the first year. I went through four years of Occidental College and graduated with a BA in philosophy.

00:13:32

STEPHANIE SAPIENZA

At what point did you or did you start focusing on forming video during your college years?

00:13:37

JESUS TREVINO

My introduction to film and video came with the Chicano Civil Rights Movement. I was--it was my senior year in high--in college at Occidental. Let me start that over again. My introduction to film and video and the important of it that would later play into my life came during my senior year at Occidental College. In March of 1968, the high school walkouts occurred. And this was about 4,000 students from the four major high schools in East Los Angeles walked out to protest the inferior education that they were receiving.

00:14:20

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And I became immediately involved because my sister was one of the walkout participants from Wilson High School and I started attending community meetings. And for the first time in my life I think I began to see Mexican Americans who are articulate, who are smart, and who were championing human justice. And this completely turned me around and I began to realize this was really what I needed to be doing with my life.

00:14:49

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And so within a very short time I got involved, I started the Occidental College of Mexican American Students organization. We did food drives to Delano to help the farm workers and it was during this time that, you know, I was graduating and when I graduated I applied to five graduate schools and were turned down by all five of them. So here I was recently graduated, recently married, no money, no job, and I'm at an East LA community meeting dance and I bump into this guy, knock him on the floor, on the dance floor, I help pick him up and he introduces himself as Frank C. Fuentes.

00:15:33

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And he tells me that he's an advisor for a soon to be started film school for minority students. And at that time, there were a number of producers in Hollywood who had realized that there were virtually no African Americans or Latinos or Asians involved in Hollywood filmmaking and so they petitioned the US Government and they got a grant to create a school which they called "New Communicators".

00:16:03

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And "New Communicators" was accepting bids for students, you know, applications. I applied and I got accepted and that was my introduction to a little Super 8 camera. And it was with that Super 8 camera that all during the summer of 1968 and on into 1969 that I began to document a lot of the key events were going on in the Chicano Civil Rights Movement here in Los Angeles.

00:16:31

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

There was, for example, walkouts, I'd be filming them, picket lines, I'd be filming them, I participated in a seven-day sit-in at the Los Angeles School Board from within, filming from within. And all of this, you know, began to work on me and I began to see the important of how the media could be utilized to better the community.

00:16:54

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And that was, I think, basically when I made my commitment that this was what I wanted to be doing with my life. About this time, KCET was starting up a--for the very first talk show, Mexican American affairs talk show. And they had--they were going to open up a satellite studio in East Los Angeles. They'd gotten a grant for the Ford Foundation and they basically took over an old bank and the vault became the control booth and they created this studio in East Los Angeles.

00:17:31

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And they'd heard about this crazy kid in East LA with this Super-8 camera and so I interviewed and I was hired on and I came on I think first as a PA but within the first month of planning I quickly became associate producer and I wound up writing more than three-quarters of the scripts for the show and I was a co-host and so it was really baptism by fire and that's really how I learned a lot about television production was just on-the-job training.

00:17:59

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

THE AHORA SHOW, called *Ahora* which means “now”, we produced 175 live half-hour shows and so I learned in the live format what it meant to do TV and it was really pretty exhilarating, pretty exciting because every night at seven o'clock, whether we were ready or not, we went on the air. And we did all manner of programming. We did cultural affairs, we had musicians, we had theater, we had art, we--I wrote a whole series of Chicano history.

00:18:36

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And we had--we covered all the events that were going on in the community at the time. We covered all the walkout leaders, the brown berets, all the different civic groups that were involved in East Los Angeles. And that was really my introduction to television.

00:18:54

STEPHANIE SAPIENZA

I just want to stop you real quick. I just want to make sure we fill in a little bit of what happened as far as your filmmaking, a little more on because you made a few films during college, correct? *YA BASTA, LA RAZA NUEVA*, can you talk a little bit just about the finish pieces and what they were?

00:19:10

JESUS TREVINO

Yeah, once I was working and involved at “New Communicators”, we were assigned to do projects. And of course, because of my involvement in East Los Angeles, by then I was very actively involved with a group called the Educational Issues Coordinating Committee. And this was a group of parents and teachers and students and we basically tried to lobby the school board for improved conditions in education.

00:19:40

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

When the East Los Angeles high school students had walked out in March of '68, they had come up with 21 demands and some of them were things like more Mexican food in the restaurant, but there were some substantial ones that had to do with, you know, teaching us our own history and more bilingual teachers. And just generally more respect for who we were as Mexican Americans because in those days, you know, this was following a period where you could be slaughtered for speaking Spanish in campus, where there was huge discrimination against us.

00:20:15

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And where we were basically, you know, we were programmed into classes that were destined to land us menial labor. We were discouraged from taking college prep courses because we'd just be farm workers anyway or factory workers. And so these were the issues that the students have raised and these were the issues that the Educational Issues Coordinating Committee had taken on.

00:20:40

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

I was very involved in that and I began to document a number of events. The whole year of '68 -'69 there was a lot of confrontations and issues related to Chicano education and I wound up documenting all that, first in a little Super- 8 movie, 20 minutes long called *LA RAZA NUEVA*, The New People, that basically talked about these issues. It began with the walkouts. It was basically a little student documentary that began with a walkout and then explored the issues that the walkouts had dealt with and then chronologically spoke about the arrest of walkout leaders and Sidel [sp?] Castro, he was a teacher that had been denied teaching in his job at Lincoln High School because he had been arrested and he was indicted.

00:21:32

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

There were 13 people that were indicted for allegedly conspiring to do the walkouts and they were facing something like 65 years in prison. And it was all later, two years later blown out of court but at the time it was a pretty scary thing. And I was documenting all this and so that was--that became a little 20-minute film called *LA RAZA NUEVA*. In those days I would film it on Super-8 and we would record it on a Sony reel-to-reel, five-inch reel tape recorder.

00:22:04

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And when I showed the final product, I had the projector because we didn't have double system then so I had the projector running and the tape recorder going and since they were obviously not in sync, I'd have to stop the tape recorder every now and then so that they narration would be in sync with what the pictures were doing. That was one of my very first ventures there.

00:22:26

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And then later on, I did a 16-millimeter version of that which became--which was called *YA BASTA*, and on that I was able to utilize--by then at "New Communicators", we were dealing with actors and I was able to dramatize conditions in a Chicano home and so this became my first drama if you will. And I intercut the dramatic scenes with the documentary footage that I'd got and that became *YA BASTA*. Then subsequent to that, that's when I got hired by KCET and from then on, I was pretty much active in the real world, in professional world producing this real live television show.

00:23:07

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And so I put a lot of my filmmaking to the side for a while and it wasn't until 1970 that I did a major piece following the Chicano--August 29th Chicano moratorium, I did a major one-hour show called *CHICANO MORATORIUM AFTERMATH* and that one won me the San Francisco Broadcasting Industry award for best documentary. And it was broadcast nationally and it was kind of put me on the map so to speak in terms of like a real professional because up to then I would say a lot of my stuff had been, not student but certainly not at the level that I would, you know, programs that I would later make.

00:23:56

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And that was followed by my very first half-hour documentary film *AMERICA TROPICAL*, 1971 and that one was a documentary that dealt with the mural that the Mexican muralist, David Alfaro Siqueiros, had painted in downtown Los Angeles in 1932. And it was a very controversial mural because he had painted an Indian crucified on a double cross and on top of the cross was the eagle from the US currency.

00:24:32

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

So it was this big denunciation of US imperialism in Latin America and it was whitewashed shortly thereafter and for 30 years, 40 years, it had been whitewashed and the sun and the rain had begun to work on the whitewash and had begun to wash it off and so now the image of this crucified Indian was beginning to emerge and I saw this as metaphoric because like the Chicano movement, we were emerging and our protests and our identity in the United States that had been occluded all these years was now being manifest by my generation.

00:25:11

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And so I did this documentary, *AMERICA TROPICAL* that tied the two together and basically said, you know, we were whitewashed in 1932 and we're no longer going to be whitewashed. And so this was another one of my first--early first works and then probably the next year, 1972, I completed what is probably one of, you know, my first landmark documentary, *YO SOY CHICANO*, I am Chicano.

00:25:40

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And this was--until that time, there had never been broadcast nationally in the United States a documentary about the Latino experience. Mexican American, Cuban, Puerto Rican, anything. The closest that had been produced has been the *HARVEST OF SHAME* documentary by CBS News which dealt with farm workers but it included a lot of Mexican America farm workers in it.

00:26:09

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

But in terms of identity, of social identity of Chicanos as a people, nothing had ever been done and so I felt that what we needed was a document that would give us a face that would say--a countenance: Who are we? And so I produced this--I wrote a proposal to the Ford Foundation through KCET and we got funded and I produced this one-hour film and I structured it in parallel structure so that I began with the events that were going on in the '70s-1969, '71, '71, related to the Chicano Civil Rights Movement, but I intercut it with a historical overview of who the Chicano was.

00:26:53

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And we began with the Aztecs and moved all the way forward. And so at the end, not only did you get a perspective of the different struggles that were afoot at the time, the political struggle, the farm workers' struggle, the education struggle, but also you got a sense of how this was a culmination of 500 years of Mexican American history. And that film was screened nationally.

00:27:19

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

It was broadcast nationally. There was a group called the Fairness--Accuracy in Media that tried to have it banned from broadcast on PBS, they filed a lawsuit with PBS. KCET's attorneys fought it and we were able to broadcast the film anyway. But it just gives you a sense of the controversy that just doing a film about Mexican Americans in those days was a big deal. And to this day I'm proud to say that to this day it's still being used in universities and colleges, 40 years later.

00:27:55

STEPHANIE SAPIENZA

So you talked about *AMERICAN TROPICAL*, you talked about I think everything on this list. Is there anything else that you did that was particularly memorable for you, that you feel like you--?

00:28:10

JESUS TREVINO

Well, one of the things that was going on at the time at KCET when I first got on there, KCET was primarily--let me start that over again. When I got hired by KCET in 1969 for the *AHORA* Program, I was one of just a handful of Latinos. Until the *AHORA* Program, there were virtually no Latinos and no African Americans at KCET. It was all Caucasian. And this was the legacy of KCET having been started as an educational television station.

00:28:43

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

There was a vibrant forward-looking program manager and station manager named Charles Allan who was hired to basically bring KCET into the 20th Century. And so what he did was he began to hire minorities and integrate the station and I was one of the very first people to do that. His vision was that minorities should be integrated as part of all the different departments so that there was a human affairs department, there was a cultural affairs department.

00:29:23

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

He wanted to see minorities integrated throughout so that all the programming the new department, should have them. Myself and a co--an African American co-producer named Sue Booker, she now goes by the name of Tandaica, we were pretty much against this. We felt we wanted to--we should be part of the general programming, but we felt that our communities, because our communities had been ignored for so many years, that we deserved special programming for our communities as well.

00:29:57

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And we went to the mat for this and we won and we were able to basically create two shows that dealt specifically with the Mexican American community in Los Angeles and with the African American Community in Los Angeles. And in those days, I wouldn't advise it today, but in those days the way you got something like this accomplished was you went to the station and you said unless we have this kind of programming, we're going to bring the whole community down and picket the station for the next year.

00:30:29

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

Well, KCET agreed and we had these shows. My show was called *ACTION CHICANO*, *CHICANO ACTION*. It ran for three years. We did a weekly show. I was executive producer and host and we covered all aspects of the issues at the time affecting the Chicano community. And I was very proud of that but it was one of these hard-fought battles and of course the deal was that the station said "well we'll let you have your show but you've still got to produce for the mainstream shows as well."

00:31:04

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And so I was wearing two hats and gladly so because I felt it was very important to get this kind of programming specifically for our community and the same thing happened with Sue Booker and her program, *STOREFRONT*, which was the African American public affairs show. And again, these shows ran for two, three years, they were on weekly and we covered everything that was going on in our communities in Los Angeles.

00:31:33

STEPHANIE SAPIENZA

Sue Booker? So I'm curious because, you know, we kind of went right into KCET and, you know, I'm just curious. Where did you learn your skills for editing? You seem like you climbed up the ladder pretty quickly at KCET so you obviously came in at some level of knowledge and ability.

00:31:54

JESUS TREVINO

I actually--I actually--in terms of how I acquired my filmmaking skills, I would say that I acquired most of them or the bulk of them while working at KCET. "New Communicators" only lasted nine months and during that nine-month period, I did learn how to operate the little Super 8 camera and the 16-millimeter Aeroflex and 16-millimeter Eclair and we did learn about editing and we did learn about sound and transferring sound and mag stock and editing and the whole deal.

00:32:29

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

But--and that was really what allowed me to make my first little films. But when I got to KCET, I was able to work with real professionals who really have a very mature sense of filmmaking, people like Richard Davies and Barry Nye who went on to have their own careers in filmmaking. And they taught me a lot. They taught me not just about, you know, refine my technical skills, but also just gave me a sense of what it takes to make a good movie and how do you tell a story and how do you bring a story together.

00:33:08

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And we had great collaboration during the early '70s together and it was really a lot of on-the-job training that I was getting there at KCET that allowed me later to make my longer documentaries and eventually move into long form drama.

00:33:25

STEPHANIE SAPIENZA

So just to fill in one quick question...did you know or were you exposed to the film department at all or Bill Moritz and Chick Strand were two of the seminal people that were there at that time. Did you have any interaction with them?

00:33:43

JESUS TREVINO

At the time--when I was going to Occidental College, there was no film department to speak of. There was a film appreciation class taught by Marsha Kinder who is now at USC and there was a lot of filmmaking talk with Bill Moritz who was one of the, I forget, I think he was teaching American Studies at the time. But there was no real full-fledged film program at the time.

00:34:10

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And really my early introduction to the greats of world cinema, the Fellinis and Bergmans and Kurosawas, was through Marsha Kinder and the course she taught and she was very good at it and she wound up later, I think, writing a book based on her lectures to us at Occidental. She was terrific and she really inspired us and gave me a sense of the potential of film and really piqued my interest in doing drama.

00:34:37

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

Because until then I had been doing, you know, I didn't know until later, I did all the documentary work, but I remember those courses and of course by then I was very familiar with the greats and I was going to Kurosawa movies and, you know, all the foreign filmmakers and getting an awareness of that and that kind of helped shape my eventual direction toward drama.

00:35:07

STEPHANIE SAPIENZA

So there was a period where you were filming for--I'm sorry, I think you already--

00:35:14

JESUS TREVINO

[overlapping] Yeah, I would just add too that Chick Strand, I don't think had come to Occidental then. I think she came much later, but Bill Moritz was there.

00:35:23

STEPHANIE SAPIENZA

What you were speaking about earlier when you were filming for *YA BASTA*, was that the Chicano Liberation Conference, was that covered or--

00:35:32

JESUS TREVINO

[overlapping] No, while at "New Communicators", in March of 1969 while I was at "New Communicators", we got word that there was going to be a big conference in Denver, Colorado and it was an all-points call went out to Chicano youth. Until that time, the Mexican American youth community had only met once before in the late 1930s. There was an organization--organizing meeting in the late 1930s and then since that time there had--there had not been virtually any organizing with youth.

00:36:10

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

My generation was the Baby Boom generation and so for the first time we had these huge numbers of Mexican American youth and so in March of 1969 Rodolfo Corky Gonzales called together this national meeting and I approached my then--the director of the "New Communicators" school and I said I've got to go film this.

00:36:37

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And so I was able to secure 5,000 feet of black and white footage and an Eclair for a week and a Nagra for a week and three of us went out, myself, Bobby Romero and Martin Quiroz, jumped into a VW and we drove to Denver and we spent a week filming this very historic event. In retrospect it became one of the--perhaps a seminal event that crystallized the Chicano Civil Rights Movement, because until that time, we were calling ourselves Mexican Americans.

00:37:10

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

After that week we began to call ourselves Chicano. During that--at that conference, we came up with the concept of Aztlan. Aztlan is the name given to the ancestral home of the Mashika Indians. Before settling in Mexico City in what is today Mexico City, the Mashikas were in quest for a homeland that would have an eagle eating a serpent. And they found the eagle eating the serpent all right. The symbolic quest. It was on a small island in the middle of Lake Texcoco and that is today what is Mexico City.

00:37:54

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

So they built the Aztec Empire out of that. But where had they come from? They had come from the north and the west in a place called the Aztlan, the place of reeds and herons and it was described as an island with seven caves and some natural catastrophe took place and they had to travel south looking for this new homeland.

00:38:18

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And so we realized that Aztlan was the American Southwest and that our ancestors are Mashika ancestors that lived here long before there was any United States and in those days, in the '60s, we were--even then we were being called go back to Mexico and you're a stranger here, you're a foreigner. And we realized that in fact we were not foreigners and the concept of Aztlan became the mythical poetic homeland of the Chicano.

00:38:47

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And so we embraced that concept and so then you began to see organizations using the term Aztlan and using the term Chicano. And so it was a very important conference for that reason. And I filmed it and I was fortunate enough to film it. Just as an anecdote, 25 years later, when I was producing the Chicano Civil Rights series for PBS called Chicano, History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement, I went looking for that footage because it had gotten lost over time.

00:39:19

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

A year later I couldn't find it. Someone had taken it out of the lab and no one know who and so for 25 years this footage was lost. And it was 25 years later I finally tracked it down to the basement of the daughter of Corky Gonzales, one of the civil rights movement leaders, and there was this huge box about so big jammed full of film and reels and videos and every winter that basement would become flooded to a foot or two and so the whole bottom of the box had eroded away and all the film and stuff that was on the bottom had corroded.

00:40:07

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

But on top of the box were these virgin rolls of black and white work print and it was the footage that I had shot 25 years earlier and I was doing this and gasping. It was pretty awesome. And that's the footage that we wound up using in the Chicano Civil Rights documentary series. Are we running out of tape?

end tape one

TAPE 2: JESUS TREVINO

00:00:36

STEPHANIE SAPIENZA

Can you talk about meeting Jose Luis Ruiz and Sylvia Morales and right where that happened?

00:00:42

JESUS TREVINO

Yeah, I was--after I was working at KCET for a while and I had my program *ACTION CHICANO*, I began to meet many of the other young filmmakers who were--who like myself had a vision for Chicano cinema, that we wanted to do films about our community. And one of these was a young man from UCLA who had just completed a student film there. His name was Jose Luis Ruiz and he came to see me at the studio at KCET and we became friends.

00:01:16

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And shortly thereafter, he got the opportunity, he was offered a job at KABC to work on a weekly Mexican American affairs talk show called--how quickly we forget. Called--it'll come to me. Wait, let me do that one again. While I was at KCET in the early '70s, I received a visit from a young filmmaker from UCLA named Jose Luis Ruiz. And we got to know each other and we were united, we found out, by this common vision of wanting to do filmmaking for our Chicano community.

00:02:02

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And we began to talk about concepts like what is Chicano cinema. And we became very excited about this and about this time he was offered a job at KABC to be a cameraman for what they were launching as their first Mexican American affairs weekly talk show. And I advised him to take it. He was being offered a job either as a cameraman or as a producer and he wasn't sure which to take.

00:02:30

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And we had a long discussion and I advised him he could be more powerful as a producer and so he took that job and he began to run his own series which he called *REFLECIONES*--Reflections. And during this time he knew of another UCLA student, Sylvia Morales and he hired her to work as a camerawoman on *REFLECIONES* and because we were doing very similar things, myself with *Action Chicano* and Luis and Sylvia with *REFLECIONES*, we began to work very closely together and we became really good friends.

00:03:05

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And we were able for the first time--we were just a first generation of Mexican Americans who were, for the first time doing programming to our community and it was new to us and so we needed to discuss amongst ourselves what are we doing and what issues need to be covered and how are we covering them and how do we create more opportunities for other Latinos in television?

00:03:26

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And it was at a time when the FCC had been challenged by a group of Chicano attorneys and they had found this clause in the--A group of Chicano attorneys had discovered that there was a clause in the programming license that said that you had to-- [technical]

00:04:03

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

I'll start all over again. While I was at KCET, I received a visit from a young man from UCLA, student there, just completed his student film, called--his name was Jose Luis Ruiz. And we were very taken with each other because we both had a common vision about what we should be doing with media for our community. And we began to discuss for the first time what is Chicano cinema and how could we use television and cinema to better and further advance our community.

00:04:32

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And at about this time he got offered a job at KABC. They were starting up a local weekly talk show about Mexican Americans and he was debating whether he should take the job as a producer or as a cameraman. And I advised him that he should be a producer because he's have more power and he could have more of a say in what kind of programming would be done. And so he did take the job as producer and then I believe he hired Sylvia Morales, another UCLA student to be the camerawoman for the series.

00:05:04

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And at this time, the three of us became very good friends and part of it was we all had a common vision and we had at our disposal this medium, television and we could use it now to better our communities and so it was really an exhilarating time when we had long discussion about what kind of programming should our--does our community need, what kind of issues need to be addressed and how can we do all this using our TV shows?

00:05:32

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

It was at a time when the--a number of Mexican American legal groups had challenged the Federal Communications Commission because many of these television stations were completely ignoring the Mexican American and the African American communities. And there was a clause in their license that said that they had to program to all their communities.

00:05:56

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And so the way in which all the networks, the stations in Los Angeles responded to this was "Okay, we'll create a talk show for you guys," and so in the early '70s, you saw this proliferation, every TV network station had a Latin talk show and an African American talk show and they had names like *BIEN VENIDOS* and *THE SIESTA'S OVER* and a number of other kinds of programs, *REFLECCIONES*, *ACTION CHICANO*, *IMPACTO*, and so you found on every station, usually Sunday mornings, there we'd be with our little talk shows.

00:06:34

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

But it was an exciting time because I think it fired us up about the potential for television but it also kind of inspired us to look at film and to realize, you know, we could be doing so much more if we were making documentaries. And so that's when we all decided, you know, we need to start exploring the documentary field. And that's what led, in my case, to the documentaries, *AMERICA TROPICAL*, *YO SOY CHICANO*, *LA RASO NEEDA*, *CHICANO MORATORIUM AFTERMATH*.

00:07:12

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

In the case of Jose Luis Ruiz it led to *CINCO VIDAS*, and to *THE UNWANTED*, the major documentaries for NBC. With the case of Sylvia Morales it led to *CHICANA*, the first documentary about the Mexican American woman experience. So it was a very exhilarating time for us and these early documentaries would later lay the groundwork for the next step of Chicano cinema which was long form drama.

00:07:45

STEPHANIE SAPIENZA

So let's see.

00:07:52

STEPHANIE SAPIENZA (CONTINUED)

Can you talk about your involvement with La Raza Unida, or can you talk about that?

00:07:56

JESUS TREVINO

I haven't--while I was at KCET in 1972, I--let me start that over again. In 1972, I did a documentary called *YO SOY CHICANO*. And one of the people that I interviewed was the founder of the Raza Unida Political Party, Jose Angel Gutierrez. Jose Angel Gutierrez had created this all Chicano, all Spanish surnamed political party, a third political party, and had won a number of victories in small towns in south Texas.

00:08:32

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And he had created quite a stir down there and the result of all this was that, in our community, for a community that had been politically disenfranchised for years and years, the Raza Unida Political Party represented the potential for us taking political clout and getting our people elected to political office. At this time, in the late '60, early '70s, there were very, very few elected Latino officials.

00:09:00

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And the Democrats took us for granted and the Republicans didn't care about us. What we decided to do with the Raza Unida was create a national political party that would be comprised of Mexican Americans and that would challenge the Democratic and Republican candidates in every district we could find. And so throughout the southwest in the early '70s, you saw this--the presence of a number of political parties running Raza Unida candidates in Tucson, in Phoenix, in Los Angeles, in San Antonio, and some of these people were getting elected.

00:09:44

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And so in 1972, by 1972, I was in a very much an adherent to the Raza Unida political party. I was a member of the party, and I was helping advise their national publicity campaign, if you will. And at that time, the 1972 presidential elections were coming up and Jose Angel Gutierrez called me and said, "We're going to have our first national convention in September and we need to get the word out to the press."

00:10:15

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And one of the things that the Raza Unida political party was adamant about was its independence. It did not want to be affiliated with the Democrats or the with the Republicans. And I said to Jose Angel Gutierrez, he said you know, "We've got to get all the national media to come to this--to cover our event, our national political party convention,". And I said "Well if you really want to get people to go there, why don't you let leak that we're going to endorse McGovern?"

00:10:49

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

McGovern was running against Nixon in 1972. And he said, "But we can't do that. We can't support a Democrat." And I said, "Well you know it and I know it, but the national media doesn't know it." So he agreed and we leaked out to the National Press that very likely at this convention in September, there was going to be an endorsement for George McGovern to the Presidency and that we were going to encourage all Mexican Americans to vote Democrat and get McGovern elected.

00:11:22

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

Well, every news media in town showed up: ABC, NBC, ABC, PBS had a group called National Impact, all the newspapers and New York Times, the Washington Post, everyone was there over this weekend. It was actually a week, of this national conventional convention. And I wore two hats. Months prior, I was the national media coordinator and I put together 500 media packages with articles, with bios, with profiles, with success stories, with photos.

00:12:04

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And I did this every weekend at KCET, I'd go into the Xerox room and I'd just use KCET's facilities to mass manufacture 500 press kits. And at one point, my general manager called me in and said, "What's going on? Every weekend you're here? And I noticed that we have this enormous Xerox bill. what's going on?" I said "Okay, I'll stop." By then I'd already done what I'd set out to do which was I had compiled all these press kits which then I proceeded to mail to every new outlet in the United States.

00:12:39

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

So we got huge coverage of the news there. While at the convention I wore two hats. I was the national media coordinator, and I was also doing a documentary called *LA RAZA UNIDA* for myself, for KCET, for my show *ACTION CHICANO*. And those were the two hats I wore at the Raza Unida convention.

00:13:03

STEPHANIE SAPIENZA

I'm curious, we go mostly chronologically but I'm going to break in here just time-wise and ask if you were aware of the Asco Collective, if they were on your radar at all and what your thoughts were on that.

00:13:14

JESUS TREVINO

I had first met the Asco people in the late '60s. I knew Harry Gamboa who was a walkout leader from Garfield as--and a participant in the education coordinating committee so I had met him through that, through the political aspect of it. And then began to discover that and Gronk and Willie and Patssi were all part of this art collective called Asco. And they were kind of very avant-garde. A lot of people considered them non-political because in those days we were fired up by this very strong indigenous movement within the Chicano movement, very cultural nationalist movement.

00:13:59

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And here was Harry and Gronk and Willie and Patssi getting all fancy dressed up and doing performance art before there was performance art and doing all kinds of crazy stuff and we became--I became friends with them, with Gronk and Harry in particular and I remember Gronk having art exhibits downtown and I would go to them and I would go to Harry's video performances that he would film.

00:14:27

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

It was a pretty exciting time. They were considered very, I think, fringe and most people didn't understand them. I got to be friends with them just as people and I didn't really understand, I think, at the time, I probably didn't appreciate how visionary and avant-garde they really were because I was so steeped in my cultural nationalist *VIVA LA RAZA* deal as were most filmmakers at that time of the Chicano community.

00:14:57

STEPHANIE SAPIENZA

Yeah, one of the things we try to get is sense of our, you know, any kind of solidarity within a particular movement and feel if there's any kind of crossover or how you think that your work related to what they were doing or do you think that together collectively that it was any kind of movement at all.

00:15:16

JESUS TREVINO

Well, I think, I don't know that they were a movement as much as they were a phenomena, but one of the things that was going on in the late '60s and early '70s was the gelling of a common purpose particularly amongst African American, Latino and Asians in the field of media. As part of the Educational Issues Committee, one of our agendas was me writing textbooks, California State textbooks and it was an effort that we joined with VC, with Visual Communications, in terms of making sure that all of the minorities were represented.

00:15:54

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And in years later, particularly beginning around 1976, '77, and continuing through 1980s, there was a lot of collaborative coalition work being done amongst African American, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Asian filmmakers at the national level, in terms of influencing NEH, CPB and NEA. In about 1977 there was a number of people who had come to the San Antonio Cinefestival which was one of the very first Chicano Mexican Latino film festivals.

00:16:43

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And we had representatives there from CPB, and from NEA, from NEH, and it was clear that none of us were getting funded. And so we basically read these guys the riot act and we said, you know, what's going on. And we realized that what we really needed to do was go back to DC and lobby. And so a number of us on our own dime flew to DC and did a series of meetings with the heads of NEH, NEA, CPB, PBS, and we basically said, you know, "We're the undeserved--undeserved community and you need to--how do we get integrated?"

00:17:20

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And to give you an example, in those days, there was a select group of people who would serve on panels that would approve funding and the panels were invariably the old guard, the White, Caucasian filmmakers of the traditional documentary format at the time and so they were the Pennybakers and the Frederick Wisemans and people like that.

00:17:44

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And so who did they fund? Well, the funded people they knew and so we were on the outside, minorities. And so we began to change that. And one of our first successes during the late '70s and early '80s was being able to integrate the review panels, not only the ones that read the proposals but also the ones that actually sat around and watched the movies and said "Okay, this proposal's the one that we should give the money to."

00:18:11

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And so now for the first time beginning around '78 and continuing through the middle '80s, you began to see minorities working at this level and being invited to be on a panel and of course once we were on a panel, we all kind of helped one another in terms of solidarity and we began to see for the very first time in history, we began to see minority filmmakers getting funded to do their films where before they had been totally left out of the pictures.

00:18:42

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

So that was one of the very successful coalition efforts. Later on the person who I think masterminded and was key to raising this to yet another level, was Jose Luis Ruiz because he worked with the different consortia, the minority consortia and PBS and these consortia were a hard-fought battle. At first PBS said, "You know, we don't want to give--why can't you just apply to the regular funds?" And we were able to successfully say "No, you need to put aside money programming specifically for Native Americans, for Asians, for Latinos, for African Americans."

00:19:24

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

So they created these different consortia and they went from very little funding to big bucks, to a million, million and a half. And all of this was through collaborative coalition work of all these different communities and Luis Ruiz was one of the key people instrumental for that.

00:19:46

STEPHANIE SAPIENZA

So can you talk a little bit about Teatro Campesino and how it sort of affected your--how you went forward and as far as your artistic vision and changed your work or did it change?

00:20:00

JESUS TREVINO

While I was at KCET, I produced the film *YO SOY CHICANO* and it was my introduction to Daniel Valdez and Luis Valdez. I asked Daniel Valdez to do the music for my documentary *YO SOY CHICANO* and he agreed and I began to become friends with Daniel and with Luis Valdez and I visited them up north in San Juan Bautista where they had their operations. And basically I became infatuated with the circus.

00:20:31

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

They were doing theater for our community and it was exhilarating and I was doing cinema and TV for our community but what was missing for me in many ways was this notion of drama, working with actors. And so in 1974, I decided to leave my job at KCET, my very well paying job at KCET and move north and join the Teatro Campesino. And I had long talks with my then colleague and good friend Jose Luis Ruiz and we decided that we were both going to leave our very lucrative jobs at KCET and NBC and we were going to join the Teatro and it was a collective experience there.

00:21:15

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

You got a hundred dollars a month to live on whether you needed it or not, couples got two hundred bucks a month and we all lived as a commune. So this is radically different from the kind of job that I was doing at KCET and that Luis was doing at NBC as you might imagine. That experiment lasted for about a year and at the end of that time, it became clear to me that I couldn't do a lot of the film work that I wanted to do with the Teatro.

00:21:54

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

The whole notion of collectivity was one that worked in principle but when it came down to brass tacks, I began to see many of the flaws inherent in it. You know, those of us who are more educated wound up doing most of the work and the lesser educated didn't do as much of the work. We were all being paid equally so to speak and so there was a lot--there was resentments around that and there was a number of other creative differences that arose between myself and Luis Valdez and Luis Ruiz and Daniel Valdez.

00:22:29

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

We were the triumph or of the four that were kind of the key players. And at a certain point, Jose Luis Ruiz and I decided we were going to leave then come back to Los Angeles and we did. And I think the experience for me reflected, showed me that I needed to hunker down more in my own projects and that I had a vision and that that vision could be easily side-swiped or, you know, disoriented with working with a whole, big collective of people.

00:23:05

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And that I had something to offer and the best way to offer it was to do it through myself, through my own filmmaking. And so when I came back I was very determined by then that I was going to try to get back into filmmaking and pursue drama as a format, long-form drama films, whatever. And I proceeded to try to do that and the couple, three years later that I was successful in doing my first feature film, *RAICES DE SANGRE*, which was produced in Mexico.

00:23:44

STEPHANIE SAPIENZA

Did you talk about--I don't think you did. Did you talk about the making of *IN OUR LIVES*? Can you talk about it?

00:23:49

JESUS TREVINO

Yeah. While I was with Teatro Campesino, Luis Ruiz and I and Montesuma Esparza, had applied to--well, let me start this all over again. In the early 1970s, the McGraw-Hill Company owned five television stations and they had ignored their Latino constituency. And some of their TV stations were in major markets like San Diego that had a lot of Latinos in it. And a number of Chicano attorneys got together and sued them and out of the suit came a compromise and the compromise was that McGraw-Hill agreed that it would do--they would produce ten documentaries on the Mexican American experience in the United States, ten one-hour films.

00:24:46

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And so they said well who's going to do these films? Well, they invited myself, Moctesuma Esparza, and Jose Luis Ruiz to each do one film. And whoever did the best film would get the rest of the seven documentaries. At the time, Jose Luis Ruiz and I were in the process of moving to San Juan to be part of the Teatro Campesino. So we brought the films with us and under the auspices of the Teatro Campesino, we produced two one-hour documentaries. One was called *PRIMA VERA*, Springtime, and the other one was *CALLED IN OUR LIVES*.

00:25:24

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And each of us, Luis did *PRIMA VERA* and I did *IN OUR LIVES* and these are documentaries--they were supposed to be documentaries but in the same way that I had utilized drama in *YO SOY CHICANO*, I decided that we were going to create drama vignettes for this. And so this film, *IN OUR LIVES*, really became more of a docu-drama. Dramatic elements interspersed with documentary.

00:25:56

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And unfortunately, my film, well both films had a certain political bent to them that McGraw-Hill was not happy with. In particular, my film dealt with the--was very supportive of the farm worker's struggle and McGraw-Hill got to the point where they said we don't want you to--we cannot allow you to finish the film the way it is so if you want to receive your final payment, you have to redo the film.

00:26:30

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And I of course didn't want to do it, but the Teatro Campesino insisted that we needed the money and so we wound up giving back the film to McGraw-Hill and receiving our final payment and McGraw-Hill retained the title to it and put it on the shelf and it's never been seen. And that was really the, I think one of the factors that really for me signaled that I was going to be a more effective filmmaker if I worked by myself and not with a collective.

00:27:05

STEPHANIE SAPIENZA

So did you say that *IN OUR LIVES*, is it available to be seen at all?

00:27:13

JESUS TREVINO

No, I don't even know where it's at.

00:27:17

STEPHANIE SAPIENZA

Well, can you talk about when you came back and why you ended up going off to Boston and the making of *INFINITY FACTORY*?

00:27:25

JESUS TREVINO

Well, when I got back from--when I returned to Los Angeles having spent a year in San Juan Bautista with Teatro Campesino, I was broke, out of a job and without any prospects of employment. So it was a hard time for several months. I found out that being away from Los Angeles just for over a year did nothing to make me employable. And there was this job that was being offered in Boston to be executive producer of a children's mathematical television show.

00:28:01

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

It was to teach mathematics to the target audience was 9-14 year old students with an emphasis on minorities. And at first I thought this is not for me. I'm a political filmmaker. What am I going to be doing this? But actually I had some sense pounded into me by some colleagues who said, Trevino, you get an opportunity to do this then you can call your own shots. You can do with it what you want. [technical]

00:28:55

STEPHANIE SAPIENZA

You were talking about Boston, your friends had told you that you should come out.

00:29:02

JESUS TREVINO

While I was in Los Angeles, having left the Teatro Campesino, I was broke, I couldn't find a job of any kind and this news got around that there was this job opening in Boston. The Educational Development Center was looking for an executive producer to produce 52-half hour children's shows geared to minority students from 9-14 years old, and it was to teach them mathematics. Well, I'm a mathophobe. I don't know anything about math. I flunked algebra.

00:29:40

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

I figured this is not for me and I'm also a political person. Well, it turns out that the very things that I thought disqualified me for this job, in fact qualified me for it. I interviewed, and one of the questions was how would you teach this to children, mathematics to children and it gave me a whole list of things they wanted to teach. And I said, well, you know, I'm a mathophobe. I don't know anything. If I can understand it, then I think a nine-year-old can understand it.

00:30:09

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And so I would make it, first of all, so that I could understand it. And that got me the job. And so I went back to Boston and I lived there for a little over a year and we did in fact produce 52 half-hour shows and they dealt with--they dealt with mathematics but because of who I am, I was able to bring this ethnic sensitivity to it and so what we did was we created a storefront drugstore in Yonkers, New York run by an African American family.

00:30:44

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

It was a drama and we saw how mathematics was used in their lives and then I created a similar one in East Los Angeles, a panaderia, bakery, and we saw how mathematics was used in their lives. And then the unifying element was a brownstone set in Boston with kids in the target age. And so using this I was able to kind of infuse our ethnic cultural experience in a creative way to teach mathematics and it won awards and it was a very successful show.

00:31:21

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And during this time, I had--for the first time I had the opportunity to devote myself to a screenplay and I was working pretty hard in those days. During the week I would do *INFINITY FACTORY* and on weekends I would work on my screenplay. Prior to that, in '75--'74, '75, the President of Mexico had been meeting with Mexican American leaders and he had met with Jose Angel Gutierrez of the Raza Unida political party and they had discussed the notion that the Mexican audience needed to know who the Chicano was.

00:32:02

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And so the president said, well we should make--we, the Mexicans, the Mexican government, should make a movie to explain the Chicano experience to our Mexican audience. Who should do it? Well, my name came up and I got commissioned to write the screenplay. And so all during the year that I was at *INFINITY FACTORY*, I was also writing this screenplay and by the end of the year I'd completed this two-hour feature film screenplay about the--I began explaining what the Chicano experience was to Mexicans, but the more I got into it, the more I realized that many Chicanos has prejudiced notions of what the Mexicano was.

00:32:45

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And so it wound up being--explaining the Mexican immigrant experience to Chicanos as well and it all focused on a--the border, on Macilla Doras, labor intensive factories. In those days there were companies, many companies that would have plants on both sides of the border and they'd do the labor-intensive work on the Mexican side, and then the shirts or skirts or whatever they were assembling would be assembled on the US side so that it could be branded made in USA when in fact most of the work had taken place in Mexico.

00:33:23

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

So I did my *RAICES DE SANGRE*, Roots of Blood spoke to the need for an international union of Mexicans on one side and Chicanos on the other working together for better--the betterment of better wages and better working conditions against this US multi-national corporation. Very political. So political that first of all I was unsure that it was going to be allowed to be made, but they did--they had made a commitment to shoot it. Then I had to pitch them on the idea that I should be the director which I proceeded to.

00:34:01

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And they were of course who are you and have you ever had an experience directing a feature film and no I haven't but I'm running, you know, a \$5 million TV show in Boston and I'm doing 52 half-hour shows with drama and believe me I can do it. And so they agreed and I was assigned to be the director for *RAICES DE SANGRE*. And we shot it in '76 beginning I guess June and through December of that year.

00:34:32

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And then in December of that year there was a presidential change and a new president came in. And--I'll do that again. [technical]

00:34:56

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

So I finished the script for *RAICES DE SANGRE* and I was invited down to Mexico and I met with the then head of the Mexican film industry who had been advised that he was going to produce this film. And I had to pitch myself to him and say look, not only have I written this, but being a Chicano, I'm the guy who authentically can interpret the Chicano experience so you need to hire me to direct.

00:35:22

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And of course he was very reluctant at first, who are you ,what is your experience that you've had directing, and I explained to him, look, I'm running this \$5 million show in Boston and I have been doing 52 half hours shows with drama etc. Believe me, I can do this. So after a lot of finagling, they agreed that I would direct the feature film. This was my first, big-time venture out as a director.

00:35:47

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And so we filmed it in 1976 beginning I think in June with pre-production and shooting in September, October and editing through December. What I didn't know was that after December there was a presidential shift. The old president who had authorized this motion picture was leaving office and a new president was coming in. And I didn't know how this worked in Mexico. And so one Friday, my production manager--post-production manager comes up to me and says, "I'm leaving my job today."

00:36:23

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

"I just got fired, 'cause a new guy's coming in on Monday. But you ought to finish your film as quickly as you can." So Monday I get called into the new guy's office and he says you have two weeks to finish your film. And I said "I'm almost there but I haven't finished the sound mix, and I have all these opticals in it, dissolves and wipes and what not." He says, "You're not being sanctioned to have any optics in this movie. It's gotta be cuts and whatever you have ready in two weeks is what we're going to produce and that's the end of your movie."

00:36:59

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

So I, you know, did what I had to do, which was I re-cut the film to just be cuts and not opticals, wipes or dissolves or anything. And I quickly mixed the last music and I put it together. Two weeks later it was done and, you know, I worked day and night to get it done and then it was promptly shelved for the next year because the new president was not interested in such a political film.

00:37:30

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And it wasn't until 1979 that I was able to finally get it released and the way that came about was that the star of *RAICES DE SANGRE* is an actor named Richard Inigis and Richard Inigis was also the actor/star of a movie directed by Tony Bill called *BOULEVARD NIGHTS*. And on the first weekend of *Boulevard NIGHTS*, they made gazillion dollars and so I took the variety article that said, you know, three million dollars in two days or something--in those days it was a lot of money--to the head of Azteca, which was the Mexican subsidiary of the Mexican film industry in Mexico.

00:38:15

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And I said you guys have a movie on your shelf starring this actor that just made \$3 million for these gringos and you guys are stupid if you don't take this movie, subtitle it and get it out to the same audience. And so they saw the wisdom in my argument and we did an English subtitled version and it was released nationally in the United States in the Spanish language theater circuit and it made a killing for these people. They made a lot of money off of it.

00:38:41

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And I was just happy to get the film finally seen, and it has become kind of a classic in its own right now just because of its history and the fact that it was the first co-production between Chicanos and Mexicans and the theme obviously, the highly charged political thing.

end tape two

TAPE 3: JESUS TREVINO

00:00:31

STEPHANIE SAPIENZA

What was--at that point did you make any more personal or documentary films, any films that were your own before you started working more towards the Hollywood mainstream?

00:00:41

JESUS TREVINO

Yeah, following *RAICES DE SANGRE* in 1975, I began work on a major project with I envisioned as the history of Chicanos in the United States. It was going to be an eight parter, eight one-hour dramas beginning with the Mexican American. [technical]

00:01:09

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

After I finished directing *RAICES DE SANGRE* and finally got it released in 1979, I began work on a major project which I'd been gestating in me for years and years. I was very taken by the notion that Chicano history was unknown even to ourselves. And so I came up with the idea of a multi-part PBS series called *LA HISTORIA*, The History, and it was to be eight one-hour dramas focusing on key events and issues in Chicano history beginning with the Mexican American war in 1948 and continuing to the present.

00:01:53

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And I basically took that period of time and divided it up into eight pieces and found stories that were important in each. I got development money from the National Endowment for the Humanities and from PBS and I hired people to write screenplays based on each of these eight themes and I wrote one myself, *SEGUIN*, about the Chicano story or the Mexican story of Mexicans who fought inside the Alamo. We always here about the Mexicans who attacked the Alamo but little is known about the Mexican Americans who fought inside the Alamo defending Texas.

00:02:32

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

As it turned out, this was a time when Reagan came into office. Some of the films that were being funded by NEH and NEA were very political and the Reagan administration felt that government money was going used for communist propaganda. And so all the projects that had been funded in the late '70s began to be defunded in the early '80s. And so my project died but I was able to secure enough funds to do a one-hour film called *SEGUIN* which was about the Mexican Americans at the Alamo.

00:03:13

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And so that was my next dramatic piece which I wrote and directed and that was released on KCET--PBS nationally as part of the American Playhouse drama series in 1982. Following that, Jose Luis Ruiz and I decided that we wanted to continue to make documentaries and so we formed our own company and we held our company produced two or three films but our experience was so negative at the time because all of--at that time, the only funding you were getting to do documentaries was coming from PBS.

00:03:53

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And they had a guy who was running PBS who had very decided views on the kind of documentaries that should be made. He had once worked for *THE VOICE OF AMERICA* and he felt that one of the documentaries that we were--we had undertaken was too political. We did a documentary called *NEIGHBORS: THE UNITED STATES AND MEXICO* and one of the areas that we uncovered was that while our southern border was a problem for us because of the illegal immigration coming through, that Mexico had a very similar problem in its southern border with Guatemalans illegally coming through and that that problem was being exacerbated by the United States government training the Guatemalan army into basically burn and pillage campaigns in the northern part of the country.

00:04:50

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

This was motivating thousands and thousands of Indians to leave Guatemala and flee to Mexico. So we decided to cover this part of our story of how the intricacies between the US and Mexico, the irony of the fact that we were creating this problem for Mexico's southern border. We went there to Chopas and we found 80,000 Chopian Indians from Guatemala living in Mexico forced out by the training that the US government had given to the Guatemalan army.

00:05:22

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And these people were--we interviewed countless people who talked about the army coming in, 300 women and children put into a barn and set on fire, the same thing with men. It was just horrific. And it was all because they were after guerillas that they thought were hiding within the people and so the best way to do it is you just wipe out the people. This was a story that went from a 20 minute segment of a one-hour film to a five minute segment to one sentence.

00:05:51

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And at that point we thought, you know, here we are trying to be documentary filmmakers and we get funded and we're not making a lot of money believe me. As you know as a filmmaker, documentaries is not the way to be successful. And we're being--our voice is being compromised anyway so what are we doing? So we had a heart-to-heart with each other and we decided to fold the company.

00:06:18

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

We decided there's got to be another way to make a living and we're certainly not going to be doing it this way where we're being censored by PBS. And so we folded our company. Just, you know, the reason why we couldn't finish the film the way we wanted was because PBS said if you do we're just not going to pay you the last payment. And of course we owed all this money to the labs and the editor and all of that so we had to pay everybody off and so the only way we could get the money to pay them off was basically to compromise our vision, our artistic vision.

00:06:55

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And that was really what convinced us that we needed--we didn't want to do that anymore.

00:07:01

STEPHANIE SAPIENZA

What was the name of the company?

00:07:04

JESUS TREVINO

Inter-American Satellite.

00:07:10

STEPHANIE SAPIENZA

Was anybody else besides you and Jose involved, from the community?

00:07:15

JESUS TREVINO

No, no, no. We were basically a two-man operation. I mean, we hired people to work with us as crew: Sound people, camera people, etc., production managers, but that was based on the, you know, when we needed to go filming and stuff. We produced two one-hour films, *NEIGHBORS TO US AND MEXICO* and *YO SOY, I am*, which was kind of a decade later after *YO SOY CHICANO*. Where are we today? That kind of thing.

00:07:52

STEPHANIE SAPIENZA

So what led the drive to start working on the more traditional Hollywood there?

00:07:58

JESUS TREVINO

Okay. Following--let me just--following--after Jose Luis Ruiz and I folded our company, it became clear to me that I was having real problems making a living and I took my *RAICES DE SANGRE* and *SEGUIN*, my two dramas, and I would go to studios and try to get interviews with agents to see if I could get--break into Hollywood. And no one was listening and I couldn't get past the secretaries.

00:08:42

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

So there came a time when I decided I was going to give up filmmaking so I moved to Arizona and I started teaching at the University of Arizona and I enrolled in the creative writing program and I gave up filmmaking. And about a year or two after that, I decided to move back to Los Angeles and no sooner had I arrived than I got wind that they were--CBS was going to do an after school special about Chicano gangs, titled gangs, and that they were looking for a Mexican American or Latino director to direct it.

00:09:21

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

So I--on my own I called up the producer, I had them send me the screenplay, I read the screenplay. It was dramatically very exciting but it was full of stereotypes and was not really the authentic community voice. It was very much as many films in Hollywood that depict a Latino, done from a perspective of the Great White Father.

00:09:54

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And so I--it was a tough time for me because I really needed the job. I was unemployed but I wrote back. I called the producer and said, "you know, I'm sorry I can't do this based on my whole trajectory of political filmmaking I just can't seem myself bending to do this film that perpetuates the stereotypes."

00:10:19

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

So I sent him a five-page single-spaced critique of the screenplay and to my amazement he called me the next day and said, "We don't agree with everything you said but we definitely want you to--hire you to direct but also hire you to work with the writer to rewrite this. To reflect your community's point of view we want to do the right thing." Well, that was just a huge mind-blower for me.

00:10:46

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

I just picked myself up off the floor and said “My God this doesn’t happen.” This is not the way Hollywood operates. So I agreed to do it and I directed it and that film won the Director's Guild Award of American Award for best daytime drama that year and that put me on the map. All of a sudden those doors that had been closed to me were open to me now. All of a sudden I was getting calls from William Morris, from ICM, from CAA, saying we want to sign you on and represent you.

00:11:18

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And it was about as fundamental a shift in your life as you can expect going from a year or two having given up filmmaking because I couldn't break down the doors, to all of a sudden winning the Director's Guild Award for my directing and getting an agent. And that opened up the episodic world for me.

00:11:40

STEPHANIE SAPIENZA

So tell me about what you think about the shift from say producing to directing. Do you feel it was a natural shift for you? Was there any growing pains so to speak or just a natural progression? Did you feel better in that position of director than you did as a producer?

00:11:56

JESUS TREVINO

Well, I think that--I think the question of whether I prefer to direct drama through things like episodic television which I've been doing now for the past 30 years or more versus documentary, I enjoy doing both and I do both. What I discovered is you can't make a living as a documentary filmmaker. And often it involves compromising your point of view and it takes forever. In a recent conversation with a documentary filmmaker, the producer told me that it took her seven years from beginning to fundraise to completion of her film.

00:12:45

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And I asked myself, if you're in your 20s and it takes you seven years to do a documentary, you can count on one hand the number of documentaries you're going to make in your lifetime. And I could not let myself do that so the formula that I've come up with, I work as a gun-for-hire director in episodic television and I squirrel away some money and use that money to make my own documentaries.

00:13:11

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

I just completed one of those ventures, a one-hour documentary called *VISIONS OF AZTLAN* which was broadcast last month on KCET, completely self-financed and done on my own dime, through my own company, from money that I've made directing episodic television. And this is my way of giving back to my community and also expressing myself artistically, pursuing the visions that I have about the kind of filmmaking I want to be doing and still paying the bills.

00:13:48

STEPHANIE SAPIENZA

So just generally, I think kind of mostly got caught up now to present day so I'm going to ask a few more general questions. It was curious about the concept of, first of all, your filmmaking philosophy so to speak. We always ask this just to talk about if you have a particular philosophy, when you go in to make a film if you're going for a certain theme. And then also just your concept of documentary and drama, I can see this trend of you combining those two.

00:14:21

STEPHANIE SAPIENZA (CONTINUED)

Sometimes doing them completely separately, but then sometimes combining them. Talked about a couple films where you used dramatic footage and then cut it in. How do you see those two relating?

00:14:37

JESUS TREVINO

What are the films that I want to make? Well, the films that I want to make, I think, in large part, have to do with who I am as a Chicano. When I was growing up, what remains in my memory is a young man who hated himself for being Mexican because when he was growing up, there were no images of positive images of Mexican Americans.

00:15:07

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And in my lifetime I've striven to change that, to do video and television and film that portrays Latinos in a positive light that give some sense of who we are as real people and to convey through our personal experience the universal human experience of what it means to be a human being on the face of this earth. And so my--the determining factor what stories I focus on is basically motivated by that.

00:15:37

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

I look to my community and I ask myself, what kinds of films do we need and I try to answer to that question. Some of them have been dramatic in form, the bulk of them in terms of the Chicano experience have had to do with documentary format. I enjoy both. The frustration that sometimes comes from directing episodic is certainly not that it isn't fun. I enjoy directing, I enjoy working with high caliber of actors and technicians and directors of photography and production designer and writers and producers that you find in the episodic world.

00:16:17

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

This is the crème-de-la-crème of America and it's a great honor to be among them and be working with them and to produce and contribute to this universal statement of who we are as Americans. Having said that, there is a special kind of satisfaction that comes from seeing your own vision realized and that is what I'm able to do through my documentary work in particular.

00:16:39

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And so I don't see the two as being conflictive or contradictory. I see them as two different ways of pursuing my artistic vision and I guess fundamentally I see myself as a storyteller and the stories that I tell are stories about the human experience either as a director on episodic TV or as a documentary filmmaker about Chicanos. In whatever way, it's about the human experience and with respect to my documentary and Chicano work, it's told through the lives of Chicanos.

00:17:19

STEPHANIE SAPIENZA

So when you work with--say you're working with a documentary subject, do you feel that you're more of a vérité filmmaker where you're more hands-off and you like to film things as they unfold or do you ask people to sort of reenact the moment? How do you work when you're working as a director? What's your style, I guess?

00:17:38

JESUS TREVINO

I'm not sure I subscribe that much to the cinema vérité approach that says you film it all and then after you've accumulated 50 hours of footage you try to make a story out of it. I think that's being irresponsible. Although certainly it's much more possible to do that now with video and digital formats than it used to be when Frederick Wiseman used to do it with 16-millimeter film where it's very expensive.

00:18:14

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

I--when I tell a story, I like to know where I'm going. It's possible for me to change it in the course of the journey and I often do and I think part of that is paying close attention to what you're filming and what people are saying and responding to the reality of what the story is that you're trying to tell. So by no means do I impose a vision I already have and say this is going to be set in cement and this is a way that this story's going to be told.

00:18:49

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

A good example is the documentary I just finished, *VISIONS OF AZTLAN*. I have a lot of stock footage pertaining to events in the '60s and '70s and since that was a very formative time for a whole generation of Mexican American artists, I wanted to do a documentary about how this first generation of artists that created what we know today as Chicano art, the Asco generation if you will, how did they get shaped and how--why did they decide to do things related to the Chicano/Latino experience.

00:19:20

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And so my first idea was that I was going to--because I knew that people like Harry Gamboa had been part of the walkouts. I figured well, you'll do the walkouts and you'll have Harry talking about that and how the walkouts impacted on his life and I'll have scholars comment about all this in the big picture.

00:19:38

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

Well, as it turns out, nothing is ever so neat and I found out that, in fact, many people were not impacted or developed through a lot of specific political events but generally they were moved by a sense of the farm workers' movement or seeing Terina [sounds like] on television or Cesar Chavez on television and that that shaped their decision to go forward.

00:20:16

STEPHANIE SAPIENZA

Talk a little bit more about the concept of... what you were just talking about.

00:20:22

JESUS TREVINO

I lost my train of thought here.

00:20:28

STEPHANIE SAPIENZA

You were talking about filmmakers weren't necessarily going into it based on--

00:20:33

JESUS TREVINO

Oh, so I came to this documentary business of Aztlán with an idea of how it was going to be told. In the course of doing the interviews, I met a number of artists and one of the things one of the artists said to me, “Jesus, don’t have all the scholars comment on us and all the people that critique Chicano art. Let us tell our own story.” And that made perfect sense to me.

00:20:59

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And even though I had already interviewed quite a number of scholars, I realized these scholar interviews are going to be put to the side and I’m going to let the artists speak for themselves. And to this day, that is what the film is about, is the artist speaking—that generation of artist speaking about themselves, how they came to be artists, how they were inspired by the Chicano Civil Rights Movement to take on material and themes that had been denied our community for years and how they wound up fashioning what we know today as Chicano art.

00:21:29

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

So that’s a way in which as a filmmaker I go to it with a general idea but I’m really listening to what’s really inherently there and what is really the story that wants to be told and then I try to interpret in the best manner possible.

00:21:44

STEPHANIE SAPIENZA

So what are some of the threads that you noticed? Can you talk a little bit about who you interviewed and some of the threads that you noticed between them, whether you came out of it with an overall, or overarching thesis or concept or it was just a bunch of individual stories that didn’t seem connected?

00:22:00

JESUS TREVINO

One of the things that motivated me undertaking *VISIONS OF AZTLÁN* was when we, back in the '90s when we were doing the Chicano Civil Rights series, we had originally envisioned an hour on the artist but we ran out of money so we wound up doing--instead of doing six hours we wound up doing four hours. But I was always very much taken by the notion of the arts in the Chicano Civil Rights Movement. They were so formative and so important to the movement.

00:22:27

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And so I resolved that I wanted to tell this story and the other mitigating factor was that some of these artists were getting older. Some of them are already in their 70s and we don't know how long they're going to be around. And I wanted to make sure that this generation of artists were interviewed and were captured on film at a time when they were still articulate and vocal and vibrant and I didn't want them to be, you know, at death's door, doing the last interview.

00:22:59

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And so that is one of the factors that influenced me deciding to do this documentary series. Once I got involved in it, I interviewed quite a number of people. I think we interviewed about 40 people of which there's maybe 23 or 24 in the finished work and a lot of that was determined by the narrative that kind of evolved in the course of the filmmaking.

00:23:23

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

In fact there were five or six--five or six of the artists we interviewed, I interviewed early on without--when I had a different sense of what the film was going to be about. Then as I began to interview other people, other themes began to emerge and I realized that these first people I had interviewed I had never asked them those questions.

00:23:46

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And so my choice was either not include them in the film and that would be bad because it was my mistake not to have asked them these questions, or to go back and ask them these questions. So I wound up biting the bullet and going back and re-asking, re-interviewing about five or six or seven or the artists that I had already interviewed, explaining to them that there were key issues being dealt with that had emerged in the course of the documentary that I needed them to respond to and that I didn't know at the time that I first interviewed them but these were going to be issues that I wanted to address.

00:24:19

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And they cooperated and they're in the film with the new interviews.

00:24:24

STEPHANIE SAPIENZA

And who did you interview?

00:24:25

JESUS TREVINO

Locally Judy Baca, Gronk, Harry Gamboa, Barbara Carrasco, John Valadez, Wayne Healy, David Botello, McGue, Gilbert Luhàn, Frank Romero, in the Bay area, Rupert Garcia, Ester Hernandez, Yolanda Lòpez, Patricia Rodriguez, Malaquies Montoya, Jose Montoya, Stefan Villa, Zarco Guerrero from Arizona, Amado Peño from New Mexico. In Texas, César Martínez, Santa Barraza, Jose Esquivel. We've interviewed the who's who of Chicano art.

00:25:21

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

And each of them has been, as this interview, been a two or three-hour interview so I have this enormous archival material that I will leave for posterity of all these guys. And the thing that I'm most happy about, is that they're all really, really articulate.

00:25:36

STEPHANIE SAPIENZA

Yeah, we did Harry Gamboa a couple of weeks ago, as yours is as well. He was also very efficient in his giving of answers. I'm curious to hear your thoughts on the concept of quote/unquote ethnic cinema. We've gone into--we don't necessarily want to package that way and ghettoize it necessarily. I don't know if that's even a concern. Really visual communications with the Chicano movement have a distinct political bent whereas maybe, you know, like New American Cinema--sorry, the New Rebellion or the Black Rebellion.

00:26:13

STEPHANIE SAPIENZA (CONTINUED)

I can't put my thoughts together, that UCLA were less political. But in general there was a little bit of crossover that you talked about and I was wondering if you could comment on what you see as the differences between these quote/unquote ethnic cinemas and whether there was any crossover.

00:26:29

JESUS TREVINO

Well, I think that, you know, my generation of filmmakers came in the late '60s, mid to late '60s, early '70s, at a time when American was in fervent [sounds like]. And the Vietnam War was happening, and communities, the Civil Rights, the African American Civil Rights Movement was happening, the Chicano Civil Rights Movement was happening and this was, you know, permeating everybody.

00:26:55

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

We all were aware of this and I think that there was certainly the alternative, the American cinema going on, the Brakhages and the other experimental filmmakers. To my mind and I think the mind of many of us, it seemed kind of self-indulgent. There were so many more important issues that we had to grapple with because we were in a minority communities that were being discriminated against and we had oppressions and we had injustices and these were certainly far for us--far more the material that we wanted to cover than to do experimental, formally experimental filmmaking.

00:27:37

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

You know, playing--drawing on film and stuff like that, which I think I personally at the time felt that was just so self-indulgent and irrelevant to the issues that had to be dealt with. And so we, you know, I think a number of us just coming from where we were coming from as minority people, we had this reality that we faced every day and what we did find was that there was great similarity between us.

00:28:06

JESUS TREVINO (CONTINUED)

I remember talking with filmmakers from visual communications. We all kind of worked together when we could and supported one another when we could. This was a time when we all knew we had a specific job to do and it was to tell the stories of our communities and we were very impassioned about that. The same thing with African Americans filmmakers and I think it was only later that we began to see ourselves in this other context of how we were part of this.

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