

## Oral History Transcript

**OH # UA-016-01**

**Interviewers:** Alexander Haga and Mae Haggard

**Interviewee:** Autumn Alaniz-Wiggins

**Location:** Zoom

**Time:** 9:40 - 10:55 AM

**Date:** October 24, /2024

**HAGA:** Hello. My name is Alexander Haga, and today is Thursday, October 24, 2024. It is 9:40 A.M. My partner,

**HAGGARD:** Mae Haggard,

**HAGA:** and I, are conducting this interview in Chico, California. We are here virtually with Autumn Alaniz-Wiggins, former Associated Students President of Chico State. This interview is part of the oral history project, Preserving Chico State Voices for Change, which aims to archive and narrate the history of community activism at Chico State. Former President Autumn, before we get started, we need to formally ask you, do we have your consent to record this interview?

**ALANIZ-WIGGINS:** Yes.

**HAGA:** Awesome.

**ALANIZ-WIGGINS:** You have my consent.

**HAGGARD:** Thank you for agreeing to do this Autumn. So to start off, why don't you just tell us about yourself?

**ALANIZ-WIGGINS:** So my name is Autumn Alaniz-Wiggins. My pronouns are she/her/hers. I graduated class of 2024 with a double bachelor's in sociology and Multicultural and Gender Studies. I started Chico State in 2017, initially as a nutrition major, and after two years, I left Chico State and decided to just travel around the United States with \$100 to my name. And work in different kitchens and farms, and summer camps to learn about what's out there in fields that interested me. Then I decided to come back to Chico State after thinking about going to culinary school, but things just didn't play out with financial aid. I decided to come back to Chico State, where I changed my major to Multicultural and Gender Studies, eventually became director of Social Justice and Equity, and then took up an additional major for sociology and became the Student Vice president, to which led to some of my most proudest moments, a lot of change within myself, within the community. I'm happy that I was everything that I did. I don't think I would have done anything differently, but it was a great time. Now I am traveling around the world, doing the same thing, working with different farms and different work exchanges in Egypt, in Turkey. I'm planning one for Pakistan now to work with a director. Actually, you'll like this Mae, working with a director who is making a documentary on women in Pakistan. That's going to be a lot of fun. But that is the plan before I go to graduate school inshallah, God willing.

**HAGGARD:** Same as me!

**ALANIZ-WIGGINS:** I guess self ID, Black, Hispanic, Native American, first gen, Muslim, of course, a Muslim revert. Queer. Yeah, I think that's all of mine. More or less. Who doesn't have mental health issues. That counts. Thank you.

**HAGGARD:** So let's walk back to your choice to become a Multicultural and Gender Studies and sociology double major. So you started out with nutrition. So can you walk us through what led you to nutrition, and then what led you to leave nutrition? Can you tell us more about that journey?

**ALANIZ-WIGGINS:** Yeah. I love nature. In high school I've always loved Nature. I always had a green thumb. I went to Summer Camp since I was 14 with the Boys and Girls Club of San Francisco at their camp, Camp Mendocino. When I applied to Chico State, I applied as an agriculture business major because I love economics. But I quickly switched in the middle of EOP, Summer Bridge. I switched to nutrition. Because I really wanted to I wanted to do something sciencey, but still based in food and healthy living. Then I was the garden program coordinator with Camp Mendocino, I taught kids, specifically inner city youth, mostly by PoC campers, and military youth because I went to that campus of military youth, about gardening, about healthy living, about food and racial justice, about food justice, food swamps, food deserts, those types of things. I had a lot of fun with it. But when I took those experiences to the classroom and even after I came back from farming, I was still a nutrition major for one semester when I came back. It just didn't translate well with the professors. They didn't seem to particularly care about talking about or following an anti racist pedagogy and talking about they talked about food and food inequities from a very objective scientific field and point of view. Which, with nutrition, the people that we're trying to help are most likely not going to be talking about quinoa and kale. They're not. They're going to be talking about foods that are culturally relevant for them, and the issues that they struggle with are always going to be based in things that are related to the class, to gender, to nationality, to those types of things, and they didn't care to delve into those topics in the way that I cared about it. They had literally calorie counting. And so I felt disgusted. I was like, not only am I struggling and so classes. But I'm struggling for what? For my experiences to be erased. And and to not really get into the nitty gritty, besides one professor, doctor Seth Klobodu who actually talked about class, who actually talked about, you know, what women of color have to go through in pregnancy and why women of color, specifically, Black and Native American women have the highest rates of mortality being pregnant, in the developing world. He was the only professor who was a Black-he was like the first Black-I think he's Nigerian. I'm not 100% sure, but professor that I had ever seen in that department, and the only one at the time. Now his sister is also in that department as a professor. But at the time, when I was going my first two years; there was no Black professors in the nutrition department at all! And so I eventually discovered Multicultural and Gender Studies and switched over. And eventually discovered there's another alternative sociology and had a lot more fun with that, yeah, that's how I found those too.

**HAGGARD:** Why did you decide to leave nutrition entirely? Because it does seem like you had such a personal tie to that— around like those food deserts and that nutrition that you— when you were part of the boys and girls?

**ALANIZ-WIGGINS:** Yeah.

**HAGGARD:** Why did you leave it entirely? Why not double major in nutrition and MCGS?

**ALANIZ-WIGGINS:** So there is this one class specifically. Well, there's two classes actually. So one was organic chemistry. It's a wash out class. And so you know, if you don't survive that class it washes you out and you're like, I can't. That was part of it, but I did sign up to retake the class. [dogs barking] I'm so sorry. These dogs never bark this much. But, that meant like, I'm struggling whatever. I left college for that semester anyways. I was struggling with a lot of different things besides that class. When I came back during spring 2021, it was online still. I was taking a nutrition, counseling, and education, and I specifically remember talking a lot about my experiences with farming and teaching to teaching nutrition education and food education to inner city youth. And how important it was to be culturally conscious and to be competent in these things. And the professor, I won't say names-so she's a white female-was like, wow. Any other questions? I was like! And my friend in the class immediately texted me and was like, what was that? That was awful. And I was like, mmm, and I was so utterly crushed that that we weren't really talking about these things. We talked about it, but in a very neoliberal sense. And so I was like, I'm like, I don't even want to be back in college. I want to be on a farm. I want to be picking carrots, and I know I need a degree. If I'm going to be struggling, I'm going to be struggling towards something that's actually going to make me feel good when I get a job and it just wasn't that. I realized that I might not be able to be a dietitian, but I don't want to be a dietitian to begin with—which is a protected term—being a nutritionist is not a protected term. Anyone can call themselves a nutritionist, and many people do, and you can still teach nutrition. You don't need to have a degree obviously, it helps. I still might go back and I believe I'm only two classes short from a whole minor in nutrition, and I'm pretty sure my courses will translate to being again two to three courses short of an associates. I might go back. But if I do do a nutrition program for associates or a minor or something, it's going to be at an institution that cares and actually values, cultural competency, and class conscious nutrition education, not in a very neo liberal way that Chico State was teaching at the time. I decided to take it easy on myself as someone who's already struggling as a first gen student, a returning student, and just completely just take classes that I know I'll do well in. I know my experiences will matter and will translate well and I get to meet other people who also have the same values as me across different fields.

**HAGA:** Awesome. Yeah. So let's talk about generally Chico State and what specifically brought you to Chico State-to choose Chico-per se, over other universities. I was actually aiming towards more UCs and looking back, objectively speaking, I could have gone to a UC. I just I did not take the application seriously. The essays were I feel like my essays probably, I did pretty much half-ass them, so I feel like it was bad. But I definitely did enough in high school looking back, to go to a UC. And so I had five free college application waivers for being low income student. I had two extra ones, I spent it on Chico State and San Jose. And Chico State because my first girlfriend at the time, we weren't dating anymore, but she had mentioned that she wanted to go to Chico State, and so I applied to Chico State. She ended up going to Boise, Idaho.

**HAGGARD:** Wow!

**ALANIZ-WIGGINS:** But, it was close to CSU for me to visit in Vacaville, and so I went with my dad. And the first thing my dad and I said when we stepped out of the car was, there's a lot of white folks here. First thing my dad. Very first thing he said. And I didn't get a chance to go visit San Jose State, but Chico State had offered me a better financial aid package. And I actually wanted to go to San Jose, but my dad was like, no, Chico State is giving you a better financial aid package. You're going to go to Chico. And I was like, whatever, I don't care. And so it was a beautiful campus and a great financial aid package. And I had already met people who were going to help me get connected with EOP and Summer Bridge. And so, yeah, that's how I chose it. Because of a girl who didn't even end up going to the school, and they offered me a really good financial aid package.

**HAGA:** Awesome. Awesome. In that case, I'd like to then ask a little bit more about your hometown, and how Chico compares to your hometown in any way that you so want to speak on.

**ALANIZ-WIGGINS:** So I grew up as a military child, and so I grew up traveling around the world kind of around the world. I was born in Oceanside, California, and then my dad I both my parents actually because my parents met in the military. A lot of people say like, oh, like, your dad, what does he do. I'm like, actually, both my parents, they were in the Marines, they met in the Marines. My mom was in the army and the Marines, which I'm going to brag here for a second, but that's less than 0.8% of the military is female Marines. And so military shmilitary military, industry sucks, but survived that, my mom survived it, so we'll brag about that. But we grew up mostly in Okinawa, Japan, so I spent eight years there in two separate occasions. I spent four years there. Moved back to the states for another two years, Georgia, North Carolina, and then moved back to Okinawa for four years before moving to California when I was like 12, something like that. Then I've been bouncing around California ever since. So, you know, hometown is always a bit of a sticky question with military dependence. Okinawa obviously is where I spent the longest of my formative years. But I do consider Vacaville, Fairfield to be, you know, where I came into my teenage self. But I would say that Vacaville and Fairfield is next to a military installation. The school I went to was mostly military youth as well. I didn't go to public school until high school. I actually went to mostly DoDEA schools, which are schools specifically for military youth on base. That brings people from around the world. That brings people from different cultures, different walks of life. A lot of us are biracial, triracial even. When I came to Chico, it was honestly a culture shock. I had never seen so many white people before. You know, even being in California, when I went to-I attempted actually-to go to public school in middle school. I lasted two days. It was in, if you're familiar with Oceanside at all. It's not the best area of the San Diego County. I went to Jefferson Middle School for like two days and I was too much, too intense of not necessarily class differences, I would say, but I would probably follow class differences of just the way people—the way that the youth act in the classrooms were very different from how military youth act. It's not like the military is rich, in terms of what they give, lower ranking people, we make not much. I definitely would consider my family, my upbringing food insecure. But the way they acted in classrooms was very different. I went to private Catholic school, and that was mostly Hispanic children. Then—then I eventually went to high school, which is again, was mostly military youth. But Chico State was very, very homogeneous, not at all, but I was used to. Getting used to that was very challenging. Because people dressed really differently than what I was used to, military youth tend to dress more conservatively. And so I struggled a lot with that as well even and seeing people dress very

much how they want to dress and not how their parents want them to dress. And so getting rid of those initial mindsets was really rough for me. I didn't know I had all those biases until my first thought would be like, why she dressed like that? And then the second thought would be like, wait a second. She can dress however she wants. I was like, what does it matter to me. That was mostly the biggest difference was getting used to the white girls, probably. And then following the lack of diversity. The lack of diversity, the lack of biracial youth! There was not that many people who are mixed at all at Chico with anything. And so that was really, really hard. And obviously, was the structural issues, the lack of certain things just led to me leaving.

**HAGA:** Awesome. So I wanted to ask, how has your international background then influenced your approach to local activism at Chico State and beyond?

**ALANIZ-WIGGINS:** Oh, that's a great question. I love that. Yeah. When I was living in Okinawa, Japan, the second time, my house on base, it was my house, a backyard, a measly little fence, nothing big, nothing extravagant. And then off base-is what we call it-off base. Every other weekend, we would see the Okinawans protesting military bases. They would say "hi, children!" and then go go go protest. They were really polite to us. They would wave and say hi, and then be like "ah so cute". And then go protesting. From a young age, I will always say this from a young age, I was always aware of the military industrial conflicts, and the American exceptionalism or military exceptionalism, more specifically, the system that I was growing up in. I knew I was not in a very- in a typical childhood. I knew that there were global power dynamics. I might not have had those words, but I knew that there was something special about being military. And a power dynamic, even though I had never seen that anything that I can remember. I hadn't seen America since I was three. I still knew that there was something very specific and unique about "why am I here?" I knew that I was American before I knew I was Black. I didn't find out I was Black until - I want to say until third grade. I was living in Georgia. That's when I found out. I knew I was American before I knew I was Black. So being aware of nationality, being aware that people who are different than you who don't speak the same language of you will protest something and seeing protest and knowing that it's about you made me realize at a young age, like, okay, these are things, these are systems, these are people who are different. It doesn't mean they hate you. It just means they're trying to work towards something better for themselves. That it might not, you know- you, and it's nothing against you personally. I have always thought that was really cool as a child. In the United States, though, I didn't really see a lot of protesting. I didn't see a lot of activism outside of the church because when I was living in Georgia, my dad was deployed, and so I was living with my grandparents on my Black side of the family. And so we went to church and they talked a lot about liberation theology, which I can get it all into. But about liberation theology, you know, talking about slavery and my dad giving me books to read about slavery. Because that's always that's an experience. I don't know if many Black children have it, but that's certainly when my dad gave me my little book about slavery. And so I learned about these things. I learned about oppression. I learned about, you know, yeah, just oppression in general and how it's nothing about the micro, the singular, but about systems. And so I forgot the second part of your question, but that's how my Internet experience kind of played and inter identity experience played into, when I come to Chico State, I still don't see that much activism, but when I do see it, I'm like, ok yes, these are things that should not be ignored. These are things that should be paid attention to, and really discuss. Like, "Hey, why is this happening? What is this for? Let's have dialogue about it. Let's

have discussion about it.” That’s something that I’ve always— I’ve never been like don’t listen to them, just to walk away from them, they’re crazy. I’ve always been — questions. Let’s ask questions. Let’s have conversations because in 2018, there was a lot of random groups coming through Chico State. There was- I don’t know- she was really famous on TikTok a few years ago, but the Christian crazy Christian lady, she came through Chico State. And I saw her. And then there was this one group that came through, like conservative group that came through. But I wasn’t super big into activism my first time in Chico State. Only when I came back to Chico State, did I really get into activism. Sorry. That was a long winded answer.

**HAGGARD:** No, that was great. That was perfect. So talk about your activism on Chico State. Where did you focus most of your work when you did start to get into activism?

**ALANIZ-WIGGINS:** I kind of focused most of my work, I would say, hmm. [pauses for several seconds] We talk about this in sociology a lot. But having two different selves, the online self, and the in person self. My online activism started a lot sooner and my ability to speak out against things started a lot sooner than my in person ability to do so. I didn’t know any groups or any way to do so in person. I thought it was a special status you kind of had. If I’m reflecting on what it meant to be an activist in person when I was a little bit younger, 18 to 20. And so I didn’t really know too much about it. Or I was a little intimidated. I didn’t know who to reach out to-how to become-an activist. Most of my attention was online, focused predominantly on on being Black, of course, because I walk through this world racially as a Black person, and talking more about I would probably say talking more about being a woman, mostly in hyper militarized environments because my mom talked to me so much growing up about what it meant to be a woman of color in the military and to be in the Marines, specifically the hardest branch of all the branches. I talked a lot about, I definitely talked a lot about and knew a lot about, sexual assault in the military. Against women of color, woman of color, children of color, mostly when it comes to violence and growing up in violent environments because I come from a violent childhood. I would say mostly those two areas, two to three areas, I focused more on. Then when George Floyd happened, and when I started to work at more rural places where I was quite literally the only Black woman and woman of color for miles, specifically in Pennsylvania. When George Floyd happened, I was in Pennsylvania working at a Jewish Summer camp that was able to operate— somehow? At a smaller scale, it was able to operate. They got us the COVID test. There was the spit test and no one was really sure if those things even worked to begin with. Were we able to get those, and they got us spit tested every few weeks. And they flew us out. But I was the only Black woman there. I was the only woman of color there. Actually no, there was one other woman of color. I take that back. There was this great girl. She was my roommate. But we were the only two of color there and there was only five Black people and one of them was the poster diversity child for that camp. Love him. My bestie, I say this to his face all the time. He went to Humboldt, too. We were really close. But I was crying every single day over that. After George Floyd, that’s when I would say, my activism went to being more awareness based to being more anger based, and wanting to channel that anger into conversations with people. Then eventually when I come back to Chico State, learning that I can turn those conversations with people into action into policy changes because my dad has always said, I hear a lot of problems and not a lot of solutions. I hate, I did not personally feel comfortable with just like walking around the sign. I was more of a, how can I go into a system and change the system? Both need to exist. I always say this. Both need to exist, people who

work in the system and people who work outside of the system. They need to acknowledge each other and work with each other and not against each other because nothing will happen and that's how, I think Malcolm X said, "We're not outnumbered. We're out organized," And so having people who are willing to play game is just as important, I'd say probably almost just as important, almost just as important as those that are on the ground, walking around signs and doing all that stuff. And so that's where I focus my energy more towards. Then when I converted to Islam and then later on that year, everything with October 7th happened and those tensions rose up again because they rise and fall and rise and fall. When everything with that happened, I happened to meet some people who wore more boots on the ground type and really were looking and relying on me to give them that information so that they could get away with a lot of things, so that's I enjoyed SJP [Students for Social Justice in Palestine] and started doing more on the ground action like banner drops and sit-ins and teachings and all that stuff, while also being in the system. It's still rather a growing and developing thing. I didn't pop out when I was 18 and start doing all this activism stuff. I was probably later in the game when it came to not necessarily only caring when it became super popular trendy. But genuinely-as I realized with a lot of people-as I had my own things going on. I was struggling with mental health issues. I was like, I just left school. I'm like, what am I doing? I have no source of income. I have children at home my children, but I have at the time, they were like five and six. Little boy and girl, siblings, and my mom has MS. I was dealing with all of that. My mom was still figuring out her identity. I was still figuring out my identity. I genuinely did not have time to do anything other than repost things. When I got more time and I learned more things and learned more terms and learned more ways to ease myself into what it means to be an activist. Then that's when I started to really push and nudge and be like, wait a second. I have a lot that I can offer and a lot of not necessarily experience, but well, yeah, experience, but a lot of experiences of conversation with people, things that I've witnessed, things that have happened to me that aren't just a sign of, this is me, myself, the micro. This is a system thing, that's when I started to grow and expand, become activist.

**HAGGARD:** So you talk about the need for people to work both in and out of the system. And you were the AS president. Can you tell me more about what it meant to you to be an activist and also be AS president at Chico State?

**ALANIZ-WIGGINS:** Yes. That's a good - [pauses for several seconds] So I stumbled into presidency. I did my term as director of social justice and equity, and there was another person in AS government who I thought was going to run for AS president because I figured it should be somebody who's already been in AS government that runs for presidency because it's hard to be president. You can't just hop in there. You can, but I guess historically since I've learned, those don't do that well compared to those who have been in AS government. She decided not to run due to social drama. I was like, wait a second, nobody's running. That's been AS government and everyone looked around like, No. I also, I'm going to say that anyways. I was like, no romance, whatever. I guess I'll say anyways. No, I had an ex, he was being a little annoying. I was just like, you're if not going to see my face, I'm going to post my face everywhere! That was 3%. That was like 3% of the reason I ran. But I was deciding between presidency and doing research with the nutrition department again. Because again, I like data, I like working with—I had already done a research project with the nutrition department, studying nutritional knowledge of EOP [Educational Opportunity Program] students compared to non EOP students. And, surprise,

surprise EOP students have worse nutritional knowledge than those who are non EOP students. But I was deciding between doing something like that with more marginalized groups, studying nutrition, studying food. Still being an MCGS major, but you can partner with other departments to do research and being president. When I saw that nobody was running, after talking to a lot of people, I decided to run. That's how I even became presidency and I didn't put my name in until literally the night before the deadline. That's how I even became president. Then when I realized, okay, here, I'm here, and then seeing Steve Perez become president and me and him had got along already a year before. I was like, This is going to be great. This is going to be good. Me and him are really close. It's not like with Hutchinson who has her own way of leadership, but it was a lot more intimidating. For me. I was like, this is good. Anything that I have brought to him, social justice wise, He always, always, always, always, was full send for it. It didn't matter how little, how extreme, how minute it might have seemed. He was always full send for it. It was so empowering too because I had met him when he was the president, the interim president for San Jose State at the Juneteenth symposium, the inaugural Juneteenth symposium. We already met on social justice grounds. Every meeting that we had, encounter that we had with each other was also in social justice realms in terms of promoting campus security after the biology professor thing, and helping him get acquainted with everything. And so it was very empowering, very empowering! It does a lot. When when your boss and your boss's boss and your boss's boss's boss are all like, do it. Tell us what you need. Again, when everything with October 7th happened because that was so early into presidency for both of us. It was just like he was like, just let me know what. Let me know what you need. And, when I told him, I remember walking with him a few times and every single time, I was like, yeah, I'm going to be doing this resolution. Now I'm doing the next resolution. Now I'm doing the next resolution. He was like— I was telling him, like, I'm scared, I'm nervous, like what if something happened? What if the backlash, this, he said, “You don't worry about that. We're behind you. We'll take care of it. You should do it. Don't ever feel any fear or anything like that.” And there was this one time where I literally went crying to his office because of just how much pressure I was facing with the AS government resolution, and he was just— he was great. And so when the banner drop happened, Funny story. When the banner drop happened, I had my alibi. I was at EDI [Equity, Diversity, Inclusion], an awards thing. I did it and ran straight over there. The President and Sima, the chief of staff, Sima was like, “hey, do you have a moment to chat?” And I was like, “totally!” And so we met up. And she's like, “if you happen to know who did it, just let them know that we changed the time and policy and that if anyone or if you want to come pick up the banner at the end of the day, you know, no problem. We'll save it for you. If they want to talk, we'll talk, if they don't, that's fine. And we won't let anyone take it down. We'll just let it stay up.” and they were very accommodating, even though they not have to be at all. And even the president gave me some low low advice on that. He was very helpful because he knew he was watching everything with Humboldt, watching everything with LA and was like, I don't want that heat over here. And so the entire administration for me was very empowering to play the game, to play the game of being in both worlds, whichever world I was in with multiple identities and to really be accommodating with helping me get that platform for not myself, but for the people who I represent. So I think I had the most fun in my life because of that. I did not feel—there was other external things that would stress me out more about being an activist and being president like the Orion. They stress me out, to no end. But otherwise, no, I had I thought that was probably as perfect as an activist working within the system as you could have gotten across the entire CSU honestly, because from my understanding with all the other presidents and their



relationship with the university presidents, they were not having the same luxury as me. So kudos to President Perez for that.

**HAGGARD:** So just for people who will listen back on this, can you explain what the banner drop is and how you experienced it?

**ALANIZ-WIGGINS:** Oh yes! The banner drop was—Chico State is a very not a very politically active campus. I don't know if people come to Chico State because they want to escape that because they're coming mostly from SoCal or what, but they don't rally for nothing. It's the same 30-50 students across 14,000 students that rally for anything. So a lot of campuses were having banner drops, so they would drop a banner. That's like free Palestine, arms embargo, all eyes on Gaza of those types of things. Obviously, that would get taken down, but it was still off of a huge building. Chico State had done and everyone was like, what's going to do it. I was in a group that was like, we're going to do it and I was there painting with them. Then we organized the entire thing. I told them the advice is: if you do it, do it off of Butte and not taking over an entire building. Because Humboldt back, Humboldt our sister campus, went through it, Google it, Yahoo it, whatever's popular at the time. They were going through. They had entire encampments, buildings taken over administration building almost set on fire because of it. And so President Perez, being his first year, he's didn't want none of that smoke. And so him and his administration were very careful with how they approached a lot of things and changed a lot of rules that they did not have to, but they did, to accommodate all forms of activism. There was no anti protest. There was one heckler. But they even said that they would prevent students from taking it down, which was also really cool. And, so we did that banner drop. I think that you were just asking about what that is. It stayed up. I think one student eventually did get down, get up there and take it down. But it stayed out there pretty long.

**HAGA:** Nice. So then reflecting on your time in just the AS student government, how has your perspective on affecting change within institutional structures in general evolved?

**ALANIZ-WIGGINS:** I think I was decently effective when you realize how, you know, bureaucracy honestly. I really is just bureaucracy at the end of the day. To have something on the agenda can take anywhere from one day, if you get it right at the right time to four weeks to sometimes months, if you're choosing to do it at the last meeting, and you have to wait till everything's back in session, which is like three months from then. So it's not hard to get anything, you can get anything on the agenda to be discussed, you can make any policy changes you want. It's just a matter of getting it on the agenda. Because with student government for Associated Students, this is for Associates Students specifically, which is a separate entity from state side. Mostly it is run by students. Chico State's student government at the current moment. They don't care too much. They'll vote yes on anything or no. But it wasn't hard for me to get any changes. The only time I faced hiccups was when pro staff who worked for Associated Students wanted to get their hands on it. I was updating the Code of Ethics for AS that had not been updated since the 80s. It was still saying "those who are handicapped" in their bylaws and talking about using all types of out of date terminology to discuss people from marginalized communities and had nothing to do with online presence, texting, intimidation, harassment. None of that language is in there. I was like: type type type. I grabbed some people from Student Rights and Responsibilities. So it was more in line with their policies as well. It's like, cool, sent

it off. Then like ten other associated student people like, Oh, I would have been in, I even got to pass it my term. Because everybody, all of a sudden, was at the last second after I had already done all the work, was like: Oh, wait, I want to ask, wait, I want to ask something, oh wait, so that was. I still say I passed it because nobody thought about it since the 80s. But nobody cared to initiate that process. But still bureaucracy man. The same thing with stateside is it's who you know, and it takes too much longer than a student's term at Chico State to even touch the surface of who you need to talk to. Everybody at Chico State, I will say this, I will stand by this, 90% of the way. Most people at Chico State who are in positions of power, most of them. I'm not talking about the people you go to for academic advising. I'm talking about their boss's boss's boss. So like Kate McCarthy. They will always be willing to have the conversation and to help you draft up as a student whatever you want, because they love the students. Compared to other institutions that I've seen, that I've worked with, Chico State actually does fare pretty well. But there's always like five, quite frankly, assholes that want to hold up the entire process. And so when I was passing the Academic Senate or why I did pass it, but when I was going through the process of trying to pass the Academic Senate resolution for Gaza, it was easy to get on the agenda. I had the support of most voting members who were in charge of something. It was just like five people that were like, being so mean for no reason. So that holds up the entire process. Yeah, I thought I was decently effective. Again, I will note that I do have certain privileges. Being all my identities, intersecting identities, it's a hard in this time and age. If you're mean to that person, that's cancel culture. I could work with that. I could be like, Hey, if you really want to bully the first-gen Muslim Hijab president, play that game. Let me know because I'll out you. But I will say there was that nicety of being protected by my identities. But it's still a lot of bureaucracy and a lot of people who will throw policy in your face and shut down conversations, and sometimes they won't give you the why. Why does that policy exist? And so I worked with the music department chair who was a dick to one student for no reason. Yeah. Otherwise, I think it's easy, it's fine. It's easy to to start something. It's just hard to finish something in the lifetime of a student at Chico State.

**HAGA:** Cool. So tell me then about a time when you felt a significant gap between what students wanted and what the CSU system was providing. And how did you navigate that situation?

**ALANIZ-WIGGINS:** Between what students wanted and what the CSU system was providing?

**HAGA:** Yeah. If there was a time.

**ALANIZ-WIGGINS:** Oh, yeah. I'm thinking about probably the tuition hike. Um, The tuition hike was this really weird case of timing. They started having these conversations, assuming years ago, but they didn't start telling students until the year of and then didn't put it on the agenda to have real tangible conversations about molding everything until the summertime when all the students were out of session. Then when it came down to it, and all these students are saying yeah, no. They were like, It's in the best that this. And they were giving all the student body presidents, all these talking points for the why. And activists were getting very different talking points. And student activists were getting very different talking points. And so there was a gap. In general, I would say there's a gap in what student leaders are told and what student activists are told. And so that translation of what students want. It's a classic case of divide and

conquer. You win one side or you piss off the other side, and they're just going to fight each other. And so I saw a lot of student body presidents struggling with a lot of their students and constituents and because they come from more politically active campuses, trying to even tell their student body president to tell their university president what they wanted. And here at Chico State, there's simply, again, it's not a politically active campus. So I had zero students coming to me telling me anything. And I tried a lot of different things. I was hounding my commissioners to be like, please have more events so we can get more feedback. But when it comes to aid, those types of things and having more training for financial aid officers, this is something that first year students are like, yeah, I need to have more competent financial aid officers, and there's zero funding given to these offices to do professional development. That's the first thing a student will complain about and see issues with— is financial aid. Yet it's one of the most underdeveloped, allowing for professional development, places on campus. In fact, they're more focused on, we should have another ice cream truck here. Or we should have another out there. Let's get a new football team, a new stadium. Their priorities are really out of whack because they tell student leaders one thing, student activists, another thing. Faculty activists one thing, faculty leaders is a different thing. It's the same for faculty and for students. They tell these different groups completely different things, and so they just fight amongst themselves instead of going after the people actually in charge.

**HAGA:** Yeah. Then, could you describe me a moment when you felt torn between wanting to change the culture at Chico State and between feeling the need to abide by that culture?

**ALANIZ-WIGGINS:** Let's see. Change the culture versus abide by the culture. Yes, I know one example. There was an incident between the Black community and AS over the display of the third floor. I don't know if you guys remember, but the third floor art gallery. They had art that happened to coincide from mid January, I think through mid February-mid March or something like that. Yes. That. They had the chimpanzee art.

**HAGGARD:** Yes. If they don't know there was an art gallery that was paintings of chimpanzees that were basically like doing like human things. They were smoking. They had like bats, they were beating things up, and it kind of fell in line with Black History Month. But go on Autumn, I'm sorry.

**ALANIZ-WIGGINS:** Yeah. There was a pa-I mean, for the most part, like, I walk through I hardly noticed these types of things, but I had walked through and didn't care. But then when they were like, oh, this came up and we went through and looked at it together, I was like, okay, I can see how two of these might be issues. But we had, this is the second year though that we had Victory in Unity, which is a City of Chico event, celebrating Black culture and Black History Month at Chico State. This is the second year. I guess a lot of the community members went up saw it and was like, oh my gosh, this is terrible, and complained about it. And then the Black Student Union wrote a whole thing for it and sent it to AS and then was like, we're going to go to the newspaper and blast you all. Kendra [Kendra Wright], and I were like, let's just have a meeting with the president. I know the president. He's a friend of mine. I wouldn't say close friend, but a good acquaintance, not that many Black people on campus, so we had a meeting and he was like, cool. This is mostly solved. He's not a really confrontational person though and I

was always a little concerned that he wasn't saying everything that he wanted to say. But their advisor who I was a lot closer with, who was a student. She just graduated and then I think she was doing she was working there. She was kept them more settle—hold your horses. There's only so much so much change. Anyways, they were wanting to scrape the entire thing, like overhaul the entire system of art galleries and have the last say I'm being a little over dramatic, but but pretty much they were wanting to be all student run. And the last say and having—they were wanting a lot of a lot of change that while the activist in me and the Black person in me and the MCGS, you know, I saw a lot of value in some of it, there's also a lot of things that I was like, that is not possible. And if we did— and it was just one of those stupid cases of like, if I did that for you, I'd have to do that for everybody. So I felt really torn. I wish I could remember all the details. Honestly, I don't. But it was just one of those cases of just—there is a radical version that would be great obviously. And then there's a practical version and most likely version of what's going to happen. There was a lot of things that were incorporated, that policy wise that they wanted. For example, they were like, how did this even get through? Dadada is not culturally competent? This is dadada. We looked at the policy together and we're like, well, we have people from all these departments, like arts departments, staff from different cultural groups who sit on these committees and it's not an all white you know, all white committee that just huddles in a room. It is faculty of color on these committees from different departments, who sit there, who analyze all of them and place them there. And I think even Tracy Butts sat on the committee. I'm not 100% sure. Don't quote me on that. A Black woman, just so people who read this, see. Anyways. Yeah. That was one moment where I was like, Am I the bad guy, am I flipped now? That's always something I would say as a student leader that I've always struggled with, even when I was director of my community feeling like I betrayed them or that I don't focus on them? Like, I had a Muslim student who was mad at me for one thing, for giving too much attention to the queer community. I had the Black community mad at me when I was hearing from people because I was giving too much attention to other communities, and I was like, do people not know that I'm a lot of different things? Yeah, that's always an issue of feeling like you're betraying, or people feeling like you're betraying them because you do or don't always agree with them. Or do or don't always do things specifically for them. I don't know if I'll always be a leader of all sorts, but I will always struggle with that syndrome of feeling hated by my own people.

**HAGGARD:** So along those lines, you weren't just the AS student president. You also belong to a lot of different student organizations—clubs—that also participated in a lot of different things. Did you feel that when you were in those organizations in those clubs that you had to be distant from your peers because you were AS president?

**ALANIZ-WIGGINS:** Hm. [pauses for several seconds] No. I feel like I was very picky about the groups that I if I chose to be a part of that I chose to dedicate my time to. There was some clubs that I didn't have time for anymore. Like the Philanthropy Council, I didn't have time for anymore. But I chose to start doing my SACS club, the Sociology Association, I started to do that. Then I started to do SWANASA, which is focused on the more Muslim diaspora, but focused on South Asia and Middle East and North Africa. I chose to spend my evenings doing that. I was really picky about those types of things. I always tried to make sure that they were far enough, actually, from my position, more than I was far enough from them or that I kept more distance because so what if it's a bunch of random students gathered together. Now, if it's like students who also happened to be in AS government with me, then I might be—happen to be

closer with certain administration or certain faculty that are in positions of power, then I would've probably felt a little bit more distant. Maybe that was also contributing reason to why I didn't really want to be in philanthropy anymore. But with all the clubs that—not all the clubs, there's not too many, there's only two. Two clubs. With those two, I felt like everybody was distant enough from my role and the effects of my role that I didn't have to, so like, I didn't have to other unless it was a matter of like a closed meeting, which those types of things never really came up. I feel like I gave the same amount of courtesy that you would give for being, I guess a friend, a mutual friend between two people breaking up, for example. You're like, oh, I'll tell you things, but there's still some things, I won't say, but it's not like I'm giving particular favoritism. I felt more like that.

**HAGGARD:** How do you think being a part of those organizations, those clubs influenced your activism, or did it influence your activism, being a part of those clubs?

**ALANIZ-WIGGINS:** I think, yeah, I think SACS was great because it was a nice—I would classify it as a nice random sample of students who, some had a lot of knowledge of what was going on at Chico State, some had zero knowledge of what was going on at Chico State. And so it was nice for me because I got to see what the average student knew, what the more than average knowledge-wise student knew. That was really cool in that way because then I could actually gather general opinion about certain things. Then the SJP definitely inspired more activism with everything surrounding Palestine and Gaza and everything because I—because I had I went to the mosque and the mosque does have a decent Palestinian population there. They were just like my second family. I felt you know, more inclined to do more when it came down to organizing invitations and those types of things. Otherwise, I would have been more like, here's my contact. Here's my tex—my message. Please let me know if you— if you want anything done, otherwise, and that's where I would have most likely left it and stuck more to the digital activism. But being in person definitely inspired more and faster in person change.

**HAGGARD:** So along those lines of being able to interact with people, are there notable activists within this community that you believe are especially important to you?

**ALANIZ-WIGGINS:** There's some that recently graduated for sure. Again, I'm only going off what I recently graduated. Like Abraham [Abraham Trujillo]. Watch me say someone that had tea behind them, I don't even know. Abraham, I thought he did a lot with—we worked a lot together when when I was director to do more clothes swaps and more events for GSEC with director funds. And then getting him connected with SACS for a Queer prom. Abraham did a lot with the queer community, I would say, that I really appreciated. And then I feel like I have to go like community by community to tick them off. [pauses] So much activism. I am so bad at names right now. Oh, my gosh. I have his face in my head. Juanwon [Juanwon Anderson], Juanwon. I think is his name. I think it is his name, Juanwon. He was in CCLC. He graduated, I think, two years ago. Very friendly guy. He did a lot with CCLC in the Black community. I think his name is Adan White. He's a commissioner for sustainability. He is number one ally. Like in S in the SWANASA, we give him the Mashallah Award, which is the Award too because he's so close to taking a Shahada. But he does so much. He's an ally. He's a white man. He does so much for all communities. He's just great. Not just like being there, you need a ride? Here's a ride. You need me to hold signs? Here's a sign. You need me there pin things. I got you. Mashallah. So cute. Activism comes in so many forms. Like I said there's digital activism, there's activists who work

behind the scenes that I don't even know about. There was a few master students who I don't know their names, but if I need them if I need a student in a committee, I'm like, let's go and they're like, great, let's do it. And then I send them to that committee and go about my day. And so I'm really happy for any student who does anything outside of their class schedule, anything. Being in a club is a form of activism because being a part of the community that keeps you engaged, and you get to talk about things that are really important to you and find ways to bring that alive to Chico State and bring that color to Chico State. So I genuinely applaud any student who does anything that they don't have to at Chico, because one, it's Chico State, the acceptance rate of 90%. So doing anything is like, wow, you care enough to come here, one, to stay here, two, and really make the most of your experience outside of partying and drinking and doing, you know, Lord knows what—not that you can't. It's just like I know people who do nothing but that. So yeah, kudos to them, kudos to y'all.

**HAGA:** Yeah, I think that leads into my next question here, which is, what are some ways that other young activists/people who can take effective action for change in our community. Like, sorry, what are some ways that young activists or people can take effective action for change in our community?

**ALANIZ-WIGGINS:** Now that I've reflected on, why it took me so long to consider myself an activist, I feel like you know, there's certain things that, like, parents say, that, you know, pamphlets say, that you're like, oh, man, you're just saying that are like kind of true. Like I said, joining a club, honestly, does miracles, because you just meet people and you get exposed to different things. I would say join clubs that are different than what you might be a part of, like being MCGS major and being in SACS for example, or being like I said, like Adan who—he's white, but he's a part of SWANASA, he's part of this, he's part of that, BSU. And so join clubs that are different in how you identify whether that's racially, gender, generation, literally anything. Find ways to be exposed to different parts. I think that's also what also helped me get into different things. I remember coming back to Chico State, and I was approached by the president of MENA is what it was called at that time, which is another version of SWANASA, and I talked about the Middle East North African region. I went to the meetings and I thought it was really cool and I thought the food was great. And so I became more curious about that region, led to my curiosity about Islam, dadada. I think that's a good easy, not intimidating way to to start the seeds of what is activism? What does it look like? And I think that just starts with being connected with people who are different than you.

**HAGA:** Yeah. So then, how do you balance sort of self care with your passionate involvement in student advocacy? And do you have any specific examples of when such a balance was challenging to you?

**ALANIZ-WIGGINS:** My grades and my self care had never been better than when I was student body president. Because it was so time intensive, I had to figure out how to balance my time. I found I mean, this works for me. I don't know if it works for everybody, but not having really reason to go out, being more introverted, I found worked for me specifically. So when I had became a Muslim and stopped drinking and stopped drinking in general, and smoking and all that, there was no reason for me to really go out that much. I could still go out and I didn't mind getting my little cranberry juice, but I didn't do it as much because I was like, I can just sit at

home. We can just sit at home. We can just watch a movie. That worked for me. Just embracing the more introverted side of myself. When I did go out even before everything, I would only go out for 30 minutes and then go back home. That was a waste of time of getting up, going and then coming back and then undressing. And so I was a lot more intentional about when I went out. I think being very intentional about when you go out and definitely being like, this is a treat. This is nice for me, rather than being like, I'm not doing anything. There's a million things that could be doing, but I was very intentional with my outings there was times where I genuinely embraced mindless work. I remember, I did my winter break on a farm in rural Oregon, taking care of goats and a llama, and some sheep and ducks. That is it. And that is all you need sometimes. I'm telling you it is a good dopamine reset. Finding some way to dopamine reset. Chucking your phone into the river, going camping, I don't—something, but you need to dopamine reset or detox sometimes find whatever it is that works for you, reading a book, committing to reading that book. I don't know, something, but that is the problem of, I think, being so connected is that we always look for the next thing. Instead of really just being like, you know what? I'm going to sit in my yard and I'm going to cut every blade of grass singularly the scissors. That's what you need to do sometimes. Yeah. I think that was how I balanced. I also embraced splurging sometimes, and so I really was like, I really sat there and I wrote down, like, you know, what does make me happy— what generally do— I don't mind spending and committing to as a routine? I love a good matcha. So I invest in being like, okay, I'm going to have a matcha. I had a friend who we would go on Sundays to go get coffee at Stoble's. That was the routine. So finding friends that you can have routine things with, so you're more intentional with your outings, and then finding ways to do dopamine detoxes. For me, keeping a more simple room, less cluttered with things. That also worked a lot, did wonders for me as well, and constantly finding ways to get back to the community in really low stress ways. I had a lot of free garage sales, getting rid of things, and I was in a Facebook group three years called the Buy Nothing Group, I would constantly post things on there and be like, hey, I want to get rid of this, hey, I want to get rid of that. A few years ago, when I was dating one of my ex-girlfriends, she was going through a slump and I was like, I can get some plants for you probably. I went on the Buy Nothing Group and I was like, “Hey I need some plants” and then a bunch of people like, “I got plants.” We run around getting—plants do well, get some plants. There's so many tiny little things that you can do that I think make you just 1%-- but not overwhelming yourself with change. Find one thing, focus on it, focus on not even mastering it, but becoming constant with it. I think it does wonders. But my grades have never been better. My skin had never been clearer. Great.

**HAGA:** We are nearing the end of our time here, but, any final words or reflections on your time as an activist at Chico State?

**ALANIZ-WIGGINS:** It is in our time and age really hard to prove, I think, consistency and what's the word? How genuine you are. Like even if you know you're genuine, as a activist, it's really hard to and constantly you're fearing if people feel like you're not genuine. When you say you don't know something or when you say you don't have time for that or all types of things. I feel like that is something I struggled with was having to tell people, I'm so sorry. I don't have time for that right now. And it is disheartening that you have to focus your energy on enacting change in specific areas because I might know so much about the struggles of being this, that, and the third intersecting identity and this at Chico State and wanting to solve it all for them. But

I don't have time. One of the biggest things that I had to learn as a student leader, and it came decently easily was learning how to delegate. I think learning how to delegate and then MCGS capstone was good for that. It taught me the whole mindset of not measuring you know, change in a human lifetime because it does take hundreds of years sometimes to see change.

Unfortunately. Learning how to measure change in a human lifetime, one, and learning how to delegate to people and trust that they also deserve to have the limelight, the spotlight, the title of expert or program lead project leader and stuff like that, you don't have to be everywhere. And teaching people like I don't have to be everywhere. I deserve time for myself too. I'm not going to attend an event at 11:00 P.M. When I have an 8:00 A.M. Not happening. I think those were the hardest things for me was learning to say no, and learning to say, I don't have time, and learning to tell people to their face, being student body president, they expect you to be very agreeable. I had a lot of students who were upset with me when their ideas and my ideas didn't agree, you know? And so that was one of the times where I had to go—I only cried to his office once. But a lot of things happened that week, being president-wise, president stuff-wise. But sometimes there are days that are consecutively bad. I remember having for the first time in my professional life, like five consecutively bad days of getting kicked out of my office, having two students come in my office and barrage me for like an hour over their ideas and their things and they don't agree with the resolution and dadadada, and then and then some people in AS government that were upset with this recent trip that we went on. And so I was, it was so much all at once and I was like, I have no idea to handle this. One bad day, fine, but a bunch of bad days all at once. They're all around you as a person or feeling like you as a person when most of it wasn't me as a person. It was a lot. It is a lot of crying sometimes. But again, growth is hard, change is hard. It's not in anyone's best interest to be the most agreeable, the most available, the most overly happy person. It is in no one's best interest to always be that. You have a right to disagree, you have a right to want to spend time by yourself, you have a right to not be there, sometimes, you have a right to say, I don't know, I don't have time, because who on Earth does? Nobody. Yeah, I think those are probably the biggest things that I learned and that I will always preach to the next person who takes on that torch is like you are your own individual person. You are not like, yes, ma'am. Yes person. Don't be that. It's okay if people disagree with you. It's okay if other activists disagree with you. If all activists agreed, then we wouldn't have any issues going on because we would have solved them by now, but because people disagree and that's all. We would have been so organized if everybody agreed. But no, we don't, because there's different ideas of what success looks like. There's different ideas of what change looks like. And so my idea of a win is certainly not Lindsay Briggs' idea of a win, and that's okay. That's okay. I love her still. Yeah, we're all working to push the needle, and so no one should be hating on another person for only wanting to push it one inch versus another person wanting to push it fifty inches. They're like, Okay, you do the inch. I'll take the rest. Leave it at that. Yeah. I'm just ranting now. I'm so sorry.

**HAGA:** No, that was great!

**HAGGARD:** Thank you. Thank you, Autumn, for allowing us to interview you for being a part of this oral history project. Looking forward to seeing all the amazing things you do after your time working on farms overseas. Graduate—excited.



**ALANIZ-WIGGINS:** Yes, thank you for having me. I hope I gave enough. I know sometimes my partner tells me too. Sometimes I can come off like a neoliberal. When he tells me straight to my face, and I'm like, it's fine. It's fine.

**HAGGARD:** You come off like Autumn is how you come off!

**ALANIZ-WIGGINS:** I come off like Autumn? I— come on. But that's why having friends from different places in different atmospheres because it's good to call each other out and be like, hey, you're showing your privilege here, hey you're doing this, and still love each other. If there's ever that, let me know.

**HAGGARD:** Thank you Autumn, we'll see you again soon.

**HAGA:** Thank you so much.