

Oral History Transcription

OH # UA-016-13
Narrator: Yazmin Rubio (2003 -)
Interviewer: Mik Zendejas
Paula Vazquez
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Language(s): English, Spanish
Project: Preserving Chico State Voices for Change

Mik (interviewer): [Laughs] Um, anyways, thank you for agreeing to participate in this oral history project. I would like to remind you that this interview may be published as part of the Oral History Archives project for Dr. Gloria Lopez's Ethnic Studies Methodologies class at California State University, Chico. My partner and I need your permission to publish this transcript in part or in its entirety. Do I have your consent?

Yazmin Rubio: Yes, you do have my consent.

Mik (interviewer): Great, thank you. For the record, could you please state your name?

Yasmin Rubio: My name is Yasmin [pause] Rubio.

Mik (interviewer): [Laughs] Alright, that's cool. Uh, my name for the record is Mikaela Zendejas, and my partner-

Paula (interviewer): Paula Vazquez.

Mik (interviewer): - is also with me at the time of this interview. It is currently 6:48 PM [November 19, 2024], and we are in the [Meriam] library's third-floor study space, Room 360, at California State University, Chico. [pauses] for the record.

Mik (interviewer): Um- alright, on to the first question. Could you tell me why you personally decided to choose Chico State University as your college?

Yasmin Rubio: Yes, so, Chico State was actually the first school that I got admitted to. So, I remember it was also on Christmas Eve, so I felt like it was kind of meant to be. I had got into other schools as well, but something about Chico State, like, I just really wanted to come up here. And I also remember having a dream that I came up-

[Minor technical difficulties occurring]

Mik (interviewer): [reassuring interviewee] No, you're good!

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Oh, okay. Um, so yeah, I had a dream, it was pretty much me and my classmates coming up for another tour because I was really conflicted on, like, whether I should stay or I should go, um in the dream, I pretty much just, like, decided on a 'yes, this was where I wanted to go.' And, um, so I chose Chico because I thought it would be a good way for me to learn how to be independent and just grow on my own as an individual.

Mik (interviewer): Okay, okay, I see. And when you mean you wanted to grow as an individual, what does that mean to you, personally?

Yasmin Rubio: Like, you know, you start off college— basically, you're like, a teenager, you don't really know what you're doing. So, like, you learn a lot as you go. I'm a fourth-year now, and I feel like me, as a freshman, compared to me now as a fourth year, like, I've definitely changed a lot.

Mik (interviewer): Okay, okay. Thank you for that. Now onto the next question.

Paula (interviewer): Okay, what is your major?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): My major is Public Health, and once I graduate, I want to be an ultrasound tech.

Paula (interviewer): Did you always have that in mind?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Um, so I actually-actually started as a pre-nursing major, but then I got kind of, like, discouraged because I do not like science, so I changed my major to liberal studies. And then, I just kind of like, it was always in the back of my head, like, oh dude, I wanna work for the medical field.' so I ended up changing my major to public health.

Paula (interviewer): Next question? [gesturing towards Mik]

Mik (interviewer): So, from my understanding, you work at El Centro, right?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Yes.

Mik (interviewer): Okay. So, could you tell me a bit more about El Centro's mission? Like, what are they really there for?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Yeah, so, El Centro's mission is to offer academic support to Hispanic and Latinx/a students. But of course, everyone is welcome in our center, and we don't just offer academic support. El Centro is a space where you can feel connected to your roots and celebrate your culture. We want to motivate and support students throughout their academic journey and make sure they make it to the finish line. We do have a high percentage of college dropouts, so like, our focus is to try and prevent that from happening and just, like, motivate them to continue working on their studies and get that degree.

Mik (interviewer): So, you would consider yourself a part of that community then, correct?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Yes.

Mik (interviewer): So then, as someone who is part of that community, how does that resonate with you?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): This resonates with me because I never thought I would be capable of coming to college. When I was in middle school, I was doing really bad. I had Fs in almost all my classes, and it wasn't until Avid that I started caring about school. Avid is a program that pretty much, like, prepares you for college and that changed my whole perspective on school. And as a Hispanic student and a first-generation college student, it's really important to me to get that degree. Not only would that open doors for me, but it would make my family extremely proud and that's what keeps me motivated.

Mik (interviewer): Thank you, thank you. So, you're a first generation [college student], you said?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Yes.

Mik (interviewer): And that definitely, heavily correlates with you'd say with your line of work, correct?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Yes.

[pause]

Paula (interviewer): What are ways students can contribute to El Centro and their mission?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Um, so students can definitely stop by and use our resources, definitely take advantage of everything that we offer, like, reprinting and, like tutoring. And they can also just like share their stories and their cultures and their struggles because it's not just like just academics, because people also go through other things. It's just nice to have someone to talk to you, no. We are really friendly. We have an amazing staff. And so, we can guide them in the right direction if they need support in other places.

Mik (interviewer): I see. So, you said that you are first generation student, you are Hispanic. So, with that in mind, I wanted to ask you, where exactly did you— where are you from? Where did you grow up at?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Um, so I'm originally from San Diego, but I grew up in Paris since I was like in middle school.

Mik (interviewer): Paris, as in, a city in California, correct?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Yeah.

Mik (interviewer): That's cool. Uh, you—would you say that your upbringing in your community, was it mostly Hispanics, or was it [trails off]

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Yeah. It's like mostly Hispanic families. It's like, yeah.

Mik (interviewer): You said that you'd say that would have definitely impacted your vision growing up and, you know, as a first generation, would you say that impacted you?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Yeah, because I feel like back home, a lot of people just didn't really care about school, and even in high school, we had people dropping out. So, I feel like kind of like I want to change that and be a part of that percentage that do graduate and get their degrees.

Paula (interviewer): I do want to expand on your question [Mik's last question]. Do you think coming up here, was there any cultural shock or cultural difference that you had when you were up here?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Yeah, yeah. Most definitely, it's really different. I actually got like homesick, and I did not like Chico at all. I actually wanted to transfer back. I didn't care if I had to go to community college. I wanted to get out of Chico because I was just so sad. But then eventually I just kind of like found my place and I started I made a lot of friends and that really helped me in feeling comfortable in Chico, and I also just really like how I have my freedom up here compared to back home because I can't really do the same things that I do here in college.

Paula (interviewer): Where do you— [stutters] does where you grew up have anything to do with your choice of work for El Centro, and— [indiscernible comments to Mik]

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Um, I feel like yes. Like back home, like you mostly see Hispanic families. So, it's nice to be in a space that presents my culture.

Mik (interviewer): And so, you would say that also has something to do with you becoming more active in the Latinx community and doing this line of work as well?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Mhm.

Mik (interviewer): So how did you learn about El Centro?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): So, I was recommended by an old colleague of mine, so I had no idea that El Centro was going to be a new center.

Mik (interviewer): And what were your initial thoughts before you really knew anything about it?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): I was just really excited to be honest. I was like, I wonder what they're going to do. I wonder what it's going to be like. Once I became a part of El Centro, I just realized that it's really a place where you can just go and chill, work on your homework. Our staff put in a lot of effort to throw events and make students feel like they're back at home. I know in the past, we've had, like a Latin American independent celebration. We had a Dia de Loteria, we had a Latin Unity celebration, and we recently made an *ofrenda* to celebrate the month.

Paula (interviewer): For people who might not understand what *Dia de los Muertos* is, can you explain what it is?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Yes. *Dia de los Muertos* is Day of the Dead, so it's celebrated November 1 to November 2. Day of the dead is a two-day holiday that reunites the living and dead. Families create *ofrenda* offerings to honor their departed family members that have passed. These altars are decorated with bright yellow, marigold flowers, photos of the departed, and the favorite foods and drinks of the one being honored. The offerings are believed to encourage visits from the land of the dead as the departed souls hear their prayers, smell their food, and join in the celebrations. So, November 1st. [pause] November 1st at 12:00 A.M. It's considered to be *Dia de Los Angelitos*, which is spirits of the children. *Dia de Los Angelitos* starts the holiday at midnight, where the spirits are all deceased.

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Children are believed to be reunited with their families for 24 hours. Families construct an altar known as an *ofrenda* with the departed child's favorite snacks, candies, toys, and photographs to encourage a visit from their departed children. The names of the departed children will often be written on a sugar skull. Um, on November 2 at 12:00 A.M. It's considered to be *Dia de los Difuntos*. So, the celebrations shift to honor the lives of the departed adults. The night is filled with laughter and fun memories, much like the night before. However, the offerings take on a more adult like theme with Tequila, *pan de muerto*, Mescal, *pulque*. Families will also play games together, reminisce about their loved ones, and dance while the village bands play in their town. At November 2nd at noon is considered to be *Dia de los Muertos* spirits of all the dead. The next day is the grand finale and public celebration of *Dia de los Muertos*. More recent times, people come together in their cities, dressed up with calavera painted faces, which just translates to skeletons, and have parades in the streets. Cemetery visits are also common on the last day as families will go to decorate the gravesites with marigold flowers, gifts, and sugar skulls with the departed name on them. It's customary to clean the grave, stone, and restore the color. There's also a few ways to celebrate the *Dia de los Muertos*. We have Calaveras which translates to skulls, Calaveras are um, [pause] they're like a unique [pause] They're like a unique part of *Dia de los Muertos*. The skulls are often drawn with a smile as if to laugh at death itself. They take many forms such as sugar candies, clay decorations, and most memorable, face painting. Sugar skulls are decorated and placed on the *ofrenda* of loved ones. A calavera or sugar skull is decorated skulls made usually by hand from either sugar or clay, which are used in the Mexican celebration of the day of the dead.

Mik (interviewer): Um, so thank you, um for telling us about the meaning behind that. And would you say that El Centro hosting events like that has made you personally feel a bit more at home since you started?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Yeah. I feel like there's not a lot of— Well, from before I started working in El Centro, I wouldn't really hear about too many events on campus. And I feel like now that working at El Centro, I feel like there's a lot more going on to represent culture.

Mik (interviewer): I see. So, El Centro, you say that they represent Latin(x). So, would you say in that same sentence that you feel represented then?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Yes.

Mik (interviewer): Okay. And why do you feel represented?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Because I feel like they're really bringing a lot of, like effort to celebrate our cultures and just make everyone feel seen and heard.

Mik (interviewer): So, a lot of people would say that organizations like that, sort of, follow up with a bit of activism. Would you consider yourself an activist?

[pause]

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Um, do you mind repeating the question?

Mik (interviewer): [Laughing] Ah, yeah. I asked you, since you feel that way [represented], would you say you're an activist?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Yes.

Mik (interviewer): And why?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Um, I just I feel like, yes, but I feel like I could be doing more when it comes to being an activist because I feel like although, I like, support like my culture and my community, I feel like I could be like more educated, but I would stand up and defend our culture.

Mik (interviewer): If it all came down to it, you would defend? I see.

Mik (interviewer): So, since you're intimately involved with this work, what are some ways that fellow Chico State students could help in their own ways with the Latin community? In your opinion?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): I feel like students could definitely help us by, like, sharing— because we have a lot of cultures, you know and a lot of traditions. So, I feel like maybe going around and asking the students that come into El Centro to share their traditions and what they do for their cultures. And that way we can like include them in El Centro and make everyone feel included. That way, we can also educate others and like, this is what it's from. You know, Christmas, or this is what they [another culture does] do. This is the most famous dish, or this is how they make it, I feel like that would be really interesting.

Mik (interviewer): So you like, to you know, educate about our culture basically to other people who aren't so aware of it. Since you said that, what is the main— one thing that you would definitely educate to others that don't really know too much about our culture, if you could. You had a whole audience to yourself one day, and they asked you, tell us something that we do not know about our [Hispanic] culture. Something you find personally unique that you really like.

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): [Pause] Hm. That's a very good question. Really got me thinking there. Hm. Do you mind repeating the question? Yeah, no worries about it. So I asked you if you had a whole room full of people who weren't super educated about our culture and you had just a few minutes to explain one thing that you find personally unique about our culture that you would educate others, what would it be?

So back to what I was saying earlier, I feel like *Día de los Muertos* is like, really resonates with me because my dad did pass away a couple of years ago. So, I feel like I really think *Día de los Muertos* it's like very special to me because I do believe that they [deceased loved ones] do come back, and they visit us. Not just specifically on *Día de los Muertos*, but like, like any other day. I know I felt— I felt my dad's presence before. Like, there is this one day, like I was really going through it. It was in the beginning of the year. And I've never really told too many people about this because I just think it's really personal and special. But I was really going through it, and I have like one of his shirts in my closet and it sprayed with his cologne. So, like, I was going through a lot. So, I grabbed his shirt, and I started like hugging it like really tight and I was [unintelligible] to my dad. I was like Pa, like, I really need your now, please listen to me, like, please guide me in the right direction. And I was— I was like hugging his shirt and I was like rocking myself back and forth. Like I felt his presence. And like I felt like his hug. So, like, he was there with me, and he was like listening to me. And as I was venting, like, I felt like he was taking the pain away. I feel like that's really special. *Día de los Muertos* is like a way to remember like hey, like it's a day to remember my dad, but it's also important to remember that, not just on those days specifically, but like every single day, they're always with you and they're always going to be looking after you and they're always going to be like, a piece of you.

Mik (interviewer): So, you think there's something that definitely— that even non-Hispanics should know as a culture since it's something comforting for you?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Mhm.

Mik (interviewer): Thank you for sharing that with us. So, going back to the topic of where you were at with El Centro, do you know exactly how this organization got started? And when?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Um, I am actually not too sure how it got started. Yeah. I'm not sure. I just applied and I got the job.

Mik (interviewer): And how many people are a part of this organization?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): So, we have our, um, graduate assistant. His name is Ernie. We have our program coordinators. I'm a part of it, Yasmin. We have Alma, we have Eric, and we have Paola and then we have Jamile who's in charge of [unintelligible].

Mik (interviewer): Okay. Cool. And what are these people like, what do they do? What are their exact, like jobs [unintelligible]? What do they do in their day-to-day life?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): So, program coordinators, we pretty much just try and set up events with everyone. And we reach out to people like say, um, say like [unintelligible] and we want to make a workshop about classes and stuff. That's pretty much what we do. We also make flyers and Instagram posts and so everything that you see like we're making.

[pause]

[brief laughter]

Mik (interviewer): Um, you said that you guys hold workshops. What kind of workshops do you guys hold?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): So, we haven't had workshops yet, but we are planning on having workshops more, like centered on the academic side. So, we have a workshop planned for choosing your classes. And let's see, yeah. That's one that I'm working on right now. But as for the others [employees of El Centro], I don't really look at their tasks. I also want to give a shout out to doctor Glor– Gloria Lopez because she is also there to help out our students. And if anyone wants to talk about like graduate school, like she's the person you can go to or like help classes. She's there.

Mik (interviewer): Cool. That's actually our professor. That's crazy.

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Wow!

Mik (interviewer): Yeah, bet you didn't know that. [Laughs].

Paula (interviewer): So how do you think Chico [State] handles representation? Specifically, Latinx. Do you think they do a good job or they got [unintelligible]?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): I feel like Chico could do more because like I said earlier, I didn't really hear about too many events involving, like our culture like Hispanic and Latinos and Latina, Latinx up until I started working at El Centro. I feel like they could probably do a better job at representing cultures.

Mik (interviewer): And so, when you say that they could do a better job, what do you mean by that? What is a better job?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Like promoting sharing our Instagram posts and just maybe like, uh, also, like, recognizing, like, uh, different holidays that are in the Hispanic culture.

Mik (interviewer): So, have you ever felt misrepresented here and Chico State and all of your time in being here?

[pause]

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): No.

Mik (interviewer): No?

Paula (interviewer): Going back on how you mentioned you felt homesick when you first came here culturally. How did you work on that? Like, how did you cope with it?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): So first, I would always Facetime my family, and I would always just try and call them every single day so I can feel closer to them. I would also just hang out with friends. That also helped a lot. I try to find restaurants like Mexican restaurants, because I'm not the best at cooking. I can't really cook as well as my mom. Going to restaurants and really just like eating food there reminded me of back home, like *quesabirrias*, one of my favorites. I don't know how to make that, but *Mi Jalisco* [local restaurant] has really good *quesabirrias* and I haven't tried all the Mexican restaurants here, but I've heard of a little taco truck by Red Room [local tattoo parlor]. I heard they have really good *birria* there too. I would also just try and listen to music that reminded me of back home, like I listen to a lot of [unintelligible] or a lot of *Bandas*, and *Cumbia* and stuff like that really helped me out.

Paula (interviewer): Do you think working and El Centro has also helped you a little bit or uh, can help uh, other people experience or ah, help with homesickness?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Yeah, I feel like because in most spaces, I feel like they don't really play or like for example, when I would walk into the space [El Centro], I would want to hear music that I listen to and El Centro is always playing music that reminds me back home and they, uh, they have Mexican candy there too and they have *Gansitos*, and have the whole place just decorated very nicely.

Mik (interviewer): So, you bring up music. Would you say that music is a big part of our culture then, that makes you feel kind of like at home?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Yes. I love music.

Mik (interviewer): So, would you say you have any influential mentors in your life at the moment or used to have any mentors?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Yes. So I was actually apart of Reach [different campus organization] my first year of college and my mentors name is Isabelle. She really motivated me to get out of my bubble, and I'm still very shy and I know I can do better with being more outgoing, but definitely compared to freshman year, I'm like a lot more outgoing, and she really helped me out with that and she's just very kind and very sweet and I look up to her, and I hope to be like her one day.

Mik (interviewer): Thank you for telling us that.

Paula (interviewer): What resources have you used in El Centro, being there?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Um, so I'm in central every single day. I worked every single day, and I feel like I don't really take advantage of the resources and that sounds bad. But they offer snacks, they offer chips, candy. They also offer tutoring, free printing. As for tutoring, I have wanted to go to the research and it's like I forgot what else it's called, but it has to do with research. But most of the time, I'm at work, and, like I don't really have time to be going like that. It free printing too. I don't really take advantage of that either because there's not a lot of things that I have to print. But if I do, I know where to guide people like, hey, there's free printing here at sent so take advantage of that way they don't have to be paying at the library, I think you have to pay and like I don't know, [unintelligible].

Mik (interviewer): So, you would recommend that to basically anyone use the resources—

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): We're also going to start a mentor program soon next semester.

Mik (interviewer): Oh, wow. A mentor program, will you be participating?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Um, to be determined.

Mik (interviewer): To be determined, okay. Cool. So how long have you been working for El Centro?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): I've been working there since August, so it's been like August, September, October, November. Like, three months, two months and a half.

Mik (interviewer): That's a long time.

Paula (interviewer): So how has your experience been working at El Centro as of the three months?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): It's actually- It's been it's been good. I have no complaints, but something I will say is that I feel like, I feel like I can get a little lonely sometimes because since I got there, like really late and I'm like kind of new. I feel like everyone already, um, had like everyone just already, like, had their person to talk to and I just feel like I sometimes feel out of place sometimes. But everyone's really kind and I really like how, like not just like in El Centro— but the whole East wing. Everyone just stops by the officer they're like, hey, how are you doing? I feel like I have I have I feel like I haven't really made, like, oh, that's like my best friend. But I know I have made like connections for sure.

Mik (interviewer): So, do you consider yourself an advocate then due to your line of work?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Yes.

Mik (interviewer): And why?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): I feel like I don't do as much as I should be doing, but the other day at work, I actually had a very long conversation with one of the students who came into the center, and we had a lot in common. We talked for like, my whole shift. And we actually ended up exchanging numbers and we met up the next day to like, work on some homework and then we even made plans to hang out. Although, it was postponed because we were both, like actually really busy. We still text and we're like, hey. She's really kind. I feel like I me as a staff. I would want students to know like, Yeah, I worked there. But I also wanted them to know it's okay to come up to me and want to make conversation. I'm totally open to talking to them or if they need advice or if they need help, I'm definitely open to that. Also like me, like, I can just get up from my seat and go up to students and be like, hey, how are you doing? My name is Yasmin. I know you've been coming in here for a while. Just want to present myself if you need a friend, I'm here for you because I know it can be a little intimidating going to a new center, especially, especially if you're going in alone. Um, it can be a little intimidating if you like, I don't know these people, like, oh, I'm not allowed to talk to them, they're working, I don't want to bother them. I would want students to know we're staff, and we work there, but it's also important to let them know, we can also be your friend and help you in any way that we can.

Mik (interviewer): So, you guys as staff, really just want to connect students and make it known that you guys are there to also be companions, just as much as you are there for academic business?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Yes.

Mik (interviewer): So, what are some challenges that you've encountered here at Chico State in your four years of being here? I mean, you spoke about, you know, not being able to fit in very well, but what are some other challenges that really just dig at you, or used to?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Definitely balancing school and work. I feel like I'm a really, really, really, really, really big procrastinator. So, it can get a little difficult to balance, especially not just work in school, but also my social life because I tend to prioritize my happiness with, like, um I tend to prioritize my happiness and just leave school to the side. I feel like it's definitely really hard sometimes. I just have to create a schedule and stick to it. But most of the time that really only works for the first month of school and then after that, I'm like, I don't care anymore. I know it's bad, but it happens to be every semester and it's something that I need to work on most definitely. But I would say that that's definitely one of my biggest struggles like balancing social life, work and school.

Mik (interviewer): Would you say El Centro helps you balance that social life and school, or would you say it makes it worse?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): I feel like uh I want to say not worse, but also not better either. I feel like although I'm there working at the front desk, I feel like I'm not really social and I'm really just always working on my tasks. And um, yeah, that's definitely something I could work on and be more social with the students and once I finish, say a task or part of my task, I can get up and walk around and ask students how they're doing or if they need any help with anything or be like, Hey, did you know that this event is coming up? And definitely be more vocal.

Paula (interviewer): So your time at Chico, has there been the year that's been particularly hard for you or that was hard for you?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Yes. My sophomore year was definitely one of the hardest years I've ever had to go through. I was going through a breakup and then shortly after that, I lost my dad, and it was very, very difficult to go back home and just, like, kind of, like I didn't necessarily like leave— like I did leave school, but like I just like emailed all my professors and said, like, Hey, like, this is— this is what's happening. So, it was definitely really hard to finish school because it happened like in November. So, it was definitely really hard to be at home and be like, struggling with my emotions and just everything that I was feeling, but I'm like, Oh, I have to finish this assignment, I have to finish this final, like I have to do it, or else I'm going to fail. It was definitely one of the hardest years. Definitely afterwards, too, because since it had, like I came back second semester till Spring of 2023. That was also really hard because everything was still very recent and I was like, I was not okay. So yeah, it was definitely really hard for me to, like, get up out of bed and just continue with my studies, kind of like as if, like, nothing happened. So, I was really, really, really hard to try and find, like motivation. When all I could really think about was like my dad. Um, but something that really helped me was like my friends. So, they were like a really big support system. They were like always listened to me, rant, they were like— asked me to hang out or they're like, hey, like if you need anything like I'm here for you. So, I'm really grateful for the people I have in my life and for helping me get out of like, that place. And

it's still hard till this day because it's something that you can't really ever get over. So, there's times where when his birthday is coming up or like for example, if it's like Father's Day or like, now since we're like ending the year, it's like holidays it's really hard to be without him. So that's definitely something that I still struggle with.

Paula (interviewer): So, these friends, I'm assuming they're from Chico?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Yes, they're from Chico.

Paula (interviewer): So how did you meet them, first of all?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): So, I met most of my friends, my freshman year of college. I was in this program called REACH, which is like a program that helps first year students— first generation college students. I mostly made my friends there. It's crazy because within the hub, I didn't really start getting close with them until like the second semester even after the year had ended. Um, but yeah, I'm very grateful for them because we got close— we got close so fast after after the year ended. But I'm very grateful because I really don't know what I would do without them. And the reason if it weren't for them, I would probably be at home body and be home all— although I am at home all the time. But like I go out with them. I've been to like, we go out to eat and we try to hang out, make little hangouts every now and then. Although we're all busy, we try and come to the library, sometimes have a little study day. Besides, REACH, I did meet one of my best friends through a friend of mine, and he's really important to me too. He's also someone who's helped me through my academics and personal struggles that I've had to go through. So, very grateful for my friends. I feel like college is definitely like, the time where you get to like, meet different people. Um, and definitely, like, you go through ups and downs, but you also find, like long life friends and like friends that you— that you know that you can count on and friends that will support you and motivate you and that you can go to whenever you're going through something, or like, if you ever want to hang out or if you ever need help, you can go to them like, Hey, like, I need advice on, like, say, you need, like relationship advice, you go to like your girls, you're like, come up. Um, And yeah.

Mik (interviewer): So, moving on to the next question, would you consider El Centro to be, or would you recommend it for first years who are looking to connect with fellow Hispanics and get to know more people?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Yes, I feel like that would be a good way to meet people and make connections with others because you have a lot of people stopping by. Depending on the time, it can either be slow at the center or it can be really packed. I know it can be intimidating going up to people, but just like—like, don't be shy. Everyone is really friendly here in Chico. That's something that I've also noticed, just go up to them and be like, Hey, I'm so and so. I'm a first year, what's your name? Let's be friends. I feel like that also just like If that interaction goes well, it motivates you to keep doing it and keep talking to people and go to not just in central but different centers as well where you like, can make friends there and then bring them into El Centro, like, Hey, there's a there's this resource center on campus. It's really cool. They offer

snacks. They have different events that they host, they play music. I feel like that's a really cool way to make connections, bring people in.

Mik (interviewer): How have you stayed involved in campus other than just working at El Centro?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): I've stayed involved by working at the Reach Center, which is a center for like, first generation college students, not just like first year students, but it's open to everyone and every single year, even if you're like a graduate study— a graduate student, my apologies. So, I've, I actually became a mentor in my junior year of college. So, I took a class spring semester of, of my sophomore year. Yeah, my sophomore year. I took a class, and I was actually motivated by the mentor that I mentioned earlier, Isabel. She was my mentor in my freshman year. Since I was really motivated by her, I was like, dude, I want to be like you. I talked to her about wanting to be a mentor, I became a mentor. It was actually a really good experience. I had a really amazing group of students, and it's really rewarding because you get to help them throughout their first year of college, you get to guide them. Not only, Like once that year end, it's not like, I'm not your mentor anymore. You still have that connection with them. I let them know I'm like guys, I know I may not officially technically be like your mentor more, but I'll always be here for you guys. If you guys ever did anything you guys can always reach out to me. I'm always here for you guys. Besides that, I also work the front desk at Reach. That's also a good way that I've stayed connected. I've made most of my friends. It's a very nice interactive way. People come in and I get to sign them in, I ask them how their day is. I asked them for their first and last name. That's how I also started making more friends because I started seeing more people at Reach and then you just see them out while you're walking to classes or even like, not even on campus, but sometimes I've even seen some people say, at Barnes & Noble I'm like dude, no way, I know you. It's crazy because you're like, Oh, my God and now they're my friends now. It's really cool. It's like I really love it.

Mik (interviewer): So, since you have mentoring experience, would you say that's helped you work at El Centro in any sort of way like your experience, has it somehow assisted you when you talk to others?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Yeah, I feel like um, if anyone needs guidance and say they need help with their classes. I know there was, there's been a student, and it's been the same student too. She's come in asking for help, say for example, for her computer, I'm like, oh, they can go to ITSS. It's not too far. It's literally down the hallway. She also needed help with getting specific paper. And I know— I think the library has what— my boss actually guided her. But now I know of it. I think it's somewhere here in the library. I feel like that has definitely helped me because I know of different resources on campus like the counseling center— [Laughing] I'm sorry, the counseling center. Um, there's also tutoring and at the [stutters] SSC building, you can go and sign up. There's writing centers that they can help you write your papers, your essays, if you ever needed anyone to look over your paper, or you need feedback besides like your professor, can go there. I would really recommend them to take advantage of like, uh, what's it called,

office hours. Get like really not like close to professors, but try and visit them every now and then because that really helps build the connection and it helps the professor get to know you. There's the Well as well. It helps you. There's a little coloring section. They have like, I forget what rooms they have, but there's this room that I really like. I think it's called the sensory room. They have lights and bean bags, and it's very chill in there, and I think they play music too. It's just, it's very good to be able to help as that's something I really like helping them like, I don't know. I just I-I want to be able to help people as much as I can.

Mik (interviewer): So, since you're a former mentor, what are some things you've learned, some hard lessons you've learned as a mentor?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): It's definitely hard to try and, um, hard to like, you're working with like a group of eight to— depending on how many mentees you get, you're working 8-10, sometimes even 12 students. It's hard to manage a big group of students, especially since, like, sometimes some students don't really want to be there, and it makes it hard when I was a mentor at the time, some of them just didn't really want to be there and it was kind of hard to try and get them to stay focused on the presentations that we would give or like, oh, please don't use your phone or please make it on time or we had a certain, you could only miss class, I think it was twice, which I think is it's difficult because, you get sick. But it was really hard and it was sad sometimes because I feel like they weren't really interested, which I understand because I was the same way when I was a freshman, I was like, dude, why am I in Reach, I just want to get out of here. But yeah, I guess I just kind of got, like, definitely more courage. There's this one time I was really, really upset and I had like a serious talk. I was like, guys, like, what's going on? I told you guys this, this and this, and you guys aren't showing up. You guys aren't reacting to my messages. Like, It's not that difficult. It really takes courage, but I also had the help from my mentor Kevin Click. Shoutout to Kevin Click. He also helped me a lot and we would meet up every single week and talk about things we could do. I was— I think there is this one time we played UNO [card game] or we would— What else did we do? Yeah.

Paula (interviewer): So how do you think El Centro has formed you as a person? If it has, if it has.

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): I don't— I don't think El Centro has formed me as a person. I feel like mostly because, like I haven't really been there too much. If I definitely would have— Like if El Centro would have been a thing, like my freshman year and I would have like started working there, I definitely feel like it would have helped me. Definitely being more educated with different cultures and just on how to reach out to like, um, certain resources on campus so that we can work together. I would say that something that I have kind of improved on. I'm still kind of iffy on it, is writing emails to people. That's something I really don't like to do because I feel like I'm not the best writer because I tend to stutter. Then my grammar really sucks. I'm like, does this sound good? How can it sound better? I had to reach out to I think it was the Pride club because we wanted to make a post about like Pride Month. But they weren't really— I didn't really know how to write that email and that was kind of like, oh, how can I make this sound like respectful and how can I be I don't know. I feel like it's also hard, especially through email because you

don't know how people are going to interpret your email because I feel like it's different, for example, me, the way I read emails or the way I read messages, it's different from the way other people would read. So, like, that's definitely something that's really scary, but now I'm just like, okay, I know how to start up. Hi, first I introduced myself, hey, my name is Yazmin. I work at El Centro as a culture program coordinator, and I'm reaching out in hopes that we can coordinate a day so we can host a workshop at El Centro, so we can help students with their classes. That's something that I have gained.

Mik (interviewer): So, you guys, um, where you work El Centro, do you guys often collaborate with any other cultural organization we may have on campus?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): We've coordinated with— like, there's a whole East Wing. It's like the CCLC. We have the BRC, IPTA. They definitely, we like, help each other out. We have weekly meetings. We don't meet with them every single week, but there's times where we have a big meeting with everyone. We talk about like, oh, this is what's happening on this day or this is what the CCLC is offering on this day, this is the event that we're having and we all just come together and we help each other like, because some centers like everyone may not be able to work the event. So, we come together as like every single center and we're like, okay, like so and so at the BRC or so and so at El Centro can volunteer these hours and work these hours and help them out and stuff.

Mik (interviewer): So, based on what you're telling me, it seems like all the cultural groups on campus are pretty much all connected with one another, is that correct?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Yes.

Mik (interviewer): So how does that make you feel knowing that all these different groups of cultures are coming together to mutually plan things and just come and just socialize with each other and connect.

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): It makes me happy because I feel like it's a nice way to get others to, like, come together. Um, I haven't really, I know the people from the people who work at each centers, but I feel like I haven't really made a connection with them. But definitely when we do get together, I feel like it's really nice to like, they're really, really nice people, and I feel like me, myself, like working at the El Centro, I still feel like kind of intimidated, like going to the CCLC and the BRC. But once you're in there and you're like talking to people, you're like, wow, these people are so cool, I should come here more often and build connections with them and be like, hey, like, how's your day going? I know the first time I went to the BRC [Black Resource Center]. I was intimidated because I didn't really know anyone besides Darnell and Ashley. But, like once I sat there on their couch, people just started talking to me and I was like, oh, yeah, this is my major. This is my name, blah, blah, and then now every single time, he passes by El Centro he comes and says, Hi. He's like, what's up like, how are you? It's not just from the BRC, it's also APIDA [Asian Pacific Islander Desi American], and the CCLC [Cross-Cultural Resource Center], people stop by. It's just like it's a really nice, it's a little family, the whole East Wing.

Mik (interviewer): So. So, all these cultures coming together, you view it as a positive thing?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Yes. Makes me happy.

Mik (interviewer): So, we've been talking about all the positives that you've been having working at all Central, but what are some other downsides? What are some things you ran into that was just a particular challenge for you that you've had to learn and overcome working there?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Definitely in the beginning, when I was like, getting trained and everything, I would definitely say like Canva. I wasn't too familiar with Canva. I know it's like something new for me because I always use like Google slides. Making flyers was definitely really hard for me because I feel like I'm not that creative. When it comes to like, artistic stuff and like, flyers and colors and pictures and stuff. I feel like it's definitely something that I still struggle with. But, compared to when I first started, I feel like I'm a lot better because now I'm just ok. Let me just look up like say like it's like a game night, I look up game night. I know that I have to put the time, the day, accommodations for like disability, like um, explain what the event is going to be like. And yeah. I still feel like um, I need to be like more confident within myself because although I may not be like that creative, like my work is still like, worth something, you know? So, like a post that I was like, really proud of was like *Dia de los Muertos*. I know I keep bringing that up, but I was, wow, like, I'm so proud of that post. I had a lot of information. Yeah, but I do feel like I could be putting in more effort in the flyers and the posts that I make.

Paula (interviewer): Do you guys uh, does El Centro have tours for new people?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Yes. So typically, if I recognize a new phase or like my other coworkers as well. Typically, my other coworkers who give out the tours, because I feel like they're better doing it than I am. But typically, when someone comes in or say, I know it was a few weeks so I think we had high school students come in and we had to give a tour of the space. Typically, we obviously introduce ourselves like, Hey, I'm Yazmin, program coordinator here at the El Centro. Then we just offer the resources that we say the resources that we offer, like free printing, tutoring, and how we're going to start a mentor program soon. For example, we have cubicles right behind the desk that you can reserve, we have a little QR code. It's just like if you want a more private area to, um, to work on your homework, there's only two spaces. But it's really cool because it's like um, a little office. I would also say, this is a space where you can do your homework and you come in and have a little study session, we have music playing in the background. We have snacks in case you're ever hungry. We have a little break room area where you can go in. We have a fridge and say if you're a commuter, even if you're a Chico local and you're just there for a long— like you're at school for the whole day. You can come in early, we open at nine, you can leave your lunch in the fridge, we have a microwave. Once you're done with your classes and you're hungry, if you want so just come heat up your food, we have water, we have ice. We have a little coffee table as well. We can make coffee, can make tea. There's typically sometimes we have really good snacks. I know there's times

where we have *concha*. *Gansitos* are really really popular. Um, what else? We offer tutoring. So, we just explain what type of tutoring we offer. I think one is like the Research Breakdown, one is like I'm pretty sure, it's like Chicano studies. We have one more, but I can't think of it from the top of my head. Of course, we also introduce— we try to introduce all our staffs. Whoever is there, we're like, oh, this is Jamile [Balli], she runs everything from El Centro. This is Dr. Gloria Lopez, if you want to talk to her about like, if you're interested in graduate school, like, um, you can talk to her. Recently, we had Cal Fresh move in. So, we have Cal Fresh too. Students need help with applying to Cal Fresh. They can go to them, they can get the help that they need, they can get food because that's always important, got to stay healthy, to stay focused on your classes. Um, I'm not sure if we're getting any— Oh, also. I forgot something very, very, very important. We ask students to sign in too, so the desk would be like this where you typically sign in, just type in your, I think it's your last name, your ID number, and then the reason why you're there. And like I said, we offer free printing. I know it can be a little difficult because you have to like log into the computer, and then you also have to log in to a little like there's a little device on the left side where you have to log into that and then say what you want to print and stuff. So that makes a little difficult. I know I've had students ask me for help before. Um, I think that's it, I don't know if I'm missing anything, but yeah, that's typically like the rundown of like, El Centro.

Mik (interviewer): Okay. So, what are your bad experiences at El Centro, If you have any bad experiences at all?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): I haven't had any bad experiences with students. But if someone were to come in and be like, really rude, I would kind of just stay calm, you know, because you never know what they're going through. Just be like say like someone just like um, I don't know, like, they're just kind of like maybe yelling at you, maybe taking out their anger at you. I would obviously be upset, but, like, you kind of just have to take it as like, oh, they're probably having a bad day. You can be like, oh, like, I don't know if you're going through something, I can I understand that you're upset, but like please don't take it out on me, I'm just trying to help you. I just work here. I'm not trying to do anything to make you even more mad or upset you even more. Kind of just take things like, deal with it with respect and be calm, don't take it to heart because they could be going through something.

Mik (interviewer): If there was a resource that you could personally add to El Centro that you think would help you and you would actually go out of your way to use, what would it be?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Umm. Hmm.

Mik (interviewer): Take your time. It's okay.

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Yeah, I'm trying to think. You said a resource that I would like them to offer?

Mik (interviewer): Yeah, that that you would personally use and actually go out of your way to, like, participate in because you told me that, you know, you don't really use many of the resources, so what's something you would use then?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Um. Maybe if they had— actually, hold on, let me think. [Pause] Maybe like, it's not necessarily like an academic resource. But like say you're just there to like chill and you're like, done with your homework or like you don't want to work on your homework-homework. Maybe they should have things like maybe like a coloring book and some colored pencils. I know we have markers, but I'm not sure if we have coloring books. Maybe that could be offered at the tables and if people want to destress, that can be a way. Maybe also have a certain designated table that maybe has like a puzzle or certain card games that people can play. I would definitely use that.

Mik (interviewer): So, you think they should add more enriching activities rather than just straight academic business?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Yeah

Mik (interviewer): Is there anyone in particular you feel connected to or look up to in El Centro?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): I think someone I would look up to would be Erme[lindo Salgado Hernandez]. He's a graduate—graduate assistant. I know he's a very busy guy. He's always going somewhere probably meeting after meeting or he has class from 8-11, and then he has meetings, and then I feel like, that, just seeing him and knowing that he's in the graduate program that really motivates me to not necessarily go to— Yeah, I've just never really thought about going to graduate school. But it just really motivates me and being like, if he finished his undergrad, if he's in graduate school, now dealing with all these events and writing his thesis and, like, balancing his social life and school life and work. That really motivates me with my schoolwork and social life and, like, work life. Because like I said earlier, I can— I really struggle with that. Knowing that he can do it like, if he can do it, I can do it too because I don't really know him too much, but he always comes up to me. He's like, hey, Yasmin, how is your weekend or how are you doing? Just knowing, sometimes you can tell that he's really stressed because he's planned events before and they go very well. So, I'm very proud of him. That's definitely motivation.

[Pause]

Paula (interviewer): How do or would you connect to people or newcomers in El Centro?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Like new students coming in?

Paula (interviewer): Yes.

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): So typically, when students come in, I just normally ask them about, like, oh, how are you doing or how's your day going. But other than that, I feel like I don't really go out of my way to really, like build a connection with them. I just sit at the front desk, and they just sit at the tables and work on their homework. I would definitely like to start making more connections with the students that come by also so they could feel more comfortable and like, oh my god, she started conversation with me and not only did she just like— how's your day, but she kept the conversation going, you know, I feel like that would make students feel a lot more comfortable and that would motivate them to come to the center more often. So yeah, I feel like that's something [unintelligible].

Paula (interviewer): So, if you theoretically weren't working at El Centro, do you think you, as a regular student, would be in El Centro, [unintelligible] advantage of resources or just visiting?

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): I feel like I probably would hesitate to go into El Centro because I'm a very shy person and I go into, like, new spaces really intimidates me. So I would probably want to go visit with a friend so that way I don't feel like too like, anxiety, you know, I feel like I probably wouldn't, but with a friend, I probably would take advantage of the resources and once I go in there, like, this isn't too bad. So, then that would probably motivate me to go to El Centro alone and be like, oh, I need to print this paper. I can go to El Centro and definitely go in there to get snacks because I love free snacks, everyone loves free food. Um, and I also really like the cubicles in the back. But I feel like knowing me, I probably— well, I don't know actually, because since you're in the back and no one can really see you. I feel like I probably would— I probably would do that, but I would feel intimidated to go up to the QR code and scan and then look for the time that it's available. And I'm just like really shy. But I feel like me, like if I wasn't working there, and just me as a normal student, I probably wouldn't go in there.

Paula (interviewer): So, if anyone came that wasn't a part of the, uh, Latinx or Latine, uh, group, could they go or uh, how would El Centro receive them? Yeah.

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Anyone is welcome. I know it's like specifically for Hispanic and Latinx students, but we really like, it's open to every single student. Anyone is welcome at any time. Anyone can use our resources. Um, I would just treat them the same as like anyone else. Like, hey, how are you going, do you mind signing in and just also just explain to them the services that we offer, like, oh, have you been in here before? I would also encourage them to come back more. Like, you're always welcome in here. I know maybe like different space, but we offer resources and we do offer, like, I would tell them to follow our Instagram page where we make posts about, um, events that we're having throughout the week or like informational posts so they could, like, stay informed. That's a good way. Just like let them know that they're welcome. They don't have to be a part of the community. Tell their friends about it, the free snacks that always lures them in. And just when they're leaving, like, oh, like, have a nice day, like it was nice meeting you.

Mik (interviewer): So, as we wrap up the interview, I have one more question for you, and that is, if you would like anything to add to this interview [unintelligible].

Yazmin Rubio (interviewee): Um, definitely just, I would like students to know that they should definitely take advantage of the resources. I know I said that if I wasn't working in El Centro, I probably wouldn't because I would be intimidated. But I feel like students should just get out of their bubble and like, oh, hey, like, it's free printing, you know, free food, free candy, events that also offer really good free food. But not just that, but also a way to build connections with others and, um, make friends as well that you can start— I don't know, you go to the library, you can go out to eat. So definitely come by, stop by El Centro, we're all really nice. We would love for you guys to come in. We would love to meet you.

Mik (interviewer): Okay. Thank you for participating in this oral history project. Thank you.

Paula (interviewer): Thank you!