

12-21-2007

## Interview no. 1584

Ventura Gutierrez

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### Recommended Citation

Interview with Ventura Gutierrez by Mireya Loza, 2007, "Interview no. 1584," Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso.

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## THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

Interviewee: Ventura Gutiérrez

Interviewer: Mireya Loza

Project: Bracero Oral History Project

Location: Mérida, Yucatán, Mexico

Date of Interview: 21 December 2007

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Transcript No: 1584

Transcriber: \_\_\_\_\_

Mr. Ventura Gutiérrez was born on December 14, 1948, in Puruándiro, Michoacán, Mexico; he is the second oldest of eight children; his paternal grandfather was Joaquin Mendez Mendez and his paternal grandmother was Lucia Mendez Mendez; in 1950, his father moved the family to Coachella, California; his family lived on farmland that belonged to his uncles; both his father and his mother worked as field laborers; at the age of eleven, he made his first trip to Puruándiro, Michoacán, where he noticed the vast disparities in the standard of living compared to the United States; he promised his grandfather, an ex bracero, that he would do something to help change the standard of living in Puruándiro, Michoacán; he is an organizer with Bracero PROA. Mr. Gutiérrez briefly recalls his childhood and the neighborhood he grew up in; he recalls accidentally setting his home on fire while playing cowboys and Indians; they lost all of their belongings in the fire and as a result they moved to a Mexican barrio; he discusses the Chicano Movement and organizations such as MEChA, UMAS, the Partido de la Raza Unida, MAPA and the U.F.W.; he briefly discusses his time in the military; in 1972, Mr. Gutiérrez married; Mr. Gutiérrez worked as a teacher's aid at Coachella Valley High School (1976-77) and obtained his elementary teaching credentials at San Bernardino State University; he taught elementary school and served five years as the vice president of the school board; he worked with union workers in the Coachella Valley, Yuma, and San Diego (1983-1996); he discusses how, from 1988-1998, they had informed ex braceros and/or their widows that they could not adjust their immigration status by using MICA or under the Rodino Bill; he determined that the braceros had ten percent of their earnings deducted and that it should have been applied to a savings fund; Mr. Gutiérrez moved to Puruándiro, Michoacán and established a service center; Mr. Gutiérrez discusses the Bracero PROA inception, expansion, and organization; he further discusses the reasons why some of the members were expelled from the organization; in 1998, the first general assembly for migrant workers was held in Michoacán; in addition, Mr. Gutiérrez discusses the regional organizations that serve different segments of the community; he gives a detailed account of government harassment that he endured because of his organizing efforts; he concludes the interview with a brief description of his plans to continue to organize H-2A and H-2B workers.

Length of Interview 100 minutes

Length of Transcript 30 pages

**Name of Interviewee:** Ventura Gutiérrez  
**Date of Interview:** 21 de diciembre de 2007  
**Name of Interviewer:** Mireya Loza

Hello, check, am I cording? No. Yeah, ya está. I am here today, 21<sup>st</sup> of December, 2007 with Ventura Gutiérrez, in Mérida, Yucatán, Yucatán.

ML: Um, Ventura, where were you born and when?

VG: I was born the 14<sup>th</sup> of December, but registered, my birthday was registered the 16<sup>th</sup> of December, 1948, in Puruándiro, Michoacán, México.

ML: And, what kind of town is Puruándiro, is it a small town or a large town?

VG: Oh, right now, it's, has over 20,000 population. When I was born, I imagine it was, twenty five percent that number.

ML: Where you raised in Puruándiro?

VG: No, I was born there, and at the age of almost two years of age, my parents moved to Tijuana, with my older brother, Salud, where we lived for approximately a year where my father, who, who was and is a U.S. citizen by birth, immigrated my mother, my older brother Salud and myself, on the 8<sup>th</sup> of August, 1950, to Coachella, California.

ML: And when you moved to Coachella, was it again a larger or big town, what kind of community did you live in?

VG: Oh, a small community, rural community, in the southern part of the Coachella Valley, which is where the employment was primarily in agriculture, the population was 110,000 in 1950.

ML: Was it predominantly a Mexican community?

VG: Yeah. Well, yes but there was a significant, um, population of um, a, individuals of European descent, Anglos, because Coachella was the hub of the entire Coachella Valley. In fact there was, there was um, more residents in the city of Coachella than Indio, which is three miles north of Coachella, Palm Springs, Rancho Mirage and all the co-communities in the northern part of the Coachella Valley, was, it was the hub of the entire Coachella Valley in nineteen, well, in the beginning of the twentieth century.

ML: And what did your parents do for living?

VG: My, my parents worked in agriculture, in the fields, my father obtained employment in a date processing plant, and, but he primarily worked in, in agriculture with the, most of the time, in the fields, as field labors.

ML: Did you have any more siblings that were born in the U.S. after you immigrated?

VD: Yeah, well, my older brother Salud and I were born in, in Mexico, Puruándiro, Michoacán. Ah, my father immigrated us, and the other six siblings were born in the United States. I have a, they're all, they're living, they all live in the Coachella Valley, with the exception of myself, I am all over the place, in Mexico and parts of the United States, and one sister, Jenny, who lives in the L.A. area. All the rest live in the Coachella Valley, different communities but in the Coachella Valley.

ML: What kind of home did you live in Coachella? With all six siblings.

VG: Well, initially after my father immigrated my mother and my older brother and myself, we lived in a trailer, on the, the farmland of a, of a, owned by, by uncles, my mother's uncles, and um, we lived in a trailer, which burned down, I was the cause of that accident, playing Cowboys and Indians, I left a, a broom, ignited, next to a packing shed, that belonged to my parents, made of, of date pound

leaves, and it caught fire, and, and the shed burned down the trailer, and thanks to my mother and my older brother, I and two siblings, younger, two younger brothers and the oldest of my sisters, were, were saved and we're all alive and doing well. But they lost, we lost all our material belongings, and um, and thereafter we went to live in a one-room wooden house in the, in the Mexican Barrio. There was two neighborhoods, primarily composed of Mexicans, in Coachella at that time, and we went to live in one of those barrios, 5274 Calle Avila, and my father built around that one, one-room house, to what today is a three bedroom, living room, bath, dining room, normal, normal house, which he rents, because my father now lives just outside of Acapulco, with his second wife, after the death of my mother in 1999. And that house still exists, but it's been rented, and that's, that's the house I grew up in.

ML: Did you and all your siblings go to a public school?

VG: We all went to public schools, from kinder garden through, through high school, um, the only ones that continued with, with higher education was myself, junior college, College of the Desert before going into the service, and after I, I, my honorable discharge, I returned to College of the Desert at Palm Desert, there in the Coachella Valley, and I changed my, my area of study from, from general education to, to an emphasis in the social sciences, from there I transferred to the University of California Riverside, where I, I majored in Sociology, worked an entire year for a Masters in Education and Chicano Studies, but I was denied my Masters, because they wanted me to repeat a course in a curriculum. I refused to do so after having a, conducted my, my written exams, I only needed my oral exams, which primarily is the, the easiest part of the examination process to, to obtain a Masters degree, and I opted to return to the Coachella Valley and, um, and um, teach at the local school district as a Teacher's Aid, within the bilingual program, at the Coachella Valley High School site, and while I obtained my elementary teaching credential at the San Bernardino State University, a college in San Bernardino. I taught, fifth, fifth to sixth grade, from nineteen, what was it?

For [19]72 through, through [19]78, or later, I don't recall the exact dates at this time, and, and in 1983, was 'til 1983, and it wasn't [19]72, was [19]77, I was a Teacher's Aid at the Coachella Valley High School, from [19]76 to [19]77, a substitute teacher in the district and for five year, from 1983 to nineteen, no, 'til 1983 I taught elementary school at Oasis School, got elected to the, the district school board, had to resign as an elementary teacher, as an employer of the district, and I served for five years on the school board, the, the last year, or the next to the last year, I was in the school board, I was the vice president of the, of the school board, and in 1988 I, I exited the school board, I exited my participation in all organizations groups, boards, commissions, at the local level, state level, and even national level, to, to participate in, in the social political movement in Mexico that, that Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas initiated in 1988 because I, like many other individuals have felt that, that the time for, for a social revolution in Mexico had come. And, we weren't mistaken.

ML: Let me go back to a couple, a couple years before your interest in Mexico. Um, you know, right after your, I guess your high school experience, what compelled you, as oppose to some of your siblings, to go onto higher education.

VG: Um, well, at a very young age, um, at the age of twelve, thirteen, I was in junior high, at Dayland School in the city of Coachella, and at that age, I was thinking about changing the world. And what inspired me to, to wanna do that, was my first visit to Mexico, or my return to, to Mexico in 1959, I was eleven years old, I, I had already lived in Coachella, in the Coachella Valley for nine years of my life, which is my parents and my, my three brothers and one sister, without any contact or relationship with grandparents on, on either side of my family, paternal or maternal, cousins, um, no contact or relationship with any other relatives, because they all, all remained behind in Mexico, with an uncle or two that were somewhere in the United States, and, and I grew up not knowing anything or very little about Mexico, nothing at all about Puruándiro, Michoacán, and our first, first visit to Puruándiro was, was a, a tremendous experience. The, the first thing that,

that opened our eyes, was the, the radical difference between, the standard of living in the United States, and the standard of living that we, we lived in the Coachella Valley, not knowing that, that, or conscious that we were poor, ¿verdad? *Este*, we, materially speaking, we lived a, a better life than most Mexicans south of the border, and a, and in Michoacán, concretely in Puruándiro, vastly a better standard of living, materially speaking. And that stood out, all the way from Mexicali, San Luis Río Colorado, throughout the Pacific, right down to, to Guadalajara, *este*, the, the poverty, the difference in, in the standards of living, just impacted me, tremendously. And also, the, the treatment on the part of the, of the government concretely, customs, on the Mexican side, which forced us to go through some very humiliating experiences, at the different check points. It had a major impact in my life, that continues, 'til, to this date. And um, and just, just the experience that went with knowing my maternal grandparents for the first time, my cousins and relatives, and the people of Puruándiro, and the region of Michoacán stays with me, to this date. And, and a promise I made to my, my grandfather Joaquín Méndez Méndez, paternal grandfather, who past away in 1972 I believe, uh, uh, where I promised him that in the future, at the age of eleven, while he was telling me all his worst stories, when he was a bracero and worked in the United States, while listening to his, his radio that he had bought in Chicago, I promised him that someday in the future I was gonna do something to change the, the standard of living of a, of the people in Puruándiro, in Michoacán, in Mexico. And he just chuckled and, and but I meant it, *este*, and ever since it's become more and more clear in my mind what it takes to, to bring about that change and to equalize the standard of living, if not, the way of life between the two societies. And uh, and, that's what the, motivate me at a, at a young age, as a teenager, I still recall, when I was under the, the lunch port, at Dayland School at the age of, of thirteen, and, and I made my commitment to, to become a, teacher, okay, because I felt back then that, if I could influence or change the way of thinking of a, one student, and if that student influenced another student, that after a while, it multiplies into a great number of individuals, and I guess, I believe in the snowball effect and that, that influencing another person to think differently or

the way that I, I thought, eventually there would be sufficient number of individuals to, to do dramatic changes in the United States and in Mexico and other parts of the world. It was maybe a simplistic way of thinking, but that's what led me to, to wanna become a, a teacher. Specifically teacher in high school in physical education, where I had a very early ambition of becoming a coach, specifically, the Varsity Baseball Coach, in, at the high school, which is one of my young adulthood objectives that I have yet to, to fulfill. All the rest I have accomplished, except for that, and learning how to ride a horse. I think, as a young adult I have completed all my, my lifetime objectives, except for those two, and I intend to accomplish them before, before it's all over.

ML: So then you went off to community college, because you had plans of becoming a teacher, and what made you change your plan and go to the military?

VG: No, the draft was still on.

ML: \_\_\_\_ (?) draft.

VG: Well, actually not, because I requested an extension to finish my second year of community college, and it was at that time, it was in 1969, when we were going from the uh, from the draft to, to a voluntary military force. But I was um, I guess in the last, in the last round of those that were, were drafted, okay? But I asked for an extension to finish the, the 1968-1969 school year at college at the Desert Day. It was granted and on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October, I arrived at Fort Ord, and I think that the military experience changed me from, not, not from not wanting to become a school teacher, but from area of study, I was real interested in Geology and Archaeology and Astronomy. I think that was a point in the direction of physical sciences, and um, I shifted, I shifted to the social sciences, when I, was granted an early out, from the military service, I, I um, I went back to college at the desert for an additional year, and, and that was in, in 1972, the summer of [19]72, I transferred in the month of October of 1972 to College of the Desert, where I

majored in Sociology at one course, and my oral interviews from Masters in Education and Chicano Studies, and I dropped out. But I returned back to Coachella, to apply, *este*, what? I had learned through the formal education process up to that date.

ML: Did, when you, when you were in the military, where you ever deployed?

VG: Uh, um, no, uh, I was not deployed to Vietnam, because I applied for consciences objector, as a consciences objector. That, in the, in the uh, the troop that I took my basic training under in Fort Ord, uh, most, all of them except for three or four were sent to Vietnam, okay? And the other four, eventually were sent to Cambodia, 'cause there was a time right after the invasion of Cambodia, and, and uh, after a few months, I decided to withdraw my consciences as a big objector application, and uh, I sat around for orders, and, and they sent me to Germany, okay? For about nine months, and I got an early out, went back to the \_\_\_\_ (?), I already explained, and into U.C.R., and my teaching credential in San Bernardino.

ML: What legion pull your consciences observer seatment?

VG: Uh, well, believe it or not, uh, I, I, I reflected a lot before I submitted my consciences objector application, and while they, that was under review and consideration, I reflected a lot, *sobre, sobre iba a decir ah*, about the all the, the other individuals that, that, that had been deployed to Vietnam and to Cambodia, and uh, and I don't know, I guess I felt that, that, that I had to swallow the same, the same medicine, independently whether I was in agreement with the war or the, yeah, the war or not in Vietnam, and in the southeast, and I pulled my consciences objection application, and uh, and let the dice roll.

ML: So then, what is it that you did in Germany?

VG: Ah, wall plate soldier, okay? Because we, we took the place of other individuals that were in the infantry, that finished their term, went back home, and we were like replenishment forces for, for the U.S. NATO forces in Europe, ¿verdá? And I, I was sent to the Third Brigade, in a Scharfenberg, Germany, where I was, and I was there for, for over a year, for about a year and two or three months, and my orders to, to come back home, arrived in August, while we were in a field training in a, in a wall flicking German. And they pulled me out of there, I went back to Scharfenberg and its, filled up my duffle bag with all my goods, and they shipped me back to Norfolk, Virginia. From there to California. And the first thing I did was toss every, my duffle bag and everything in double bag, into the trash can.

ML: You didn't wanna hear of the military anymore?

VG: Nothing to do with the, the military, um-hm.

ML: And then you went on...

VG: I continued...

ML: Studying in the desert.

VG: Um-hm, under the G.I. bill, okay, and uh, on the and I forget for the 5<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> of August, of 1972 I got married, right after finishing the, the summer, summer courses at College of the Desert, and, and came to Mexico on, for my honeymoon, and, and uh, and when I returned back, we went to live in the city of Riverside, where I attended U.C.R. 'til 1974, began my Masters program there, and in the summer of 1976 I returned back to Coachella, while continuing my studies for my elementary school credential, at San Bernardino State University, applied for a bilingual teacher position at the high school, I maxed the exam, I was the only one that maxed it, and they refused to give me the employment, because they knew of my, my community political activity, and they didn't wanna employ me, until I, I

demanded that they do so, and if not, then I was gonna sue 'em. And, and immediately thereafter, they notified me, congratulated me for having maxed the, the exam, and that I had employment as a teacher aid, within the bilingual program at the, the Coachella Valley Unified School District, high school.

ML: Two questions, so I'll start with one. What were your interest in chicano studies? You mention that you were doing bilingual education and chicano studies.

VG: Um-hm.

ML: Um, why did you decide to do that?

VG: Well, a significant number of individuals from the Coachella Valley, Palo Verde Valley, and Imperial Valley, not so many from the Imperial Valley, but the Coachella Valley and the Palo Verde Valley were recruited, it was a, it was first years of B.O.P., of a very strong recruitment of minorities into the different university college systems in California, and throughout the country, but in California, were recruited to U.C.R., and the recruiters were originally from the Coachella Valley, graduates of Coachella High School, and, and that appealed to me, going to a university, living outside of the Coachella Valley for the first time, to a campus where, you know, you were gonna run into people that, that were from the Coachella Valley and Blythe, and from the same rural experience that, that I had as youngster, as a young adult, there was a, there was an economic support, there was, opportunities of employment under work study programs, and, and I was gonna be close to home, an hour, an hour, fifty minutes from, from Coachella. And, and it was a small campus, it remains the smallest campus within the U.S., U.C. system, in the state of California, and they practically guarantied admittance. And, and the, that's why I ended up attending U.C.R., and uh...

ML: Where there a lot of connections between chicano studies in Riverside and the activism of the chicano movement in Coachella?

VG: Ah, yes, as a matter fact, it, it's individuals, most of them still are alive, from the desert area, as we call it, specially from the Coachella Valley, that were responsible for the establishment of the first chicano study programs, the first E.O.P. programs in California, that later extended a nation wide, responsible also for the, for one of the firsts, if not the first chicano student organizations, that was established at U.C. Santa Barbara, *este*, the, the precursor to, what is now MEChA, one of the, if not the largest, student organization in the country, UMAS, was the name of the organization that preceded MEChA, and it was students from the Coachella Valley, from the desert area that put that together, and when the, all the representatives from the different campuses in California got together in Santa Barbara, *este*, to develop the *El Plan de Santa Barbara* in later created MEChA, the majority of the representatives were from Coachella, from the desert area. Okay? A town, a rural area of California, where, where, it history indicates that the, the grape, the organizing among grape workers began. It was not Cesar Chavez that organized the first Grape Work Crusade, organized the strike of the rose workers in, outside of Adelanto, okay? And from there they made contact with the, with the grape workers in the, that area of the San Joaquin Valley, but it was, it was at the end of the, grape harvest of that year, 'cause the grape harvest used to begin in the Coachella Valley, in may. Okay? Now it's in Yuma and in parts of, of Sonora, Mexico. But the first real drive to organize grape workers, was in 1965, [19]66, in the Coachella Valley, and a man by the name of, Nicasio, organized the first group of grape pickers in Meca, California, and not Cesar Chavez. And he turn that group over to Cesar Chavez and the rest of that moment is history, and wouldn't you know that, amongst the principal organizers were individuals from Coachella, as is true with the, *partido Raza Unida* de José Ángel Gutiérrez, organized in Texas, and in California, the ambassador of California was from Coachella, *este*, the principal organizers of the *partido la Raza Unida* were from Coachella, *este*, the largest chapter in California, of, of MAPA, Mexican American Political Association, the largest chapter was in the Coachella Valley, and, and with Burt Corona in Casa, you just name any and most of the, the

organizations, state wide departments, or in the southwest or nationally, that, that got off the ground during the [19]60's and [19]70's and the, and you'll find names of, of prominent individuals, important individuals figures, are from Coachella, the Coachella Valley and the desert area, and we, and we receive these youngsters as students in high school and junior college, this major dose of, of activism, and that also influenced me and a lot of the individuals, to, to uh, to dedicate in college and in the university, good portion of our time, to, to community and student activist.

ML: So, did you participate in a lot of the organizations that, I guess, derived a lot of the politics from movement?

VG: Yeah, well we, we participated or we sympathized or we, we volunteered or we, we, we gave up our time, to, all of these organizations and movements as high school students, as junior college students, and, in the university we continued that support to these organizations, while, uh, while participating directly in, in MEChA. I participated in MEChA, at a University of California, the time I was there, and it was like three years, from [19]72 to [19]76, until I returned back to the Coachella Valley, and, and when we returned back to the Coachella Valley, we continued to support the, the U.F.W., and activities of, some of these other organizations saying, that were created during the [19]60's and the [19]70's.

ML: And so then you ended up teaching for a, for some time in bilingual education, and there was a moment obviously that there was a break when you decided that you wanted to go to Mexico and participate in a social movement there.

VG: Well, um-hm, but before that, uh, there was a break with the, with the most, if not all of these organizations that I mentioned. Especially with the U.S.W., because, because they were, they operated under, under what is called theoretically centralized democracy, very maquievellian, and uh, they didn't, they didn't allow you to participate, with the, the enthusiasm, the initiative, the creativity, that you

wanted to give, okay? You, you had to tow the line and follow the plan, that a few individuals in a dark room, by themselves plan, develop and, and apply. That was very discouraging, demoralizing, uh, to, to many of us, and, for that reason, a lot of us, and I mean a lot of us, that grew up in Coachella, and the Coachella Valley, went out to college and university and return to Coachella and the Coachella Valley, started developing our own organizations, okay? And, and later on, years later, when some of these initial organizations opened up to doors to no blood, it was too late, okay? We were already committed to our own, our own efforts, our own organizations, and, and even though they, they did not have the same social base or importance, within the, within the community or the social movement of that, of that era, or that period, it was something that we were creating, ourselves, that we wanted, they not wanna let go, or, or just hand over, to one of the existing organizations, and then, a little by little, separated distance, separate ourselves from these, um, of what we call traditional organizations. And um, in the, in you mentioned a different kind of separation or, or split.

ML: Yeah, but, how were the organizations that you and I guess, people that you found you had friendship with, in terms of politics, different from those of the movement? How did you see that you guys were creating something that was distinct from, in terms of politics from, what was already in place, in part of the chicano, in part, yeah, within the chicano movement?

VG: Uh, well the, the difference, was very clear. We, we began to develop organizations that had, had a, a complete focus on the local community, on the local needs, okay? Not on regional needs, or state wide needs or national needs or the particular interest or needs of, of one organization, okay? That, that, that maybe could influence very little or nothing in changing the, the objective reality of Coachella, the Coachella Valley, we were home grown organizations, entirely focused on the, on the, around the reality that people live in Coachella, in the Coachella Valley, seeking solutions to those problems, while the other organizations were looking for solutions at a state wide or national level.

ML: And now going to the next part which would be your break between organizing at the local level in Coachella and teaching to moving on to, social movements in Mexico.

VG: Well, I never broke away from, from the local community and political activism, uh, while I was a teacher. As a matter fact, during my breaks, Monday through Friday, rest breaks and lunch break while I was teaching, as soon as I exited the, school on weekends, on Holidays, I dedicated most of my, my, my time, to my local community in political activities, okay? And I was real careful of not doing it during working hours because I was being monitored constantly, continually by officials of the school district that were, that wanted nothing more than for me to violate the, an employment condition, to, to dismiss me, okay? But, you know, I worked as a school teacher, and, and all the free time, or my time, that, that I had disposable, I applied it to my community political activism. In that sense, I never, I never broke between my community political activism, and my employment with the school district, until I got elected, okay? In November, 1983, and thereafter I had to resign my employment, 'cause I can be my own boss, and I served on the school board, and uh, what happened next was, I, I grew in my, in my community participation, that's the way I, I feel. If anything, I broke away from, from community and political activism, to, to union working, okay? I dedicated myself from, from the 1<sup>st</sup> of May, officially 1<sup>st</sup> of May, nineteen, 1<sup>st</sup> of May of 1983, until, until 1996, to union work. Independent union work within, among date workers, they process the plant workers in the Coachella Valley, date, citrus processing workers in Yuma, and a, and field workers in north county, San Diego. And I invested a lot of time, all my time during those years to, to that work, and, and from there, I went to, to a, to Puruándiro, Michoacán, to establish a, a service center, because I felt, and I was convinced that we needed to organize, from the sending communities, to the receiving communities. We established a service center in Puruándiro, Michoacán, the 1<sup>st</sup> of July, 1996. Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, *este*, cut the ribbon, on that occasion, and two years later, in March of

a, 1998, we held our first general assembly for migrant workers in Michoacán, we, we had about five hundred in attendance, and from there we, or there, we developed a plan of action, with, with a, with a, three, three objectives, a, migrant workers, the widows of, of migrant workers and the possibility of obtaining humanitarian visas, ¿vedá?, for, primarily for widows that, that had a right to a social security administration benefit, but could not cross the border legally to meet the residents requirement, and, and that changed, the first objective changed very quickly, because the, the afternoon of that assembly, the last part of March 1998, when I returned to Puruándiro, Michoacán, my paternal grandmother, Lucia Mendez Mendez, who is diseased, presented my within, an identification from the *Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores*, F5, is the code for that identification, that belonged to my grandfather Joaquin Mendez Mendez, that was issued to him on one of the occasions that he was contracted as a bracero to, to the United States, and she asked me to determine if he had a right to a benefit, and I began researching if, to determine if I could find any evidence that, that he had worked for, for the Union Pacific, the Union Pacific Railway, or something like that, with headquarters in Dallas, in those years, and I do a blank, and on my return to Mexico, through El Paso, I was handed a copy of the, the labor agreement signed between Mexico and the United States in nineteen, 23<sup>rd</sup> of the July, 1942, that created the Bracero Program, I read the part about the, of the ten percent savings fund, and at that moment I realized that, that, that from 1988 through [19]98, from the, from the application or implementation of the Rodino, Rodino Bill or law, at the amnesty program, 1988, we had rejected a lot of individuals that were ex braceros, or *viudas*, widows of ex braceros, that wanted to know if they could adjust their immigration status with their, their mica or contract, that was issued to them under the Bracero Program, and after telling them that they could not adjust their status under the Rodino Bill, to gain permanent resident status in the United States, they all without exception ask for help to retrieve a money they had deducted from their paychecks. And we confuse it with the, with the deduction under the social security administration. And we rejected all those individuals for about ten years, but in April of 1998, when I read the, the labor agreement, that

created the Bracero Program, I immediately started planning for a first meeting in Puruándiro, which was realized on the 15<sup>th</sup> of May, 1998, to bring together ex braceros, or family members of ex braceros, to determine if, if the deduction they alluded to, was a ten percent savings fund, or the Social Security mischance in deduction, and with the four ex braceros that participated that day, the 15<sup>th</sup> of May, we determine that it was the ten percent savings fund. And, and the rest is, is history, as far as the, as the Bracero Program that was initiated on that date, or nine years ago, and everything that's, that's occurred has since, within this moment, that is attempting to retrieve the ten percent savings fund, that belongs to the ex braceros, 1942 to [19]64.

ML: I'm gonna back trap once more.

VG: Um-hm.

ML: To the moment where you decided that you wanted to focus on union workers, versus the previous work.

VG: Um-hm.

ML: What compelled you to think that union work was the kind of work that you wanted to be doing?

VG: I became, 'cause I became convinced through, through my own personal experience, and not through books or courses at the university, or, or forums, or, or speeches that, that, this, this world is composed of, of those that work, and those that don't work, individuals that have an opportunity to work, and individuals that don't have an opportunity to, to gain full employment, that do have that opportunity, a real opportunity, a, you find two groups, those that work and those that don't work. And of those that work, they form labor organizations, or they don't form labor organizations, ¿vedá? And, and that, that the only way

that, that workers, those that produce all the products and services of this country, of this world, can, can gain the organization and the clout to compete with, with the owners of capital, and the owners of the means of production, is by organizing themselves, a, into labor organizations, not necessarily unions as we know them in the United States, or, or *sindicatos* in Mexico, but that, minus a, minus a, a better alternative, that that was the best option that, that existed at that moment in my life, and, and because of all organizations, and all organizations can contribute to change, but to bring about real fundamental change, *este*, workers need to develop, a, a working class consciousness, just as the owners of capital, have developed a, a consciousness as owners of capital, owners of the means of production, until workers, working class, unite themselves, organize themselves around, of their own consciousness, working class consciousness, that is gonna be very difficult to, to compete and become the owners of, of a, complete owners of their own labor force, of a, of the, of the capital, of the product services they, that we produce, and, and a, and owners, you know? A, of all that. And, I went for; I went for that experience, okay? Which was a tremendous experience, and that, along with my community activism, my, my political activism involvement, both electoral, non-electoral, it's just, my life in general, has all accumulated, accumulated to, to, to give me sufficient experience, knowledge and the ability to, to do what I'm doing at this moment, where the, the ex bracero movement, which I hope, ends soon, because I wanna get back to, what I, to the project that I originally started up with in 1996, was, which was to, to organize a movement, similar to what we now have with ex braceros, but among a study workers.

ML: So, can you walk me through the early beginnings of the organizing around the ex braceros who looking, to these, this group of men that you found, did back their ten percent taken away.

VG: Yeah.

ML: So, how did you conceive that you could build a movement around these men?

VG: Well, first of all, I think to, to do justice to the question, it would take an hour or two in a separate interview, okay? I don't know that, we wanna do that at this time, but, in general terms, okay? Because I made a promise to my grandmother, maternal grandmother, okay? And, and, and the four ex braceros that showed up at that first meeting, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of May, 1998, who committed themselves to, to participating in an effort to resolve a, a fraud that nobody had resolved for over half a century. Fifty eight years, as a matter fact, and, and they committed themselves, to, to this effort, and because they committed themselves, I committed myself to the effort, but the only commitment was, that I made, was, that if we cannot get the Zedillo government, who was in power at the time, to, to resolve this fraud, through executive order, the legislative process in Mexico, that we would follow a lawsuit. That was my original an only commitment that I made, and, and a, and we fulfilled it, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March of, in 2001, I clearly recall, I was, I was participating in the, in the a, what became known as the Zapata Tour, from San Cristobal, *este*, to, to the Zócalo in Mexico City in 2001, I was a, I was helping commandeer bus number nine, and after the accident, just outside of Querétaro, when one of the buses lost, lost its brakes and ran into a, a motorcycle police elements, and a van that was blocking the, the autovan, the high way, by orders of a, a House of Representative, or *diputado* from the *PAN* party, which resulted in the death of two or three individuals, I, I jumped ship, because I read in the, La Jornada Newspaper, that the lawsuit, in eight district quarter San Francisco had been filed by Jonathan Rustain, and what was the, they're in Chicago, they are based in Chicago, Hus Hesler and Soco, something like that, Rustain, Jonathan Rustain is now, negotiates contracts for the city of Chicago, labor contracts, that he had filed, finally filed the lawsuit, wanted to retrieve ten percent, in favor of the ex braceros, but from [19]42 to [19]49 I believe, I jumped ship, and headed to Morelia where I organized a press conference to, to let this out. And, but, you know, before then, we are talking about, about three years, okay? A lot of activity, a lot of press conferences, a lot of, of base work, to let the word out, that, that there was a movement, on the way that wanted to retrieve ten

percent. And I, I could literally tell you, *este*, almost month by month, year by year, all the activities that realized but, I don't think we would do justice to your questions if we attempted to do it. At this hour, today. But, but the, the first phase out of the movement was a lot of press conferences, a lot of meeting in, in Michoacán, in Guanajuato, primarily, I thought if, if the movement could get off the ground, in Michoacán, in Guanajuato, when Irapuato was the first, a, pre-contacting site, back a, after the war years that, you know, we could get the movement off in other places of the country. But we needed to, to get it off the ground in the Bajillo, Michoacán. In Michoacán y Guanajuato, and in Jalisco, which, which sent thirty to forty percent of the braceros during that period. And, and our focus was on, yeah, on those states, and we were successful in a relatively short period of time, because, I remember that the first press conference after that first meeting in Puruándiro, was in October of 1988 in, in Morelia, Michoacán, and the first, real meeting of ex braceros, took place in Moroleón, Guanajuato, in November of 1998, and several of the individuals that were there, were ex braceros or sons of ex braceros, that I participated with in a mushroom worker strike in Kennett Square, Pennsylvania in 1994, okay? And that opened the doors to, that whole region of, of Guanajuato, Uriangato, Moroleón, *este*, from there we extended to Acámbaro and Salvatierra, and *este* Valle de Santiago, and, and on the 20, on the 19<sup>th</sup> of July, we, we filled the Revolution Stadium in Irapuato, Guanajuato, with five thousand, okay? *Este*, and we knew then, that we had a winner on our hands, if we, if we kept the momentum, and we did, and it intensified, and, and, but it wasn't until the 7<sup>th</sup> of February, 2004 when we invaded the Fox France(??) for the first time, that this fraud, this issue, this cause got real national, to certain extent, international attention, which led to the pool of a law, that was published in the Federal Registro of Mexico, the 25<sup>th</sup> of May, 9<sup>th</sup>, 2005, and the first payments were issued on the 15<sup>th</sup> of December, 2005. They paid a 23,000 individuals of the 42,000 that were accredited last year to receive \$30,000 pesos per person, and we're now waiting for, for payment to the, the other 19,080 individuals that have their, their payment noticed, and haven't been paid, while another 300,000 to 400,000 are waiting for a third registration period,

that may or may not happen, it depends on, on a legislative proposal that the Mexican Senate approved on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October, but that the House of Representatives or Deputies in the Mexican Congress, have yet to approve, and once they do it, and if they do it, between February and, and April, there will be a third registration period that is gonna allow about three hundred to four hundred thousand additional ex braceros view this, or their children to accredit themselves for the \$38,000 peso payment, while we awaited decision from the Mexican Supreme Court, whether, whether they pay the ten percent, more than the \$38,000 pesos, and issued to all those individuals that lost their, their original contract, a certificate of identification, that legally took the place, and can take the place of those original contracts that have been lost, by at least half of the ex braceros or their potential beneficiaries, over the last six to four years.

ML: So, can you tell me a little bit about how the, the Bracero ProA is organized? I mean, is a very, very large organization.

VG: Yeah.

ML: So how, on a ground level is it organized?

VG: Initially, in Puruándiro, Michoacán, we began operating as *Unión sin fronteras*. It's a non-profit that still exists, exists to this day in Coachella. Is not a very active organization, it's a, but we maintain, it's a registration alive, but we, we operate her under that banner: *Union sin fronteras*. Union without borders, which was initially established in the Coachella Valley, to be like the, the social service arm, of the, the independent union that we were organizing. And from there, we created a, a network, with, with Mexican organizations. I felt that if we can get existing Mexican organizations involved, that the movement could raise its head at a faster pace. So, so we asked, I involved the, a group from Michoacán, and another group from, from Guanajuato to, to become involved, we, eventually we incorporated other, other groups, not many but other groups, and, under what we

call *Corriente migratoria*, okay? Because we were looking beyond the ex bracero movement, okay? We were looking at migrants in general, down, down the road. We just, didn't know at the time that it was gonna take us nine years to resolve the ex bracero question partially. And, and that was established almost immediately in the year 2000, no, in 1999, and in the year 2000 at a meeting in Irapuato, Guanajuato on the 5<sup>th</sup> of February of 2000, we created Alianza, *este*, Bracero ProA.

ML: Why did you choose that name?

VG: Ah, because at that time, in February 1999, the fraud, the fraud known today as FOBAPROA, caused by the, the bankers of Mexico, was a, something known to everybody, to all, practically all Mexicans and on the one hand, on the other hand, it's a pla, playing words, to help ex braceros and their family members and the society in general, get a, a quick sense of, of what takes bracero movement, is all about. In fact, our slogan became the following, the first FOBAPROA was not FOBAPROA but, *pero*, Bracero ProA, okay? And we coined the slogan and this term Bracero ProA, because after an hour, an hour and a half, or two hours of informing the ex braceros in a meeting, all about the fraud and everything they would had done, or what we were planning to do to resolve the issue of the ten percent savings fund in their favor, everybody applauded, everybody is in agreement, but when I questioned them or asked them to explained to me what I had just informed them, very few could respond to the question. And, it just occurred to me that, that maybe a slogan, such as the one I just stated, could help, help them comprehend, get a sense for what the ten percent saving fun fraud was, and after I repeated the first time, and every time there after the slogan, we don't need to do it now, because most everybody understands what Bracero ProA is all about, they, they would, the majority without exception would say: "Now we understand". Okay? Because they all understood what the FOBAPROA fraud was about, okay? So after repeating the slogan, they would say: "Now we understand what this is about".

ML: Um-hm. And so, the early organizing was done through existing bracero organizations.

VG: No.

ML: I mean not the bracero organization existing, all organization.

VG: Existing campesino organizations, in Guanajuato and in Michoacán, okay? And the first state that we visited after that, was Jalisco, because Jalisco is the state that proper, in real numbers, sent more braceros to the US than any other state in the country, than Michoacán and Guanajuato, so we, focused then on those three states, and if we extended ourselves to other states in the northeast, northwest and southern, southeastern Mexico.

ML: And, at any point was there any conflict with other bracero organizations that came after Bracero ProA?

VG: Well, practically all the other existing ex bracero organizations, none of which have a national or, or bi-national structure, came, came out of our ranking file, okay? The first to be out set from our organizational movement, was a group called USEM, headed up by Aaron Cabañas with base in Irapuato, Guanajuato, on the 7<sup>th</sup>, October in 1999. I personally with the other that participated in *Corriente Migratoria*, expelled him and his group out, because he violated the only condition that we placed, it belonged to the, to the front, or the network, and that was not involved, not open, not involved electoral politics in our movement and in our cause, okay?

ML: What did you not involve electoral politics?

VG: Oh, because that ultimately leads to, to division, okay? Just like religion divides, and accomplishes quite the opposite of what it claims to, to, to be, their ultimate goal, political parties, electoral process, ah, instead of uniting people and instead of uniting society, it divides, because of personal interest or the interest of groups or currents within the different political parties, and, and we wanted to develop a movement, cause with that, without those sort of divisions, conscious that other types of division, based on personal interest and interest of groups, we are gonna raise, but if we could, if we could prevent from, from, partisan politics, ah, contaminating our movement, we, we, we wanted to make, and still do make a great effort to keep that out off our, off our movement, so the first to go was Aaron Cabañas, and then Baldomero Capiz, from Los Angeles, and, and that caused our three principle coordinators in the state of Sonora to also leave the organization, they weren't expelled, they left. That once we expelled Baldomero Capiz, who was in L.A., and Jose Garcia.

ML: Why was he expelled?

VG: Oh, because, he was expelled because he, he, he decided to leave the organization, okay? And then all of the sudden, opted not to do so, once were filed the lawsuit in San Francisco, and thereafter he begin charging people \$10 and \$20 dollars per meeting, okay? At once a month, okay? This was generating for him over \$1000 dollars per month. He began to live off the Bracero Movement, okay? And, and the first attempt to expel him, led to a, to an *empate*, a stillmay(??), okay? But a year after that, everybody was convinced that he had to go, and the decision was unanimous, moreover he, he didn't even show up at that meeting, *este*, in October of 2001 in San Jose, California, and, and he continues to hold the meetings in Los Angeles with a small group, he attempted to form other groups in other parts of the country here in Mexico, and they all fizzled out or went by the way side, during the last registration period. But when we asked him in October in 2001, because he, he is a member of the PRD, okay? Was the president of PRD in Los Angeles before becoming involved in our movement, and because he accepted,

resigning and he did so, and not involve in a partisan politics in our movement, we allowed him to participate with us, but after he, he was asked, he, he returned to the PRD, in fact, began seeking and continues to seek a seat within the, the House of Representatives in the Congress of Mexico, something that, that he has not accomplished, and we hope that he never accomplishes. But, but this cause are three, our coordinators in Hermosillo, *en* Empalme, *en* Ciudad Obregón, why person in our organization helped him develop the social base that, that they develop, and still have to a certain extent, left our organization, because there also members of the PRD, and decided to, to exit. Again, for, for personal, political partisan interest that some of them had, where they too wanted to become, *este*, House of Representatives within the Congress of Mexico. And they, they knew that could not fly with our organization, and they, they, once they saw that we all still \_\_\_\_ (?) peacefully, they opted to, to leave, okay? And, and after that, other, other groups in other parts of the country, started forming around the, the bracero issue, which is something that you can avoid in any social movement, very few of them, with the only interest of resolving the ex bracero issue, most of them, with a personal, political or economic interest. But, none of these organizations, or supposed organizations of ex braceros, has been able to establish a, a national, let alone, bi-national structure as we have. And as we've had for several years now.

ML: So, how did the organization, this, the bi-national structure as you say, come about? How did you find organizers on the local level? You mentioned one that you all tapped into local organizations that already existed.

VG: Um-hm. During, during the first years, until, until the law was published, until the invasion, the invasion, the first invasion of the Fox ranch, the 7<sup>th</sup> of February, at that time, I and other were conscious that, that we were gonna resolve, at least partially, the history. Okay? The payment to the ex braceros, we were convinced, and, and before that date, and after that date, until the approval of the law, and the \_\_\_\_ (?) start the, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May, 24<sup>th</sup> or 25<sup>th</sup> of May of 2005. I was all over both countries, I personally organized and realized the first meeting in 85% into

90% of the sites where we now have ex bracero, braceros organize, whether they participate with us, or not, ¿vedá? I don't think is necessary to mention all the sites, the chronologic, the chronological order behind the organizing of all the groups that now exist, but I, I personally organized and realized the first meeting, and at least 85% of all the sites where we have ex bracero groups now. I invested a lot of time, okay? And, and because I personally invested that time, thousands of a quarter million that are registered with the federal government to receive the payment, now meet personally, okay? There is groups, there's states, where meetings were not realized unless I was present, okay? And I wanted to do that, and, and I committed myself to invest in the time necessary. And I did it, okay? Because, because I wanted results, I wanted real participation when the time came to realize actions, that, that would give us the results that we needed. I needed the guaranty, and there's no better guaranty to, to accomplish in something, than doing it yourself, okay? I invested, I can't even begin to explain the time that I invested as, between May of [19]98 until December of 2005. These last couple years, a, the pieces has slowed down, because we've been developing the \_\_\_\_\_(?) structure over the last two years. We went from a, from a centralized democracy structure, okay? Ah, to a more democratic structure, okay? Two years ago, and, and...

ML: How did that happen? So...

VG: Well...

ML: And...

VG: Well we, I and others, we had, we had a good feel for who was who, amongst all the coordinators that participated in our organization, okay? Where every group had a directly relationship with me, and, and with the, the individuals that, that moved out organization at a national, bi-national level, and we knew, that, that after the invasion of the ranch, after the approval of the law, and after the first

payments in December, 15<sup>th</sup> of December, 2005, that the movement required a different structure, okay? *Este* and for that reason, two years ago, we started developing a regional structure, around regional coordinators that we felt had the experience and the know-how and the capacity to, to take over the reigns, region by region, that I held for, for seven years, okay? And, and we created five regions, one based in Mexicali, for three of four states on the Mexican side, in the northwest of Mexico, Arizona, California, Las Vegas and Washington State. A, region two based in Monterrey, that includes six states in the northeast of Mexico and Texas, Mexico City, Guadalajara and Villahermosa for the south, southeastern region of Mexico, okay? And the, you know, I made a conscious effort to, to delegate a lot of what used to be my personal responsibilities, duties to, to these regional coordinators and for the most part practically all of them had responded well, the people in those regions now identified equally as well, and respond equally as well to those recent coordinators as they do to, to me, ¿vedá? And I make a conscious effort not to undermine them, so that this regional structure can, can grow and, and *este* and become stronger, and after our general assembly, annual general assembly under the new organization, ANAM, *este*, *Asamblea Nacional de Adultos Mayores*, *este*, which is like a non-profit, *este*, here in Mexico, we're gonna take the, this new structure to the, to the next level, or to a lower level, to the municipality level of county, as we know it in the United States, and the local community, so that each local group, like the ones you've, you've come in contact these last days, have their own representation, *este*, and from those local groups, establish a, a municipality, municipality wide representation that will feed in, to our, our regional and national structure that is, that is more developed at this moment than the municipality and local level structure. And, and we're working from the, from the top down, because the whole registration process with the Mexican government, practically obligates us to, to do it this way, and because we know we're, we're solid at the local level, ¿vedá? We're solid, okay? 'Cause all our time and effort has been directly at the local groups. And, and I think that come March 2010, we're gonna have a well defined national structure from the local to the, for the municipal or county-wide

regional and national level. That, that allows me to invest my time in, in other, in other areas, that will allow the regional coordinators to invest their time in other areas, because the, the majo[rity], the weight, of the organization we're structuring, we're developing, will rest on the shoulders of the local and municipality representations, ¿vedá? And that, that's gonna allow us to move, as an organization, both, both vertically and horizontally with, with a lot better communication and coordination. Have been, well, maybe not as well as, as under a, a centralized democracy, a concept, because there, basically one person decides what you gonna do, and everybody does it, or gets out of the way. But none of this, is no structure which the movement at this moment requires, is a, is a, half-way across the river, and we hope to, to receive the side by March of 2010.

ML: What does ANAM stand for?

VG: *Asamblea Nacional de Adultos Mayores*. Um-hm, because the *Alianza Bi-Nacional Bracero ProA*, consciously over the last two years, or formally on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March of this year in Guadalajara, Jalisco, we realized that the general assembly with over two thousand members, became *Asamblea Nacional de Adultos Mayores*, with a Federal registrar, a registry, a registration and *Alianza Bi-Nacional Bracero ProA* converted into one of five projects that we have. The project *Alianza Bi-Nacional Bracero ProA* that dedicates itself to the bracero cause, ah, *proyecto*, project, *Aquí y allá*, which is our migrant project that, which is coordinated by region one, based in Mexicali, Alma Fraile is the primary coordinator of this project, being the coordinator of that region, Nacho, Ignacio Zapata, regional coordinator in Monterrey, have the, the 2010 project, which is our political project, in Guadalajara we have our PaloFetti Project, which is coordinated by Isabel Cabrera, a popular education project. In Mexico City Pablo Robles Flores, region coordinator of region four, coordinates the Bracero ProA Project, and in Villahermosa the, Paula Carrillo, the attorney Paula Carrillo is in charge of that region, the south, southeast of Mexico, and our *Proyecto Alba* which is our social project. The most of advance in terms of a definition of this

project, is a Bracero ProA, then a 2010 our political project, in the month of January we hope to, to put our final touches to the other three projects. And all of them under the direction of this new organization ANAM, which is being built around our ex bracero basis, ¿verdá? Looking into the future and not wanting to discard, throw away, the work that has been done in developing the regional set of movement and conscious of the fact that most of them are, are elderly individuals, we opted to create an organization of elderly individuals, workers or ex-workers, braceros and non ex braceros, but that, but the support at this time, five different projects have benefit to them, other individuals like themselves and the communities and society in general in those five, those five years.

ML: I have a couple more questions, I know is getting late, so, my next question is, in all this time that you've been organizing, have you ever, I guess, experience aggression from part of Mexican or the American government, because, because you are seen in a lot of ways as the head of Bracero ProA?

VH: Um-hm, well, yes. On the Mexican side. Beginning with the invasion of the Fox ranch on the 7<sup>th</sup> of February, 2004, okay? For practically two years, we were tailed, specifically by *Gobernación*, at the state level, federal level, Sinsen, and even military intelligence almost round the clock for two years, okay? The, they never did anything to me, physically, but is was a harassment that, they pressured me quite a bit. And before that, in, on the 9<sup>th</sup> of a, of April, the 7<sup>th</sup> of April, the 9<sup>th</sup> of April, 7<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> of April of 2000, when we shut down the National Headquarters of Banrural, okay? Who, who theoretically had the money from the ten percent saving fund, before becoming *Financiera Rural*, *este*, on my way to the airport, the taxi I was, I was, I was riding in, I was surrounded by, like seventeen Suburbans, okay? *Este*, in the front, the backside and both sides, and in one of the principal arteries or freeways or autobahns, in Mexico City and I was physically drugged out of the taxi, and beaten, and I escaped from them, and almost like a Hollywood movie, okay? I was about to jump on top of a car, and, and run off from a car hood to car hood, ¿verá? And I slipped and fell and they

grabbed me again, and they tore the ligament, my left part of my shoulder, and, and a, and they drove me off, *este*, in a Suburban for like about an hour and a half, they rode me around Mexico City imagine, and with somebody's hand on my neck, with my face against the rear seat, and where they interrogated me with a lot of intimidating questions. And, and there was not until I asked to, to call someone to exercise a constitutional right I had, while they were chuckling and laughing, they asked me who, and I told them Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas Solórzano, and, and still chuckling they said: "Give us his number and we'll call him for you". And I said: "It's in my back pocket". Okay? And cell started to ring, okay? Back and forth, and I asked again for my right to, to call someone, but this time, my government, and they said: "What government?". "The United States government". Okay? The U.S. Embassy. Cell started ringing again and about half hour later, they drove up to the national headquarters of the PGR, they're next to the Mexican monument of the Revolution, and they took me off with some ribbon, and they tossed me into the reception area of the main office of the PGR and they disappeared. And, after about half an hour, they took me upstairs to the third floor, and they wanted me to sign a statement that I had voluntarily presented myself to that office, okay? And I refused to, to sign, and a, and I was let go. But that was the first, um, the first incident. The second was the harassment for two years after, after the invasion of the Fox ranch, and a, and over two years ago, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of August, where, where we carried out a, a protest in front of the offices of the, *Secretaría de Gobernación*, where floors and glass windows were broken, and I and nine other individuals, including one woman and eight men, ex braceros and a wife of an ex bracero, went into the offices of the *Secretaría de Gobernación*, arguing that we were protecting ourselves from the *granaderos* that had appeared, and were beating people, all over the place, were arrested inside the building, and taken out to jail, and for two years after that, while the legal process was being carried out, we, we were forced to sign, the first money every week for two years, at the *Reclusorio Oriente* in Mexico City, and three months ago, they sentenced me to two years in jail, and the others to six months in jail, we appealed and now signed the first Monday, of every month

since June or July of this year. And we will continue to do that until we know the results of the appeal, which we expect during the, first month or second month of this, of this new year. I think in general terms, those are the three, the three, the three time periods that, that I and others have received pressure from the Mexican government, on the U.S. side, I imagine the CIA here in Mexico and the FBI, no other activities, have a file on our activities in relationship to this movement, and...

ML: And you're getting into the National Museum. (laughter)

VG: Oh no, but that.

ML: In general terms.

VG: I have no doubt that, there's a FBI and CIA file on me, and I've never made the attempt to, to obtain those files under the freedom of information act, 'cause I don't have the time, or I don't know, the interest of, it doesn't bother me that they or anybody knows what my activities are. But, if someone that hears this, this interview, wants to do me a favor and, and request my file, I would be, and hand over a copy to me, I would be more than pleased to know what it is in that file, more out of curiosity than any other thing.

ML: And seems like this is probably going to be one of the series of recordings, and we are on the ninety seventh minute, I think it cuts off in about three, four minutes, so is there anything you wanna say to leave on this tape?

VG: Ah, that, that I think that, that we are gonna resolve partially or to a good extent if we receive a federal ruling by the Supreme Court next year, as to the ten percent savings fund payment, that, in a short period of time, we will, we will witness the last chapter of this cause of movement on behalf of the ex braceros [19]42-[19]64, but of the, we are establishing, and we are gonna establish a database with all the

names, addresses, telephone numbers of the sons, daughters, and grandsons and granddaughters, nephews, nieces, and relatives of all the ex braceros that, that continue to participate with us actively, and those that are inactive to begin organizing a new as to aid workers, as to be workers, and the migrants of today, which to a large degree are the sons and daughters, relatives of the ex braceros [19]42-[19]64. And we have a jump start over any other group or union in the United States and Mexico that may have this interest, and we are eager to, to start up, and we may begin, by way out of the *Proyecto Aquí y allá es un*, is the next employment ciclo history workers, which is in January, to Canada, and the 15<sup>th</sup> of February to the United States.

ML: Well, thank you very much.

End of interview

DRAFT