

**TRANSCRIPTION RE:**

**CSUMB Founding Faculty  
Oral History Project 1995-98  
Rina Benmayor, Project Director**

**Interview with Luis Valdez  
Former Director, Teledramatic Arts and Technology  
College of Science**

**Interviewer, Christine Sleeter  
Professor Emerita, Teacher Education  
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**Narrator: Luis Valdez**

**Interviewer: Christine Sleeter**

1           **Sleeter:** This is Christine Sleeter interviewing Luis Valdez on December 6 [2019]. Luis, if you  
2 could state your full name and whether we have permission to record this interview.

3           **Valdez:** My name is Luis Valdez and yes, you have my permission to record this interview.

4           **Sleeter:** Thanks. Okay, we have five questions, or general areas to talk about. The first one has to  
5 do with your motivation for coming to CSUMB and what things were like for you when you first got there.  
6 If there's anything that stands out when you first came to the University, your feelings when you landed  
7 there, and why you chose to come to CSUMB given the theater work that you'd been doing.

8           **Valdez:** I was invited to come to Fort Ord at that time by Steve Arvizu who was the Acting  
9 President of the new University. There was nobody there, frankly. It was just the empty Fort Ord base.

10          **Sleeter:** When was that? Do you remember?

11          **Valdez:** This was late in 1994. Late '94. In the Fall of '94. I was undergoing some rather dramatic  
12 changes in my family life. My mother had just died that summer. I was still heavily involved in Hollywood.  
13 I had a movie project going. Two movie projects going, actually. But my Dad was still alive and I didn't  
14 want to leave him and I didn't want – I mean I'm not the only one in the family--, but I wanted to be  
15 around, you know, for his last few years. As it turned out he had two more years left so I made the right  
16 choice. I didn't want to go back to L.A. I didn't want to get involved in any big project that would keep me  
17 separated. So the invitation by Steve Arvizu was therapeutic in some ways. I went to Fort Ord and checked  
18 it out. I remembered Fort Ord from the Viet Nam war. Actually, I was in ROTC when I was in college and  
19 did some training there and then did not go into the service, as it turned out. But I was really intrigued, you  
20 know, by the possibility of what was going to happen with this big, old base. And there was just really an

21 empty space. I agreed to do part-time work. I agreed to become an advisor to go into this process. But as I  
22 got into it, I became one of the 13 founding professors. I really enjoyed the conversations that we had  
23 speculating about what the nature of the University was going to be. It was in my area. The Teatro  
24 Campesino had been based in San Juan Bautista since 1971 and we had helped Cesar Chavez and the  
25 United Farmworkers in Salinas and the whole Salinas Valley. So this was our work area and I was painfully  
26 [3:05] aware that there was no real institution of higher learning besides Monterey Peninsula College  
27 basically, and Gabilan [Community College] over here in Gilroy. So the idea of establishing a state  
28 university at the old Fort Ord base seemed really like a great idea to me. Since I was taking the time to be  
29 with my Dad, I decided to commit. I became a full time FTE participant in the planning.

30 I was very aware that these were the initial stages and I thought I could have the greatest impact by  
31 participating as one of the 13, because none of the other professors were in my area of expertise. None of  
32 them were into the performing arts. There were no plans for a theater department of any kind and it seemed  
33 to me that was a real pity. How can you have a state university without a Performing Arts faculty and a  
34 Performing Arts institution. So I decided that that was going to be my role. I was going to contribute the  
35 vision for the Performing Arts at Monterey Bay. It also doubled with the fact that this was my target area.  
36 The Teatro Campesino was still working. San Juan Bautista is at the mouth of the Salinas Valley so it  
37 seemed to me the two organizations, you know our missions really coincided and worked together. So I  
38 decided to commit. As it turned out with my Dad, he was in a hospice in Monterey while we were  
39 essentially creating the University. So I was really going from campus to the hospice up in the trees in  
40 Monterey. And he eventually passed.

41 **Sleeter:** Westland House?

42 **Valdez:** I forget what it was. Yes. The one that's up in the trees. He didn't like it too much. It was  
43 too quiet for him, you know. So we moved him to one in Hollister that was noisy and smelled like urine but  
44 he was happier. He was happier with the chaos, you know?

45           **Sleeter:** [Chuckles]

46           **Valdez:** It kept him more alive. The silence was killing him, basically.

47           **Sleeter:** That sounds like a really stressful situation for you, though.

48           **Valdez:** Well, it was. But you know, in that sense planning the University was a relief. It got my  
49 mind off of my personal concerns. Also I mean I was still basically working on a movie for Warner  
50 Brothers. I was totally contracted to deliver a screenplay, which I did, based on the life of Cesar Chavez. So  
51 I was very, very involved professionally at the same time that I was dealing with my Dad and my family  
52 and then at the same time taking time to plan the University. It was like a vacation for me to be able to  
53 think, really, with all the challenges, in terms of creating a new State University. Also, I really believed in  
54 the Vision. I thought that it was an opportunity that had opened up to create something new in the State  
55 University system. What I ended up contributing was my professional experience as a filmmaker and as a  
56 director but also as a community organizer, you know, with the Teatro, combining those ideas and  
57 developing my own institute, which turned out to be TAT, Teledramatic Arts and Technology.

58 **[6:29] Sleeter:** Well, speaking of the Vision can you talk a little bit more about it and what parts of it  
59 really drew you?

60           **Valdez:** Well, I think there were a lot of empty buildings over there, right? And some astonishing  
61 facilities that are no longer there, they removed them. What they call target acquisition in the military. This  
62 is high tech stuff, computerized and it dealt with aircraft. You know, dealing with jet planes and bombers  
63 and stuff. So I saw some of these facilities but then they eventually dismantled them. We couldn't keep  
64 them. I really wanted them. But also what attracted me was all that space in the back where they used to do  
65 military maneuvers. I looked at that and I looked at some of the big empty buildings. So I told Steve  
66 Arvizu, "You know, we could have our own back lot back here!" [Chuckles] It was a pipe dream. But the  
67 idea of a Hollywood back lot, you know, and that we could create a new 21<sup>st</sup> century center for movie  
68 production at Monterey Bay! And really get ahead of San Francisco State and San Jose State and a lot of

69 the others – and San Jose State is my alma mater, I wasn't trying to put them down --, but at that time they  
70 were having difficulties. The Arts were just not getting the kind of respect that I thought they deserved.  
71 There's this big controversy, ongoing conversation about STEM, and I really think it should be STEAM.  
72 They left the "A" out. They left "Art out.

73 **Sleeter:** [Chuckles]

74 **Valdez:** But Science, Technology, you know and Art belong together with all the other disciplines.  
75 Particularly in the computer age, in the digital age you cannot have technology without artistry. It goes  
76 hand in hand.

77 **Sleeter:** Yeah.

78 **Valdez:** So that was the whole point about the Institute that I was pushing toward. Also, because it  
79 was so exciting that we were going to go digital, that every student was going to have a laptop. As a matter  
80 of fact, I got my first laptop – I had computers --, but I got my first laptop as a result of being on the  
81 faculty, right? It was something else! I had to learn like everybody else how to handle emails. You know.  
82 I couldn't believe how many emails there were – I had a flood of emails coming in through my computer. I  
83 was just kind of stressed by it. But I decided it was a good thing in the final analysis. But I thought that this  
84 possibility of working with technology and education and the kind of community orientation that we were  
85 talking about in terms of the Vision, really trying to service the whole Salinas Valley, was very exciting  
86 and it was hand in glove with what I had been doing with the Teatro without resources for forty years at the  
87 **[9:10]** time. So it worked for me. I figured I could contribute in some way by helping to connect, as  
88 everyone else was doing in all their individual institutes, departments and centers. Everybody was working  
89 with this technological connection in whatever our disciplines were. So I found a lot of collegiality in the  
90 13 professors. I enjoyed talking to them. I'm telling you, it was like a vacation for me [chuckles] in many  
91 ways.

92           **Sleeter:** [Chuckles] Could you describe in a little bit more detail your – I'm getting into a little bit  
93 of the organization of CSUMB --.

94           **Valdez:** Of course.

95           **Sleeter:** Your Center assignment. The job or multiple jobs you ended up with. The tasks that you  
96 took on during those early days?

97           **Valdez:** Well, as you may recall, we were in that little building close to the entrance of the  
98 University. We weren't even the main campus, we were sort of on the periphery when we started.

99           **Sleeter:** Was that in 80...?

100           **Valdez:** Yeah, close to where the Black Box ended up being built. And the Black Box is one of the  
101 things, again, that Phil and I came up with. Phil Esparza was my producer and comrade from the Teatro  
102 Campesino. He ended up joining the staff, of course, of CSUMB. He's still there. But he and I literally saw  
103 we needed a place to socialize on campus. There was no place just to get coffee. So there was a black box  
104 which had been something that the soldiers had created for their own amusement and entertainment. It had  
105 a little stage, so we figured this would make a great little coffeehouse. So we went to work on that. Of  
106 course, eventually it became real. The Business Department took it over. But nevertheless it provided a  
107 service. But from that footprint, at that point at the University we're looking at the whole space. You  
108 know, we're looking at all those empty buildings. So it was a pleasure for me to go around with Phil and  
109 others and look at all the possible places where we could develop facilities. I ended up focusing on the  
110 Chapel which was at one of the high points because of the high ceiling. I really wanted a high ceiling for  
111 what I had in mind. I wanted to build a television studio, basically. I thought that we needed to have a  
112 video component that could service the University, and I had been working with KQED and KCET in Los  
113 Angeles, and so I had some experience in terms of public television. I figured that we could really enhance  
114 all our educational efforts if we had that kind of facility. The first thrust was really to deal with the  
115 emptiness of the space and to try to create facilities that could just get us going, that laid the foundation for

116 the University for instruction. We were given eight months to develop a working plan. So that was a shock.  
117 I had never done anything like this before. Of course I worked with the United Farm Workers and we took  
118 on the whole country with a grape boycott so I wasn't afraid of challenges. But this was an immense  
119 responsibility because there were so many details to be worked out, not only in terms of what the plan was  
120 **[12:30]** but how much was it going to cost? The initial planning required that we come up with budgets.  
121 And as it is I consulted a lot of experts that I knew in Silicon Valley because I had worked with people in  
122 the early stages of an AVID system. which is a digital editing system that they use in movies. We're passed  
123 that now, but the fact is that it was cutting edge in 1995. In 1990 we had shot a movie here in San Juan  
124 Bautista based on "La Pastorela," our biennial Shepherd's Play, which we edited on a very early AVID  
125 system from Silicon Valley. Someone actually brought an original demonstration model – and set it up in  
126 the Teatro. Before that you had to cut film by hand, the standard process of handling and editing films for  
127 the last 100 years. Whether it was 35 mm or 16 mm you'd work on a Moviola or on a KEM, these are  
128 different editing machines. I had been used to that. I had been trained and learned that professionally. But  
129 then we started to go into digital technology. I had done some television work and the preliminary digital  
130 editing systems were kind of crude to begin with but they were amazing because we had never seen  
131 anything like that. Then suddenly in 1990 comes this Avid system and we cut a film for PBS here in San  
132 Juan Bautista. So I said, "That's the way to go." By the time that the University started in 1995 the Avid  
133 system was just becoming professionally available. Our editor who edited the "Pastorela" here for us, also  
134 cut his professional teeth on our machine. He had been a regular film editor but he'd never done the digital  
135 aspect. So he cut that for us, the "Pastorela." And then he cut another movie for me, "The Cisco Kid," later  
136 on. He ended up being the editor on "The Matrix," for which he won an Academy Award. I don't know if  
137 you know that movie. But it spoke to me very directly that even in San Juan or Monterey, whatever, these  
138 are skills that can be translated and impact the world at large and wouldn't it be wonderful if our students  
139 could do the same thing? That they could pick up these skills here in Monterey and go into the industry and

140 work as professionals. My son Anahuac, became one. I brought him in. He learned the Avid. He became  
141 one of the teachers, you know, of the Avid system there at Monterey Bay. He's just finishing work on the  
142 latest Star Wars movie. It's going to be released December 20<sup>th</sup>, you know, this year.

143 **Sleeter:** Wow!

144 **[15:18] Valdez:** He's worked two Star Wars movies, you know, with J.J. Abrams. So he's a TAT faculty  
145 member who has gone directly into the industry, right? This was my dream. I thought that we could take  
146 disadvantaged kids from the Salinas Valley and teach them high tech stuff that would take them into the  
147 movie and television industry if that's what they wanted to do. So in order to do this we had to really lay  
148 the foundation at Monterey Bay.

149 **Sleeter:** Yeah. How did you see building – because taking the kids to the Vision that you had –  
150 building the curriculum and getting the faculty in place that would be able to do that?

151 **Valdez:** Well, that turned out to be the real challenge here, because ultimately we were working  
152 with limited resources. You know, it was not open ended. We did come up with a budget that for our aspect  
153 of it, for our institute, our center, if you will, but that ended up being the whole Arts budgets. In other  
154 words, down to the penny we provided a very detailed budget in order to accomplish what the TAT  
155 Institute, Teledramatic Arts and Technology Institute was supposed to cost.

156 **Sleeter:** When you say “we” could you clarify “you” and ...?

157 **Valdez:** Okay. Phil was involved and I had other people that were coming from Silicon Valley that  
158 were advising us on the technology, you know?

159 **Sleeter:** Okay.

160 **Valdez:** When we set up the TAT studio, which is basically a digital television studio, we never  
161 got the up link or the down link, it was just the box. But that was the Chapel. I saw the Chapel with the high  
162 ceiling and I said, “This is beautiful.” It still had stained glass windows. It was a lovely space. But all the  
163 other buildings at Monterey Bay were kind of squat, you know. Not the new ones but the old buildings. The



164 military doesn't care. They didn't need high ceilings, you know, they just had boxes. So I saw the chapel  
165 and I said this could be it. And so annexed to it also was the old movie theater, one of the old movie  
166 theaters on the base. So I thought, "This has to be our theater." Right? It was a 900 seat cinder block movie  
167 house where they used to show Hollywood movies to the soldiers. So we took that and redesigned it into  
168 the World Theater. The World Theater became a multi-purpose facility. It wasn't just a movie house. It was  
169 also a Performing Arts space. We had to have backstage. It was digitally hooked up. To this day, we're  
170 streaming movies. Now, you can stream movies into the World Theater. We could do that back in '95  
171 before the industry standard had been set up, but we knew where the future was going. So we wanted that.  
172 We wanted that for the campus. We wanted to be able to stream direct movies into the theater. So the  
173 World Theater has that capacity. All of that came as a result of experts that came and advised us. Okay,  
174 people that I knew in the industry. There's a lot of names but they've come and gone. It's people from  
175 Silicon Valley and from Hollywood that came and advised us in terms of where to go with the World  
176 [18:27] Theater and the TAT studio. The problem is that we ran out of money. The problem is that there  
177 wasn't enough money to cover our technological aspect. You know, we needed technicians. We needed  
178 operators that can help run the place and there was never enough money for that. So we had to really  
179 redefine the Liberal Arts. I know that we were involved in a lot of ideological and philosophical  
180 conversations about the nature of the University. I don't know if you remember that we used to talk about  
181 linear versus non-linear thinking.

182 **Sleeter:** Yes, um hmm.

183 **Valdez:** And so we needed to think out of the box. We couldn't go analog, which is the old hands  
184 on kind of approach. We needed to go digital. We needed to go non-linear. And that meant that there had  
185 to be an understanding of what that meant in terms of the Liberal Arts. I don't think there was a depth of  
186 understanding in the faculty. They came directly from more traditional universities with really a 20<sup>th</sup>  
187 century aspect, you know, viewpoint. And we really needed a 21<sup>st</sup> century viewpoint.

188           **Sleeter:** Okay.

189           **Valdez:** I had learned in the process, as a result of working in the industry. I mean I was exposed to  
190 this technological change on a professional level in Hollywood, working on movies. So I knew what was  
191 happening and I was trying to bring some of that to bear on what we were planning to do. I know it  
192 couldn't be as sophisticated as Hollywood but nevertheless even Hollywood was learning in those days.  
193 But it seemed to me we had a chance to get a jump on it. But it needed very specific details in terms of the  
194 planning, in terms of equipment and for budget. So our TAT budget ended up being very specific, down to  
195 the last penny in terms of the people that we needed, the equipment that we needed, the materials, all of  
196 that. But when that was accepted and worked into the budget that became the budget for all of the Arts. So  
197 we had Visual Arts having to draw out of our budget. Do you know what I'm saying?

198           **Sleeter:** That must have been really frustrating.

199           **Valdez:** It was very frustrating because what happened is that our budget was chopped up. We  
200 needed leadership to be able to accomplish all of that planning. We brought in Richard Bains, for instance.  
201 I had known Richard for years, you know, and Amalia was at San Jose State, Amalia Mesa Bains. So I had  
202 known them both and CSUMB was very fortunate to have both of them come onto the campus. I think it  
203 was wonderful. Cecilia Burciaga came also from Stanford and I was very aware of her difficulties. But  
204 anyway the fact is that there was a disconnect between some of the ideas and the planning. And then the  
205 [21:20] amount of detail that it needed to be able to work out what the budgets were going to be and what  
206 the real demands were, you know, of what we were planning. I felt that we had presented a very viable,  
207 workable even economic plan to accomplish what we were going to accomplish and that was cut in half.  
208 You know, there wasn't enough money to do what we wanted to do.

209           **Sleeter:** Some of the folks in the Arts, you're talking about the non linear versus linear kind of  
210 ways of thinking.

211           **Valdez:** Yes.

212           **Sleeter:** How would you describe the folks in the Arts? Were you all kind of had a similar  
213 orientation or was there just sort of a conflict in perspective there?

214           **Valdez:** No, I mean, you know Judy. You know. It was great. I mean Baca, Judy Baca, man, she  
215 was “la maestra” [the master teacher], right? We were very fortunate to have her. We were in the same  
216 building, you know, our offices were next to each other. We had some wonderful conversations. That was  
217 part of the perk for me, just to be able to coexist with all of these people. Actually the whole faculty was  
218 amazing as far as I’m concerned. They were all amazing people, you know, with deep professional  
219 experience and ideas and wisdom and I enjoyed that very much. When push came to shove is when we had  
220 to actualize all our ideas into budgets and timelines and faculties and FTE’s and all of that. That’s when we  
221 hit the wall, so to speak. But I embraced the whole idea of what we wanted to do with the Arts. I think the  
222 Visual Arts developed a tremendous center under the leadership of first Judy Baca and then Amalia. You  
223 know? It was incredible. And the work that was done was fantastic. I’ve always believed in all of the Arts,  
224 you know. What Richard Bains did with Music and did it with very limited resources. I know when we  
225 opened up that little Center that became the Music Center, the Musical Department, right, he again was  
226 working with limited resources. But that’s all right. That’s never scared me. The idea of working with  
227 limited resources has never scared me. What you’ve got to do is you’ve got to just define what the limits  
228 are so you can work within those limits and grow from there. Unfortunately there just wasn’t enough  
229 money and time. You had to have either time or money to do it. The time I think has been well served at  
230 Monterey Bay. I’m happy to see that it has evolved. But I don’t think that we were able to accomplish our  
231 early dreams. Maybe that was our function. We were dreamers. We were visionaries. We gathered to  
232 dream out loud and awake with our eyes open, you know, with each other. The need in this area is still  
233 **[24:21]** tremendous, you know? It has always amazed me that Monterey, *the* Monterey, the first really  
234 political and cultural capital of California, going all the way back to the days of the Spanish galleons, it has  
235 not developed more. I love the fact that it’s so beautiful, its landscape and all of that, but it should be really

236 more highly developed than it is. A lot of it, I think, is due to the fact that the major industry in the area is  
237 still agriculture. So then they need a workforce that's not highly educated because the more educated they  
238 are the more demands are going to press under their employers.

239 **Sleeter:** Yup.

240 **Valdez:** They need immigrants to come in and they're uneducated and they want to keep them,  
241 "they" being the system, agribusiness, wants to keep them uneducated so they can use them for labor. But I  
242 thought that Monterey Bay could take that on, and it's still taking that on. And become a door that allows  
243 all these kids a chance at life in general.

244 **Sleeter:** Yeah, I think it is doing that. For you, what would you describe as key moments of  
245 struggle that stand out for you while you were there? Grappling with where the campus was going.

246 **Valdez:** Well, we set up the TAT studio. We had some editing bays that the students were going to  
247 need in order to cut their videos and stuff. A lot of people didn't understand that these were editing bays.  
248 They're not offices. [Chuckles] They're the little spaces – they're not big enough to be offices anyway,  
249 they're like little closets but each of them had an Avid system. One of our dear colleagues, I won't  
250 mention any names, came through and was looking for a place to put faculty and said, "Well, we can put  
251 faculty in here." And I said, "No, those are editing bays." So you see, again, the misunderstanding. No  
252 knowledge of really what the technology was. Again, it was all a learning curve. There were many ways to  
253 learn. We were all learning. But that seemed to me kind of an obvious gaff. Wow, if they don't understand  
254 that we need this space for teaching, these are teaching spaces, then we have a lot of teaching to do within  
255 our faculty. People have to learn. I accepted that as a responsibility, but [getting people] to try to  
256 understand the concept and also trying to get the money to do the basic stuff became very frustrating to me.  
257 I wasn't able to get to first base. Maybe I got to first base but I couldn't get to second base.

258 **Sleeter:** [Laughs]

259           **Valdez:** I needed to round all the bases to get back to home plate, just make one round, you know.  
260 So all of this is tied in with so many other things. . . . That the growth of the University, bringing on new  
261 faculty, we were responsible, the 13 were responsible for selecting some of the others. I brought in Ruben  
262 Mendoza, I remember. He turned out to be great. It was interviewing them long distance. They were at  
263 different places. They were in Boulder. They were cross country. And all of that was exciting as far as the  
264 search was concerned, but then once they got on campus they found they had their own challenges just to  
265 **[27:59]** be able to do what they needed to do. I realized that we were transitional in that sense, that we  
266 were really founding faculty and we were pioneers who were breaking new ground. I'm sorry that we lost  
267 Steve Arvizu, quite frankly, because I think that he had his heart and mind in the right place. It was a real  
268 disappointment to him personally that he was not selected. Peter was okay. Peter Smith was fine. I had no  
269 problems with him or Sally, his wife. They were fine. But they were outsiders. You know, they came from  
270 Vermont and they weren't up to speed, that's all. Steve was completely up to speed. He had the Vision. He  
271 knew what it needed. And somehow he was turned away I guess because of the politics. Academic politics  
272 is not something that I've been deeply involved in. I've had to deal with many forms of politics.  
273 Democratic and Republican politics, I've been in that all my life. The politics of Hollywood is incredibly  
274 something else. The politics of the regional theater is something else, still. But academic politics was. . .  
275 there's some sharp knives in there, you know? [Laughs]

276           **Sleeter:** [Laughs]

277           **Valdez:** There were some very sharp and polished knives in academic politics. You know? It's  
278 because you have a lot of intelligent educated people doing what human beings do. So all of it centered  
279 around budgets and FTE's and trying to find personnel. Who were all in the mix, trying to find the people  
280 that each of us needed in our own disciplines. So that got to be a little overwhelming. Finally it really  
281 frustrated my enthusiasm about what I needed to do at Monterey Bay and I had hoped that maybe the  
282 foundation we had laid, I wasn't sure, that it would go on. I was disappointed when they changed the name

283 of Teledramatic Arts to the Cinematic Arts and Technology. It's like going backwards, you know? It's not  
284 cinema anymore. Cinema belongs to the old days, the silent days, the talkies where you are handling  
285 celluloid. No one works with celluloid anymore. It's all digital. Teledramatic Arts is really more to the  
286 point. It deals with the delivery system as much as what the product is. Not only telling stories but how are  
287 you watching stories. Hollywood is very aware of this. We're streaming movies now. They've got different  
288 kinds of platforms. People watch movies on your phone, on your laptop, on your television. What have  
289 you. In any form. Netflix is the new dominant player because they started with very basic concepts and an  
290 understanding of where it was all going. So I had that kind of awareness back in '95 and I was hoping that  
291 maybe this new University could get a jump on it. That we could in fact accomplish something. Because  
292 that whole military base area back there that I thought was a potential back lot, which they used for war  
293 games and stuff, could have been used, still could be used, I suppose, for a lot of purposes. But it takes  
294 someone that understands, at least has a glimpse of what the 21<sup>st</sup> century is going to be. And for better or  
295 for worse. I think there are some tremendous evils that have sprung up through this kind of technology that  
296 we were not aware of in '95. Social media and stuff.

297 **Sleeter:** Yeah.

298 **Valdez:** It's having deep political impact now that we can all see for ourselves. Questions of  
299 disinformation. And really mind control.

300 **Sleeter:** Yeah.

301 **Valdez:** I think we needed to anticipate that better. We didn't know it though in '95. And it's just  
302 yesterday for us. For me it's just yesterday.

303 **Sleeter:** Yeah.

304 **Valdez:** But it's amazing how rapidly that technology has taken over. So Teledramatic Arts was an  
305 acknowledgement of that. Teledramatic Arts was telling you, "Okay, listen, we need to be able to  
306 understand the delivery system so we can understand how we can process all of this entertainment through

307 it.” Or information or education. Right? We used to talk about Edutainment at the beginning, that we were  
308 going to merge the techniques of education --- of entertainment to educate people. All of that was part of  
309 [32:33] the Vision. I’m actually seeing that in other universities what we started to do with Teledramatic  
310 Arts has become sort of the norm now. San Jose State has merged their Theater, Television, Radio and Film  
311 Departments into one whole.

312 **Sleeter:** Hmm. Interesting.

313 **Valdez:** Yeah. And I’m an advisor over there, too. They called me back, and so I have been over  
314 there and made contact and produced the plays. But the thing is that they’re not alone – all the universities  
315 in California, notably Cal State Northridge have made tremendous advances in what I would call  
316 Teledramatic Arts. I mean they saw it and they grabbed it and they took it and they went with it. And I was  
317 in touch with them then. Again, it’s through my contacts in Hollywood. I’m a member of the Academy of  
318 Arts and Sciences. I made contacts with all of these people, all the way to San Diego. San Diego State. I’m  
319 just talking about the state universities but it would also be the Cal system. You know, the UC system.  
320 Although the expertise is in some ways grounded in the state university system, in some ways more than it  
321 is in the other system. I don’t want to speak out of my hat here, but I’m talking about things that I have  
322 seen. Right? But I’m just saying that the concept that we came up with at Monterey Bay, where  
323 Teledramatic Arts and Technology was viable, it was forward looking and then when they changed it back  
324 to Cinematic Arts I said, “Well, they’re going backwards, they’re not going forwards.” They didn’t  
325 understand how you have to maintain live performance and dance together with the technology in order to  
326 achieve the new forms. So, you know, I was no longer there so they just did what they did.

327 **Sleeter:** Well, okay. So let me move to the time when you left. Now you stayed for was it two  
328 years?

329 **Valdez:** Ultimately it became two years, yeah. ’95 to the end of ’97. Yeah.

330 **Sleeter:** What were the core factors that led you to decide to leave?

331           **Valdez:** Well, our budget was cut, on the one hand. Josina [Makau] who was our Dean at the time,  
332 said that they were going to have to cut our budget, and we were not going to get the FTE that we needed  
333 for a technical person that we were courting just to be able to run the TAT studio. That became a serious  
334 breach for me. Then there was a threat that they were going to take over the budget. I figured how can you  
335 take over the budget if you don't understand what the process is. So it seemed to me that I'd had it. You  
336 **[35:20]** know what I'm saying? Also my Dad died, actually in '96. Finally. You know he passed toward the  
337 end of the year and that kind of freed me on another level, emotionally and my responsibility to walk him  
338 to the door, so to speak. You know, he had a decent passing. He went peacefully. But the thing is that I  
339 needed then to refurbish my own dreams and say, "Okay, what can I do? What am I going to do with the  
340 Teatro?" I had movie projects that were waiting. Television series that were waiting, so I decided to go  
341 back to my previous relationship with the Teatro and my professional life in Hollywood, as a playwright  
342 and as a filmmaker. The teaching, I said, was really too much. I either have to devote all of my time to this  
343 in order to fight it. I mean I can't give a half-time or quarter-time it's not worth it. I won't accomplish  
344 anything. I'll just be spinning wheels for everybody. It's a new University. It's going to eventually work  
345 out its problems on its own, anyway. So I decided to withdraw.

346           **Sleeter:** Yeah.

347           **Valdez:** That's all.

348           **Sleeter:** Looking back what would you say is your legacy that's persisted?

349           **Valdez:** Well, the World Theater is still there. Phil is still there. Not much longer, you know. But  
350 the World Theater was going to be part of the TAT Institute. Peter and Sally had plans for a \$50 million  
351 performing arts center. They had plans. I saw the plans. I saw the designs. That was going to be up and  
352 running, you know, within five to ten years, or something. When we developed the World Theater it was  
353 for *our* purposes. We were going to do plays. We were going to have movie screenings there. It was going  
354 to be *our* facility for *our* institute, for the University. But it turned out to be that that was the only place that



355 the University had, really, to conduct meetings and that even started before we did the remodel. I don't  
356 know if you remember, we had some meetings in there when it was still known -

357 **Sleeter:** I do. I do!

358 **Valdez:** It was the old cinder block movie house, right? Wishful thinking, you know. I think that it's too  
359 bad that that performing arts center was not built. It probably will, one of these days, eventually, if they get  
360 a donor to come in. Some day perhaps a big, rich graduate or some of these agribusiness giants in the area  
361 will come in and donate. Make it out of lettuce, you know, "Give us the lettuce – [Laughs] – to build this  
362 thing!" But it has frustrated, really, the evolution of the World Theater as a facility, what it was supposed  
363 to be. But it's still going, you know. Joe Cardinale, who runs it is also a colleague of mine. He's been on  
364 our El Teatro Campesino board for many, many years. So I still have a toe in there, not that I'm involved in  
365 their planning or anything like that, but I do go there and Joe just told me I'm scheduled to speak at the  
366 **[38:48]** University again next February. So I do want to come back, you know, and touch base with the  
367 faculty. We had our summer programs there, you know, the migrant education programs, until recently.  
368 Somehow they got curtailed, but we had some wonderful experiences teaching farmworker kids on campus  
369 and really opening up the possibility in their eyes of going to college. Of saying, "Okay, let's go to  
370 college." I think it's so important, higher education I think is a step that's so necessary. High school isn't  
371 enough these days. They have to go to a college. They have to go to a university in order to be able to see  
372 the breadth of what their potential is. CSUMB still has a tremendous role to play in that regard. There are  
373 still a lot of disadvantaged people in our area. And it shouldn't just be farmworkers. I mean everybody  
374 should be there. Why not? Monterey is beautiful, right? So I think the potential for the University is still  
375 great. I believe in it. I'm proud, you know, that I was involved in the early stages of planning for CSUMB.  
376 I think I'm proud of what it has accomplished to this day. You know, President Ochoa has been very nice  
377 to me. I remember Peter and Sally with great affection in certain ways. In spite of the fact, again, they were  
378 newcomers and they had to learn to be Californians, you know. It's not easy overnight. I have that problem

379 in Hollywood, too. Every time we get new producers they come from the East Coast. They know nothing  
380 about the West Coast. So it has to be taught. It's a battle that I'm familiar with. I didn't expect it in  
381 academe but I guess it only makes sense.

382 **Sleeter:** Yeah. Yeah.

383 **Valdez:** Even so. I'm very hopeful about what's happening at CSUMB. I'm very hopeful about its  
384 future. I think it's really a necessity. I wish every new faculty member that comes in, every student for all  
385 that [matter], the best. That they come in and achieve their dreams in any way that's possible. You have to  
386 fight for it. Nothing's given to you. You have to dream and work very hard.

387 **Sleeter:** Yeah, that's true. That is true. Is there anything else that you would like to say that I  
388 haven't asked about?

389 **[41:09] Valdez:** Well, no. It was only two years but it was a very intense two years for me. It was a  
390 healing process, believe it or not, for me personally, emotionally, in terms of my family. But at the same  
391 time, I think that it laid the foundation for an expanded vision of what we had been doing with the Teatro  
392 for a lot of years. I think that the kind of discipline that education brings, that academics brings, is key and  
393 central to our livelihood and to our civilization, wherever we're going with it. You need to have these  
394 disciplines. People have to learn how to handle ideas and how to reason and how to make plans that are  
395 workable, that are viable. We had a very practical challenge given to us. In those eight months of planning  
396 a university and converting Fort Ord, we were turning spears into plowshares. You know, we really were.  
397 We were really going the reverse. We were creating something for peace that had been planned, that had  
398 been created for war. It was quite a challenge. So dramatic. It's a movie in some ways, you know?  
399 [Chuckles] In that sense of transformation. It's still going on. I'm not exactly sure what the half life of a  
400 university is. I don't think that 20, 25 years is all that significant. It's just the beginning. I think it's still  
401 growing up from the roots. San Jose State has been there since 1857, when you think about it. A lot of  
402 people don't know that UCLA was a satellite of San Jose State.

403           **Sleeter:** Hmm!

404           **Valdez:** [Chuckles] It was. Before it was UCLA it was the L.A. Teachers College. They sent  
405 professors and people from San Jose State into this cow town in the south to create an institute that could  
406 teach teachers. It was a Normal School in downtown Los Angeles.

407           **Sleeter:** Interesting.

408           **Valdez:** Yeah, right where the L.A. County Library is, in the heart of L.A., way down there. That  
409 was the site of the L.A. Normal School for teachers. And that became then Los Angeles College which is  
410 L.A. City College now. Then it eventually moved to Westwood and became UCLA. So it's all part of  
411 educational history in California. But I'm still amazed though, that Monterey, -- speaking as a Mexican  
412 American -- having had such a dramatic role in the history of California is not enhanced even more.  
413 Regardless of who does it, somebody has to do it. The fact is that it's a lovely area and it's a historic area  
414 and it needs to be more than just a military base. It needs to be a center for learning and for peace and  
415 education and civilization. I think we're going to see tremendous changes. A lot of people are too aware of  
416 the technological changes that are happening in agriculture, but farm labor as such is going to go robotic.  
417 We're going to see robots out there. So all those people that are working as wage slaves right now, they're  
418 out their working as stoop labor, they're going to need some place to go.

419           **Sleeter:** Yeah.

420           **Valdez:** And this is where CSUMB can have a dramatic, a dramatic role in terms of the future.  
421 This is the rest of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Where to go when the robotics takes over in the fields? What's going to  
422 happen to all these people? What are they going to do with their skills? Some of them will go into business.  
423 There are Mexican American farmworker families that are now creating their own wine in the Napa Valley.  
424 They've become vintners. They are no longer just farmworkers. I don't know what will happen with the  
425 lettuce and all of that. But I think that we need to have far reaching, forward looking visions to be able to  
426 understand the future that is upon us, and not just economically and technologically but also politically.

427 Where are we going to go with all of these people? How are we going to defend our way of life? This is  
428 where CSUMB has a real important role to play in this area. And I'm just happy to have been at this very  
429 primary stage, one of the founding professors that made some groundwork here for this Vision.

430 **Sleeter:** Yeah. Well, thank you. Thank you so much!

431 (END OF RECORDING)

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