

TRANSCRIPTION RE:

**CSUMB Founding Faculty
Oral History Project 1995-98**

**Interview with María de la Luz Reyes
Former CSUMB Professor of Teacher Education**

**Interviewer: Donaldo Urioste, Professor Emeritus
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Narrator: María de la Luz Reyes
Interviewer: Donaldo Urioste

1 **Urioste:** This is July 31st. We're in Las Vegas, Nevada. And we are interviewing Dr. María de la
2 Luz Reyes who was a planning faculty at CSUMB starting in January of 1995.

3 **Reyes:** Yes.

4 **Urioste:** Okay. Good evening, Dr. Reyes.

5 **Reyes:** Hello.

6 **Urioste:** Dr. Reyes, we're doing a project at CSUMB, an oral history of the early days of the
7 founding of the university. And of course as one of the planning faculty you were there earlier than most
8 other faculty. So we have a series of questions we'd like to ask you and hopefully we'll have a successful
9 interview here.

10 **Reyes:** Okay.

11 **Urioste:** The first area is going to be about the motivation for coming to CSUMB, reactions,
12 interviews, arrival, stories and the like. So, first question. We all have a story that stands out in our minds
13 about what brought us to CSUMB. Could you describe for me the moment when you first learned about the
14 university?

15 **Reyes:** Well, I saw it in the *Chronicle for Higher Ed*. There was a call for faculty at Monterey Bay
16 where they were opening a university. It sounded intriguing. The other thing, though, was that Dr. Steve
17 Arvizu had hired John Halcón, my husband, as Assistant to the Provost. He had taken a leave for six
18 months to help Steve, and I was encouraged to apply. I did. I wasn't as excited until I read the mission that
19 Dr. Arvizu had crafted and that Vision [Statement] contained all the ideals that I've always valued in
20 Higher Ed: the diversity, the multiculturalism, the multilingualism, the service to community, the

21 incorporation of community surrounding the campus. That sounded so different than any other campus in
22 the country so I was really intrigued and I wanted to apply for it.

23 **[2:44] Urioste:** Can you describe your first feelings when you landed at the university?

24 **Reyes:** Well, it was strange, actually. [Chuckles] When we drove into the university it was not quite
25 like any university I've seen. It was a military base. It had been closed and on the long driveway in were
26 these scrawny little trees, I forget what they're called. It looked isolated. So I wondered, "Oh, my God,
27 what did I get myself into?" But I felt that with the kind of people that would be attracted to that and with
28 Steve Arvizu as Provost and with that beautiful mission that it would be an exciting time.

29 **Urioste:** How would you describe your initial arrival to campus?

30 **Reyes:** Do you mean physically?

31 **Urioste:** Physically, yes. Your physical arrival to campus. When you arrived there,

32 **Reyes:** Well, I don't know if I can describe it. It seemed like I was lost. We were driving around
33 trying to find the main area for an office that had been opened, and everything looked boarded up and
34 desolate. I wondered exactly where we were going to live. They took us to what had been the Officers'
35 quarters. The buildings had just been re-opened, after being shut down for five years. You know, I looked
36 forward to living in a community where the rest of my colleagues were going to live, especially the ones
37 that I was close to. Everything was intriguing because it was so different from anything else I had
38 experienced. It felt like teaching at a university while you were boarding there. [Chuckles] You know. Like
39 a boarding school for academics! [Chuckles]

40 **Urioste:** What did you imagine CSUMB to be before you arrived and what was your impression of
41 the actual place?

42 **[5:06] Reyes:** I don't think I imagined anything, really because I knew it was a base. And not having been
43 to too many bases, all I could conjure up were military structures. Nothing very amenable to a university.
44 And what was the second part of it?

45 **Urioste:** What was your impression of the actual place?

46 **Reyes:** Well, I mean my impression was what I said earlier. I wasn't sure what I was getting into
47 because the place seemed so desolate and so different than any other university where I had applied. You
48 know. I had a sense that it would be a great deal of work because there wasn't anything there. But I didn't
49 realize the extent of the work waiting for us. I knew we were going to work hard, but when we got into it, it
50 was a *lot* more than I ever imagined! [Chuckles]

51 **Urioste:** Everybody who came to the university initially left some place. What was the cost to you
52 personally to leave to come to CSUMB?

53 **Reyes:** Well, actually it was a big cost because I had just gotten tenure and my career was getting
54 off really well. I had published seven articles that one year. My name was well known in my field of
55 bilingual ed[ucation] and literacy. So I was getting a lot of invitations to speak at conferences and other
56 places. And this was interrupted by that. I mean I chose to do it. I asked for a leave and because of my work
57 and my publication record the dean was willing to let me go. But he wanted me back. He didn't want me to
58 resign. He wanted me to take a leave because he said, "Yes, you should go, but when you come back ask
59 me for a raise because we want you back." During that time, of course, there were eighteen months where
60 there was no opportunity to do any kind of publication or any kind of conferences or talks. I did go once to
61 the University of Wisconsin. I was invited as a guest speaker. It was exhausting to go. It was difficult to
62 prepare because we had very little time to do any professional personal academic work. It was all about
63 building a community, opening a university and all the various facets that that entails. Even including
64 getting a computer and getting pens, having a secretary. You know, having space to work. But I went. That
65 was the only thing that I did. I also worked on one article but it was at a very high cost physically and it
66 was exhausting because there was no time to think. You just had to make decisions on the spur of the
67 moment because the university had to be opened by August and this was January. So . . .

68 **[8:22] Urioste:** Okay. Looking back now, 20 years later. . .

69 **Reyes:** Oh, my God! [Chuckles]

70 **Urioste:** . . . do you feel you made the right decision to come to CSUMB when you did?

71 **Reyes:** I don't think it was a bad decision. I'm glad I did it because it was a real eye opener as to
72 what is entailed in putting together a university from scratch. All we had was one building and no
73 equipment, no resources, nothing on paper, no curriculum, no plan. Everything had to be built from the
74 beginning so that was a really good learning process for me. We delved into everything. The colors of the
75 buildings. Hiring the secretaries. Getting your computer in your office. Organizing governance and going
76 out to recruit. All of us went out to speak to community groups trying to recruit students while we were
77 writing curriculum. Trying to get ourselves organized as a faculty. Trying to meet parents. Trying to figure
78 out what all was entailed in just creating this thing called a university. It's massive. You don't have that
79 kind of experience when you go to a university because everything is already set up. It's easy now, in
80 comparison. It was so easy to go back to my own university in Colorado, in Boulder. I recall my first
81 reaction going back was, "Ah, thank God. This university is finished. I don't have to think about all those
82 very basic things that have to be thought for creating a university. " It was all done.

83 **Urioste:** It was all done.

84 **Reyes:** All I had to do was work. [Chuckles]

85 **Urioste:** Do you feel it was worth it to come to CSUMB?

86 **[10:27] Reyes:** Oh, yeah, it was worth it because I met many new and diverse people--World class faculty
87 from around the country; some better than others. But just to be around them and to be around other
88 colleagues that shared the same ideals of diversity, multiculturalism, having had experience in diverse
89 communities, that was really important because that meant that our main goals were similar and that's not
90 what happens in most universities, especially if you are a person of color, a minority. You're the only one
91 always lobbying or working for diversity. Everybody is, "Well, what's wrong? We have diversity. We have

92 men and women. We have feminists and non feminists.” Their definition of diversity is very different from
93 what *we* think about. So it was a good experience to work with people like that.

94 **Urioste:** Who were some of those early faculty that you had a....

95 **Reyes:** Strong connection?

96 **Urioste:** . . . a strong connection to.

97 **Reyes:** Well, there was Luis Valdez, to begin with. My god! He was impressive, as a playwright, a
98 person who had made movies. I think he had just done *La Bamba* when we arrived, or recently anyway.
99 There was Judy Baca, a Chicana muralist. There was Christine Sleeter, who was already very well known
100 for her multiculturalism. Then I met Josina [Makau] and other people. I mean these were thinkers and
101 these were people who were doing exciting and creative things that I could interact with and share time and
102 plan.

103 **Urioste:** Was there a time before you left that you thought about maybe leaving, like the ambiance
104 or something that -

105 **[12:12] Reyes:** No. Actually I had been recruited by the University of Arizona. And I had been recruited
106 by ... I can't remember the other place-- it was so long ago. I did get offers to apply. The only one I really
107 took up was the University of Arizona in Tucson because they were opening a new campus and this was, I
108 mean way before this other thing [CSUMB] happened, and it seemed like a good opportunity. So maybe
109 that was the impetus that propelled me to accept something adventurous like that. And I did it because it
110 was also a way to get a new experience, see what's going on. Actually, I had such a wonderful dean. He
111 suggested I go because he said an interesting thing to me. He said, “The good faculty never stay. They're
112 always recruited because they're good, so I don't want you to leave but I'm going to write you a fabulous
113 letter.” And he did. And he said, “That means you're going to get a bigger salary.” And he said, “I know
114 you didn't do this to get a salary” but that's what a lot of faculty do who know their worth in the
115 community. So, it helped me for that. There was also an opportunity that John might get a job. So we both

116 went to look. But wanting to leave? No. I had such a wonderful, unusually wonderful dean. Supportive,
117 helpful and even mentoring me as to how to be an academic, because even though I had earned a doctorate
118 I didn't really know what it entailed, especially to be in a research institution, to be successful. I had gone
119 from UCSB to Bakersfield which was a non-research institution. My advisor had gotten angry because I'd
120 gotten seven offers and said, "Why are you going to the armpit of California instead of Champagne-
121 Urbana?" or something like that, that was really highly ranked. But, I went to Bakersfield there because
122 Tomás Arciniegas was the only Chicano president of a four-year institution in Cal State. He called me
123 personally to invite me. And I thought "Wow!" It was flattering. It was still California. John's kids were
124 young. So we stayed there. But the idea of my wanting to leave after I got to Boulder and I got the feel for
125 what I needed to do to be successful as a researcher, I didn't want to leave. I had a great place there.

126 **Urioste:** Yeah, but that was in Boulder. How about leaving CSUMB once you got there?

127 **[15:57] Reyes:** Oh, well the whole dream deteriorated so much by Thanksgiving of the first year when
128 Peter Smith, the President, was circulating the idea of wanting to get a Vice President of Academic Affairs
129 to help Steve [Arvizu]. Under the guise of helping Steve. I read it immediately. I understood the academy
130 and I knew that the Vice President of Academic Affairs and the Provost are essentially the same job. I saw
131 that it was a ruse to try to get rid of Steve and undermine him. I was angered that he did it at Thanksgiving,
132 when we were so exhausted. We hadn't had a break and this was our first holiday. He didn't think
133 anybody would be paying attention to the emails. I noticed it. I talked to Christine Sleeter right away. I
134 even ran over to the President's assistant secretary [Chief of Staff], Cecilia Burciaga, I was looking for her,
135 and I said, "Surely, this must be a mistake." And she knows it. She had been at Stanford. She would know
136 that there was a problem. And to my surprise she was supporting the idea. I said, "How could you do that?"
137 I mean we can't have a Vice President and a Provost. They are essentially the same person. They're the
138 person who leads the faculty and hires the faculty and has that power. She said, "Oh, Steve, you know, he is
139 very dis-organized and he needs some help." And I said, "No, no, no, you don't understand." I knew that

140 she was in on it as soon as we had that conversation. I said, “I can’t – I just –.” I was astounded that she
141 would do that knowing how much Steven had done to get Cecilia a job at CSUMB after previously being
142 fired from Stanford. I went to look for the President and he wasn’t there. Then when he was, I went back to
143 him and I said, “What are you doing?” You know, because we had that kind of openness, we were so few.
144 He said “No, no, no. We’re not . . . Steve is here to stay. We’re just trying to get some help. You know,
145 there’s a lot of disorganization.” I said “We’re just getting off the ground. Of course, everybody is
146 disorganized.” If they’re not, they’re not doing their work because it takes a lot of work to get everything
147 done and everybody had tentacles going everywhere. I had something like seven important job roles
148 myself. I was head of governance. I had the Migrant Ed. Program, I had Service Learning, I had the
149 Bilingual Program. I was writing the graduate curriculum with Christie. We had all these faculty meetings.
150 I forget the other things. We were like doing everything. You can’t be that organized and manage that well
151 when you’ve got so many things going on at the same time. So I thought, if they don’t understand that
152 that’s what’s happening with Steve and all of us But I knew that they knew, that they were just
153 planting the seed to try to undermine him and that’s what eventually happened.

154 **[19:30] Urioste:** Was there a time in those first couple of years that you were there that really confirmed
155 your decision that it was a right place, a good place?

156 **Reyes:** It was only right up to November, to be honest with you, because then I saw the coup
157 coming from Peter Smith. That really divided all the new faculty before you guys came, because people
158 took sides.

159 **Urioste:** [whispers] I was there

160 **Reyes:** You were already there? I couldn’t remember. But what happened is that there were a lot of
161 misunderstandings. Some people didn’t understand that a Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs
162 were the same thing and some were saying, “No, maybe that’s not what he is trying to do.” And I would
163 [reply] “No. Don’t you understand the academy? This is how it works, you can’t have two peopld doing the

164 same job!” Then some people started making negative remarks about Steve and I defended him and then
165 they said you misunderstood. The situation became worse between the Peter and the Steve’s camps. Soon
166 after that, the situation started spiraling downward.

167 **Urioste:** The early days, of course, you were part of the earliest days and the planning days, were
168 defined in part by innovative assignments, innovative tasks, innovative curriculum. Could you talk a little
169 about your first assignments when you first arrived at the University in January of 1995?

170 **[21:24] Reyes:** Let me think. I’m not sure what I did that the first year.

171 **Urioste:** When you guys were talking about exactly how was the curriculum at the university going
172 to be, the University Learning Requirements, ULR’s, if you remember, the ULR structure. Because you all
173 designed that.

174 **Reyes:** Well, we were designing it. I’m not sure that I got to the implementation part of it, but we
175 were trying to make the assignments connect with the real world, with the community. Students working in
176 the community, for example. If they were going to be teachers and they were going to be in a bilingual
177 program then they would go into a classroom as part of their assignment, do an observation, identify a
178 problem with literacy perhaps, or a problem with language, whether it was a Spanish speaking student not
179 understanding English, and then come back and talk about how the theory applied to that and what you
180 would do to resolve it. That sort of thing was what we were aiming for, coming up with a way of doing that
181 in a culminating project. You know, to show how much you’d learned. I don’t remember any more specific
182 things at this moment.

183 **Urioste:** Do you remember, in those early days, what the eleven of you, I think –

184 **Reyes:** There were eleven of us.

185 **Urioste:** Were there any stories you can remember?

186 **Reyes:** No, there were thirteen of us.

187 **Urioste:** Thirteen, yeah? Any particular stories that you remember as you guys were having those
188 heated discussions or discussions about the curriculum?

189 **[23:35] Reyes:** Well, one of the funny things was that Steve Arvizu was always referring to us as a world
190 class faculty and of course the other CSU faculty who were not there and people outside who weren't in
191 support of the campus were doubting him saying, "Well, there are a lot of diverse people. What do you
192 mean 'world class'? What can they possibly be?" Well, the faculty used to meet in this room where the
193 [military] armor used to be kept. That's where we used to have our meetings initially. There were bars. The
194 doors had bars. That one time we were talking about it, laughing about how we were world class and Luis
195 Valdez was saying, "Yeah, actually we were from the world but have no class," and things like that. So, we
196 decided to take a picture of the founding faculty behind bars. And we took a lot of photos, like we were
197 trying to climb out of the bars, and it was hysterical! I still have those pictures somewhere. And then we
198 showed it to Steve, sent him a note about world class faculty really had been in prison, in jail! [Chuckles]

199 **Urioste:** Would you be willing to share some of those pictures?

200 **Reyes:** Oh, sure, if I can find them. I think I know where they are. They were hysterical because we
201 were just making fun of ourselves. We did have some tense moments when we were talking about
202 curriculum because there was a little bit of tension between the CSU hired faculty and all the outsiders that
203 were not CSU. All the outsiders came from Research One institutions. We had a different way of looking
204 at what needed to be done, in terms of what we're going to be our expectations for faculty and for students
205 and for the rigor in the curriculum and things like that. I remember some heated discussions with Vicky
206 Jew who thought she was the only one who knew anything about education and in particular bilingual
207 education. I had written a lot in that field and conducted research and she did not like to be shown that
208 someone else had done something in that area. It was petty little stuff like that. But we got over it. I think
209 we managed to get through it. Luis would always manage to make some kind of drama about it. And then
210 we'd laugh. In fact, we had some of the meetings at his Teatro [Campesino] early on. He chaired them. So,

211 he had full control of how to maneuver the conversation and get the work done, so that was really good.

212 **Urioste:** Were there any particular stories that really confirmed your expectations about those types
213 of curricular discussions or decisions, or defied your expectations?

214 **[27:13] Reyes:** Well, what was confirmed was that people like Christie Sleeter, for example, took it to
215 heart and worked really, really hard. She built some really exciting and interesting culminating projects.
216 But others resisted. They wanted the same thing that they'd always had at the CSU. Traditional exams and
217 so forth. So, you know, it was the nature of the beast, where you came from, what you were accustomed to.
218 I knew that that would continue because of who was there. I think we shared some values in terms of
219 diversity and in terms of students and community but not necessarily how to get there because of our
220 experiences.

221 **Urioste:** Different experiences. Okay. I know that many of us were attracted to the university
222 because of the Vision.

223 **Reyes:** Well, yeah, that was the main thing for me.

224 **Urioste:** Exactly. Different folks were attracted by different aspects of the Vision. What aspects of
225 the Vision drew you?

226 **Reyes:** Well, first of all, it was going to be a first class 21st-century university that would serve the
227 footprint of the community surrounding CSUMB. That was Salinas, and that was Marina, and so forth. So,
228 it wasn't just Carmel and Monterey. There were a lot of "raza" [Latinos]. No other university starts off
229 with that kind of Vision, that you want to serve the people that you ought to serve, that surround the
230 university, your real constituents. That was a big thing. The fact that all of us had to be bilingual. Not
231 necessarily just Spanish-English, but that was a real value in what we wanted the faculty to be. The fact that
232 they needed to have worked in those kinds of communities so that they could understand the need for
233 bringing that community up to a different level. [...] You know, really be a change agent. So those were

234 really wonderful, realistic things that Steven had put into that Vision that were remarkable. I had hoped that
235 we would be able to respond to that. But it didn't quite happen.

236 **Urioste:** Now as one who was very, very engaged in bilingual education, literacy, how did the
237 Vision guide your work?

238 **[30:16] Reyes:** Well, we went out to talk to parents, mothers, and the families. We actually spoke
239 Spanish. We actually talked about the opportunities for the young girls to become educated, not just to be
240 guided to get married because they didn't have to study. Those are things you don't get to do in any
241 traditional university. You don't get to go and get into the communities and talk to the population you want
242 to recruit. So that was different. Being able to be bilingual and understanding the educational problems that
243 our communities had throughout their enrollment in U.S. public schools, they're the same kind of issues
244 that happen all the time. Kids come with native Spanish speaking facility, not necessarily always English.
245 And it takes a while, and they're looked upon as if they're stupid or the expectations are low. So maybe
246 they don't graduate. They don't think they can go to college. Then professors don't think that they should
247 come in because they're not up to par. But if you are really a good teacher you take the students where
248 they are and move them to the next level and then the next level. You don't say no because there are other
249 things that you don't know, the resources and funds of knowledge that the student has, and the community
250 has that can serve that student to be successful. So those are things that you know when you work with
251 community.

252 **Urioste:** Your assignment, was it Liberal Studies or Teacher Education?

253 **Reyes:** It was Liberal Studies and Teacher Ed, because Liberal Studies is the base for it. Yeah.

254 **Urioste:** Those first two years that you were there what really stands out in your mind for you that
255 you worked on? Any particular project that you worked on that stands out now?

256 **[32:41] Reyes:** Let's see. We were working in so many areas. There was a Service Learning component
257 that we were working on. I forget the name of the woman [Marian Penn] that was the coordinator. But I

258 was the faculty person in charge of that area. Trying to incorporate Service Learning into all of the courses
259 was probably one of the most interesting things that we did. But we just laid the basic ideas down. We
260 didn't tell people exactly how they had to do each one. So, people did it differently. And to be quite honest
261 there was so much going on it's hard to focus on one thing. I mean, we were trying to organize the Faculty
262 Senate to participate in the [faculty] Union. There were some people who didn't want to be part of the
263 Union because they didn't quite understand. It seemed that the Union was not really doing anything that we
264 valued at the time. You know, most of them were white. Most of them were working on things that seemed
265 foreign to what we were trying to do. We actually encountered a lot of early resistance because they didn't
266 like the fact that the first faculty came in as tenured full professors and the highest paid. We were all paid
267 exactly the same. They resented that because they had to go through the ranks. They didn't understand that
268 the reason for doing that, which came from Steve Arvizu and probably John's [Halcón] idea, was that if
269 you bring them all at the same level then no one has more power than anyone else and you don't have to
270 worry about moving to the next rank and competing with someone. You are then just focused on how to get
271 this campus, this university off the ground. So, I think that was brilliant.

272 **[35:15] Urioste:** What was the creative part of your work for you?

273 **Reyes:** Well, everything was creative because everything was new. We were creating a curriculum,
274 creating a community. We were getting to know the outer community. Building community with the
275 faculty. With the administration. Planning our first graduation. Planning our reception for President
276 Clinton, and who was going to get to go [to the reception]. What did we have to do to make it look like we
277 were a university? We knew that all the buildings had to be painted. We had to find a place. A few
278 [buildings] had to actually be completed for viewing. So, all of that was creative because we were all part
279 of it. There were times when Steve would go out in the morning and pick up his newspaper and say, "What
280 do you think if we make all these buildings colorful, you know?" I said "Yeah, that sounds like a good
281 idea. Brown. And red. And blue." He goes, "Yeah, okay, I'll pass that on." Stuff like that would happen all

282 the time and it was comical. You look back and sometimes you're most creative when you're up against the
283 wall and you have to think you of something out of the box and then it really gets done.

284 **Urioste:** I can remember those early days. There were a lot of things out of the box.

285 **Reyes:** A lot of things. I mean we'd probably be arrested if we did them again. We didn't have any
286 rules yet. Those were being written. We were going back to what the CSU had, to try to organize ourselves
287 as a governing body.

288 **Urioste:** Was there any time that you thought, "Why am I here?"

289 **[37:37] Reyes:** Yeah. After November. [Chuckles] That was the turning point for us. I think it also
290 happened after that, there was so much stress. We worked so hard. We worked from, I don't know, 7:30 to
291 who knows, 6. And then we were working again in the evening trying to get ready. We were always
292 discussing what had to be done, all the time. Even when we had dinner with somebody. Or we went for a
293 walk. With you. Or Steve. Or Sandy [Arvizu]. We were always doing something.

294 **Urioste:** Did you expect that before you came to the university?

295 **Reyes:** Oh, no. I mean in my head I did, but not how it would turn out in reality. Do you remember
296 when we used to walk, we'd talk about what had to be done? There was always work. And then we all had
297 so many jobs that were going on at the same time. But there was an incredible amount of stress. And I
298 never felt tired or anything until November. After that it was a chore because all the venom of the
299 attempted coup and then eventually the ousting of Steven Arvizu just poisoned the dream and poisoned
300 everything. It was so blatant. Some of the people who went with the President, sided with Peter against the
301 person who had helped them the most, which was Steve, eventually got ousted by the President because he
302 was using them as pawns. I saw that from day one and I told Cecilia [Burciaga]. I said "You're not on his
303 side. He's going to get rid of you, too. Steven brought you." And that eventually happened. So, it wasn't
304 until then that things were difficult to do. We still did them. I think that's why I got so sick. Everybody was

305 stressed. But I don't remember ever complaining or thinking "I'm not going to get up and do it," because it
306 was something, we really believed in.

307 **Urioste:** So that was a ...

308 **[40:01] Reyes:** A major shift.

309 **Urioste:** A change of campus culture.

310 **Reyes:** Oh, the ethos totally shifted. It went from this dream of everybody working towards this
311 creative vision to everybody fighting to see who was on whose side and who was going to get more. It was
312 all due to the hiring of your group of faculty. The 25 people that we had open slots for. That's when the
313 fight began because we already had 13 very diverse background faculty. We wanted to hire 25 more similar
314 to us in the sense of their values. Peter Smith didn't want that. He was already saying things like "There are
315 too many Italians," meaning there are too many Latinos, and "It's turning out to be too much browning of
316 this new university." So that's what happened. When the call went out, it was the same kind of thing. The
317 qualifications that we had for ourselves. And we got something like 10,000 applications for your group?

318 **Urioste:** For 37 ... or was it 37 slots?

319 **Reyes:** No, there were 25. And it was grueling to go through them. I mean we used to have boxes
320 and boxes brought in, after our day of work. There were all these committees. Faculty would be assigned
321 three or four areas and we'd try to sort out who is applying for Education, who is applying for Art, who is
322 applying for whatever. And then they'd [the committee] look at those. We'd sit in this room with the boxes
323 sometimes on the floor and we'd look at the five essential things. I forget how many there were. You know.
324 Are they minority? Are they bilingual? Have they worked in multicultural areas? Do they value diversity?
325 What have they taught? If they didn't have any of them, we would just discard them. We didn't really look
326 at them then, because we didn't have the time. After a while we would be punch drunk by 10, 11 p.m. And
327 we would do scissors/rock/paper. [Laughs] Three of us would agree, "Okay, this is okay. Should we hire

328 them or not?” And then we would do that [rock/scissors/paper] and we’d laugh. And bring some drinks in.
329 It was days and days of that.

330 **Urioste:** Wow.

331 **Reyes:** And whittling it down to, you know, a thousand. [Muffled explosion] It was an
332 unbelievable experience. People sent everything. There were applications from all over the world. People in
333 the arts would send videos and CD’s and pictures. We would laugh. I mean we were just punch drunk
334 having worked 12 hours and then we were doing this. We’d go, “Anybody want to do this?” “Nah, nah,
335 nah.” “Looks good.” [Laughs] “Say yes or say no.” Some were really intriguing. @hat was interesting was
336 some people in my field of literacy who were really well known, had applied. And we said no to one. I
337 remember. I said “Oh, my God, I can’t believe I’m saying no to this guy.” But he wasn’t bilingual and
338 hadn’t worked – he was extremely well known in literacy. And I admired his work. But he didn’t fit. He
339 wouldn’t have been one that would go out to the community. So those people. We said no to a lot of really
340 good people.

341 **Urioste:** Sure.

342 **Reyes:** But they didn’t fit what we were looking for. Anyway, that was probably one of the most
343 memorable and funny and interesting parts, because initially we tried to take it so seriously. But we would
344 never get through those 10,000 applications.

345 **[44:21] Urioste:** You had to maintain your sanity.

346 **Reyes:** Oh, geez. You know, we wanted to say, “Can they walk? Okay, take them.” But we
347 couldn’t.

348 **Urioste:** You’ve spoken on several occasions where you mentioned the early firings or setbacks.

349 **Reyes:** Resignations.

350 **Urioste:** Resignations, yeah. Steve Arvizu of course was one of the first.

351 **Reyes:** That was the biggest heartbreak.

352 **Urioste:** Do you know the background of that resignation? That firing? What caused Steve and
353 Peter to separate?

354 **[45:00] Reyes:** It started from that search for a VP. Steve knew immediately what that was. I knew. John
355 knew. Christie knew. Some people that were really thinking and examining, reviewing what was
356 happening, we knew what that meant. And when that split the community, then the people that Steve had
357 hired like Bert [Rivas] and Cecilia [Burciaga] and even Dorothy [Lloyd] and some of the other people, they
358 weren't all Latinos, sided with Peter or thought that Peter was not doing anything harmful. But it divided
359 the community. Right after that, then, Peter started gradually taking things away from Steve's domain. He
360 wouldn't be the one that would decide who was actually hired, there would be someone helping him. Then
361 he didn't need these extra secretaries or assistants, that was taken from him. Then he was asked to move to
362 a smaller office. Gradually, I mean it was like taking everything that belonged to his office as VP. He was
363 the biggest threat to Peter because he was the reason a lot of us went to CSUMB. He was the one that built
364 that dream. So, it had to be a terrible conflict for Steve to try to keep the university going and knowing that
365 he was being ousted. It was very painful. It was very painful to see that people stabbed him in the back,
366 those who would have never made it there without [his] assistance.

367 **Urioste:** I seem to recall that Steve was at a conference when he read an email. That's how he
368 found out. Do you remember that? The AAA conference or something.

369 **Reyes:** Well, the AAA [American Anthropological Association] conference happened in
370 November. That's when that letter came.

371 **Urioste:** That's how he found out.

372 **Reyes:** Yeah, that's how he found out. Because it came out when nobody was looking, supposedly.
373 But Christie and I were still working. I don't know if it was Thanksgiving Day or the day before. But there
374 weren't very many people there. And I knew Cecilia had to be there. That's why I went looking for her. So,
375 it could have been that that's what happened. I mean everything started moving so fast after that. I don't

376 know if it's true. I don't doubt that it is, because it didn't come as a conversation. I was also angry because
377 I was head of governance and no one had spoken to the faculty about hiring an academic VP. And we were
378 supposed to be part of that.

379 **[48:09] Urioste:** Do you remember any of the actions that were taken? Because I recall a meeting that ...
380 that many of us attended that was organized by I think you and Christine.

381 **Reyes:** Yeah.

382 **Urioste:** And we wrote a petition that we sent to the Faculty Senate.

383 **Reyes:** Yeah, I think we did. I think we wrote a letter to the Chancellor, not really knowing that the
384 Chancellor was also on Peter's side. They had done that deliberately. But I was also in a way angry with
385 Steve because Steve had been offered the position as President and he declined it. He had said to us that he
386 didn't' accept it because he knew that the office of Provost had all the power to hire faculty and that would
387 guide the direction of the university and the curriculum. That position is more powerful than being the
388 President. The President raises money. And being the trusting person that Steve is, he thought the
389 Chancellor seemed to support him and so forth and nothing would happen to derail the mission. When they
390 hired Peter, they hired him for a reason. He seemed to be a reasonable man. He appeared to be a liberal
391 Republican when he arrived and had worked with, I think, community colleges or something. He
392 interviewed each founding faculty on the phone before they were given the confirmation that they were
393 hired. We had been interviewed by Steve and some surrogate faculty from other CSU's when we were
394 brought in. So, in the second round of hiring, Peter didn't want us to have the final confirmation as
395 founding faculty because *he was President* and that was *his prerogative*. So, he demanded that he be the
396 decision maker. That's why he called each one of us. He really didn't have a choice but to accept us, but he
397 sounded reasonable. But I knew immediately that he was going to be a President that wanted his mark on
398 the birth of this new university because he was President. That was the first sign of it.

399 **Urioste:** We know you are not still on campus.

400 **Reyes:** No, no, no.

401 **Urioste:** Who inspired you to leave? You were on campus for two years?

402 **[51:05] Reyes:** 18 months.

403 **Urioste:** 18 months, okay.

404 **Reyes:** Well, I got very ill and I think that was related to too much stress. My illness was brought on
405 by the fact that we had so many floods. It was the year of the floods. The cold and dampness negatively
406 affected my lungs. We also lived on campus, the [military] officers' previous quarters where there was
407 mold. There was fatigue and stress. Eventually that had an effect on me, on my lungs. I was tired and I
408 began coughing non-stop. I thought, "Ah, I'm on the verge of getting a cold." Finally, John said one day,
409 "You coughed all night long. You need to go to the doctor." I said, "No, I'm catching a cold, but I don't
410 seem to get it..." He said, "You need to go." I finally went. I got a doctor's appointment and after the
411 doctor's visit, and I went back to work. Part of my doctor's visit included taking chest x-rays. That same
412 afternoon I received a call from my doctor. He said, "Are you somewhere where you can sit down?" "Yeah,
413 I'm in my office," or "I can go to my office." I said so I went to my office. He said, "Sit down." I sat down.
414 [Chuckles] The Doctor said, "Your x-rays show that you have tuberculosis." I couldn't believe it: "What?"
415 He continued: "I've just called the public health nurse and she's going to meet with you. You need to go to
416 your house immediately. We're going to quarantine you, and we need to know the names of all the people
417 who work with you." There were over 50 employees at the time. And they all had to be tested. I argued:
418 "No way!" I always test positive in all this stuff. So that was a big scare. I was sick but the truth is that I
419 got really, really sick due to the TB medication. Within three days of taking it, I had a violent toxic reaction
420 to it. I broke out in hives throughout my entire body and I ended up in the hospital for two weeks. They
421 didn't know what I had. The environment wasn't good for my lungs. That, on top of the stress, made the
422 decision very clear that I couldn't stay. Also, ty that time I didn't want to stay with what was happening to
423 Steve and the Mission. I was fortunate enough to still have my job in Boulder, and my dean wanted me to

424 go back. John had also taken a leave from the University of Norther Colorado in Greeley, so he still had
425 his job. [...] We were fortunate to be able to get a leave. We had our jobs waiting for us. So that was what
426 precipitated my/our return [to Colorado].

427 **[54:08] Urioste:** Aside from the administrative conflicts, going back to your role as a faculty member,
428 were you satisfied with the accomplishments while you were there, the 18 months that you were there?

429 **Reyes:** I don't think at the time I saw them as accomplishments. I just saw them as contributions to
430 the development of the university. I can't say that there was one thing that I accomplished like I wrote all
431 the curriculum or something. But I know I made a major contribution because I played a key role.
432 Education was a big, big part of CSUMB. That's where many of our students came from but, I can't think
433 of anything in particular.

434 **Urioste:** Okay. I guess that covers it.

435 **Reyes:** That's it? Oh, good.

436 **Urioste:** Yeah, thank you very much.

437 **Reyes:** Thank you.

438 **Urioste:** I appreciate it.

439 **Reyes:** My pleasure.

440 (END OF RECORDING)

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