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

Reyes: Yes.

Urioste: Okay. Good evening, Dr. Reyes.

Reyes: Hello.

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

Reyes: Okay.

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

Reyes: Well, I saw it in the Chronicle for Higher Ed. There was a call for faculty at Monterey Bay where they were opening a university. It sounded intriguing. The other thing, though, was that Dr. Steve Arvizu had hired John Halcón, my husband, as Assistant to the Provost. He had taken a leave for six months to help Steve, and I was encouraged to apply. I did. I wasn’t as excited until I read the mission that Dr. Arvizu had crafted and that Vision [Statement] contained all the ideals that I’ve always valued in Higher Ed: the diversity, the multiculturalism, the multilingualism, the service to community, the
incorporation of community surrounding the campus. That sounded so different than any other campus in the country so I was really intrigued and I wanted to apply for it.

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

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

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

Reyes: Do you mean physically?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Reyes: Oh, my God! [Chuckles]

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

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

Urioste: It was all done.

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

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

[10:27] Reyes: Oh, yeah, it was worth it because I met many new and diverse people--World class faculty from around the country; some better than others. But just to be around them and to be around other colleagues that shared the same ideals of diversity, multiculturalism, having had experience in diverse communities, that was really important because that meant that our main goals were similar and that’s not what happens in most universities, especially if you are a person of color, a minority. You’re the only one always lobbying or working for diversity. Everybody is, “Well, what’s wrong? We have diversity. We have
men and women. We have feminists and non feminists.” Their definition of diversity is very different from what we think about. So it was a good experience to work with people like that.

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

**Reyes:** Strong connection?

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

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

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

[12:12] **Reyes:** No. Actually I had been recruited by the University of Arizona. And I had been recruited by … I can’t remember the other place-- it was so long ago. I did get offers to apply. The only one I really took up was the University of Arizona in Tucson because they were opening a new campus and this was, I mean way before this other thing [CSUMB] happened, and it seemed like a good opportunity. So maybe that was the impetus that propelled me to accept something adventurous like that. And I did it because it was also a way to get a new experience, see what’s going on. Actually, I had such a wonderful dean. He suggested I go because he said an interesting thing to me. He said, “The good faculty never stay. They’re always recruited because they’re good, so I don't want you to leave but I’m going to write you a fabulous letter.” And he did. And he said, “That means you’re going to get a bigger salary.” And he said, “I know you didn’t do this to get a salary” but that’s what a lot of faculty do who know their worth in the community. So, it helped me for that. There was also an opportunity that John might get a job. So we both
went to look. But wanting to leave? No. I had such a wonderful, unusually wonderful dean. Supportive, helpful and even mentoring me as to how to be an academic, because even though I had earned a doctorate I didn’t really know what it entailed, especially to be in a research institution, to be successful. I had gone from UCSB to Bakersfield which was a non-research institution. My advisor had gotten angry because I’d gotten seven offers and said, “Why are you going to the armpit of California instead of Champagne-Urbana?” or something like that, that was really highly ranked. But, I went to Bakersfield there because Tomás Arciniegas was the only Chicano president of a four-year institution in Cal State. He called me personally to invite me. And I thought “Wow!” It was flattering. It was still California. John’s kids were young. So we stayed there. But the idea of my wanting to leave after I got to Boulder and I got the feel for what I needed to do to be successful as a researcher, I didn’t want to leave. I had a great place there.

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

[15:57] Reyes: Oh, well the whole dream deteriorated so much by Thanksgiving of the first year when Peter Smith, the President, was circulating the idea of wanting to get a Vice President of Academic Affairs to help Steve [Arvizu]. Under the guise of helping Steve. I read it immediately. I understood the academy and I knew that the Vice President of Academic Affairs and the Provost are essentially the same job. I saw that it was a ruse to try to get rid of Steve and undermine him. I was angered that he did it at Thanksgiving, when we were so exhausted. We hadn’t had a break and this was our first holiday. He didn’t think anybody would be paying attention to the emails. I noticed it. I talked to Christine Sleeter right away. I even ran over to the President’s assistant secretary [Chief of Staff], Cecilia Burciaga, I was looking for her, and I said, “Surely, this must be a mistake.” And she knows it. She had been at Stanford. She would know that there was a problem. And to my surprise she was supporting the idea. I said, “How could you do that?” I mean we can’t have a Vice President and a Provost. They are essentially the same person. They’re the person who leads the faculty and hires the faculty and has that power. She said, “Oh, Steve, you know, he is very dis-organized and he needs some help.” And I said, “No, no, no, you don’t understand.” I knew that
she was in on it as soon as we had that conversation. I said, “I can’t – I just –.” I was astounded that she would do that knowing how much Steven had done to get Cecilia a job at CSUMB after previously being fired from Stanford. I went to look for the President and he wasn’t there. Then when he was, I went back to him and I said, “What are you doing?” You know, because we had that kind of openness, we were so few. He said “No, no, no. We’re not . . . Steve is here to stay. We’re just trying to get some help. You know, there’s a lot of disorganization.” I said “We’re just getting off the ground. Of course, everybody is disorganized.” If they’re not, they’re not doing their work because it takes a lot of work to get everything done and everybody had tentacles going everywhere. I had something like seven important job roles myself. I was head of governance. I had the Migrant Ed. Program, I had Service Learning, I had the Bilingual Program. I was writing the graduate curriculum with Christie. We had all these faculty meetings. I forget the other things. We were like doing everything. You can’t be that organized and manage that well when you’ve got so many things going on at the same time. So I thought, if they don’t understand that that’s what’s happening with Steve and all of us . . . . But I knew that they knew, that they were just planting the seed to try to undermine him and that’s what eventually happened.

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

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

Urioste: [whispers] I was there

Reyes: You were already there? I couldn’t remember. But what happened is that there were a lot of misunderstandings. Some people didn’t understand that a Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs were the same thing and some were saying, “No, maybe that’s not what he is trying to do.” And I would [reply] “No. Don’t you understand the academy? This is how it works, you can’t have two people doing the
same job!” Then some people started making negative remarks about Steve and I defended him and then they said you misunderstood. The situation became worse between the Peter and the Steve’s camps. Soon after that, the situation started spiraling downward.

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

**Reyes:** Let me think. I’m not sure what I did that the first year.

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

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

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

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

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

**Reyes:** No, there were thirteen of us.
Urioste: Thirteen, yeah? Any particular stories that you remember as you guys were having those heated discussions or discussions about the curriculum?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Reyes:** Well, first of all, it was going to be a first class 21st-century university that would serve the footprint of the community surrounding CSUMB. That was Salinas, and that was Marina, and so forth. So, it wasn’t just Carmel and Monterey. There were a lot of “raza” [Latinos]. No other university starts off with that kind of Vision, that you want to serve the people that you ought to serve, that surround the university, your real constituents. That was a big thing. The fact that all of us had to be bilingual. Not necessarily just Spanish-English, but that was a real value in what we wanted the faculty to be. The fact that they needed to have worked in those kinds of communities so that they could understand the need for bringing that community up to a different level. […] You know, really be a change agent. So those were
really wonderful, realistic things that Steven had put into that Vision that were remarkable. I had hoped that we would be able to respond to that. But it didn’t quite happen.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Reyes: Well, everything was creative because everything was new. We were creating a curriculum, creating a community. We were getting to know the outer community. Building community with the faculty. With the administration. Planning our first graduation. Planning our reception for President Clinton, and who was going to get to go [to the reception]. What did we have to do to make it look like we were a university? We knew that all the buildings had to be painted. We had to find a place. A few [buildings] had to actually be completed for viewing. So, all of that was creative because we were all part of it. There were times when Steve would go out in the morning and pick up his newspaper and say, “What do you think if we make all these buildings colorful, you know?” I said “Yeah, that sounds like a good idea. Brown. And red. And blue.” He goes, “Yeah, okay, I’ll pass that on.” Stuff like that would happen all
the time and it was comical. You look back and sometimes you’re most creative when you’re up against the
wall and you have to think of something out of the box and then it really gets done.

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

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

Urioste: Was there any time that you thought, “Why am I here?”

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

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

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

Urioste: So that was a …

[40:01] Reyes: A major shift.

Urioste: A change of campus culture.

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

Urioste: For 37 … or was it 37 slots?

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

It was days and days of that.

Urioste: Wow.

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

Urioste: Sure.

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

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

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

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

Reyes: Resignations.

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

Reyes: That was the biggest heartbreak.
Urioste: Do you know the background of that resignation? That firing? What caused Steve and Peter to separate?

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

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

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

Urioste: That’s how he found out.

Reyes: Yeah, that’s how he found out. Because it came out when nobody was looking, supposedly. But Christie and I were still working. I don't know if it was Thanksgiving Day or the day before. But there weren’t very many people there. And I knew Cecilia had to be there. That’s why I went looking for her. So, it could have been that that’s what happened. I mean everything started moving so fast after that. I don't
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 I was head of governance and no one had spoken to the faculty about hiring an academic VP. And we were supposed to be part of that.

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

Reyes: Yeah.

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

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

Urioste: We know you are not still on campus.
Reyes: No, no, no.

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

[51:05] Reyes: 18 months.

Urioste: 18 months, okay.

Reyes: Well, I got very ill and I think that was related to too much stress. My illness was brought on by the fact that we had so many floods. It was the year of the floods. The cold and dampness negatively affected my lungs. We also lived on campus, the [military] officers’ previous quarters where there was mold. There was fatigue and stress. Eventually that had an effect on me, on my lungs. I was tired and I began coughing non-stop. I thought, “Ah, I’m on the verge of getting a cold.” Finally, John said one day, “You coughed all night long. You need to go to the doctor.” I said, “No, I’m catching a cold, but I don’t seem to get it....” He said, “You need to go.” I finally went. I got a doctor’s appointment and after the doctor’s visit, and I went back to work. Part of my doctor’s visit included taking chest x-rays. That same afternoon I received a call from my doctor. He said, “Are you somewhere where you can sit down?” “Yeah, 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.

[Chuckles] The Doctor said, “Your x-rays show that you have tuberculosis.” I couldn’t believe it: “What?” He continued: “I’ve just called the public health nurse and she’s going to meet with you. You need to go to your house immediately. We’re going to quarantine you, and we need to know the names of all the people who work with you.” There were over 50 employees at the time. And they all had to be tested. I argued: “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 got really, really sick due to the TB medication. Within three days of taking it, I had a violent toxic reaction to it. I broke out in hives throughout my entire body and I ended up in the hospital for two weeks. They didn’t know what I had. The environment wasn’t good for my lungs. That, on top of the stress, made the decision very clear that I couldn’t stay. Also, ty that time I didn’t want to stay with what was happening to Steve and the Mission. I was fortunate enough to still have my job in Boulder, and my dean wanted me to
go back. John had also taken a leave from the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, so he still had his job. [...] We were fortunate to be able to get a leave. We had our jobs waiting for us. So that was what precipitated my/our return [to Colorado].

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

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

Urioste: Okay. I guess that covers it.

Reyes: That’s it? Oh, good.

Urioste: Yeah, thank you very much.

Reyes: Thank you.

Urioste: I appreciate it.

Reyes: My pleasure.

(END OF RECORDING)

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