Oral History Interview with Acela (Chela) Gonzalez

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California Department of Education
Adult Education Oral History Project

Oral History Interview

with

ACELA (CHELA) GONZALEZ

Metropolitan Adult Education Program, San Jose
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Site Coordinator
Instructor
1976 - Present

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1994 - 1996

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1989 - 1994

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1979 - 1982

November 30, 1995

San Jose, California

By Cuba Z. Miller

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RESTRICTIONS ON THIS INTERVIEW

None.

LITERARY RIGHTS AND QUOTATIONS

It is recommended that this oral history be cited as follows:

Acela (Chela) Gonzalez, Oral History Interview, Conducted 1995 by Cuba Z. Miller in San Jose, California, for the California Adult Education Oral History Project.

PREFACE

Adult education in California has a proud history of helping its citizens to meet the challenges of life in a huge, complex, multicultural state. Through the years, California adult educators have provided leadership to the nation in the development of innovative instructional practices and creative educational solutions.

The California Adult Education Oral History Project began in 1992 as a companion to a print history of adult education commissioned by the California Department of Education. As the century draws to a close, the growth and energy of California adult education in the sixties, the institutionalization of competency based education in response to the influx of refugees and immigrants in the seventies and eighties, and the innovative uses of technology of the nineties will be recorded.

The oral history project started with a small group of leaders whose careers began in the 1950's and 1960's and who witnessed and influenced important events in the development of the nation's largest adult education program. Seven interviews were added in 1994 - 95.

Significant assistance to the project was initially provided by the staffs of both the California State Archives and the Oral History Program, History Department, California State University, Fullerton. This project could not have begun without the vision of Raymond G. Eberhard, Administrator, Adult Education Policy and Planning Unit, California Department of Education, and the support of the late Lynda T. Smith, Consultant, Adult Education Policy and Planning Unit.

Linda L. West
June 30, 1995

INTERVIEW HISTORY

Interviewer

Cuba Z. Miller

Interview Time and Place

One interview was conducted in San Jose, California, on November 30, 1995.

Editing

The interviewee reviewed and edited the transcript. When the tape was inaudible or when necessary for clarification, some information was added and is indicated by brackets [ ].

Tapes

The original cassette tapes were transferred to reel to reel format at California State University, Fullerton and deposited with the California State Archives.

CALIFORNIA ADULT EDUCATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEWEE: ACELA (CHELA) GONZALEZ

INTERVIEWER: Cuba Z. Miller

[Session 1, November 30, 1995]

[Begin Tape 1, Side A]

MILLER: This is Cuba Miller interviewing Chela Gonzalez, English as a Second Language teacher and coordinator for the Metropolitan Adult Education Program. The interview is being conducted in San Jose, California, on November 30, 1995, for the purpose of recording her recollections of significant events and trends in California adult education during her career.

Chela, your first experience with California's education system was actually as a junior high school student. Tell us a little bit about your background and what brought you to San Jose.

GONZALEZ: I was in Mexico, and as a very little . . . almost toddler when my father died. My mother had two brothers living here already when my father died, so it was what happens to a lot of immigrants, they want a better life. My mother needed to support three little girls and had to look for a better . . . a

future. She had never worked before, my father was the support of the family. So since her brothers were here already and they saw a future in the U.S., especially for a woman, they asked her to come up, and that's how. . . . It took my mom a long, long time for us to get here. I mean, my father died when I was two and a half years old, but it took her, I believe. . . . She started coming on a yearly basis at first. She would come and stay and work for six months, and then would go home.

MILLER: Come and go, like so many of our students do.

GONZALEZ: So many of our students do exactly the same thing. And she did not start to process her immigration papers until about, oh, two or three years after she had started coming, and eventually got her papers, I guess, when I was about six years old, five or six years old. But it took her another six to eight years to bring us here because of the immigration laws. She had to make so much money to—

MILLER: To support you.

GONZALEZ: —to support three children, and she did not . . . in U.S. standards, she did not make enough money to support us. So every year she would apply, for about, oh, I don't know, seven years or so—six, seven years. She would apply and she would

be asked to present her income tax papers, would not make it, then she would have to wait a whole year again until she would present her income tax papers again for the following year. Then they would evaluate the finances, would not make it, and many years went by. It was not until I was almost fourteen that she was able to bring us.

MILLER: And in the meantime, you were staying with relatives?

GONZALEZ: We stayed at a government boarding school, which was for children who either did not have parents or whose parents were away from [home], out of state. But you had to have good grades to remain in that school; it was like a government school but with scholarships.

MILLER: So the experience that you've had, that your family has had, in seeking to bring family members into the country, are things that your students go through also.

GONZALEZ: Very, very similar to what the students go through, yeah. They take a long time to get here—legally. We luckily were never illegals. At that time it was the bracero program and all that, so that we. . . . It was easier to immigrate, even though it was very difficult for us because of the finances. But, yeah, it's very

similar to the problems that our students, the current students throughout the world go through.

MILLER: Okay, and that was actually in the '60s, is that correct?

GONZALEZ: In the '60s, yeah.

MILLER: And was it still the '60s when you came, or had the '70s turned by then?

GONZALEZ: No, it was the '60s. It was end of '64, December of '64, right about Christmas time. So I started school in January, almost right after we came, into a junior high.

MILLER: Okay. Do you know how they placed you in the grade level here? Was it the same number of years that you had had in Mexico, or was it based on your age, or. . . ?

GONZALEZ: It was based on our age. As a matter of fact, I went and they said, "Well, you are almost fourteen, so you should be still finishing the eighth grade." My sister was at that time eleven, she was going to be twelve, and they said she needed to go into the sixth grade, although in Mexico she was in the seventh grade, and they were going to put her in the sixth grade. And we said, "No, she's already finished the sixth grade." They said, "But she's too young. She's eleven years old, she can't be in the seventh grade." So they gave her a math test, because they

couldn't give her an English test. They gave her a math test and they decided that she was okay in the seventh grade, and they let her stay with us.

MILLER: Okay. [Chuckling]

GONZALEZ: So it was by age, pretty much, very much by age.

MILLER: Pretty much by age.

GONZALEZ: Yeah, very much by age.

MILLER: Very good placement methods. [Chuckling]

GONZALEZ: Yes, by age, and whether you knew the stuff or not you were there, right.

MILLER: Okay. Now, had you studied any English before you came?

GONZALEZ: I'm embarrassed to say I had, the little that I had, because I really didn't know any practical English. You do get [it] in the seventh and eighth grade in Mexico, just like in any secondary school, which was at that time the equivalent of high school, you do get some English. But the teacher never spoke to us. It was, I would say, a written grammar English, and I understood nothing. If I saw it on a piece of paper I might be able to tell you *do* and *does* . . . although I wouldn't know what they meant. So it was that kind of grammar structure, and it was not communicative.

MILLER: A little bit of reading, but not. . . .

GONZALEZ: A little but not a lot, though. Very little, just very little. I was not functional in English when I came, I could not even understand the word "Hi." But I had taken English, supposedly! [Chuckling]

MILLER: Okay. Tell us about your experiences in learning English then.

GONZALEZ: I think a lot of the same as what our students go through: very traumatic, the language is difficult, it seems just very difficult, it seems like you're never going to learn it, and that's how it seemed to me. It was very difficult, it seemed like I was never going to learn it, but I would say I had a very good, a very caring teacher. It was a multilevel class, all immigrants in a junior high and multilevel for three hours. You had non-English-speakers all together with I'd say advanced ESL [English as a second language] students that could not function in a regular English class—of those days, because the English standards were high. I mean, you had to communicate well or you were told, "I guess you have speech problems," or you were put in a. . . . And at that time, people who were not . . . where there were not ESL classes, they were put in classrooms that were for the handicapped.

MILLER: For special ed students.

GONZALEZ: For special ed, yeah. But I was lucky, in that the school where I went had one ESL classroom, a multilevel class. We had three hours a day, and the rest of the time we would go to a physical education class, a math class, and a cooking or singing or some kind of other class.

MILLER: Did the ESL class . . . was it just English, or did they try to give you social studies and science in there?

GONZALEZ: We didn't have any science, but I do recall social studies because I remember studying the California missions. And to this day I remember. I mean, that's how much U.S. history I had, because to me it was very. . . . And I think the students, too, when they come from other countries, think they're going to start studying whatever they learned in their country. And I thought I was going to start studying Mexican history, and I said, "Oh, what is this? California history?" which you don't know when you come. I did have that, yeah, but I didn't have any science. I don't think there was a lot of time to do any more than that because of the language barrier.

MILLER: And the fact there were so many different levels.

GONZALEZ: So many different levels, and one teacher for about . . . I would say for about forty students. So I guess the numbers haven't changed very much. [Chuckling]

MILLER: Not the ideal learning situation. [Chuckling] Okay. Now, that was in junior high then, that you had this three hours of ESL a day. What happened when you moved on to the high school? And I believe that was a tenth-grade entry into high school.

GONZALEZ: I was given remedial courses: remedial reading, I was given a speech class, and the lowest level of English that they had. They had three levels: the X, Y, Z, the Z being the lowest and the X for the accelerated students. I was given the Z-level classes. I was okay in the math but I was given the lowest social studies class. Those are the courses that I had.

I don't think I had a regular English class until maybe the second semester of the tenth grade. But I think even when I was a junior I still had. . . . Except for the English, I don't know, I kind of picked it up fast, or at least the teachers felt I picked it up fast. I never felt that I had enough English. I always kept writing to my new teachers that I was a foreign-born student and I didn't speak English well, and could they understand and please help? And those were my notes to every

single class, every new class. But they were remedial courses, and as I said, the English one. . . . And I think a lot had to do with my ESL class. I think it helped a lot that I had an ESL class before that so that I was given maybe tools as to how to learn.

MILLER: You could even see the difference in your having ESL with other students who had not been in an ESL class?

GONZALEZ: Yeah.

MILLER: How much of your mastery of English came as a result of English instruction versus being in a school of mostly English-speaking students? In other words, how much did you pick up versus study?

GONZALEZ: Oh, how much did I pick up versus study? I studied a lot. I studied a lot and I did pick up a lot.

MILLER: You learned what "Hi" meant. [Chuckling]

GONZALEZ: Right, I learned what "Hi" meant. It was frustrating, but I did study a lot. I would try to do a lot of homework, and if the teacher. . . . I would talk to the teachers after class and say . . . if I didn't understand something, since I had already left my little note that I wasn't an English-speaking student, could they

help me? Then I would go to them and ask them if they could help me.

But I had a situation, though, that a lot of our students have now. I don't think it's changed much. You know, it's where you feel comfortable. I would go to school and study as much English as I could, but I would come home and I would speak Spanish. My mother to this day speaks Spanish, so it was my Spanish-speaking environment. Although, because I was going to school, I think that helped in my tuning in to, "Okay, now let's switch to an English channel." Although it took me a long time to start watching a TV program. And I think you had the influence of the other students, whether the foreign-born or the English-speaking students, watching TV and talking about, oh, this program and that program, helped me to maybe change the channel to an English-speaking channel. I think it's probably even more difficult now for our students to change the channel, because at that time when I was going to school there were not a lot of Spanish-speaking channels. I think there was only one in San Jose, and it was only Sundays and only a few hours, and the rest of the time. . . . So, if you wanted to watch TV, you had to watch an English channel. Nowadays you have

a lot more information going, which can be helpful because at least you know where. . . . It can lead you to resources if you at least have it in your language.

MILLER: *Okay. Well, you certainly had the drive, and the talent too.* [Chuckling]

GONZALEZ: Yeah, and the mother to make us have the drive, too. She was very influential.

MILLER: To overcome the language handicaps. I'm curious that your mother has never really studied English. Haven't you been able to bring her to classes with you? [Chuckling]

GONZALEZ: Before we came, she had to do two shifts. She worked in a restaurant and she worked, just like our students, in the cannery in order to bring us. So, once we came, she let go of one of the jobs but she kept the other. And she never drove, she's never driven, so she. . . . A lot like our students. Didn't have a car. We didn't have a car to go anywhere, so she had to stay always in the background working, and she was just. . . . And just like our students today, the job shift would change and then she could never go to school and really keep a certain class. And of course classes at that time were not as available as they are now. We have morning, afternoon, and evening classes, whereas

before maybe you would have one in a faraway school but not at all times, it was just night, and she worked a lot at night.

MILLER: She worked a lot at night.

GONZALEZ: I don't think there were a lot of day classes at that time.

MILLER: So those same things of primary responsibilities in keeping your family together.

GONZALEZ: Yeah, and I think, in the sense that we have a lot of classes today, it's been good for the immigrants because they can schedule their classes at the time that they are able to come. That is something really that has changed that was not at the time that my mom was. . . . And of course she only retired a few years ago, so. . . . I'm looking into her citizenship now. She did start going to a citizenship class.

MILLER: Well, good.

GONZALEZ: It's an ESL citizenship class, so she is going and she wants to get her citizenship.

MILLER: And of course she's been here long enough . . .

GONZALEZ: She's been here long enough, so now she—

MILLER: And is old enough that she won't have to take her test in English. [Chuckling]

GONZALEZ: Right. But she was a big drive for us, for me especially, in that we would see how much she worked. And she would say, "Well, if you want to pick fruit and do what I did, you're welcome to do it." She took us to the fields once to pick fruit on the weekends, strawberries and tomatoes. She wanted us to know what it would be like if we didn't have an education.

MILLER: If you didn't finish school.

GONZALEZ: Boy, I did it one weekend, and I said, "I will never do that again." I said, "I'm going to go to school forever if I have to."

MILLER: After high school you went right on to college. Now, was this a big step for you, or was it just kind of the logical next step and there wasn't any question about whether you were going?

GONZALEZ: You know, I was very fortunate. Since I was growing up in Mexico, we knew that education was the key. Mexico had this motto: "Education is the key to everything," and books open up your life and all that, so I knew I had to go to college. And fortunately I had an older sister and she was already in college. She was a year above me, so she was already in college, and so to me it was just the logical next step. It was nice in that respect that I wasn't the oldest one, I was the middle one, so I

kind of followed in her footsteps. But education meant a lot to us in Mexico and to my family, so it was just logical.

MILLER: Okay, good. Now, what did you study in college?

GONZALEZ: *I was going to . . . supposedly I was going to teach someday.* I always wanted to be a teacher. Since I was in Mexico, since first grade I wanted to be a teacher. When I came to the U.S. I never thought I was going to be a teacher *of English*. I said, "Now what am I going to do? I'm in the U.S. Okay, what am I going to do?" So I said, "I guess if I want to be a teacher, I'll have to teach Spanish because I'm never going to be able to teach English. I'm a non-English speaker, I'm a non-native, I can't teach English, and of course I'll never be an American, so no, no. . . ." So I felt that I had to teach. . . . But I wanted to teach, so I said, "Well, maybe I can teach Spanish." By that time my sister had taken courses in Spanish at the university, so I knew that it could be taught and that you could. . . . So I was planning to teach at the college level.

MILLER: You wanted to teach at the college level? Okay.

GONZALEZ: I wanted to teach at the college level because I was not going to. . . . At that time, there was not a lot of . . . you didn't hear a lot of bilingual education, so I wasn't thinking about. . . .

And, of course, for me, if it was bilingual education, I felt you had to teach English very well and know all these subject matters before you can do bilingual education, and I just never felt that I was going to acquire the language. So I said okay, I could teach Spanish. I could teach literature and poetry, and the grammar I loved. . . . Since I had acquired . . . you know, they said that I was picking up English very fast, and I said, "Well, maybe I can . . ." And when I took courses in Spanish at the university, there was a lot of compare and contrast of the two languages, which is something you don't do in Mexico. See, if I had studied to teach Spanish or literature in Mexico, I wouldn't have had to do the comparison of the languages. So, when I was doing that here, and it was because of the . . . you know, if you teach Spanish in another country, then you're going to have to compare it to the language of the country. And so since I had decided to do that here, we would compare in classes the language, the grammar, the literature, and it was helping. It was helping me to acquire more of the language. I didn't know that it was helping me, but it was.

MILLER: But it was.

GONZALEZ: Yes, so my focus was Spanish, and it was going to be literature and poetry and grammar—you know, just to become a professor of Spanish at the university. That's what I was going to do. I was never going to teach English, oh no!

MILLER: Now you're a professor in an adult school. [Chuckling]

GONZALEZ: Right.

MILLER: Okay. I know that in graduate school then, along with the Spanish, you picked up linguistics, and I was going to ask if the linguistics was actually aimed at teacher training or if it was more of a theoretical support?

GONZALEZ: It was more of a theoretical support. I took linguistics in Spanish, and then I took a course or two of linguistics in English, too, and it was very theoretical. It was not practical at all. They did give you the contrasting sounds of this and that, but it was very theoretical, so that you would come out and you were not prepared to teach the students.

MILLER: Okay, and since you were even aiming to teach at the college level, my guess is you didn't have anything even remotely resembling a practice teaching?

GONZALEZ: No, I did not, not at all.

MILLER: Okay. All right, in your graduate year then, you came across Shirley Edwards—again. Shirley has played a key role a couple of different times in your life. First of all, tell us who she is and how you met her and kind of on from there.

GONZALEZ: Shirley Edwards is a former assistant principal in the Metropolitan Adult Education Program [MAEP].[1] When I met her, though, I met her in the ninth grade at a junior high where I went for ESL, when I first arrived, but she was. . . . As I said, before it was a one-classroom school, kind of, full of ESL students and all levels. Apparently a lot more students had come to the junior high and they had to split the class in two, and Shirley was hired as the person to teach the second level, whatever that meant, probably something like high beginning to high advanced. [Chuckling] So she was hired to teach the second level, and apparently I had acquired enough English—of course I didn't feel that I had—to move on to the second level, and she became my teacher.

MILLER: Okay, so she was your teacher pretty much throughout the ninth-grade year?

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[1]MAEP is a consortium of school districts currently managing adult education programs in San Jose and Campbell. At one time, five districts were in the consortium.

GONZALEZ: Throughout the whole . . . yeah, the entire ninth-grade year.

MILLER: Okay. And so she was just with the junior high school then, she was not with the adult school at the time?

GONZALEZ: She was not with the adult school. Later on she moved on to the adult . . . as many women take a break to raise their children, then come back, and that's what she did. I guess she had taken a break, then came back to work and went to adult education and became a coordinator. I believe she did teach a citizenship class and government class, and then maybe not for a long time, and then became a coordinator of a school based on the grounds of a church that I was attending. That's how I came in contact again with her. I was her baby sitter, too.

MILLER: Oh? Okay.

GONZALEZ: I was her baby sitter. She trusted me enough—I don't know why, but she trusted me with her. . . . She had seen me enough, I guess felt that I was a responsible enough student, got to know me very well in the ninth grade and asked me to baby-sit, and we kept in contact. And when she became the coordinator at that church, I was in high school, and I would see her on and off again in college. She would ask me when I was going to graduate.

MILLER: "How are things going, Chela?" [Chuckling]

GONZALEZ: Yes. Then when she knew that I had graduated and I was still going for my master's, she asked if I would come to teach for her. *I asked, "Teach what?" And she said, "English as a second* language." I said, "You've got to be kidding." I said, "Not English." And was I wrong. At that time she was. . . . I have to say that Shirley played a big part in my life, in my professional life, my teaching life, my development. She encouraged me to study whatever I could, encouraged me to take any training courses that I could. And at that time when I graduated, I had just graduated from college but I had finished my one year of master's course work almost, she was about to. . . . TPR was becoming popular.

MILLER: Yeah, tell us what that is.

GONZALEZ: Total Physical Response, a method that was developed by Dr. James Asher from San Jose. It's a very fun way of teaching students, beginning-level students. So she was willing to try that. I guess that had just been developed, or was becoming famous maybe in San Jose.

MILLER: It must have been new at that time, yeah.

GONZALEZ: Right, and she was willing to try and send out a teacher to learn from him and develop and adapt it to our program, the TPR method, the Asher method—we called it the Asher method. *And she had adapted it to our program, the teacher that she* sent out to train adapted it to our program, and we still have the manual that she adapted for our students. Then she had another teacher train in the TPR method, and that teacher was getting tired of using the method, and the students—

MILLER: Or tired of beginning-level students.

GONZALEZ: Beginning-level students. Yeah, not using the method—you're right—beginning-level students. Shirley said, "I want to have another person do this, not just one person, so I want to expand my. . . . I'm going to have more teachers do this. How would you like to learn this?" And I said, "Not to teach English, no, no." She said, "You will like it. Look, I know you can do it. You were a wonderful student, you were the best student I've ever had throughout my life," and she said all these wonderful things, and I said, "Gee, how can I refuse?" So I opted to go and observe a teacher. So that helped me more than any training that I had had. I went to observe that teacher that she wanted to replace doing the TPR method, and I observed her

for several days—several days, the full three hours a day. She taught three hours a day and I observed her for several days. I don't know if I did it for maybe a couple of weeks, days in a row, because she wanted me to get the full spectrum of what she was doing. And then eventually she asked me to come and do it.

MILLER: You decided you would take it on.

GONZALEZ: I decided I would take it, and it was going to be on a trial basis, like it is for a lot of our teachers, just on a trial basis. I would just try it for that semester, that famous semester. [Chuckling] Just a short time. It wasn't even a semester. It was, oh, something like from March until the end of—

MILLER: March until June?

GONZALEZ: I said, "Oh, well, okay. Sure, why not?" And then she just scheduled me for September, didn't even ask me, just kind of assumed, scheduled me for September. I started thinking, "Was I going to do this for part-time? Now, did I?" But I got very involved. She then [said], "This is happening now and you should get your lifetime California credential." So I stayed. She was the driving force.

MILLER: Okay, so she just hooked you and reeled you in. You had actually worked as a tutor with primary-level students while you were in college. Did that work help you in the ESL classroom at all?

GONZALEZ: I think it did because I had not. . . . Let's see, I had taken math classes but I had never taken a real basic math class in English. So, whereas I knew how to do the math, the terminology is different, and so it helped me in acquiring the terminology of the math and some of the basics. And then just to answer questions that I know that later on would come up with the ESL students, because some of the children were bilingual and some were almost monolingual, so they would ask questions, and it helped me for later on, to find answers to questions that I would later on be asked.

MILLER: There have been times that I thought that people with elementary training or experience have made good ESL instructors because they're used to working with small increments, small components of learning, and building in those small blocks.

GONZALEZ: And I think you're right. I think you're right. When I was tutoring, I acted as a teacher. It was math and English—you know, math, language mainly—so, yeah, I think it helped.

MILLER: All right, other than kind of jumping in feet first, obviously you'd done your observations, but you did start with adult ed without any specific training in the field?

GONZALEZ: Oh, definitely. I think I'm a typical adult ed teacher. [Chuckling] I observed and that's what we're requiring now of our teachers, but I hadn't had any training. I think I observed just so I would know who the population would be and I wouldn't be so scared, but I didn't have any formal training or student teaching.

MILLER: Why don't you go ahead then and tell us about the different things you did to pick up your training? Because you can get it through in-service or you can take college courses or you can. . . . So why don't you just sort of go through the steps that you went through to pick up your techniques?

MILLER: I started with just basically getting my California lifetime credential, just a few workshops, you know, weekend . . . whole weekend, like six weekends, I think, of what is adult education and methodology? And then, of course, that led me to: "Okay,

now what are they talking about? What is that methodology?" It was all theoretical still, but then that's where I got started into going to workshops.

MILLER: So these were the weekend adult ed credential courses?

GONZALEZ: Right, to get your lifetime. At that time the lifetime credential was to get your adult ed credential. Yeah, and it was what, six weekends? That's all it was.

MILLER: Well, the credential was in two parts. There was a preliminary and then a full . . . you know, your permanent one.

GONZALEZ: All I did was six weekends, and that's how you got it. It was three different courses, I believe, or six different courses, but in one weekend you would get rid of one course, and at the end of the six weekends—it was six weekends—I got my lifetime credential. Then, after that, there was not a lot of staff development like we have now. Oh! as a matter of fact, there was very, very little—very little staff development. I would go to conferences, conferences here and there, but not a lot though. Much later on, when the ESL Teacher Institute became a very important part of adult ed and a very important part of ESL training. . . . Luckily, as I said, Shirley was a very big part of my and a lot of teachers' driving force, in that she was the

assistant principal and ESL director, so in charge of ESL programs in MAEP. And she had a vision. So when the institute would require a demonstration site or when the state would want a demonstration site, MAEP was always a demonstration site, and Shirley would say, "We can be a demonstration site. We have the teachers." And Shirley, I don't know how she did it, but she always got us to become . . . be trained, put in our time. And this was all during our own time, you know. We were never paid.

MILLER: You were never paid for any of your—

GONZALEZ: We were never paid for any staff development or anything like that. I think later on. . . . But we did it, I guess, because we wanted to. We were committed. I think with most adult education teachers there's a lot of commitment, and it dates from way back. You were paid by the hour and you were paid only what you were paid to be in the classroom. Outside of that you did it on your own time. You felt that it was part of your duty.

MILLER: How many of the institute training sessions did you go to before you took training to be a trainer?

GONZALEZ: All of them.

MILLER: All of them?

GONZALEZ: I went to all of them. And I think I went to a few of them twice.

MILLER: Okay. So just wherever they were offered in the Bay Area you showed up?

GONZALEZ: Yes. They would be offered. . . . As I said, MAEP was a demonstration site for a lot of these trainings, and—

MILLER: Well, now this was by the late '80s before the demonstration sites were actually established, but they could be host sites for the different institutes, yes.

GONZALEZ: Yes. Before that time I did not go to a lot. If there was a workshop put on by . . . I don't even recall, I would go to it. But I don't think there was a lot. There was not a lot. I went to a couple of the conferences but not a lot of that. I think when I went to City College in the early '80s, I don't recall if I. . . . I don't think I had gone to a lot of staff development yet.

MILLER: Okay. And you mentioned earlier that you thought you were a fairly typical ESL instructor. Again, this is in terms of the path that you took, you say you think that's fairly typical, of not having any special training.

GONZALEZ: Right, I didn't have any special training. I went into the class, and of course just fell in love with the students, all these students that were very committed, that were very motivated, and they just wanted to learn. That reminded me of me: I just wanted to learn. And they were very committed, very motivated, and almost anything you did was an eye-opener for them, and they just appreciated it a lot. That made you continue wanting to teach and wanting to become better, too. But I was typical, I think. A lot of people who come to adult ed are typical in the way that they're not trained. We're seeing a lot more trained people now, but not back then, were not trained to teach, had not had staff development, but they come to adult ed and they just love the students, they love the people they work with, and that's what I had.

MILLER: I think we probably need to plug in a date here. When was it that you actually started teaching for MAEP?

GONZALEZ: January of 1976.

MILLER: January of '76, okay. Now, with this teacher sort of dropping into adult ed, and you mentioned that you think you're seeing more trained teachers now, what's your general assessment of teacher training among California adult educators?

GONZALEZ: Nowadays you mean?

MILLER: Yeah. Stagnant? Improving?

GONZALEZ: Oh, I think it has improved—boy, I don't know how much percent—I mean several hundred percent. As I said, I don't recall any staff development being offered when I started. I think we may have had a teacher who would give a training of something they heard at a conference in-house, but there wasn't a lot offered and there wasn't a lot of quality staff development. With the ESL Teacher Institute training, the staff development that was offered was just quality, and it was being absorbed by teachers like sponges absorbing water. It had never been seen, it was very well developed, it was structured, it was very quality, student-oriented, targeted the students. It would address almost anything, any problem that you had. I think with the different kinds of relations that we've had during the years, if a different population came and you had different problems, boy, the ESL Teacher Institute was right there with a new workshop, a new technique, a new training to address that kind of problem—the literacy student, the Total Physical Response method for the literacy student, the citizenship, doing cooperative learning. When I started, the class size was twenties. That was a lot, you

know, twenty-five. Now, with forties or thirties, you had to address . . . you had to change to a different modality, you had to change to cooperative learning and do other techniques if you wanted to reach many more of the students. California, of course, started having a problem in the late '70s with the ESL population. I mean, it was growing so fast, and there weren't enough teachers and there weren't enough classrooms and there wasn't enough money, and so you had to do other things. With the ESL Teacher Institute training and the different techniques, well, the cooperative learning and all of that just became a big help; not just that the students were acquiring more, but the teacher was becoming better trained. We were able to—

MILLER: To handle these larger numbers better.

GONZALEZ: The numbers of students and to have more teachers to choose from.

MILLER: Now with your coordinator responsibilities, you have some input into hiring teachers. What do you look for when you're interviewing teachers?

GONZALEZ: In MAEP, we ask that they do a demonstration lesson. And before they do a demonstration lesson, we ask that they do observation, classroom observations, and we have. . . . So that

means they have to go to one of our main sites and ask to observe. We have a schedule of teachers that can be observed, teachers that have gone through training, a lot of the ESL Teacher Institute techniques. So teachers have gone to training that are either master teachers or mentor teachers. A lot of our teachers have gone through the mentoring process, so we have designated teachers who can be observed. So we ask those teacher [applicants] to go to the observations and then do a demonstration lesson in a classroom. [They are evaluated] by either one of our mentor teachers or an administrator who has come from ESL. And if that person has satisfactorily passed that demo lesson, that person becomes hired. If they don't have that, and of course a lot of them don't have that, then we ask for some kind of ESL experience or training.

MILLER: There are more certificate programs around now.

GONZALEZ: Yeah, there's a TESOL [Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages] Certificate. And if they have that, even though they may not have the experience, we hire them. And our demonstration/observation method that we ask for doesn't take very long at all. So if we ask if they've done it and they haven't yet, and let's say we think the person may be qualified,

we just ask that maybe before they go into their classroom they do observations and demo lessons.

MILLER: Are you finding more qualified teachers to hire now?

GONZALEZ: Oh, a lot more. Oh, a lot more. Yes, definitely.

[tape turned off]

MILLER: Okay, so certainly it's desirable if they've had some kind of training, and you want to observe them. About how many of the teachers that you're hiring now have specific TESOL training? Just, you know, a ballpark in percentages. I mean, you know, half, a third, three-fourths?

GONZALEZ: The ones that actually get hired?

MILLER: Yes.

GONZALEZ: I would say maybe 25 percent or 50 percent.

MILLER: Okay.

GONZALEZ: Yeah, either some TESOL training or they've taught ESL already and have had some kind of staff development in their districts.

MILLER: Experience.

GONZALEZ: Yeah. We ask about methods, and if they name us a few of them, the techniques and where they've acquired their training, they become hired. So I'd say about 25, 50 percent.

MILLER: Okay. How many major language or ethnic groups does your ESL program serve?

GONZALEZ: Okay, major? How many? I would say all the major ones. We have the Hispanics, the Vietnamese, Chinese, all the Asian . . . Russians—

MILLER: You have a significant number of Russians here?

GONZALEZ: Yes, we do. Yes, we do.

MILLER: What about Central Europeans?

GONZALEZ: Not a lot, but we have, I think, just a sporadic number—you know, one here and there. I think more Russians, Iranians, of course Hispanics and Vietnamese, Chinese. But I think at one site every year, based on our United Nation's Day program, we have people representing about thirty countries.

MILLER: Do you have any specific cultural/cross-cultural training that you do for your teachers?

GONZALEZ: Cross-cultural training?

MILLER: Cultural sensitivity is so important in the ESL classroom.

GONZALEZ: Right. Nothing that we require. I wish we could, but because of the nature of the part-time teacher, the hourly teacher. . . . There's a lot available. There is cultural awareness, there are

some cultural awareness workshops that are given. At least once a year there is a workshop. It is available.

MILLER: Okay, that's what I wanted to know.

GONZALEZ: It's not required but it is available. And I think if we are guilty of something in MAEP, it's that we provide a lot of staff development for our teachers, and I don't mean MAEP in-house, but just from different places in-house and just SDI, Staff Development Institute, just from everywhere. We make it available to our teachers, in that we announce it to them in plenty of time. They're reminded about it, they're given a stipend, praise—I mean, you name it—but there's a lot available.

MILLER: Okay.

[tape turned off]

MILLER: Chela, how has the fact that you started out as an ESL student impacted your own teaching? And do you tell your students about your background?

GONZALEZ: Yes, I do, I do tell them, and I don't tell them until I know them well, which is pretty soon. ESL students fall in love with their teachers, and once they have fallen in love with me then I tell them. And I am culturally sensitive. I am very honest with

them as to what the expectations are in the United States, as far as socially, and they want to know. And I think that certainly has helped in my teaching, in that I know what I wanted to know and what embarrassments I went through when I was an ESL student when I arrived. I certainly don't want them to go through the same things, so I tell them how it is here and I tell them, "How is it in your country?" And then we find out the different ways of . . . you know, how people deal with it, but at least they know what is done here, what the proper thing is; so that my having been through the same things that they're going through, I think, makes me very culturally aware. When I tell them that I was. . . . When Shirley was around—she's retired, she's been retired for about three years—but when she was around I would bring her in and would say, "This is the boss and this is the supervisor." And they would say, "Oh." Then she would say, "And she was my student." And they don't believe it. And then of course she would leave and they would say, "Teacher, you were a student?" I said, "Yeah, she was my teacher." And they can't believe that. So, boy, I tell them, "See, I didn't think I was going to learn the language." And I tell them that I had the same problems they did, you know,

pronunciation, grammar, and all this, and not wanting to go up to the office to ask for something, or not wanting to go up to a counter and exchange something because, oh, I'd rather keep it. . . .

[End Tape 1, Side A]

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

MILLER: This is Tape 1, Side B of the Chela Gonzalez interview. Chela, we were talking about your having had some of the same experiences as your students.

GONZALEZ: Yes, as I said, it's an incentive for them to know that I came from the ESL environment, that I had the same problems that they did, and that I think they can sense that if I was able to do it that they can too.

MILLER: Yeah, that's very good. Okay, now, when you started out, you started out with this one class that Shirley had talked you into taking. And you're now full-time. [Chuckling]

GONZALEZ: I'm now full-time and more. [Chuckling]

MILLER: Why don't you trace your progression from part-time to full-time? How long did it take, and that kind of thing.

GONZALEZ: I think it took a couple of years, about three years or so. I taught for about two months—two, two and a half months—at

an outreach site, just six hours a week, two days a week, two mornings, and then I became a half-time hourly teacher after the third month. I was very lucky because Shirley had faith in me. [Chuckling] And then—

MILLER: Well, you must have demonstrated something for her to have that faith in it. [Chuckling]

GONZALEZ: I must have maybe, or maybe she just had faith in me. And that took . . . let's see, it was about a year that I did that half-time. Then I went to half-time morning and then nights. I would do nights, so it was almost full-time. It was twenty-five hours a week, fifteen, and then ten at night.

MILLER: Fifteen hours in the morning and ten at night.

GONZALEZ: Ten at night, and I did that a few years, about three years or so, a few years of morning and night, and then I finally jumped to the full-time morning and afternoon.

MILLER: Okay, but somewhere in there you worked at the college, also.

GONZALEZ: Right, I was doing morning and afternoon, then I left to go to a college.

MILLER: Oh, you got your morning and afternoon here.

GONZALEZ: Morning and afternoon, and then I left to go to the college, right.

MILLER: Okay. Now, why did you do that? [Chuckling]

GONZALEZ: Well, see, the ESL classes at the college were becoming. . . . ESL had never been taught at the colleges before, but there were so many . . . a lot of students were coming in from Vietnam that everybody was teaching ESL, and so the colleges. . . . Here in San Jose the colleges started teaching ESL, so they hired the adult ed teachers to teach ESL here in San Jose. All my colleagues went to the college to teach from adult ed, and so I decided . . . and since they paid a lot more, that I would go and just teach three . . . I think it was three afternoons a week for the same amount, the same pay that I was doing five afternoons a week.

MILLER: Five afternoons here.

GONZALEZ: So I said, "Well, I'll have two afternoons off. Why not?" And then I did it for about three semesters, or two years, three or four semesters. And I noticed the students were the same as in adult ed, but I was getting a little frustrated at the college because the expectations were the same as for any college student, and the students were adult ed-type students that had children and obligations and could not come every day, and could come in late. . . . Well, at the college if you—

MILLER: Were they being offered as credit classes?

GONZALEZ: They were being offered, I believe, as credit, but they were also giving the financial aid. So people were being really motivated because of the financial aid, so they would go and. . . . They were the identical student of my literacy class, my beginning level ESL class—

MILLER: That didn't belong on a college campus.

GONZALEZ: They were put in this situation they did not belong in, and we had to give them homework. Well, they didn't have time to do homework, and they had nobody to help them, and they. . . . They were an adult ed student, and so I couldn't do that. So the last semester that I was there, I had to. . . . I was told that that was like what the equivalent of a beginning literacy class or low beginning ESL class, but that because they could not get credit, I had to fail them all. I had to give them all D's, and if they didn't get a C, they could not go to the next class. So I knew from the very beginning that they all had to get D's, and I felt very bad about that. I did it one semester, then I left. I came back to adult ed.

MILLER: Okay. [Chuckling] Now, a majority of our adult teachers in California are part-time.

GONZALEZ: Sadly yes, but. . . .

MILLER: And that presents some special kinds of problems. Do you want to talk about the part-time teacher and what those special circumstances are?

GONZALEZ: Although people come into adult ed and they love the program and they love the students because they're so motivated, one of the problems it presents is that the teachers have to seek employment everywhere, you know, at different places. If you have a staff meeting, for instance, you may catch a few but you may not catch them all, so you may have to have different staff meetings to disseminate the same information. You may rely a lot on the written material to them, but it doesn't necessarily mean they're going to read it because they may not have the time since they're juggling all these different jobs. And just the transportation from [one] place to another, just the travel time takes so much from them, so even if they're not teaching a full-time schedule, it's almost like a full-time and more because of all the travel time and the preparation and all that. So you may not get the commitment that you would if you had a full-time teacher. They may not be able to attend staff development that

they want to attend, where they want to be to target their needs. Just a lot of different problems like that.

MILLER: What's the reason for this reliance on part-time employment?

GONZALEZ: Oh, well, we are . . . they are cheap. You don't have to give them benefits. If they're part-time, there are no benefits. If they are, let's say, ten hours a week, which is most of our teachers in MAEP, there are no benefits, so it's a very cheap person that you are hiring. If it's a fifteen-hour, half-time teacher, which is the other majority, the second majority of our population in MAEP of teachers, you get half-time benefits. In MAEP there is a union, a teachers' union, and that's with the union. There are other programs that maybe have nothing, even with half-time employment, and so it's cheap for adult ed. There is no funding, enough funding to have full-time teachers, so of course it would be much better to have full-time teachers, but because of the great need of ESL and other classes in adult ed, you can't hire everybody full-time. They are cheap.

MILLER: So funding is a primary factor in determining—

GONZALEZ: I think that is the main factor. In the MAEP administration, I think if it were up to the administrators, because they all came from being part-time adult ed teachers, they would want to give

full-time employment, but the funding isn't there to give full-time employment.

MILLER: What special kinds of support does a part-time teacher need?

GONZALEZ: Staff development, at the different times . . . at maybe the one time that they are able to come, maybe on a Sunday. Of course, they may not want to come. The only time they may have available without being away from their family so much might be on a Sunday, and they might not want to do it. You know, they might be available, and we might be able to provide it, but they might not want to go.

MILLER: So staff development at a time that's convenient.

GONZALEZ: Staff development that's, yes, convenient for them. Also, a stipend, some kind of paid staff development. If, let's say, they have a full-time job at a school, or they have all these different jobs and they don't really have the time or they just can't put out, you might want to give them an incentive. And if you don't provide the incentive, they might not come.

Then another thing that's good, I think, that can really help them is a mentor, a mentor teacher, somebody that can really help them. But, see, that too is expensive. It's expensive, and if you really want to have a good mentor or a good support

for the teachers, you need something like that. But it's expensive. And then for everybody to have a mentor, it would be . . . it's impossible. It's impossible. That is something that we could have—

MILLER: Again, funding levels become—

GONZALEZ: Funding again. In MAEP we have the mentoring program, and we had it one year, two years, then we kind of modified it to fit our budget—not to fit the needs. We had to modify it to fit our budget, not the needs of the teachers really.

MILLER: MAEP is both large and is also recognized as an exemplary program.

GONZALEZ: Thank you.

MILLER: So you probably can provide more of the support than a lot of other districts can.

GONZALEZ: I think we do.

MILLER: Like you obviously have as large a mentoring program as you can. From your contacts outside the district, do you think that what you have here is the norm? Do you think the part-time teacher gets the support that they need?

GONZALEZ: I think we try. I think they get probably more support than a lot of the other places, and we hear that from the teachers

themselves that we hire. They tell us that there is a lot more support here than where they've been. We have a counterpart here in San Jose, and we have teachers that have come from *there and they say that they don't have as much* support there, even though it's under a district. That other program is under a district, and we tend to think that districts are richer, but they don't have as much support. So I think we're kind of . . . I don't think it's the norm. You know, every program can do what they choose to with their funds, and I think in MAEP we have utilized the 321 [Section 321 of the federal Adult Education Act] and all the different funding sources for the needs of the teachers, but I don't think it's the norm.

MILLER: Okay. Certainly another kind of support is just the, what? Instilling the feeling of worth, or that they're included even though they are part-time.

GONZALEZ: Oh, right, yes. We have a lot of that in MAEP. The teachers do feel that they're included. I think a lot of times they feel that they . . . they feel bad that they're not able to participate because of their time and family commitments, but there definitely is a lot of inclusion.

MILLER: They're welcome. [Chuckling]

GONZALEZ: Yes, they're very welcome to come.

MILLER: Do you have much of a problem with people who really need in-service that just refuse or just won't go for additional training?

GONZALEZ: Not much of a problem, but we do have a few here and there that won't go, refuse to, and you just . . . you know, you're forced to decide whether you want to keep them or not.

MILLER: Okay. Now, you made this progression from full-time to part-time. . . . [Chuckling]

GONZALEZ: The other way around?

MILLER: Other way around, [Chuckling] from part-time to full-time. And after you pretty much became a full-time teacher, then you started picking up responsibilities outside your own classroom. Where did that start? I mean, obviously it would have been within the district, but what were your first non-classroom responsibilities that you started picking up?

GONZALEZ: Being in a site, a night site [coordinator]. Of course, everybody goes to the night first, right? [Chuckling]

MILLER: Yes.

GONZALEZ: So I came to a large night site, and that. . . . I started when the amnesty program . . . at the time of the amnesty program, which was in 1988. Of course, the population changed: a *big* influx of

ESL students that wanted to get their forty hours in for their amnesty and this and that.[2] So then we had a large increase of ESL classes, and so I came at that point. They needed somebody to be here a couple nights a week, and someone else was here a couple nights already, so they needed someone all the time, and I became someone to be here half the time.

MILLER: Okay, so a site coordinator then?

GONZALEZ: A site coordinator, yes.

MILLER: Two nights a week was your first?

GONZALEZ: I started with two nights a week, right.

MILLER: When did you start doing in-service training in the district?

GONZALEZ: Let's see, when did I start? I'd say just before that.

MILLER: About the same time?

GONZALEZ: Yeah, just about the same time that I became a coordinator, maybe a little before that. Shirley coaxed me into [Chuckling] doing. . . . What was I doing at that time? Applied performance. I was working with the beginners and I was doing applied performance tests, not this pen and pencil, but just

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[2]Individuals who applied for permanent residency under the Immigration Reform and Control Act had to demonstrate competency in English and U.S. history and government, or present verification of attendance in a minimum of 40 hours of instruction in those subjects.

applied performance. And she said, "Why don't you. . . ?" to monitor student performance, and that's what I did. I just did applied performance tests, no pen and pencil, and monitoring of student performance. That was the topic.

MILLER: That was your first, your introduction to training. [Chuckling]

GONZALEZ: Yes, that was my entry, right.

MILLER: Okay. And then you did go on to become an ESL Teacher Institute trainer, is that correct?

GONZALEZ: Not a trainer, but. . . . Well, I guess when I became a mentor, and I've mentored some of my colleagues and some of the people that I supervise, too. One of them asked for me, so I mentor that person.

MILLER: Okay, but you haven't actually done the training in ESL Institute modules?

GONZALEZ: [I have used the ESL Institute modules as an internal trainer for MAEP. However, I have not been a trainer for the Institute outside of my own district.]

MILLER: Okay. Now, from these extra responsibilities inside the district, then you then went outside the district and have worked with several projects. Now, we've mentioned the ESL Institute several different times. Maybe we need to elaborate on that just

a little more. They have a number of different modules. What are some of the training modules that the Institute has?

GONZALEZ: Some of the training modules are, let's see, the very important one, the very first one that everybody should go through, is the Lesson Planning module: how to do a lesson plan, all the steps and what sort of techniques to incorporate in a lesson plan. So the Lesson Plan module. The Information Gap module: different ways of having the students practice so that it's not always the teacher doing the practices, so that everybody gets a chance to practice enough times. Cooperative Learning module [four modules], TPR, Literacy module, TPR is Total Physical Response, Literacy module, Narrative Reading module, Life Skills Reading module, of course the Mentoring module. Let's see, did I name. . . ?

MILLER: Well, that's certainly a good sampling. There's Problem Posing, I think.

GONZALEZ: The Problem Solving module. That's right, the Problem Solving module.

MILLER: I'm sure there are others, but then it's not. . . . And then, as you've mentioned, they've developed modules for citizenship.

GONZALEZ: Right.

MILLER: And at the time of amnesty they developed some training modules for amnesty teachers as well.

GONZALEZ: Right, for amnesty and citizenship, yes. The Pronunciation module, the Grammar module, all those that became . . . yes.

MILLER: Yes. Okay, now you've mentioned mentoring several times. What do you do as a mentor?

GONZALEZ: As a mentor, first of all you help a teacher who wants to be helped. That's the key thing.

MILLER: The emphasis there is on "wants to be."

GONZALEZ: The emphasis is on "wants to be helped," and it's not on judging the teacher but on helping the person become a better teacher by, and this is a key thing, and that's why I like the ESL Teacher Institute Mentoring module so much. It's that the person who wants to be a mentor needs to put herself or himself on the line and say, "Okay, I will do this, and then you can demonstrate it to me and do what I did." But as any good technique, you model it, and before you expect the student or the person to produce it, you need to model it well and be there for the guided practice and then be there for when you expect the person to produce that. So you model what you want, a technique or something that a teacher wants to get better at,

you model that in the teacher's classroom. And not in your classroom, in the teacher's classroom, so that if the teacher sees that it can be done with a person that's not in—

MILLER: Their students.

GONZALEZ: With her students. It's not, "Oh well, those are your students but they're not mine." So, if you can do it in the teacher's classroom, then the teacher is going to feel that "Oh, I can do it too." So a lot of preparation needs to come from the mentor, to see what kind of students, who the audience is going to be, what kind . . . you know, the teacher, the students, how many, the setup, the setting of the classroom. So a lot of preparation. But just a lot of understanding what the mentee, the teacher, is needing and is coming from.

MILLER: And so the steps in mentoring are actually the same steps in any staff training, in terms of demonstration, practice, application and feedback.

GONZALEZ: Practice and application, that's right. And feedback, yes. So, as with any module, Lesson Planning module, where you warm up and review and introduce and present and practice and evaluate and apply and all that, then the same thing with the Mentoring

module. You model it for the teacher, then get some feedback, and in a nonthreatening environment.

MILLER: Okay. So this is certainly mentoring in a structured way.

GONZALEZ: Yes, it is.

MILLER: But. . . .

GONZALEZ: In a good way, though.

MILLER: Oh yes, in a good way. But we've all had mentors as we've gone through our career, and you've mentioned Shirley several times. Have there been other people that have been sort of in that mentoring position with you?

GONZALEZ: For my coordination, I could say that Celia Larson, my principal now, my immediate . . . my principal, also has been a very good role model.

MILLER: She was an ESL instructor also, wasn't she?

GONZALEZ: She was an ESL instructor also, and she was a preschool. . . . She was a preschool teacher, then an ESL instructor, and then coordinator and assistant principal and now a principal.

MILLER: Going up the . . . yes.

GONZALEZ: Going up, and started with adult ed, I believe. Yeah, she's been a role model, in that she is very caring and nonjudgmental and tries to do what adult . . . I think embodies what adult ed tries

to do for the student and the adult ed teacher, to try to understand the student and the teacher and understand the environment. We don't have this perfect environment that K-12 has, with all the perfect classes and your classroom and all that. You know, we borrow the classrooms, so we need to understand where the teacher is and the students.

MILLER: Then how many teachers have you served [in] this mentoring capacity for?

GONZALEZ: Directly, I can say it's been only something like one per semester, so I would say about, oh, maybe five directly with this very elaborate mentoring process.

MILLER: And does the relationship go beyond when you've completed your classroom activities with them? Does it continue? Or is it sort of self-contained?

GONZALEZ: I think it has continued with. . . . Well, see, one of the teachers works at the same site where I teach, and she's in the afternoon and so I don't get to see her very often, but we do overlap if she comes in early or I stay pretty late. And generally I see her, and I think we've become, I would say, good friends. With a couple of the other teachers, they've been under my supervision, and I think we have a very good working relationship because of that,

and I've gotten good reviews from them. And they've mentioned that I've gone to their classrooms and taught their students, and they felt comfortable doing the same thing that I did because I went to their classrooms and did it. And I think we have a good rapport. I think in part it's because of that.

MILLER: I think I kind of skipped over another one of your steps. After first being site coordinator, you're now an ESL coordinator.

GONZALEZ: Right.

MILLER: With responsibility for ESL at more than one site. Is that correct?

GONZALEZ: At more than one site, right. Yes.

MILLER: And how many teachers are you kind of overseeing?

GONZALEZ: Overseeing? Well, even though I'm just an ESL coordinator, I'm also a site person, so I have to oversee some of the high school teachers and basic skills.

MILLER: You do both.

GONZALEZ: I have a good rapport with them, too, and I think I sort of use this mentoring method of understanding where the teacher is, and if they say they can't do something, then maybe I'll try to go in and see if I can do it. And then if they see that it can be

done, then they're willing to try it. So I'd say about twenty-five maybe. Twenty-five or. . . .

MILLER: About that. [Chuckling]

GONZALEZ: Thirty-five, or something like that, but—

MILLER: Somewhere between twenty and forty. [Chuckling]

GONZALEZ: Between twenty and forty, that's right, or students—

MILLER: And it varies from one term to the next. [Chuckling] Okay. All right, another project that you've been active with was the ESL model standards for adult ed. Why don't you just kind of explain to us what model standards are?

GONZALEZ: The model standards are standards for ESL that the state wanted to. . . . Okay, the state wanted to set some standards in ESL throughout the state, throughout California, starting with calling the levels . . . having a common language to name our levels, rather than ESL beginning low, or ESL 300 and 500 and 1 and 2, and nobody knew what you meant. So if we had a common language, then you would be able to target students and channel students better. So the standards are for common language, naming of the levels, so describing the levels, level descriptors, curriculum standards, instructional standards, and so forth, for a model program.

MILLER: Exit level standards?

GONZALEZ: Exit level standards, testing standards for a model program. And right after the model standards, came the quality indicators.

MILLER: And what's the difference then between the standards and the indicators?

GONZALEZ: The standards are more specific. The quality indicators are how to . . . for instance, an administrator to be able to see if there is a quality program going on, there are certain indicators: Okay, if you see this, then you'll know that there is a. . . . If you see all these different indicators, you'll be able to know that you have a quality program. So the model standards, the quality indicators, and a couple of other California publications go hand-in-hand in order to have a quality program, ESL program.

MILLER: So your indicators would be things like placement procedures, exit level standards.

GONZALEZ: Placement procedures, that's right. Correct.

MILLER: Following those, staff training.

GONZALEZ: Staff development. Right, staff training development, right. Staff support, that's right.

MILLER: So the indicators then are the components of a good program.

GONZALEZ: Right.

MILLER: And the standards are the content of the program.

GONZALEZ: Correct, yes.

MILLER: Okay. And you're working on a very exciting project now, the *Crossroads Cafe*. Tell us about that.

GONZALEZ: *Crossroads Cafe*. That, I guess, came about from different states getting together and finding out they had the same problem of the student that cannot attend class in a formal setting because of child care problems and transportation problems and job shift problems—you know, the typical—and an overpopulation of ESL students, and therefore a lot of students not being reached, waiting lists, etcetera. So then several states got together and they posed their problem. It was a very common problem in all the states, and they said that's the "distance learning student." And that's what they're called, the "distance learner."

So then these states decided they would put their money together and come up with an ESL video series with support materials. And I can't stress enough that the support materials is what makes it an ESL teaching tool or instructional tool. As I said, these different states, and California being one of them, have decided to address the distance learner. And, of course, that will also be used . . . that series will also be used for

instruction in the classroom, to enhance the instruction, that the teacher could use it to enhance the instruction. If it comes about, if California continues with the project— [Chuckling]

MILLER: There's some question about that, is there?

GONZALEZ: Yeah. I'm one of two representatives. Each state has two representatives on the National Academic Council, and the National Academic Council oversees the scripts and the culture clips and everything that will be included in the series and the support materials, with Lynn Savage [San Francisco Community College] being the academic leader, and we all know who Lynn Savage is.

MILLER: Well, tell us who Lynn Savage is. [Chuckling]

GONZALEZ: Lynn Savage is a very well-known ESL teacher, trainer, director—boy, an academic leader in ESL. She's a leader in the field of ESL, in all its aspects: in mentoring, in teaching, in newest techniques, in staff development, in everything. So she's the academic leader for *Crossroads*.

MILLER: And was the founder of the ESL Teacher Institute.

GONZALEZ: The [founder] of the ESL Teacher Institute. I have to mention, I have to go back to. . . . You asked me who else would have been my mentor. I remember Lynn from when I used to take

the training. Any training that I would take, Lynn would be right there. She was a trainer and I know she remembers me from back then, but I remember her very well. Lynn Savage very soon became a word in my vocabulary: "Oh, Lynn Savage. Oh, yes." So I have to say that I looked up to her as being a very instrumental person for my training. She probably doesn't know it but she was. A lot of times when you have a training, you know that that person is a good trainer, is a good teacher, is a good staff developer, but you never have a chance to tell that person. And I think that's what happened to me with Lynn. I don't think I've ever told her, but maybe she'll know. [Chuckling] And I would recommend her. You know, when we had CATESOL [the California branch of TESOL] conferences. . . . When we have CATESOL conferences and TESOL, and teachers come to me and say, "Gee, I'm going to. . . . Do you recommend anything?" "If you see anything by Lynn Savage or this person, go to it."

So, yeah, so the *Crossroads Cafe*, if it continues, the plan is to have it on PBS [Public Broadcasting System] stations and eventually have either people watch it at home or with a friend or in class or what have you, and have it different times of the

day, and with the support materials. And I can't stress enough—

MILLER: Or possibly even having the tapes available for them to check out, to look at whenever?

GONZALEZ: Yeah, right. Yeah, since they'll be able to tape it, and sites and schools will be able to tape them. Yeah, have them available to people who just want to check them out, and with the support materials. I can't stress it enough, because I think at these early stages of *Crossroads Cafe* when you present it to people they see a video. It's funny because they think that. . . . They want to see video as an instructional tool, and you present the video and you present the materials and they put them aside. You say, "No, no, but it goes with the materials." Because I tell people it's students. . . . We have students watch TV and they say, "I don't understand it, Teacher." And they don't watch TV because they don't understand it. So, if you show a video and that's all you do with it, then it becomes another TV program that they don't want to watch because they don't understand. So you have to have support materials before and after, either teacher-made or the support materials that we're making, but you have to have something for a student. Anytime a student watches a video or

a TV program, preparation ahead of time, preparation during, preparation after, if it's going to be used in the classroom. Now, if it's going to be used with a distance learner, then you have to provide the student with those support materials to take home.

MILLER: To take home, yes. When is it scheduled to. . . ?

GONZALEZ: In the fall of 1996, so next year.

MILLER: So coming up very soon.

GONZALEZ: Yes, very soon.

MILLER: What's it been like for you, Chela, particularly this *Crossroads Cafe* now, you're meeting with people from clear across the country?

GONZALEZ: Yeah, very exciting.

MILLER: What has that experience been for you?

GONZALEZ: It's been very exciting. I questioned Lynn Savage, who approached me for Ray[mond] Eberhard [State Administrator, Adult Education, California Department of Education] to serve on this committee, on the National Academic Council, and when she first asked me to serve, I said, "Why me?" I just didn't feel that I was qualified enough, there were just so many people, and I said, "If Mary McMullin [a former director of ESL Teacher Institute] and you are going to be on that, I don't think I

deserve to be on that committee." It's been very exciting. I think I'm learning probably more than what I'm contributing, but very exciting. And with the ESL background, I accepted to be on the committee because they needed my ESL background.

MILLER: Well, I think again, too, you're active in the classroom right now.

GONZALEZ: I'm active in the classroom, yes. And I have tried some of the materials myself, so. . . .

MILLER: And that makes a real difference. Because once you're removed from the classroom. . . .

GONZALEZ: Your perspective is very different, yes.

MILLER: Your perspective gradually changes, even though your roots are there. [Chuckling]

GONZALEZ: Right, yes. So it's been exciting, yes.

MILLER: Very good. Adult schools frequently become instruments for implementing public policy, both state policy and federal policy, and we've had a lot of these policy initiatives in California since you started teaching. I'd like to know what you recall about the specific impact that these policy initiatives had in your classroom. Let's start with the refugee policy, the Southeast Asian refugees.

GONZALEZ: The class sizes became what they are now, very large. Staff development, where if it was not considered necessary at the time and adult ed was not given proper recognition, it became a must. Staff development became a must in order to understand the culture. The culture is a totally different culture.

MILLER: Major impact.

GONZALEZ: A major impact in the classroom itself. Whereas you had the Hispanics and the Europeans with very similar pronunciation problems, you had this change, this shift that nobody seemed to know how to address. So the size, the social changes, too. A very different culture. They brought about a lot of the Hmong and the Cambodians who were not literate, and that in an ESL classroom had not been seen. I think if it was seen, it was seen just very little, and students, if they existed, they did not come to the classrooms very much. But there you saw it in large numbers. Yeah, you needed, as I said, training for a teacher to be able to teach literacy, ESL literacy, as opposed to beginning ESL.

MILLER: And in addition to the Asian languages being so different, they didn't use our alphabet.

GONZALEZ: Right, yes, so it became a matter of doing ESL literacy. It made it very important.

MILLER: Chela, I know in our school some of the refugees had to be taught some of the most basic. . . .

GONZALEZ: Very basic.

MILLER: Bathroom habits.

GONZALEZ: Yes, very much so. Even today I was approached by my site assistant principal, Nancy Arnold, to. . . . I missed a staff meeting and she said, "You've been commissioned to. . . ." I said, "To do what?" She said, "There's a lot of something happening on the toilets, and the little feet are on the toilets, and students need to know. . . ." And it's just information, it's a different culture. And I was nominated to teach the students to do that. [Chuckling]

MILLER: How to use it.

GONZALEZ: That's right, how to use it. And you just approach it, you know, in a very natural way and say, "This is what happens, this is what you do here," and just try to understand them.

MILLER: And even the type of clothing that is appropriate for outside the home.

GONZALEZ: Yes. Right, yeah, a lot of different impacts and changes.

MILLER: The refugees first started coming in '75, and I think we had our biggest influx—

GONZALEZ: After the Vietnam War, yes.

MILLER: About 1980 was when they came in much larger numbers. And San Jose was one of the major areas in northern California where they settled.

GONZALEZ: Right, yes.

MILLER: And then again emphasizing that the ESL literacy classes got started.

GONZALEZ: ESL literacy classes, and then the—

MILLER: And not many people knew how to teach literacy.

GONZALEZ: Right, and then the government wanting to. . . . Well, okay, first the government brought the refugees, and then they were all of them on assistance, and then the American people were saying, "Well, where is our money going?" And then the government was forced to . . . okay, you've got to train these people. And how can you train them if they don't speak the language? So then they started these VESL classes, Vocational ESL classes in electronic assembly and wafer production and all these different VESL classes. So there have been a number of changes based on the . . . and because of the influx of the

Southeast Asians and the refugees, yes. The amnesty program was another policy. You mentioned the U.S. policy, the amnesty program became a fact because of the U.S. policy. Then we had to again adjust to large classes just to target amnesty and do. . . .

MILLER: Did your programs double in a year?

GONZALEZ: Almost doubled, yes. We were large to begin with, but yes, almost doubled, doubled in that, yes.

MILLER: And of course one of the things about these policy initiatives is that when they start there's extra money, and then the money is gone and the students are still there. [Chuckling]

GONZALEZ: The students are still there. You've hooked them to come to school and the students are still there, and then we have waiting lists.

MILLER: We've always had a lot of Hispanic students in our ESL classes in California, it's been our major language group.

GONZALEZ: Right.

MILLER: But how were the amnesty students different from the students that were already in our classes?

GONZALEZ: A lot of them perhaps had never been to school, and they had a goal: they needed to get their forty hours so that they could get their papers. But then after those forty hours, they were going

to be given a test, and so they wanted to learn in forty hours whatever the English language entails. They needed to learn it in forty hours. You know, you have expectations, unreasonable expectations and disappointments, so it was. . . . As I said, a lot of them had been here many, many years, but they had never come to school. But the amnesty program forced them to come to school.

MILLER: Okay. And their educational level was generally lower?

GONZALEZ: Low. Lower than what had been the norm.

MILLER: What about age?

GONZALEZ: We had a lot of older people come out and take ESL for the first time. You know, not literate, a lot of them not literate, but they needed to come to school.

MILLER: And the economic status was also lower than the Hispanics that we generally see in class.

GONZALEZ: Right.

MILLER: It was interesting that it really was a different population.

GONZALEZ: It really was a different population.

MILLER: I think our teachers thought that they knew the Hispanic population, and found out they still had more to learn. [Chuckling]

GONZALEZ: They still have more to learn every day.

MILLER: Okay. Well, okay, kind of a follow-up on the amnesty that came down several years later, the ESL citizenship centers, and that was. . . . Even though amnesty was a federal policy, these citizenship centers are the result of state legislation. What were the circumstances surrounding that, of the ESL citizenship centers?

GONZALEZ: You mean. . . ?

MILLER: Yeah, what impact did it have on your programs?

GONZALEZ: Oh, all of a sudden we had all these students that needed to take . . . wanted to get their citizenship.

MILLER: They'd had their five years, after they had their papers from amnesty.

GONZALEZ: They had their five years, but they still maybe had gotten their forty hours for amnesty, but maybe had not been able to continue going to school, and still didn't speak English or didn't understand it. And here they want to get their citizenship, but they don't have the language, yet. And the impact was that we've had to change some of our classes from ESL to ESL citizenship, and teach ESL while doing the citizenship, because the students are not the citizenship students that we used to

know, where they would go to a citizenship class because they already spoke English and understood and read and wrote. These students don't have but an intermediate level of ESL, if any. A lot of them will want to take an ESL citizenship class at the low beginning ESL level, and that's really difficult. So it's hard for the teachers, it's hard for them too. It's changed the way the ESL citizenship classes are held, are taught at a much lower level of English, with not as much information as before, maybe more facts and just not a lot of critical thinking as to why policies are made, because the level of understanding and comprehension is not there. So I think a lot more factual. . . . So the ESL citizenship classes have changed in their delivery of the content.

MILLER: Okay, and where did the funding for that come from?

GONZALEZ: If I remember correctly, the federal government.

MILLER: Yeah. The state earmarked part of the federal funds, yeah.

GONZALEZ: Right.

MILLER: And in a general sense, now you've talked about the VESL classes, but others that impacted on employability were GAIN [Greater Avenues to Independence, California's welfare reform legislation] and JTPA [Job Training Partnership Act].

GONZALEZ: Oh, Job Corps, JTPA, workplace literacy, family literacy. Right now the GAIN and the Job Corps have. . . . There are different students, different problems, different expectations from social services, from the government. There are different needs. And of course, there's a time attached to those students. GAIN students can only be in the program for a couple of years only. Job Corps only have, I believe, two years. So, to think of an ESL student being job-ready and ESL-ready in two years, it's almost impossible. But you know they have certain expectations, sometimes I think a little too. . . .

MILLER: Too high.

GONZALEZ: Too high, yeah, because they are ESL students.

MILLER: In GAIN and JTPA and Job Corps also, these students become mandatory. . . .

[End Tape 1, Side B]

[Begin Tape 2, Side A]

MILLER: This is Tape 2, Side A of the Chela Gonzalez interview. Chela, we were talking about the effect of some of these programs having mandatory attendance and what that did.

GONZALEZ: Yeah, they become a problem, sort of like the concurrent high school student: they're not as welcome because the adult

student is there voluntarily and is very motivated, and these other students become almost like a burden. If they don't want to be there, they're not going to be as . . . they're not going to progress as much and they're not going to have the incentive or have the attitude of wanting to learn, which is different from the attitude of the [voluntary] adult student.

MILLER: And sometimes chases off the volunteer people.

GONZALEZ: Yes, the adult students, yes, it chases the . . . yes.

MILLER: Okay, Chela, we want to talk about some of the changes that have taken place. Your experience with ESL as both a student and a teacher have stretched over three decades.

GONZALEZ: Yes.

MILLER: That's sounds like a long time, doesn't it? [Chuckling]

GONZALEZ: Yeah, right.

MILLER: We shouldn't talk about decades, just say a long time. And certainly there have been changes in the field during that time. I'd like for you to look back and see if you can highlight these changes. Try to describe the classroom, its setup, curriculum, materials, techniques, teacher-student relationships and so on, for each of the periods I'm going to ask you about. I think you can kind of talk about it, think of it in terms of content and

techniques and how those have changed. Let's start with you as a student, when you were a student in ESL classes.

GONZALEZ: Definitely at that time we had the audio-lingual method in the classroom. We had the grammar—

MILLER: Do you want to just briefly say what audio-lingual—

GONZALEZ: Yeah, listen and repeat. [Chuckling]

MILLER: Okay. Ad nauseam. [Chuckling]

GONZALEZ: Is that frank enough? Yeah, listen and repeat, and very grammar-targeted, grammar-oriented, you learned the grammar. And the big change, the counter to that, was the competency based education, where you had grammar in context. Okay, teach grammar but teach it in context. Life skills, survival English.

MILLER: Okay, and that had its big push in California during the '80s.

GONZALEZ: The '80s, right.

MILLER: Now, you had mentioned that when you started in the late '60s that TPR was out as a new method and that you were encouraged to go to that training and to implement it.

GONZALEZ: It was in '76 and '75.

MILLER: In '76. Now, other than TPR, do you remember what you did as a beginning teacher? Do you remember anything about the materials that you were using?

GONZALEZ: Well, with TPR, *realia*, that's what I used. But I think we were, or I was, or our program, among the very few, I think, that did something like that—you know, was not doing the traditional *English 900* method.

MILLER: Oh, yes. [Chuckling]

GONZALEZ: Or *Practical English*.

MILLER: Yes, those were very popular books. *New Horizons*.

GONZALEZ: *New Horizons*, *Practical English*, and I don't know, *Step* something.

MILLER: With the elephant dancing on the beach ball.

GONZALEZ: Right, and Breckenridge something. So I was very fortunate, in that I was trying out things with *realia*. Oh, a big deal. But everywhere else, everybody else was doing the grammar.

MILLER: Still doing the grammar and. . . .

GONZALEZ: Yes.

MILLER: Okay. Now, you mentioned the introduction of life skills with the competency based approach in the '80s. Do you think that

the influx of the refugees had anything to do with how quickly that caught on in California?

GONZALEZ: Oh, yes, I do, because we no longer had the student that was very well educated and grammar-oriented. We had the student who understood nothing about a verb or a noun, and the student that needed to function without knowing what a verb was. And I think that's what made California shift so fast. Yes, you had to give them survival skills, life skills, make it relevant and make it. . . . And if you're going to teach this verb or whatever, you have to do it in context so the student understands. So, yes, that definitely had to do a lot with it.

MILLER: And I think that once it started being used we saw that, yeah, it really worked with our standard Hispanic population as well.

GONZALEZ: It really worked, yes. Right.

MILLER: Why had the Hispanics been able to survive the grammar, audio-lingual context so long? What was the difference in the Hispanic population, that had been our traditional ESL population, and in this refugee population?

GONZALEZ: I think that because the . . . see, traditionally the Hispanics have come to the U.S. to work, and they had to survive at work, so I think they would pick up the survival English at work. I guess

they had to learn it, so whoever was teaching them, whatever they got taught, that's what it was. They just had to learn and they just had to acquire whatever was available.

MILLER: And sort of there was already a critical mass here.

GONZALEZ: Right.

MILLER: They had a support community.

GONZALEZ: They had a support community, definitely, too. Yes, as I said, my mother to this day does not speak English. Her neighbors are all Spanish-speaking. Yeah, and so they had a support community, definitely. And a lot of the businesses, the banks, the stores provided stuff in Spanish. And all of a sudden you have all these refugees, the Hmongs, the Vietnamese, the Chinese, the Cambodians, and you couldn't. . . .

MILLER: The Lao.

GONZALEZ: In the first place, you didn't even have a language. They don't even have a written language, so how can you translate all these materials that the phone company wants you to use, or the stores or the banks? So, okay, teach them English, and let's do it this way. And workplace literacy came about: Teach English so that whatever we need here for you to teach them is what you need to teach them. Don't teach them about this verb and

stuff. We need for you to teach them what we use at work, so workplace literacy.

The homeless, teach them what's relevant to them. Family literacy, what's relevant in the family. So that's why competency based education, I believe, became so accepted.

MILLER: And is so adaptable to whatever comes down the pike.

GONZALEZ: To whatever your workplace is, whatever your situation is, whatever your life is.

MILLER: Because it's based on student need.

GONZALEZ: It's student need, definitely.

MILLER: Okay. Also in the '80s, along with this emphasis on competency based adult ed [CBAE] and its emphasis on life skills and whatever the particular situation was, this was also the time of expansion of the ESL Teacher Institute.

GONZALEZ: The ESL Teacher Institute, right, yes.

MILLER: So that the techniques—

GONZALEZ: So then, see, along with what you had, the techniques were being presented and there was a support for the teacher. So it wasn't you were being asked to only change to competency based education, but you had the support, so if you wanted to become trained you could be trained. The support was there.

MILLER: Okay. Now, have the model standards changed what goes on in the classroom? Or is it more subtle than that?

GONZALEZ: I don't know if they have changed it yet, but I think it's beginning to. It always takes a few years and some time for something to grasp, and I think it's beginning to. It should. In our program I know it's beginning to. We're making people more accountable. We're being made more accountable. The state wants us to be more accountable. So I think if I cannot say that they have made a total difference so that they have been completely adopted, they are being adopted and they're making a difference.

MILLER: Okay. What about content? Is it changing the content?

GONZALEZ: You mean the model standards? Are they changing?

MILLER: Mm-hmm.

GONZALEZ: In the classroom? What's being taught in the classroom?

MILLER: Mm-hmm.

GONZALEZ: I don't think it was the purpose to change. . . . Well, if the classroom is a traditional classroom, say, that had not changed with competency based education, I think it will now. It will, yeah. I guess I was thinking of my program. My program changed with competency based education, totally adopted it. It

just became very open to it. So, in my program, model standards are not making a content change because it was already part of the competency based education.

MILLER: They're supporting rather than changing.

GONZALEZ: Right. But I believe in other programs where maybe the traditional classroom had not changed, it's going to have to change, or it's probably changing by now.

MILLER: Chela, how knowledgeable do you think that teachers are about these shifts and what causes them? I mean, we've said we think that teachers were probably open to the CBAE approach in the '80s because of the changed student population, but there was also a state mandate that schools should implement CBAE. But do you think that there was. . . . Okay, was your staff ever talked to about the Adult Performance Level study or the California Adult Competency Survey, the underlying needs assessments that pointed out the need for a more life-skills-based curriculum?

GONZALEZ: I don't think they were told about the documents or the—

MILLER: The theoretical background wasn't translated.

GONZALEZ: Probably not the theoretical, and maybe if it was, they probably just did not grasp it. And I'm sure if some people did get it, it

was because they had the time. And I'm going to point to the part-time teacher again.

MILLER: Yes.

GONZALEZ: It's a lack of time. So if something needs to be done: "Okay, here is the theory." "Oh, okay, now. . . ." and they may not listen to the theory.

MILLER: Or care.

GONZALEZ: Right, "Tell me what I need to do." And if the support is there and if they have the time, they'll try changes, yes. So, as I said, maybe not the theory, but they go more for the meat.

MILLER: Kind of more front-line?

GONZALEZ: Right, because of the part-time. And if you say, "Yes, a lot of people at the time were informed of that, . . ." the teachers, the teaching population changes so much in adult ed that you think everybody has been informed about something, and then here comes a whole new group of people that don't know what you're talking about because you have totally new teachers. That happens in adult ed all the time.

MILLER: And that turnover is also a fallout from the part-time instructors.

GONZALEZ: Yes, and so you find yourself doing things over and over and over, and still having maybe a WASC [Western Association of Schools and Colleges accreditation] review and people saying, "I haven't had any training. I'd like to have some training on this." And everybody else might say, "Oh, but we have it all the time." "Oh, I didn't know." So that is certainly a big problem.

MILLER: Yes, very, very, very, very typical. That's right. Okay, talking about these shifts, the CBAE, the model standards and so on, what's left to be done in California's adult ESL programs?

GONZALEZ: What's left to be done?

MILLER: If you could wave a magic wand to improve program quality, what would you do?

GONZALEZ: I would say . . . see, I think you can almost have, with everything that's being presented now that you have, you could almost have a perfect situation if it were not for this great turnover of teachers that I was talking about. So, I think if I could wave a magic wand, I would have almost everybody be full-time so that they could be so committed that everybody would be trained and would have the time to be trained, without having to have a second job to compensate for the lack of hours in adult ed. I

think that's the biggest problem, it's having this great turnover and always having to—

MILLER: To bring stability to the employment situation so that you could then grow rather than—

GONZALEZ: Yes, rather than having to do it over and over.

MILLER: Initial training, yes.

GONZALEZ: Someone said, "ESL always has so much staff development. I don't know why. Their teachers are just saturated." Yes and no. For the person that's been there a long time, and that's not a lot of people have been, maybe they have, but the great turnover, you still need the staff development all the time for the new teachers.

MILLER: Okay. What role do professional organizations play in adult education?

GONZALEZ: I would say lobbying is one thing at a greater level that maybe the teachers don't see, a lobbying effort, information as to what's happening so that people are aware as to what bills are being passed or not passed that are going to affect adult ed. But also I think staff development. Yeah, a teacher might not be able to go to a workshop, but if he knows of a conference he might

attend a workshop and be trained and maybe [be] hooked onto an idea. So a way of providing staff development and lobbying.

MILLER: What conferences do teachers generally attend?

GONZALEZ: CATESOL and TESOL.

MILLER: Okay. And they have regional conferences as well as state.

GONZALEZ: And also CCAE, the California Council for Adult Education. Yeah, they have regional conferences. We just had a roundtable in MAEP of our teachers that attended CATESOL in. . . . Where was it?

MILLER: Was it in Napa?

GONZALEZ: [Monterey]. Anyway recently, in October, locally. And they brought back whatever they shared. I mean, they shared whatever they learned.

MILLER: Okay.

GONZALEZ: And also for materials and what's out there. Teachers do not have the time to go see what's available, in terms of textbooks and materials and technology. A way of seeing what's out there without wasting a lot of their own time, because it's all compact into one day, one place.

MILLER: Yeah, and it's good that CATESOL does have regional conferences, because not everyone can go away for the state conference.

GONZALEZ: Yes.

MILLER: CCAE, in addition to their state conference, I think they're more active in southern California. They have regional conferences in southern California, and I think the northern California CCAE regional [has] not [been] a major happening [in the past; recent ones have been larger]. But they've been sponsoring some training academies. Have any of your teachers attended those?

GONZALEZ: Yes, we have, and a couple of our administrators are officers of CCAE.

MILLER: Good.

GONZALEZ: Yeah, so our teachers have attended, last year, the year before. Our clerks, too.

MILLER: Good.

GONZALEZ: And this year, one of them is presenting something this year. So, yeah, they have been attending.

MILLER: That's fine. Does the teachers' union play a very important role in adult education?

GONZALEZ: In adult education? I think it does. It does in our program, but it has to be an adult ed teachers' union, which is what we have in MAEP, and East Side [Union High School District] also. As I said, I think that if we didn't have a teachers' union, the AFT locally, we would still have maybe everybody being part-time, maybe fewer than ten hours a week, teaching fewer than ten hours a week. True, they're not adult ed, most of the programs are not hiring full-time teachers, but at least half-time teachers get benefits, and at least the salary is attractive.

MILLER: And for students, half-time teachers are. . . . I mean, they don't see the difference.

GONZALEZ: No, they don't. Oh no, no, not at all, no.

MILLER: Because they have the same teacher every day.

GONZALEZ: Right.

MILLER: And as much as we complain about funding here, we're much better funded than any other state in the nation.

GONZALEZ: Oh, it's true. It's true, yes.

MILLER: And it's hard to realize that. As a site coordinator, you also have some responsibilities for other programs: ABE, the high school diploma programs, parent ed, maybe some older adults, I don't know. And certainly there are other instructional areas as

well as in adult ed. Can you contrast the level of staff development opportunities for those programs with ABE and ESL?

GONZALEZ: Definitely ESL and ABE have a lot more than some of the others. But then, of course, our program. In our program and in a lot of programs ESL is more than 50 percent of the program, so it's only probably fair that you would have more. There has been more in the last couple of years, I would say, for ABE and high school, but then of course you have all these different multi-subjects and credits. Credits play a big part in I guess how much you can do in the classroom. But there has been more staff development for high school and basic skills classes in the last couple of years, I would say. And I see more for ESL, because the bulk of our program is ESL.

MILLER: Well, also it's the federal funds that support the ABE/ESL. We're about to wind up here. From the things that we've been talking about, have we left things out? Have we stimulated anything that you would like to talk about or to add?

GONZALEZ: No, I can't think of anything, but I must say that adult education is the support for all the other types of education: K-12, for students that fall through the cracks, and those that have never

been to school in their countries or here. But adult education has played a very important role in people's lives, and keeps on playing an important role in people's lives. Even our adult fee-based classes play an important role for people who are professionals and have achieved all the education they need. But there's never enough. I mean, you have computers, and you need staff development or training for people to understand computers, to understand new technology. So I think adult education will always play an important role in people's lives.

MILLER: Particularly as our culture keeps changing faster and faster.

GONZALEZ: Right. Right, culture and modalities and conditions and technology keep changing, and you need to be trained and retrained, and adult education certainly is a very inexpensive means of educating people.

MILLER: Unfortunately it's inexpensive. [Chuckling]

GONZALEZ: Yes, I guess unfortunately. You're right.

MILLER: Chela, as you look back on your career thus far, can you identify who or what you consider the key driving forces of adult education in California? Kind of who or what has made things happen?

GONZALEZ: Groups or people?

MILLER: Either, both.

GONZALEZ: Let's see, local. . . . I would say local administrators who maybe have come up from adult ed and understand adult ed. The Adult Education Unit in the state, too. In staff development and training and teacher recognition, the ESL Teacher Institute. The organizations, the CCAE, and TESOL, CATESOL.

MILLER: Okay. So, actually from a number of sources?

GONZALEZ: A number of sources, I would say.

MILLER: But the administrators that come up through the ranks, I can see—

GONZALEZ: Through the ranks, yes.

MILLER: Because they then are in a position to work both down and up.

GONZALEZ: Yes, they understand the teachers and the student population, and they've come through the ranks and they are there to. . . . Because if they move up, it's that they really believe in the program and they really want to be in the program. Whereas if they've just been moved from another program where they really [didn't] want to be into adult ed, they don't have their heart in adult ed, they don't really believe in it. So, if they come up through the ranks, they believe in adult ed.

MILLER: And can exercise strong leadership there.

GONZALEZ: Right.

MILLER: We've talked about what the ESL classroom looked like at different stages in your career, and I had asked you what you would do with your magic wand if you had one. [Chuckling] But in contrast to those, do you have any predictions about what adult ed will look like, say in ten years, fifteen years?

GONZALEZ: Hopefully, besides the teachers, which is probably not going to happen, [being] full-timers, hopefully—and maybe that's something I would do with the magic wand also—technology will enter the ESL classroom. As I said, I don't know, that comes hand-in-hand with funding, but technology will enter the classroom.

MILLER: And play a bigger and bigger role.

GONZALEZ: Not just technology, but teachers need to be trained to use technology, not just for the sake of using technology and putting students at the computer, but having programs that will enhance the education of the students. So, hopefully that, computers and. . . .

MILLER: That's what we're primarily on the threshold of.

GONZALEZ: Yes.

MILLER: What do you find most rewarding about your work?

GONZALEZ: My personal work? My work in adult education?

MILLER: Mm-hmm.

GONZALEZ: The students, and my colleagues, the people I work with. And in my program, the students, and that's what everybody. . . . The teachers that enter adult ed say the students, that's what makes it, the students. But in my program, too, I'd have to say my colleagues are very dedicated. The administrators have all come through the ranks, the MAEP administrators, and they—

MILLER: It makes you a very special program. [Chuckling]

GONZALEZ: Yes, it's true. It was not, though, it was not before. We've gone through different changes, and for the last few years we've had very good administration, MAEP administration. So, gee, what else? I mean, my colleagues, the students, the administrators, I guess everything. . . .

[tape turned off]

And one thing also that is unique to adult ed is that everybody shares. Everybody has this sharing network. People who come from K-12 programs say that just doesn't happen in the K-12 systems. Teachers just are so willing to share their ideas, to share materials and whatever they have. So it's the sharing environment that makes it so unique, too.

MILLER: Very good. Thank you, Chela, both for the interview . . . I've enjoyed talking to you . . .

GONZALEZ: You're welcome.

MILLER: And for the contributions that you're making to California's adult education programs. It's certainly the students and the teachers that are the foundation of our programs.

GONZALEZ: Well, thank you.

MILLER: This interview was completed as a part of the California Adult Education Oral History Project.

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RESUME

CHELA GONZALEZ

EDUCATION
Bachelor of Art Degree, 1974, San Jose State University, Major - Spanish (Graduated with Honors).

Completion of MA coursework with a Major in Spanish and Emphasis on Linguistics - 1975 - San Jose State University.

CREDENTIALS
Lifetime Designated Teaching Credential - Subjects: Adult Basic Education, English as a Second Language, Spanish.

California Adult Education Supervision and Coordinator Credential - Lee Clark, LEA Administrator.

EXPERIENCE

1976 - Present — ESL Instructor
MAEP, San Jose, CA
Have taught all levels of ESL from Literacy to Advanced, full-time. Specialized in the monitoring of student performance, the Total Physical Response Method (TPR), beginning ESL techniques, competency-based education curriculum implementation, and cooperative learning techniques. Act as Resource/Mentor Instructor for ESL teachers.

Have taught Vocational ESL (VESL) with emphasis on electronics.

Currently participate in all types of training through the ESL Teacher Institute as well as through other trainers.

Actively involved in other professional development training which includes self-esteem.

1988 - Present — Coordinator, ESL, ABE, High School Diploma Program - MAEP, San Jose, CA

General program supervision of San Jose Center (SJ) with ten ESL, one ABE, and eight High School Diploma and Parent Education classes, two evenings per week.

Assist in the hiring process of ESL staff.

Assist ESL staff in testing and placement procedures.

Assist ESL staff with curriculum implementation and material selection.

Act as Resource/Mentor Instructor for ESL teachers.

Maintain contact with and assist community organizations in coordinating services offered to the general student population.

Conduct staff meetings as necessary to meet teacher/student needs.

1992 - Present — ESL Coordinator: MAEP, San Jose, CA. General program supervision of outreach centers, John XXIII, Roosevelt, Olinder, Horace Mann, Lowell, and St. James, every afternoon.

Assist in implementation of Workplace Literacy Program (testing, curriculum, and materials) at Sorrento Cheese, a private industry.

1979 - 1982 — ESL Instructor
San Jose City College, CA.
Taught advanced and beginning ESL.

1974 - 1975 — Tutor
San Jose Unified District, San Jose, CA.
Tutored kindergarten through third grade children in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics.

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES/MEMBERSHIP

1994 - Present — *Crossroads Cafe*, and ESL video instructional series: Consultant and California representative on the National Academic Council.

1992 - 1994 — Member of the *California State Quality Indicators for Adult Education Programs* Committee. (Published a document by same title for California Adult Schools)

1989 - 1992 — Member of the California State *ESL Model Standards for Adult Education* Committee (which has published a Document by same title for California Adult schools).

- Certified Mentor Teacher by ESL Teacher Institute
- Workshop Presenter, MAEP, "Monitoring of Student Performance".
- ESL Teacher Institute Advisory Committee Member.
- ESL Institute - Coordinator Training.
- Curriculum Committee member, MAEP.
- Steering Committee member, MAEP.
- Strategic Plan Committee for Regional Programs, San Jose.
- CBE Active Participant.
- CBE Presenter.
- Alpha Sigma Pi - Lifetime Member.

- CATESOL
- CCAE
- Leadership Training Academy
- American Federation of Teachers - Executive Board, Education, and Negotiation Committee Member. Most of my work has to do with informing teachers about legislation affecting adult education and planning to improve the MAEP program

CALIFORNIA ADULT EDUCATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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PLACE San Jose, Ca.

DATE 11/30/95

Chela Gonzalez
(Interviewee)

Enba Z. Miller
(Interviewer)
(for California Adult Education Oral History Project)