

Gavino Fernandez
TCU Civil Rights in Black and Brown Oral History Project
<https://crbb.tcu.edu/interviewees/fernandez-gavino>

Part 2 – Biographical Information:

Fernandez: I'm an Austin native born and raised here in Austin, Texas.

TCU: So when were you born sir?

Fernandez: August 19, 1954.

TCU: So, from your recollections, your childhood, how was growing up here in Austin back then?

Fernandez: It was pretty laissez faire. Everybody to their own and because Austin is very segregated in housing, it was, everybody was pretty much on their own until we either got out of high school or we went to some kind of community college, or just in general went to work outside your neighborhood or your school even.

TCU: What part of Austin did you grow up in?

Fernandez: East Austin and Northeast. I've been in East Austin where I was born and raised, and went to school.

TCU: So who are your parents?

Fernandez: Who? I was raised by my grandparents.

TCU: Are they also from Austin?

Fernandez: Yes, they're from Austin but they're originally from Lockhart, Texas...my grandparents, which is where my mother was from too.

TCU: So where did you go to school?

Fernandez: I went to public schools here in Austin. I started off at Ortega Elementary School, and then I went to the parochial school of Saint Jude's Catholic Church. Then I went back to public schools in Salalah, and then I went to Allen Junior High, and then we went to Martin Junior High because it opened, and I got my high school degree, I mean, high school diploma from Johnston High School.

TCU: So why did you go to Catholic school for a while? [inaudible 00:02:12]

Fernandez: They had just opened, and we were parishioners from Santa Julia and that time, and families just participated because they had just opened the school.

TCU: How was that change for you?

Fernandez: Well I was real young, in second grade, so other than the distinction between a public school and a parochial school, really everything else was pretty much the same. Other than it was operated by nuns versus teachers it was just regular teachers.

TCU: So were the nuns at the Catholic school mostly Anglo or [crosstalk 00:03:00]

Fernandez: No there were mainly Mexican nuns from Mexico, or from San Antonio. Some of them were from San Antonio, but the majority were from, it was an order from Mexico.

TCU: So did they have any particular policy or rules about the use of Spanish language?

Fernandez: No, not in the parochial school, no there was no restriction on language and how we could speak.

TCU: What about the public schools?

Fernandez: The public schools, yeah it wasn't really a policy it was more an instruction not to speak Spanish because they felt that it was rude, and you were probably speaking about them. So, it was rude--it was kind of like the reasons why we shouldn't speak Spanish. It was the rationale behind that.

TCU: Was there any particular punishment for speaking Spanish?

Fernandez: Well, yeah, a lot of times you'll be put in what they call time out. It would be constantly kept, or habitually, or they would exclude you from certain activities that they saw as a part for accomplishing something. It was seen as an act of disobedience from the [inaudible 00:04:43] that's the way they saw it.

TCU: So why did you go back to public schooling when you went to Salalah?

Fernandez: The parochial school only stayed open for three years, plus we also moved--that's when I moved to attend Salalah. That's when my grandparents started raising me.

TCU: So you mentioned that back then there was no, a lot of segregation in housing. So in terms of leisure and other activities outside of school, how did that affect daily life?

Fernandez: Well it was unique for us because we had a recreation center right in front of the street--Pan American Recreation Center. So to us, well, in that era, the 60s, that

was the only AC facility around this whole area. So in the summers that was our hangout. From 9:00 AM, they close at 12:00, then they open at 3:00, and they close at 10:00. So many of us that grew up around here in those times would hang out at the recreation centers because activities, and more importantly during the summer in was the only AC facility that we had. That's where we were growing up.

TCU: Did you go downtown or go to parts of the city?

Fernandez: Yeah when [inaudible 00:06:24] around that time I would work the UT games. I would sell soda waters. A lot of times it was just to go in get one tray, set it, and sit down and watch the game. And also on Fridays, when I was in like the 5th, 6th grade there was two or three of us that would hang out, as matter of fact around these tracks on the corner, every Friday. We'd meet around 4:00 and we would all bring our own shoeshine box and it had a dime, it had 10 cents. So we would make four or five dollars at one day, that was a lot.

<https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/biographical-information-99>

Part 3 – Growing up in Austin, TX:

Fernandez: And that's when we would go to Sixth Street. And that's where all the cantinas were, on Sixth Street. The African American and Mexican American cantinas were on Sixth Street in those days. But the business people started whining about drunks, and hanging out, and just kinda like a nuisance and a deterrent to other people going to downtown. So gradually, they started either increasing the rent or closing the taverns and cantinas. Today, you have the same thing, but they're white drunks. They're college kids that get drunk, but they're white. And today, we have APD that babysits while they're drinking. But that's Austin. That's a taste of Austin.

TCU: So people were complaining about these cantinas. You mentioned that the APD watches over what happen now. Back then, did they treat the people who went to these places...Was there any heavy handed treatment of, for example, drunkenness or any other behavior?

Fernandez: No. Again, this is a time when Austin was small. So officers knew who you were. If you were a constant patron of those facilities and someone that took it to the limit ended up PI or whatever, they already knew who you were. But a lot of the Anglo business people started complaining that these were blighted...We didn't have homeless at that time, but it's kinda like the same reaction to homeless people. Can't think of a word. They saw it as a negative.

TCU: So, back then, there was no homelessness in downtown?

Fernandez: No, it was real small. Austin was small back in the Sixties. And if they were, it wasn't that obvious. Not like right now, today. I don't even think we used the word homeless in the Sixties.

TCU: These spaces that you were talking about...I assume the same space where the nightlife district is.

Fernandez: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

TCU: You mentioned that they started raising rents and they started doing other things. How was this shift, how was it received, or how did it change the atmosphere?

Fernandez: Well, like I say, gradually the city of Austin started, through their planning commissions and zonings, started changing a lot of that to gradually price you out. By the time you realized that you couldn't pay rent, your business wasn't enough to pay the escalated rent that they had imposed on you. So leases ran out, and that's when they started leasing to more, I guess, for higher rent, yes.

TCU: Going back to the topic of schools, we already talked about the use of Spanish. But, in general, how were the schools? Go over the conditions of the schools or the teaching. What do you recall upon that time?

Fernandez: Now that I look back at it, it was pretty much packaged curriculum that was...I guess a teacher could go and say, "This is your plan. This is the subject you're gonna teach. And this is your curriculum. These are your notes". As students, we were taught one method of teaching. So you either were adaptable to that as a leaner, or you missed the bus. There was no attention to dyslexia. There was no attention to it being a second language student. So you either...And again, this is an era where the majority of the people were Mexican Americans. We didn't have as many Mexicanos or and other ethnicity other than the African Americans. That was pretty much the setting in those times of the schooling. If you were successful academically, the standards of academics in our schools were fifty percent less than, let's say I went to Austin High in North Austin. If I was to get an A at Johnston, that would equal to a C at Bowie, for example, or one of the elite high schools here in Austin. And then associated with Austin High. Austin High School.

TCU: On the topic of Johnston, what were the years when you were attending high school?

Fernandez: I was there from '69 to '72.

TCU: What were the conditions in Johnston?

Fernandez: Johnston, okay by that time it was, because it had a lot of vocational classes. We probably produced the most painters and brick layers of any other high school in

the state of Texas. Cosmetology, Food Service. Everybody would graduate with a technical background. Labor Industry. You could count 'em in your fingers who's going to college. You counselors wouldn't even discuss college with you. There's just not an expectation. If you survive through this curriculum and get a high school diploma, it's a win win to begin with. And we had colleagues that graduated that would ask, "What does it say?". We were shifted like cattle, if you will. Once you reach a certain age, you either got your high school diploma or you dropped out. One of the two.

<https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/growing-up-in-austin-tx>

Part 4 – Experiences in Education:

TCU: So how did you react or how did you feel about this type of thing personally?

Fernandez:: Well, again you know, when you live in a segregated area, like this fellow once said, you know, he thought they were unique because they lived in a very special place. Lived in a community like a chosen place not knowing that hey you're there because of the color that you are, you know, you don't live over there because of the color that you are. So, but it causes, it enhances a tight closeness of Mexican Americans family in school, church and what not. And as long as government saw that you were happy in that setting, you know, they would probably enhance it, embrace it and do whatever they could in order for you not to open your eyes and say, hey, you know what? I think I could live over there, for, you know. So that was kind of like the mood, you know like I said, laissez-faire. Don't bother me. I won't bother you.

TCU: I think that time in the late 60s there were several protests including in Austin, there were several student movements pro this was happening in other places.

Fernandez: Yeah.

TCU: You know, how was that ... You know, what was the awareness of this and how did the students feel at Johnston at that point?

Fernandez: Well, at Johnston, again, we're children of those that never went to high school much less elementary school, so he would always hear the comments ... If you were to bring a concern to your parent of either discipline or what not, their first reaction was gonna be that's the way it is, you know. It's your fault. You're not adhering to the structure that is being asked of you at the school.

So, it was, like I say, as long as ... It wasn't very, obviously a far cry from being college-bound, you know. Like I said, well what it is, the famous trips that they would take us to in junior high or even in high school is to a County jail, you know. This is how, this is where you end up if you don't finish school and all this and all that.

Now, when I was working as Chief of Staff for the Commission de los Leones in the same setting of the County, also I saw attorneys take their kids, but not to jail. They'd take them to the bench, to the lawyers, to the jury room, that was the exposure that their kids got. That end of the law. But we got the, you know, you're gonna end up here if you don't march right.

TCU: If you don't mind, going back to what we were discussing all the fuming that's all about 6th Street down, the complaints of business owners there. When Anglo business owners complained about loitering there and all of this, did they also complain about when Anglos did the same thing or did they only complain about African Americans in Mexico?

Fernandez: No. It was ... The complaint was driven through an approach of racism. Like I said. And you bought the word that I was looking for: loitering. You know, that was one of the complaints on 6th Street that, you know, undesirable people were loitering and affecting the businesses and patrons wouldn't go to those businesses because they fear these people that loitered, they were loitering around.

TCU: Well, given these prejudices, was there any differential treatment, when, for example, when the Mexican raid house or the African raid house went to Anglo business?

Fernandez: What do you mean? Like?

TCU: Discrimination basically. I mean, if there was this prejudice to people of color, what about the Anglo businesses, was there any discrimination that you-

Fernandez: No, there really wasn't. Most of the small businesses that we patronized were either Mexican American or in those days Lebanese, Lebanese immigrants or people in this community had a lot of the businesses that our grandfathers and mothers would barter with or would have an account ... Again, this is an area where food stamps aren't around, so you end up being creative and innovative in your resources.

We were talking about families were eight, nine, ten per family with a \$1 an hour wage.

We would go every summer to pick ... we would go to Michigan every summer. We would hang out. There's three or four families and every summer around May, later May, we'd take off to Michigan, cherry, pickle, onions, tomatoes, and when you'd go pick tomatoes you'd see the big families, eight, nine ten. Everybody getting their own cart. That's when it dawned on you, oh, no wonder they have. That was the reason why families had large families. Because of the labor part.

We'd go pick cotton. Sam thing. I mean, you would see rows of just endless rows.

TCU: How was that experience for you? What do you recall?

Fernandez: I remember it because I was like in the 5th or 6th grade. That was the last time that we went. And I was too young to work the fields so I just got to observe and hang out with my parents and my other siblings were out there picking cotton.

<https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/experiences-in-education-3>

Part 5 – Migrant Labor/School Walkouts:

TCU: How were the living spaces?

Fernandez: They were small. They were real small, but they were like camps. They were camps. ... And like I said, we would stay one place for maybe one or two months. Maybe the end of the summer maybe three or four weeks and then we'd move on to another. Another farm, another rancho, or they would refer us to somebody else. Maybe they'd need onions to be picked, or sandias or whatever.

TCU: So this was in Michigan. Was the cotton harvest, was that in Texas?

Fernandez: That was in Texas, here. The cotton was here in Texas. In Lockhart, right around Lockhart, in the outskirts of ...

TCU: Were you in the -

Fernandez: There were no child labor laws at that time. Or if there were they weren't implemented.

TCU: But you didn't get, because you were so young, you didn't get to -

Fernandez: Right, but my sisters did. They were 10, 11.

TCU: Was your family able to kind of accommodate the travel around the school schedule or did your siblings or maybe you ever have to miss classes?

Fernandez: No, we would come back before school would start. We would pretty much come back right around the latter part of August, the middle of August. We would get back.

TCU: So was this common of all the families that you remember?

Fernandez: Pretty much, yeah. Because again, you would get two or three families and they'd rent a big old truck. ... Then gradually as time progressed those trips kind of just faded away. There weren't that many going for that type of labor anymore.

TCU: So going back to Johnston, when you were about to finish, so what happened afterward?

Fernandez: After my high school? Well first, when I was in high school, the last year, at Johnston, it had never been celebrated any kind of ethnicity. Cinco de Mayo, or Dieciseis, or Black Month, nothing of that happened. That never occurred during a school setting.

Except for this year, in 1972. February comes before May. So in February at Johnston, they had a big old recognition and celebration of Black Month. The school's like 95 - 96% Mexican-American, the remainder African-American. So when that happened, a lot of the students reacted negatively, and said, you know, Why them and not us?

So when we had the assembly, or when they had the assembly, and started the celebration (the assembly was the kick off) I'd say maybe two or three Latinos attended school that day. Everybody else just didn't show up. Call it a walkout, a boycott, whatever. They just didn't show up because parents feared that there could be trouble. There was only three of us that showed up, Mexican-Americans, that day.

From there, the school assigned us to put a Cinco de Mayo together for the school. And we had a whole week of celebrating Cinco de Mayo. And as a matter of fact, they took the whole school to San Antonio.

I served as chairman of that event, that activity, and at that same time we proposed to rename the school. This was before the Confederate flag was a hip thing. [inaudible 00:04:18] This is '72. So now in 2016 it's probably gonna be changed because it has a Confederate, Albert Sidney Johnston.

TCU: This boycott, how was it organized?

Fernandez: It wasn't. It was just a natural reaction. It just happened. Nobody expected it. Nobody was out there saying hey don't come, nobody was putting leaflets out, it was just word of mouth.

TCU: In your particular case, why did you go?

Fernandez: It was curiosity. I wanted to see what they were going to do. It was just out of curiosity. Like I said, it wasn't no organized effort to say, Hey vendido, or you're weak, it wasn't that. It was just a curiosity. And I guess, courage if you will, and for others just social activity.

TCU: And how did you end up being the chairman for the Cinco de Mayo celebration?

Fernandez: Because the school administration reached out to us to address the fact that a lot of the students didn't show up. They didn't want to see any future tension between the blacks and the Mexican-Americans. And because we were the only ones who showed up, the counselors, who were Latinos at that time, were the ones that were also Mexican-Americans in the '70s, and they had an inner feeling of it wasn't right, but we'll use always the students to carry out the objective of celebrating Cinco de Mayo.

TCU: Aside from the -

Fernandez: - And then from there, I decided I wanted to go to college. Senior, all classes were vocational. Had no understanding of Calculus or anything like that. So I went to ACC. Austin Community (ACC) had just started. So I attended classes and I wanted to, I was going for government and history. Not history, government and business.

<https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/migrant-labor-school-walkouts>

Speaker 6 – Discrimination at Work: Struggles Against:

Fernandez: So I started going, and then all of a sudden, I found myself in a classroom doing something .. I mean, working on something that I was already doing work wise because I was working for the city. I was working for ... I was doing ... Getting involved in government activities. So to me, I found it boring and unsuccessful because I'm not a test person. Yes, A, B, C, all of that. I'm more of a hands on learner. And those were one of the things that back in the day, we didn't have curriculums to teach persons, or people, or students that are more hands on versus successful in testing.

But at those days, that was the only thing you had. So that's why I said, you either fit the mold or you stay behind.

TCU: So how do you start working for a local government?

Fernandez: When I first graduated from high school, like I said, I started ... My father was working at [Zavala 00:01:19] Elementary School as a custodian. And the principal at that time was the late Hermelinda Rodriguez from AISD. She was the first Mexican American principal and the first Mexican American teacher to introduce bilingual education on her own. It wasn't something that the district put on together.

So anyway, when I graduated, they needed a media visual aids person. So she hooked me up. So I started working at Zavala as a AISD video, whatever. I can't remember the title. And I just lived across the street. So I started work ... That's when I started working with them. And then from there, there was ... When I graduated, there was a opening with parks and recreation. And this is after Zavala.

And then I got hired with parks and recreation at [inaudible 00:02:29] which is adjacent to Zavala. So again, I just lived across the street.

So I worked for them for 17 years. I was a program specialist. I would market athletic program ... You know, your traditional softball, adult softball tournaments and flag football and things like that. For adults and youths. And I would give myself no more than 5 years at rec center. I would move around. So I worked east and southeast rec centers. [inaudible 00:03:01] south Austin, Santa Rita. And the department was and still is very racist. So if I wanted to apply for a northwest rec center way up there by Northland Drive or whatever ... Don't even go there. That's not ... You're not even gonna be considered much less ... That was kind of the institutionalized racism. That even still exists today.

But on the flip side, if we had a supervisor position at a rec center and we applied, we wouldn't get the job. They would give it to Anglos that yo hablo Espanol. Oh really? Yeah. Okay. You decide management. They would come and we would teach that person the whole ... How it operated. And a lot of your centers in those days were heavily patronized by people from the neighborhood. So if you weren't known ... And a lot of the supervisors went through a lot of hell because they weren't from the community. And they wanted to set discipline and you weren't gonna set discipline amongst 5, 6 persons that hang around all the time.

But anyway, I started working ... I finished at south Austin back in the eighties. We were the only rec center south of the river. So I was kind of in my own domain out there. I was free. I could market and I did a lot. Within parks, there were five of us minorities, Latinos, females. Within parks we would be ... We were working 40 hours, but only paid 30 hour benefits, okay? So after a while, everybody just started whining. So I said, well, we're all gonna stick together and not abandon the effort. If not, we'll file a case against the city.

So we did and we took it internally. And we took it all the way to the city managers office. And at the end of the day, all seven of us got 40 hours. Six of them got ... Well, all of us got permanent positions. Six of them got supervisor positions. We won the case. We went back to work. I was the only one that remained in a non supervisor position. Everybody else was in on supervisor. You're a supervisor. Okay.

So from there, because I was a union steward as well during that time ... I was a union steward, so some of the fight in order for me not to get to fired, I did under that umbrella.

TCU: [inaudible 00:06:22] In this ... It was a lawsuit against the city?

Fernandez: No, it was an [crosstalk 00:06:27] internal case, if you will.

TCU: So what was your role in the union [inaudible 00:06:35]

Fernandez: At that time, it wasn't the union. We were independent. We took it on our own. Because the union was real ... I don't think we were union at that time. It was around, but I don't think we were members yet.

<https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/discrimination-at-work-struggles-against>

Part 7 – Union Work:

Fernandez: But when I was a steward ... When we were in the union I became a steward. The union here, can't speak for all of them, the majority of the concerns that I would get from members is that their lines manages all the time and it's my fault. They never ... They don't represent us.

TCU: For the record, what union is it?

Fernandez: AFSCME, AFL-CIO.

So, then I started a grievance procedures with the union. And the union here is composed of county and city employees. With county employees being a smaller number. So, anyway, when I got in, the county folks urged me to run for president. And the sitting president was from the city. So, the numbers weren't there to begin with. But, we went ahead and ran. And there's a rule in the union selection newsletter that you can't mention any candidate or show anything, and specifically two newsletters leading to the elections.

Well, our opponent, my opponent, did that. So I, and another member, filed a grievance with the union. And the unions came down from Washington, threw out the elections, came down from Washington D.C., had a hearing here, and then we held another election. The outcome didn't change, but we were right, in that what they did was in violation of the rules for the election.

So, from there, obviously I wasn't the most welcome union member in AFSCME. So, when employees from Parks and Rec started raising those issues, I said, "Well, just give yourselves a raise. Don't worry about it." They said, "What do you mean?" "Pull out of the union". He said, "Well, it's like 15 dollars or 11 dollars a pay period." So, I got about ten or 15 to withdraw from the union.

Well, a month later, I don't know about the history, but I'm probably the only one that has been expelled from the union. I was expelled from the union, by AFSCME. And, so from there, we just took it, pretty much, on our own. Every time I would read a case, or whatever, I would just ... again hands on. It was just experience, I read, I read. And employees, they would come with grievances, and I'd ask em, like a lawyer, "Okay, what is it. Did you? Didn't you? You talking to me? You're not talking to them. You need to give me the truth."

I said, "Because if you did, then what I'm looking for is other employees that committed the same you did, what color are they and how were they treated?" I said, "Don't leave me blank on information, I'll walk in there and they show me stuff that you never told me." You know. So, we were more successful than I'd been with the union. You know, but, our people, for some reason, part of our oppression, is that we're loyal democrats. I mean, I know people that will crawl to the pole, just to vote straight ticket. Don't know, don't care who the candidates are.

So, every time you try to educate people and braking that mold where, obviously you're not part of the train, or the wave, of how you're supposed to go. Hope- I think today y'all are more independent. I'm saying y'all, your generation. But, a lot of it is part of the old oppression that still continues in our lifestyles and it's gonna take generations to break away from that.

TCU: So, all this time you were working for the city, in parks and recreation. Parks and Recreation City of Austin, or?

Fernandez: Yes, it's the Department of the City of Austin. It's the city of Austin.

TCU: Okay. Just putting it in the timeline, so you work, how many years did you spend [crosstalk 00:04:34].

Fernandez: 17

TCU: Oh.

Fernandez: No, with the city? 17. With the union? Oh, my God. Maybe, I guess it was six or seven years, that was a lot. I'd say. So, from there I stayed, like I say, managers at Parks and Rec, supervisors, would come tell me. Because here's the other thing, in my job performance, I would always succeed. Always succeed. And then I would do my grievance work, or my activism, if you will, within the job. So, I would have supervisors come tell me, "You're great at what you do, you just focus your attention in a different area. If you were to stick to your programming ... But, you stray away from that and go into your activism, and that's not ..." They would tell me, "That's not good."

So, I would never get promoted within Parks and Rec, because I was real outspoken. And, like I'd mentioned to you, the rec centers, minorities would only work in minority rec centers. That's the way Parks was. So, right after this issue about not having 40 hours and everything. Montopolis, I don't know if you're familiar with Montopolis Rec Center, it's a Latino, Mexican American community. There's a rec center there and it's a very heavily, not necessarily gang, but, you know, tough, I guess tough area to work in. So, the guy that was working there as a sports coordinator, which was what I was doing, and then said it happened where they literally just kicked his ass. I mean, basketball players. And

I don't know what he did, or what he tried to do, and they just literally kicked his ass, you know. So, they moved him.

So, I get a call. "Hey, you want a full time job? Hey, you want this? Montopolis is open." [inaudible 00:06:53] But, I have family in Montopolis. And even family, again, I didn't grow up there. You know, we're talking about in those days territorial [inaudible 00:07:06]. I come from the east side and I'm going to Montopolis.

<https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/union-work>

Speaker 8 – Work and Elections:

Fernandez: Anyway, because I had family there ... weren't close, but I had family. There was a little bit, kinda like, hands off. But then, on the other hand, I needed that as a city employee, and operating the center, I wasn't gonna be able to go very authoritarian, if you will. You just played it by ear.

So, then there's Palm Park, right here by 35. It's a swimming pool. And at that time, we had a director, Manuel [Molinero 00:00:35], from California [inaudible 00:00:40] and all that.

I saw some hope, within general promotions. So, anyway, the city decided to close the pool. Right before the summer. So my neighborhood association, we all organized and went and fought, argued, for the city to keep the pool open. Keep it open. Keep it open.

And I went and spoke to City Council. So, on Monday, I get a call from the director. "I wanna see you in my office." Okay, I was probably a 35, 36 year old man. I'm going to see the Director. So I go in there, he's sitting, we're talking.

He said, "I understand you'd like to see Palm Park open, kept open?" And I said, "Yeah." And he says, "Oh, okay, but you know we're recommending for it to be closed." I said, "Yes, I know it. But I get this is my neighborhood. I'm vice president of the neighborhood." He said, "Okay."

And this is summer and it's just an open area. And a couple of trees and the swimming pool. And there's a little shed, a little playground. In the summer, you have playground here in Austin. And he says, "Okay, Monday."

Okay and all these parks, like in April, they're already staffed. We are talking about May now. All these parks are already staffed with a supervisor and two program people.

When I go in late May, the director says, "Okay, since you are real fond of Palm Park and all that, Monday, you will report to Palm Park and you will work there until September."

I am being pulled out of a rec center that I have already been there for a while as punishment for my advocacy and going against the department. I worked that whole summer there.

Right around that time, Marcos Zilion, Travis County commissioner ran for commissioner. He had run for numerous offices before, but this time, it was the last being an Austin native, I can say it was the last true grass roots campaign successful effort, homegrown from [inaudible 00:03:10] he was elected Travis County commissioner under the Democratic Party and won by three hundred votes and just shocked the whole system. The day he won Marsala Margo Gomez followed the moyen all these early elected officials. Well, hey, you are not the kind of Mexicans we want representing our people so the day he won, they signaled the Margaret, get ready, you are running against this person.

Turned out, the third year she resigned as constable, got a job with the state. This is democratic party led, providing her these resources. Resign and we gonna get ready cause you're gonna run again. The thing was the first Chicana commissioner, under those [inaudible 00:04:05] we were voted out. Before that, when I was still at parks, when the commissioner won, I had maybe fifteen years with the city, maybe more and he asked me to go work for him and I said I can't lose all my years. I am vested and everything.

A year passed and that session, the legislator passed a law that said that any public employee that moves to any government entity, will maintain their seniority so it was right timing and he call me because his first chief of staff had moved on. He was an attorney. So he called me and said "Hey, I would like for you to come work for me," but this law was already in place. I was still with parks, with parks, I was like one foot in and one foot out.

The supervisor that was really racist and believe it or not, he is still there, never kept me from moving up. There is a policy within the city that says I have to give two weeks notice in order for me to maintain, not lose my benefits that I have accrued or I can go to the supervisor and he can sign to waive all that. One morning I go to him and I said, "I need you to sign this." He says "What is it?" I said "I am resigning." He said "No you're not. How can you resign?" Kind of like, "I own you. How can you do... I own you, how can you do... How can you just resign. You can't resign." I said "Just sign the damn thing. They didn't know nothing about where I was going so he signed it.

That morning I was like at eight dollars, nine dollars an hour. I took the paper and that afternoon I went to the county and went up to twelve dollars an hour in that one day. It stayed like that. Two days later, we hired our staff and the

commissioner sends Monda Rosa, one of ours, to go get your stuff from the Rec Center. She goes up there and says, "Hey, I am here to pick up Gavino's materials and stuff. I am his secretary and he is working with Travis County Commissioner. Boom, I mean, now they are calling me Sir. The same guy who signed the paper is calling me Sir because now I work for an elected official.

<https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/work-and-elections>

Part 9 – Electoral Politics, Discrimination, and Disparities:

TCU: I think one very interesting point when we were talking about the election in which Mr. De Leon won. You said one of the last true grass roots campaigns, can you describe in the context of Austin what's a true grass roots?

Fernandez: Senoras y Sando having fundraisers, phone banking, going door to door. Relatives, people that probably haven't even voted. It was a true, grass roots. You didn't have a Gonzalo. See Gonzalo, Muya, Raul. Todos se yos un, what the gringos call carpetbaggers.

They come to Austin. They either go to school here, come to Austin, and some Democrat from the party says hey you're marketable. You come speak for these people. Gonzalo, Muya, Margaret, Raul Alvarez, and you ask what have they done? No se nada.

The reason the democrat liberal environmentalist from this community puts them in office is because of that. [inaudible 00:01:21] nada. They're just there, so for the last 45 years our voice has been silent, because they, Eddies from McAllen. De La Garza's from McAllen. We always say McAllen has two state reps, theirs and the one here.

The only thing I tell Eddie, or the only thing that we have in common is that we've been in jail before. Eddie got busted for a DWI. Gonzalo got busted for a DWI, and got re-elected again. And here's Marcos, family man, never been to jail. Probably, I have a saying, he's so clean he you could get a napkin right between his cheeks it still come out white.

But, he's not one of those I'm gonna do what you asked me to do. I'm gonna speak for and defend the people. So Marco was real instrumental legally in closing the tank farm, and closing the power plant.

Now racism, environmental racism, you have SOS, you have Barton Springs, you have the Sierra Club, and they had one I called Green Piss or Green Peace. So Austin is very SOS, environmentally conscious. As of today not one of those organizations, not that we've asked for it, has

acknowledged the effort of poor people closing a power plant that was polluting, and killing, and causing cancer to a community.

Yet, the same people, environmentalists where at one time fighting a proposal to build nine plants throughout the whole state of Texas. You know the same people that live in Austin, wait a minute, so you're telling them don't build this because you're going to do what we did to them. Is that what you're telling me?

Smitty, you ever heard the name Smitty? He was the, he's a long time environmentalist, he's real active in the legislature, and he's kind of seen as the environmentalist guru, whatever. I can't remember the name of his organization.

But anyway, none of them had even gone there, but had that not been for the grass roots people of the barrio, that we grew up with, and then the Halloween fire that's what got it.

TCU: Well I don't mean to ask for your account of this whole process to get rid of the tank farm.

Fernandez: Okay.

TCU: And the role of Mr. De Leon and you.

Fernandez: Okay, okay, okay. The tank farm, it was a (foreign language). So [inaudible 00:04:36] has an environmental group here, and Ron Davis who is commissioner now, Ron Davis.

TCU: Do you want us to stop?

Fernandez: No. Ron Davis, African American. So they both kind of started the grass roots effort of organizing to close it, and have rallies, and have protests, this and that. And even within the Mexican American communities, there's friction, or fractions you know?

So, it went to a certain extreme to know where it went into how do we shut them down? We already protested, we already did that, we already did that. Well commissioner De Leon put it on the Charters County Commissioner's agenda to get keynote in the trans-county attorney funding to file a lawsuit against the tank farm.

And, commissioner De Leon was able to secure the unanimous vote of the court to make the funding available to Ken, and then Ken took on as the county attorney, and came out at the end of the day with a plan to shut down the tank farm.

And, then commissioner was told by lawyers and what not that, that was the death note to your political career, so don't even ask, because a lot of these people give moneys, donations involved.

So, that was one of the attacks we started getting while we were in office, the many people. So, they shut it down, but it's there, but they've never done anything other than just shut it down.

<https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/electoral-politics-discrimination-and-disparities>

Part 10 – Holly Power Plant, Austin, TX:

Fernandez: And the for the Holly Power Plant we had a fire, Halloween fire, one of the tanks leaked oil and all along we've been asking for it to be shut down since 1970, okay. We had four turbines and when they all four ran we had 120 decibels of noise. I could sit on my porch 'cause I lived two lots from the plant, my dad did and we couldn't carry a conversation and when I was working with Commissioner I, like I said I was making a little bit more, my father had a sister in Portland Oregon, and back in the day she got married, took off, and he had never seen her in about 40 years. So we found her. We did some research and found the family and I told my dad we'll go up there. So I bought tickets and he said, "Yeah, I'll go." The day of, I go pick him up and he says, "No, I'm not going" He said, "I've never flown. I don't want to fly and I'm not going." So I said, "I got the tickets."

Anyways, long story short, we left and we got seats next to the big old jet things. So as we're taking off, he says, "You know what, it's not that bad. You know the flight is not that bad. As a matter of fact it kind of me sitting on my porch and the Holley Power Plant running." So at that time we asked for it to be shut immediate 'cause of the fire and the counsel and all that said it is paid for, bringing in a billion dollar revenue a year and there were two things that faced us at that time. The generators have a 25 year lifetime, so the fire and that timeframe kind of came together. So the city had to make a decision. Do we fire 'em up again, bring a new generator or do we shut it down. So with all the public arse ... And see all these fights, all these environmental fights, no Sierra Club, no [inaudible 00:02:23], no SOS, nobody. We did it all on our own. So then we went to counsel. Mayor Bruce Todd was the Mayor.

Gus Garcia was a city council member and they said, "We're not gonna shut it down today. We'll shut it down in 10 years, but during those 10 years we're gonna make a million dollars available to the community for infrastructure, streets, sidewalks, whatever. Things that you would say, "Hey well let's actually get them anyway. I'm a citizen of Austin." And for housing. So it started off pretty good. The relationship. All the homes got storm windows. No questions asked. All the homes got ... It was noise mitigation and every home was also being visited for weather safety. Now there were some homes that they had a cap like 40,000 on weather safety. If a home exceeded more than that, they would tear down the

home, build a new home and it was a 15 year forgivable loan. The first five year, there was a Lilly down by the river and politics came into place so a lot of the funding went to the Lilly and we would argue as home owners that "Hey this wasn't for that."

Anyway, we got a new electric department director. Jesus his name was, Jesus and his daughter happened to be married with one of our community leaders, 'cause I don't know where he came from. Cortulua, he's from Cortulua. So he said, " You know what, out of the million, 500,000 for sure is going to housing every year, every year. So the remaining part ... You have Gus Garcia, and then you have Raul A. Reyes, and then you have Mike Martinez in that order. So when they went into office, they learned that, that one counsel member had a say on how to spend almost \$500,000 every year.

TCU: Why them specifically?

Fernandez: Because he was a Mexican on the counsel. Remember we didn't have single member districts back then. Any problems that I had, I had to go to the Mexican. Any problem the black had, he'd go to the black, 'cause if you would go to another one, they'd ask you, have you gone to ... And you say, "No." They say, "Well." But anyway, what happened is that we would still criticize the city for what they were doing with the plant. We didn't get quiet. So gradually what happened is that they started making funds available to nonprofits that would provide services within the boundaries, 'cause we had a boundary of where the money should be spent and they would give those moneys to every and all organizations except us.[inaudible 00:05:47].

TCU: What organization are we talking about specific in this case?

Fernandez: We're talking about like Valley East company out of Metz Recreation Center. Home grown boy. I mean these are home grown organizations, most of them. [spanish 00:06:06]. The other ones are Velasquez family. They put on their [inaudible 00:06:11] in Cinco De Mayo fiesta garments. They would get \$50,000 a year, no questions asked. The festival could be rained out and you get \$50,000. Why? Because we want to make sure those sons of bitches don't get no money, okay. So kept going, kept going, and we ended up ... Even Mike Martinez the last before this whole change. Some of our community people would go and publicly attack him. "You're a disgrace to our race. You're not Chicano. Publicly you've been deal." Well obviously he's human. So he told me and Marcel, he said, " Anything that [inaudible 00:07:05] ask for y'all ain't gonna get shit," and he lived up to it.

<https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/holly-power-plant-austin-tx>

Part 11 – Elected Officials:

Fernandez: So, when he ran for mayor, [Atler 00:00:09] [inaudible 00:00:09], he didn't win because Atler. He won because there was a strong negative [inaudible 00:00:17] [Martinez 00:00:17] in the community, I mean big time. [Perro 00:00:24], everything that we've done environmentally and just for our quality of life, the gringo term, quality of life, what's that? We've done our own. No funding. We don't go like [inaudible 00:00:43] and receive \$40,000 a year.

I would ask all the environmentalists...At one time, I was with ANC, Austin Neighborhood's Council, and they said we need a minority. We don't have minorities in our group. And we'll assure you a board seat, a vice president seat on the board. It's a real good friend of ours, Richard [McCowan 00:01:07], real nice guy, liberal. I said, okay, I'll go. But, my reasons for going was to learn how they did it. How did they, as neighborhood associates, navigate the city system to get what they want or lobby or whatever. So, I was with them and I was testing the waters, testing the waters, and they have, it's ANC president, vice president one, two and three. So when I was there I was one, two and three, three, two and one.

When I went back three, two and one, the guy says, he's a real good friend of mine, he says, hay, it's your turn. You should be president of ANC. Now, remember, these are all white neighborhoods, and the founder and the mother of that organization is Jackie Goodman and Jack Goodman, white liberals from back in the day. I said, no, I'm not gonna be no stage for nobody. I know who runs this operation. Me, being the...? No. So I didn't go there.

My last activity with them was they wanted to recognize at this time Jackie Goodman 'cause she had already finished her term at the council and she's the neighborhood and they wanted to make her a lifetime member. I said, okay, well, I have a candidate myself, Marcos [inaudible 00:02:35]. He was a [Travis 00:02:37] County Commissioner, he's president of [East Town Lake 00:02:39]. Same credentials as Ms. Goodman. Oh, what has Marcos done? Maybe nothing for you but he's done different neighborhood.

At the end of the day, they just select her, so they had the ceremony at some restaurant. You could see the divide, big tables [inaudible 00:03:01]. So when they make the presentation to her, [inaudible 00:03:05] clap except all the Chicanos over here just sat down.

But, her today, today's politics, it's the liberal, liberal won't let you hand go. The liberal will bring you along, but once you're at the same level, hey, we didn't want to train to get that astute or that right to be at my level. It's like [inaudible 00:03:32], the politics of [inaudible 00:03:35]. Sitting senator, protocol is the congressman's seat opens for the sitting senator [inaudible 00:03:47]. Well, here's [inaudible 00:03:47], supreme court justice, liberal Travis County. Money, that's the [inaudible 00:03:55] of Austin, Watson and [inaudible 00:04:00].

So I end up on [inaudible 00:04:01]. And then they had their meetings, and I just portray 'cause I know, hey, I wasn't there, I could have probably been a fly on the wall but I don't have to because I know the policy. Hey, where you going? No, sit down. You ain't going nowhere. Sit your ass down. We got [inaudible 00:04:29], he's gonna run for congressman. He's got two million dollars. You're done. [Spanish inaudible 00:04:40] to protest 'cause they had [Spanish inaudible 00:04:46].

So, Mike Martinez, same thing. Mike Martinez is the mayor [inaudible 00:05:04], you know, the democrats, they were...I'm gonna run for mayor. [Lefenwealth 00:05:09] which was his side buddy on the council all the time, there's no I'm going to [Atler 00:05:14]. He said, Michael [inaudible 00:05:19], sit down. You ain't going nowhere. This is a power [Spanish inaudible 00:05:25].

But, see, those are your carpetbaggers. Let the liberals help finance and run the elections to supposedly speak on our behalves and represent us. Yet they on their own, you can do research, and find any bill that [inaudible 00:05:54] passed during his ten years as a legislator. The only thing he could pass were resolutions to recognize somebody that was there or something. Not one...The only thing that [inaudible 00:06:06] did during his tenure was accomplish a \$90,000 a year retirement. That's it. Margaret Gomez, what has she done [inaudible 00:06:21] commissioner? Nothing. [Spanish inaudible 00:06:25] Why? Because of machines, the liberals, she's passed us, she ain't gonna hurt us, you know?

A lot of the stuff that we've done has been not only fighting the system but fighting our own, you know? But when they run for office, [inaudible 00:06:49] why are you here?

<https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/elected-officials>

Part 12 – Hispanic Representatives:

Fernandez: Jean Enajosa [Jean Hinojosa]. Democratic party. [00:00:07 foreign language] M Gomez says, she wants to meet you, I'm at the ... Finally, okay let's go sit down. So we sat down, we talked.

I said, Well you're in the wrong place. What are you doing here? Aqui no hay votos. East Austin, election day, one of their boxes kills five of ours.

Well but I want to win if you can, so okay

So, entonces, we endorsed her. We worked with her. We endorsed her, we didn't work with her. And then ... there was ... what was it that she did? Well once she got on the school board - oh and she was filing because they were gonna close her kids' school. In [inaudible 00:00:50] so that's where she came.

So the Democratic party is non-partisan when it comes to local non-partisan elections. So the party can't endorse her, alright, they can't. But if she makes the approach, and the liberals make the approach- so I was the precinct chair at that time. So [00:01:15 foreign language] and she calls me, Hey, I need your vote. I said, Okay. So I voted.

And the rule is that, well there was a motion that was made, well you know the game of, I make a motion to suspend all rules. Actually, no, okay? And then they say, okay here's our policy: We don't do this, but if we don't have, if only one precinct chair objects, we have to go through a whole process of doing her endorsement. Because if we endorse her, well obviously she's gonna be on the Democratic ticket, you know, of all the listings that say, vote for this. So I promised alright.

[00:01:59 foreign language] George Washington, from the black ... he says no. So then the liberal consultants they went [00:02:10 foreign language] And then, I'd like to change my vote. [00:02:20 foreign language]

Majority minority school board, closes Allan Elementary School. Of all the areas that we need a school for education, it's in the barrio. So I called her out. While other powers to be, Anglos called them out, but when I call em out, [00:02:49 foreign language] The vengeance [00:02:52 foreign language] And it's engraved in their minds for life. [00:02:59 foreign language] Oh, we can agree to disagree. Oh, si.

And all that exists today, you know. I work as an election judge [00:03:17 foreign language] that's what I do. So every time people go vote from this area- okay 2201 Santarita, Blue-eyed, blonde [00:03:28 foreign language]. Oh, well she sold her house to us. Really? [00:03:32 foreign language] See? So ours hasn't really been activism and that, it's been fighting for our land.

And every time I go to council and all that, you know, member of the conciglia, member of this, member of - no. I'm a landowner, and I'm here to represent my vested interest. My fiduciary vested interest in the land that I own. And collectively we form el consiglio, because there's about maybe thirty or forty of us, Austin natives, born and raised, that have land and this is our fight.

TCU: Can you tell us more about the consiglio?

Fernandez: El consiglio was born in about 1972. It was a product of the [inaudible 00:04:26]. And basically what happened is that we would end up at City Council or planning commission and we all saw that [00:04:40 foreign language] you know we all know each other, so we formed the group. It's

an umbrella of Mexican-American neighborhood associations. And this was born before Austin neighborhoods council.

So [00:05:00 foreign language] the credit for ingenuity and creativity. Because they don't teach the creativity in schools. So, not to go off more, but I used to work with this kid when we would go to the rec center. Fifteen, drop out, run out of school, met the stereotype of gang member so every time he tried to do something he was always labeled. Finally he dropped out. Fifteen years later I run into him at a construction site. He's an electrician. A master electrician, with a masters license. Has a company, at that time had ten employees. You know, [00:05:46 foreign language] Math is one language.

See, so when you're instructing, it's like if I tell you go to a certain place and they have some kind of stigma or whatever, when you go you're expecting all of that. You're not going there with a virgin sense of where you're gonna go into because you already have some.

So that empowered us as landowners, so we'd go to council and after a while we became less- we moved a little further up when we ran candidates. At one time we had Marcos as County Commissioner and we had Diana Castanera on the school board. She recently just passed away. She was the first Mexican-American on the school board when single member districts came into play. Because before her, there was de la Raza, and there was some others.

So, it was a tag team. [00:06:58 foreign language] We ran for state rep, and we were in the run-offs. So all along, Moya, [inaudible 00:07:25] who aren't from here, who are Democratic party loyalists to the Anglos, are kind of like freaking out. So [inaudible 00:07:16] puts out a letter saying, these are not the people that we want, that you want to represent you. I still have the letter, I kept it.

<https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/hispanic-representatives>

Part 13 – Politicians and Activism:

TCU: Where was this later disseminated or where was it published?

Fernandez: What?

TCU: The letter.

Fernandez: No, he...

TCU: It wasn't internal communication?

Fernandez: No no no, it was out to the community. He used his mailing list that he had as a state rep.

TCU: In the east?

Fernandez: Uh huh. In this precincts.

TCU: Okay.

Fernandez: In the areas that we ran a candidate.

TCU: When was this?

Fernandez: This was like in between 75 and 1980. And when Marcos was commissioner, the part never embraced him. The party would have fundraisers, and they'd go around asking candidates to buy ads for the book except him. I don't know how, you know? We don't need one. But we had what they didn't have. We have land. They're renters.

TCU: You mentioned that in [inaudible 00:01:12] wasn't part of the Brown Berets. What was your relationship with the Brown Berets?

Fernandez: In 1972, no it was later, I became a member of the Brown Berets. But then right after that, when Ace and I became a bureaucrat. That's when I started working for the city.

TCU: How many years were you a Brown Beret?

Fernandez: I'd say about maybe three or four. We were real active. We had like center Chicano, it was basically a como se llama? I'll remember the word but it was an academic facility. It was after-school programs. We were doing all these programs before they became popular at the schools to do after-school programs. We had women, young women in the Berets at that time. We would have a festival [inaudible 00:02:26] in Mexico. (Speaking Spanish [00:02:30]) For this day, I'm going to have a celebration.

I kind of lost my train of thought.

TCU: You were talking about there were after-school activities.

Fernandez: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That the Brown Berets operated. Yeah.

TCU: So how was the structure? Who recruited you or how did you join and who was the...

Fernandez: You were recruited. It wasn't like, "hey, I wanna join." No no. You were vetted, and what's more, your commitment. It was more of a philosophy. You had to have conciencia. Obviously promoting us as people that we were and that had academic and creativity within ourselves. We were innovative, big time. When you don't have what you don't have, you create it. You innovate. As of today, we never asked for funding. We would do our own if we needed to buy this or that. I had set out a plate lunch, feed all those people for four or five dollars and those were the true grassroots campaigns that we ran. Our only obstacles from the political process [inaudible 00:04:12].

So today, he's retired. I know him, his son worked with him, I was with [inaudible 00:04:20] at the rec center. So I got to know him real well. I said "how can I help you" because we had issues at work. But he was our biggest cutthroat within the party for opportunities and all that, no. No. Even today I call him up. If he happens to be at UT or somewhere giving a speech when I'm there? I call him out. Because of you, we're quiet. Because of your politics, we're going through this gentrification.

All this gentrification is happening under all those Latino leaderships. Por que? Because that's why they were put in office. And when you're there, they can't count to five. At the court, they can't count to three. You say, "wait a minute, I wanna run for commissioner."

"Well can you count to three?"

"What do you mean? I can count..."

"No, can you count to three? Can you get three votes? Because that's what you need to pass the commissioners."

And at the council, it's a little bit more. But we've been able to survive because we're able to expose it. And people are coming in new that we educate. We educate, I educate them about it. And once [inaudible 00:06:06] stand up and say you're lying, because he's never been able to. Our biggest foundation is we're landowners. Whether it's consiga, whether it's a town lake or whether it's our race, because you know uses that more? That argument as a leverage? I'm a landowner. "Oh, okay, shit, we are too." We're millionaires. Those of us that have been able to hold on to our properties, we're asset-rich but cash poor.

<https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/politicians-and-activism>

Part 14 – Inequalities in Austin:

TCU: Mr. Hernandez, as we enter the home stretch of the interview, I wanted to ask about contemporary issues and you've mentioned gentrification. But I was

curious, since the change in single member districts, has the dynamics, that relationship with city council changed?

Fernandez: You know that old saying, "Be careful what you ask for"? We, El Concilio, cannot get an audience with any of the three son of a bitches that are up there. De la Garza, Cerza, [Spanish 00:00:35] Pio. [Spanish 00:00:36] Pio's the democratic party. When Pio ran into a run on with his sister, Doggett came in with his resources, his money. He says, [Spanish 00:00:45].

Today, Jackie Goodman, when de la Garza ran in Dove Springs, I don't know if you're familiar with the dynamics of Dove Springs. It's probably our poorest neighborhood area. Rentals, section eight, [Spanish 00:01:03] the whole nine yards. Attorney del Valle, firefighter, union to the max, Jackie was her treasure... Because see, the liberals didn't want single-member districts 'cause they had control of the core city. They had a 20,000 vote base. With single-member districts, that split that up. So, they restructured [Spanish 00:01:39], "How we gonna get our power?"

They went to the runner-up, de la Garza, and after a year, de la Garza's up for reelection, [Spanish 00:01:53] newspaper or whatever an article... Jackie will no longer be at the planning commission to address this issue 'cause she's not gonna be working in de la Garza's office.

[Spanish 00:02:05] Be a fly on the wall. "Hey, bitch, you ain't doing your job, so I'm gonna have to go work in there or I'll run against your ass. What are you gonna do?" Well, I'll hire you. Okay. De la Garza does not represent 'la raza.' She's representing Jackie Goodman, the environmental racist agenda. You familiar with agenda 21? Research it. [Spanish 00:02:32] 'cause it's a long story. [Spanish 00:02:35] it's pretty much Al Gore's climate change and this United Nations' agenda where it calls for decrease in population, zoning density, all that, which is what happened here...

The density, you know what our density is? No? Our density is we sleep four or five to a room. You know? We don't come and change zoning where you can build. And that's what happened here. [Spanish 00:03:08] That's why... they call it gentrification. I call it genesis. 'Cause that's what it is.

If you go to the [inaudible 00:03:20] webpage and look under "Genesis," there's an office of genesis, and they'll give you actions that lead to genesis.

The interpretation we know of genesis is, "Oh, they're killing people." Yeah, that's one, but there's others: changing rules, changing taxations, changing zoning, causing a certain population to no longer be there... That's genocides.

James Barragan, Austin American-Statesman, he's a writer, chicano from LA, [Spanish 00:03:55]. Met with him a couple of times and I explained to him, "Oh,

[Spanish 00:04:01], the [inaudible 00:04:03] not gonna allow me to put genocides in there." Okay, thank you. That's Austin.

But that's what it is, it's genocides. 'Cause our people [Spanish 00:04:15]. Look at our schools. They're empty. Sanchez, 40 percent capacity. Metz, 50. Zavala, I saw the other teachers say, "I don't know what we're gonna do. We're at 25 percent capacity." So, what's gonna happen with all these schools? Eventually, something's gotta happen. [Spanish 00:04:37].

We are real strong school choice advocates. [Spanish 00:04:47]. I said, "No, no, no, no." UT Elementary right across the street. We brought it in, El Concilio. UT wanted to come in [Spanish 00:05:00] 'cause we went to Burgaw at that time and I told them what I told you: we want more out of UT, we're your social incubator. So, two years later [Spanish 00:05:12] "Hey, we wanna bring a charter school to you, to East Austin." Gonzalo was against it, our school board members, [Spanish 00:05:20]... man, the whole fucking union, the teachers. They sent parents to criticize it and denounce it and then no, we don't want it. But, hey, you take [Spanish 00:05:31]? Gonzalo, he's just a Mexican that happens to be a state rep, our Senator.

When we went to Texas School Board of Education, they're the ones who give the license, we went in and spoke in favor of it [Spanish 00:05:48] and they were against it. They said, "Chairman [Spanish 00:05:53], do you realize, if this happens, who your school board is gonna be?"

I said, "No, sir."

"It's gonna be the Board of Regents of the University of Texas. That's gonna be your school board."

Okay... [Spanish 00:06:09] It's a two-way thing [Spanish 00:06:12] UT. One, it's research from the UT and will be dishing out the top curriculums and the most modern teaching methods [Spanish 00:06:25] and for your kids, they're gonna be our guinea pigs. They'll be receiving the best, up-to-date teaching methods in the industry.

The same kids that go there that went to Zavala that were failing are exceeding. And naturally, they go from here, they go to Southwest Keys... Are you familiar with Southwest Keys? It's a non-charter school, latino, Juan Sanchez, Dr. Sanchez... So, Alita [Spanish 00:06:56] she's like, "We're losing our students." Yeah, but it's a choice, it's a parent's choice.

<https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/inequalities-in-austin>

Part 15 – Problems That Persist Today:

Fernandez: They know how to best educate the parents. When you go to public schools they tell you, "Those are my kids." I said, 'Bullshit, they're not your kids. They're the parents' kids. You just happen to teach 'em. You don't own them.'

We were gonna have a summit. We had a summit, and they want to participate because we had school choice as one of the workshops, and we said, [Spanish 00:00:28].

Oh, no, no, no, no, no, no, we are not gonna have that workshop. In my schools? School choice? Gonna have the Texas director of school choice at this one meeting with AISD. Oh, no, no, no, no, no, [Spanish 00:00:42]. We had a meeting with him, [Spanish 00:00:48]. Oh no, it's just not gonna happen. We are literally go back to the drawing board later because we've already been told yes.

Now, let me get off of that. [Spanish 00:01:00] because they say it's my families. Wait a minute, the families that have kids at UT and have kids at [Savale 00:01:20]. Now whose family is that? Is that AISD or is it UT Elementary? No, no, no [Spanish 00:01:30].

So right now that's a big, big issue. AISD's losing kids big-time, and the majority are Mexicans. [Spanish 00:02:06] Republican friends cause I'm non-partisan [Spanish 00:02:10]. Cause he sent [Spanish 00:02:12]. Okay, we're gonna ship everybody out, deport 'em, and all this shit. I said 'Okay,' I said 'Do you know that the majority of students in charter schools are Mexican immigrants? So you going to shut down all the schools? "Well, I never thought about that."

So, [Spanish 00:02:36]. I'll finish with this. Smitty, Tom Smitty, [Spanish 00:03:10] and do research. Tom Smitty, public [Spanish 00:03:14]. Back in the day, [Spanish 00:03:17] for City Council in 2003. He wrote on the form the environment and [Spanish 00:03:23]. And I was running against [Spanish 00:03:27], they're selected Latino. [Spanish 00:03:31]. Oh, let me go tell Tom, [Spanish 00:03:40]. Oh okay. [Spanish 00:03:43] Oh, he said okay, okay, okay. [Spanish 00:03:47]. This is yours.

I said, 'oh, really?' [Spanish 00:03:53]. Years later [Spanish 00:03:55]. It was second hand. [Spanish 00:04:05] We're looking for somebody to come speak at this rally, the [Spanish 00:04:11] and looked like one, looked like two, looked like [inaudible 00:04:14] five. Learn how to bait them. [Spanish 00:04:16]. Say I'll tell the lady [Spanish 00:04:19] information. That's all the information [Spanish 00:04:22] on the agenda.

[Spanish 00:04:24] Friday, I get a call. [Spanish 00:04:50]. Friday I get a call around 10 am. I was working the elections. Says [Cavino 00:04:55]? I say yeah. "This is Tom Smitty." 'How you doing Tom?' Right, right. "Listen, we had a meeting last night and we were going over the list of speakers." And I'm like 'My God, you know?' [Spanish 00:05:08] you know?

He said "You know, they advised me that we have too many men speaking. We don't have enough women. Do you think [Lulife 00:05:18] has a strong woman that could come speak?" In other words, [Spanish 00:05:23]. You know [Spanish 00:05:24] telling me [Spanish 00:05:25] in and about. [Spanish 00:05:28].

You know what? I have to call around. Let me call around and see, cause a lot of people aren't available. He goes "you know what? I'm so amazed at how you're taking this, with no objections." [Spanish 00:05:42] I'll come around. I said, 'but you know what? It's gonna [Spanish 00:05:49] transgender connection there.

He goes "but do you know what, good thing you mentioned the fact that there weren't enough women on the list." [Spanish 00:05:59] He goes "But you know what, Sunday? I'm a fucking woman. I'm transgender. And I'm a woman Sunday. Does that still keep me off the list?" And I said 'okay'. [Spanish 00:06:21]

We have succeeded without their help. But that's Austin, and we're going to genocides.

<https://crbb.tcu.edu/clips/problems-that-persist-today>

Part 16 – Final Remarks:

Fernandez: And that's why they say [Spanish 00:00:02]. Man, when you walk in, man these goddamn windows, they shatter. They say, I envy you because when you walk in [Spanish 00:00:10]. But it shouldn't be that way, you know?

So no matter what choices, it's education, education, education, education. All these social programs, they keep you in the poverty cycle. They keep you in the poverty cycle. In Mexico [Spanish 00:00:33]. It's an entrepreneurship that's a cultural thing in [Spanish 00:00:42] we'll talk about the relationship between Mexicans and Chicanos. It ain't there.

The Mexican [Spanish 00:00:53], the immigration reform to ourselves. I'm going to see how they going to react with our [Spanish 00:01:04]. You know [spanish 00:01:06] from China. [Spanish 00:01:08]. You know? [Spanish 00:01:17]. Immigration reform, I don't know if you heard it, immigration rights? [Spanish 00:01:26]. He said, "Man, I can't believe this". You know? I can't believe it's 2016 and here this [Spanish 00:02:01] has this Mexican pulling at him or her like a little dog. [Spanish 00:02:06].

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