

Latino Roots

Interview Audio transcription

Mike Santino

March 7, 2011

This Interview was conducted on February 21, 2011 in the house of Jose and Kelly Carlos. The abbreviation M, is for Mike Santino, the interviewer. J. is for Jose Carlos, the interviewee. K. is for Kelly Carlos, who interpreted for the interview. Jose asked for Kelly to interpret because he can speak Spanish better than English. Notes in [] (brackets) are my additions to the interview for clarification.

M. We are recording. This is Latino Roots oral history interview. This is Michael Santino performing the interview. Could you state your name please?

J. My name is Jose Carlos

M. And translating for us today.

K. Kelly Carlos.

J. [Jose begins strumming the guitar and singing a song for about five minutes]

M. Beautiful, Thank you.... Can you tell me about the song.

J. (in Spanish)

K. I would like to introduce myself. My name is Jose Carlos Sandoval.

J.

K. I am the captain of a group called the Ritual Dance of Huitzilopochtli.

J.

K. It is a traditional group rooted from Jalisco, Mexico.

J.

K. We have the permission from and the strength of our general Rosendo Placencia.

J.

K. The song is about when our Americas were conquered.

J.

K. The Aztec Dance and from the origins of the Chichimeca.

J.

K. Some also call the conchera dance or the traditional dance.

J.

K. Is a mix from indigenous cultures and from modern Spanish cultures.

J.

K. 500 years ago our ancestors were the Michicas from Tenochtitlan.

J.

K. They left us these dance traditions.

J.

K. And thanks to the people, the conceheros.

J.

K. They saved these traditions after the Spanish conquest.

J.

K. Or some of us call the invasion.

J.

K. The song reminds us that when the Spanish conquerers came, we opened the doors for them.

J.

K. They opened the doors of their homes and they opened the doors of their hearts.

J.

K. And it speaks for the story about when Ferdinand Cortez, the Spanish conqueror, went to meet with the the other leaders.

J.

K. The armadillo conch guitar.

J.

K. 500 years ago it wasn't actually an instrument.

J.

K. But the Spaniards that came, they outlawed the use of the tall standing drums so they were forced to switch to the armadillo guitar.

J.

K. And that is how they were able to save the sounds of and the rhythm of all the dances. Instead of using the drum, they could use it with the guitar.

M. They recorded the history of the culture.

K. Umhuh

J.

K. That is how the tradition was saved.

J.

K. They say that the armadillo was like a warrior.

J.

K. And it protects itself with its own shell.

J.

K. And they say it also refers to love.

J.

K. And they also our our grandfathers say that the armadillo um gave 4 and 4 ?

J.

K. Oh, when they gave birth, they always have birth in four children, four offspring.

J.

K. The Armadillo is very symbolic.

J.

K. So even when the Spaniards and the Catholics brought the cross, they always believed in the four directions and the significance of four.

J.

K. So for some people, it was not difficult to accept the change.

J.

K. So as the song says, when, you know, when America was conquered, we opened our doors.

M. There was a story you told me about during our last interview, when the Spanish came, and they separated the people, and the Spanish think with their mind and not their hearts, could you tell me that again.

J.

K. We are accustomed to looking to some oral traditions, oral stories, legends passed down, because all the people were not accustomed to reading.

J.

K. When the Spaniards arrived they brought slaves.

J.

K. Which were brothers from Africa.

J.

K. And when they came to invade, Mexico from Tenochtitlan.

J.

K. Most of the warriors were already dead, because of the, not only because of the battles, but because of the, the sicknesses, the diseases.

J.

K. And some of our ancestors and grandparents say that a lot of the women were were abused or violated by the ?men.

J.

K. And that is where the word Mestizo was born, for the people who are mixed blood.

J.

K. And I also grew up as a Mestizo, as a mixed blood.

J.

K. But I like to believe my heart is indigenous.

J.

K. And my job and my community and my life.

J.

K. To learn about my traditions.

J.

K. That were taken away.

J.

K. And also to be able to share them.

J.

K. To share them with the people in the community.

J.

K. And according to some other oral legends that our grandparents say.

J.

K. So even the Spaniards that were in Mexico were no longer called Spaniards, but creoles.

J.

K. Those that were born in the new world.

J.

K. And those that were of mixed blood, indigenous and Spanish blood.

J.

K. And anyone who was born from Africa was called the blacks.

J.

K. And when the African race began to mix with the other indigenous and European races, they were called Mulatos.

J.

K. And that is where all the social classes began with the mixing of peoples.

J.

K. And indigenous people were called Indians and people with other colors were called Mulatos or black.

J.

K. Most of the oral legends were passed down in front of the fire.

J.

K. He said since the Spanish were looking for India, sometimes they somehow confuse us with the Indians from India.

J.

K. He says that, I am so glad that they were looking for India and not the country Turkey because they would have called us Turkeys.

J.

K. And so even to this day a lot of the people are known as the Indians. (chuckle)

J.

M. Thank you for sharing that. Did the survey that we did before kind of got into a life history of how, where you were born, about your father, his surgery, coming from, a... your brother and sisters name, your grandparents, you told me about your grandmother is 100 % indigenous, they came from San Martín de Bolaños.

J. San Martín de Bolaños.

M. Yeah, so that story, could you tell me that story.

J.

K. I was born in Guadalajara, but my parents are from a town called San Martín de Bolaños.

J.

K. San Martín de Bolaños is close to the other state. It is on the border of Jalisco and Nayarit close to the mountains.

M. Occidental.

J. Uh Huh, Sierra Mountains.

J.

K. My father Jose Carlos Salcedo was married to my mother Maria De La Luz Sandoval.

J

K. And they had ten children

J.

K. Six Women and four men.

J.

K. Not counting those who were not born.

J.

K. I am the ninth of ten children.

J. Sciendo, Roberto Carlos, Martha Carlos, et. al.

K. No need to translate all the names. (laugh)

J.

K. My father worked in curing leather.

J.

M. That was a tradition that was handed down.

K. That was a tradition handed down to him.

J.

K. And my grandfather, may his soul rest, named Christino Carlos.

J.

K. He left the traditions to his son, of curing hides.

J.

K. My father suffered from a disease, from a sickness.

J.

K. So the reason why they left their small town because there was no, there was only a small clinic and there was no real doctors or hospitals.

J.

K. So in the hospital, they did a surgery that was cut open from his chest all the way down to his lower intestines.

J.

K. And after the operation, he was not able to work.

J.

K. So this forced my older brothers to work at a very early age.

J.

K. And thanks to them, we were able to survive.

J.

K. And thanks to my older brothers, I had, I had the opportunity to go to school.

J.

K. Because in Mexico, you have to pay for your own education.

J.

K. So thanks to my brothers and my family I went to the school.

J.

K. I went to elementary and secondary school.

J.

K. And when I was able to come to the United States, I was able to come to High School.

J.

K. And to um, the community college.

J.

K. My Grandmother, Maria Sandoval.

J.

K. I was not able to know her very well, but I know that she was 100 % indigenous.

J.

K. She spoke a funny Spanish that was called Mocho.

J. Mocho, Not really good.

K. So she did not speak Spanish very well.

J. Is like my English.

M. Was that the culture, was she Huichole?

J.

K. So um she is from the Sierra mountains there and that is where all the Huicholes are from, but she never talked about which tribe she was from.

J.

K. So my fathers and my grandfathers, grandparents generation.

J.

K. It was difficult to say that you had indigenous blood.

J.

K. The society wouldn't easily accept you if you didn't say that you were Mestizo that you were coming from a different blood.

J.

K. There is a funny story in my family that every time my mother um was carrying a child in her stomach.

J.

K. The first question that always happened when a baby was born was "What color was it?"

J.

K. We laugh about it now but um in that time, you were always, they were hoping for a light skin.

J.

K. And because in my family, we have, we have a variety of people.

J.

K. Of the ten children, some of us are very dark, Moreno. And some of us are kind of bronze colored skin.

J.

K. And others of lighter skin.

J.

K. And we even have some brothers with green eyes.

J.

K. So when I was born, my father asked her, what was it.

J.

K. And they said it was, it's a boy.

J.

K. And he was happy.

J.

K. And his very next question was, what color is he? (everyone chuckles)

J.

K. He says, I am not sure but he is Moreno and he is hairy. (more chuckles)

J.

K. So even from that time there's just discrimination on what color your skin was, even within your own family.

M. Tell me about your first experience with discrimination when you were growing up, uh, with your cousin and playing soccer. Can you tell me that story again?

J.

K. In the city of Guadalajara.

J.

K. Where I was raised.

J.

K. I did not play outside very much.

J.

K. The few occasions I had to play with my cousins.

J.

K. Some of my cousins are darker skin than I am.

J.

K. And in that time we, we played soccer in the street.

J.

K. When it was time to choose teams, I always chose a team with my cousin.

J.

K. But some of the other players did not want to play with him because he was too dark.

J.

K. He said you can come and play with us.

J.

K. That was my first experience of a, distinguishing in my mind the color of someone's skin.

J.

K. So in Mexico we are so ignorant sometimes we don't even know what discrimination is.

J.

K. So common.

J.

K. The Spanish left, left us that, that um....

M. Legacy.

K. Legacy, yeah legacy, thank you.

J.

K. So in Mexico it is just accepted.

J.

K. So when someone is dark skinned is just normal, they just call them Moreno or even black.

J.

K. Or sometimes they call them poor.

J.

K. And sometimes we just like to label people, sometimes we call you fatty (laughing).

J.

K. Even in our own family (laughing).

J.

K. Even within our own families, we give funny nick names, and sometimes we will say hey fatty come over here and hey, old one, come over here and we just call each other those names.

J.

K. In our marriage, we just joke sometimes, I will call him cacahuete, which is peanut and he calls me La Cucaracha, which is cockroach (laughing).

J.

K. But having a nick name is normal, considered normal.

M. Could you tell me about when you first came to the U.S. and working in the fields and going to school?

J.

K. 1994 and 1995

J.

K. I had the opportunity to come to the United States.

J.

K. When I grew up, I was growing up with all my sisters, all six girls.

J.

K. When I watched my boy cousins playing with boys.

J.

K. I always dreamed of being able to play with my brothers.

J.

K. But I never had the opportunity to play with them, because from a very young age they had to go work.

J.

K. And I did not have the opportunity to get to know them.

M. They came to the U.S. to Work, right?

J. Si.

K. My brother, my eldest brother, Jose Carlos, Luis was the first one to come.

J.

K. He didn't know anyone.

J.

K. And he came to the U.S. to look for a better life and a better job.

J.

K. And when he was um able to get settled down, he was able to bring my next eldest brother, Samuel.

J.

K. And then they brought my third brother Roberto.

J.

K. And my illusion coming here wasn't to come and look for a better life.

J.

K. So I go to be the lucky one, the youngest because I already have everything, they sent me. By the time I was growing up, they were sending clothes and money and I got to go to school.

J.

K. So the main reason I came to the United States is so that I could get to know my brothers and play with them (laughing).

J.

K. But what a surprise when I came to the United States.

J

K. I woke up.

J.

K. I woke up to reality.

J.

K. Not everything is free and you have to work.

J.

K. He gave his opportunity to live with him, in their home, to eat.

J.

K. I will always be thankful to them, to Luis, Samuel and Roberto.

J.

K. I began working in the fields.

J.

K. Not as much as they had to.

J.

K. I was lucky. (both laughing).

J.

K. I started with my brother in in the worms.

J.

K. Picking tulips.

J.

K And picking berries.

J.

K. I didn't have a lot of experience in the fields.

J.

K. And there were times where I have to work and other times when I didn't.

J.

K. And they arrived when I was able to go to High school, thanks to my brother and senora Petra. [His brothers mother in law]

J.

K. But as I was coming into high school, that was a time when there was a lot of talk about gangs.

J.

K. So my brother said I will allow you to go, I will let you go to school but you have to promise that you won't be involved in any type of things like gangs.

J.

K. So my, but my experience in high school as an immigrant.

J.

K. So the first barrier to to integrating was was the language.

J.

K. When I first got to the high school, lots of people offered me drugs.

J.

K. And if I wanted to join their gangs.

J.

K. But I was able to say no thank you.

J.

K. And then they didn't bother me.

J.

K. I had a difficult time understanding the, I had Mexican brothers, but not born here in this country, and some born there.

J.

K. Or my friends that were born here, but of Mexican blood.

J.

K. It seems like the people were divided, the, based on where you were born. The people were Mexican, but born here were called Chicanos.

J.

K. And it was difficult to enter into any of their groups of their community.

J.

K. Because I was considered an immigrant.

J.

K. Just because I wasn't born here.

J.

K. And one time I wanted to belong to a group named Mecha.

J.

K. And I had an opportunity to go with my friend to go.

J.

K. And one of the teachers that was in charge of the Mecha group.

J. Hey Jose

K. [Their daughter interrupts Kelly and she loses the train of thought]

J.

K. Just to try and convince me that the Mecha group was just for Chicanos, for people who were born in the United States.

J.

K. And I was different.

J.

K. Because I didn't speak English.

J.

K. And I was from Mexico.

J.

K. And after speaking with him, I did not feel comfortable anymore.

J.

K. So I tried to integrate myself with a different type of club or a different group.

J.

K. But every group kinda has their own ways and it was hard to fit in.

J.

K. It was difficult to integrate myself in the school.

J.

K. And with time the only people I made friends with were girls.

J.

K. So when it was lunch time I would sit down at the table with 15 other girls. (giggle)

J.

K. So that is how I got the nickname tio or uncle.

J.

K. So when some of the other guys noticed I was always around women, they wanted to be my friend (giggle).

J.

K. So that is when they give me the nickname tio.

J.

K. Some of them thought these were all really my nephews um nieces. (laughing)

J.

K. So I was finally able to make some friends and to this day, they are still my best friends.

J.

K. And so and thanks to them when we got together we decided we should look into our indigenous roots.

J.

K. And when I was a junior.

J.

K. All my friends were already seniors.

J.

K. And they were all able to get ready to go on to the Community college.

J.

K. And they met an Anthropology teacher who taught about the Aztecs.

M. Is that Rigoberto?

J. Rigoberto Hernandez.

J.

K. Thanks to him and thanks to my friends.

J.

K. I had the opportunity.

J.

K. So we were able to form a group um based off of our Aztec ancestry.

J.

K. And thanks to him, I learned a lot more about where I come from.

J.

K. And we learned about where we're from.

J.

K. We will know better, understand better who we are.

J.

K. And we will be ready for the future.

J.

K. That was one of his teachings.

J.

K. I am very thankful.

J.

K. So thanks to him, the dance is a huge part of my life.

J.

K. And I've been a dancer for 13 years.

J.

K. And I consider it a huge part of my life.

J.

K. As you can see in my sacred alter.

J.

K. Um, we also see symbolic of the Catholic tradition here.

J.

K. Because all of our traditions were mixed.

J.

K. So the tradition was able to be saved for the past 500 years.

J.

K. And the reason why it was able to be saved is because it was mixed.

J.

K. Thanks to all the Aztec Generals that were able to pass on the tradition.

J.

K. To those that continued the traditions, they were always having a conchero, a conch shell so they call it the concheros.

J.

K. And a lot of the tradition groups, they call them Aztec dancers.

J.

K. There's a lot of a groups that call themselves from the Mexicanidad, from Mexico.

J.

K. And some groups don't call themselves Aztecs but Micheca. [Mexica]

J.

K. Cause everything was um based in Micheca Tenochtitlan.

J.

M. Can you tell me about when you met Kelly and you brought her to Portland to dance with the group and that was when you were still with Rigoberto and he kinda of turned his back on you. Do you want to stop? Please turn off the video. Put this in pause here. All right. [Jose declined to speak publicly about this subject]

M. Alrighty, are you ready?

Cameraman. Sure.

M. Jose can you tell me about your traditional dance, about the dance in universal and the sun and the planets and duality.

J.

K. So um our ancestors, when they referred to the creator or the devine, they called it the Ometeotl.

J.

K. And in their language ome means duality and teo means the devine.

J.

K. So therefore the creator is everything that is around us and everything is dual.

J.

K. And in that time, people had tons of jewelry, tons of rocks, stones, gold.

J.

K. But the most important thing for them besides all that fancy stuff was to be in harmony with nature.

J.

K. Ometeotl.

J.

K. And so that's why they dance and they, their dance were universal.

J.

K. Cause they were astronomers, and mathematicians and poets and artists.

J.

K. So when they studied the earth, they already knew that the earth was round, and that it rotated far before the Europeans.

J.

K. And they called it Tonantzin Coatlique [means skirt of serpents].

J.

K. And they understood the rotation and the axis with the sun.

J.

K. And they understood and knew about every planet.

J.

K. And every planet had its own indigenous name.

J.

K. Just like they knew the morning star was Venus and they called it Quetzalcoatl.

J.

K. And they knew that the evening star was the same planet but at a different time and they called it Xolotl.

J.

K. And they called them the twin brothers.

J.

K. And so they passed down those things orally.

J.

K. Cause most of the tradition is oral.

J.

K. And in the dance.

J.

K. So that is why we form a circle.

J.

K. And before forming the circle, we form two lines.

J.

K. And we form two snakes.

J.

K. Just like in the Aztec calendar there's two snakes.

J.

K. And so when the two lines come together they form a circle.

J.

K. And they call it the Malacaxcoatl.

J.

K. The circle of Power.

J.

K. And in our circle every individual has the same significance, same importance.

J.

K. And in the middle we put the drums the huehuetl drums.

J.

K. Well not in the middle, in the very middle is where we put the elements in the alter. And in the middle of the circle itself is where the drums go.

J.

K. And the altar is called the Tlamanalli

J.

K. We put the Poposhcomi which is the fire pot.

J.

K. And in the dances that are always the cultural tradition, we put four elements represented, earth, air, fire, and water. The food is represented with the earth.

J.

K. Without the four elements, there is no life.

J.

K. And when we form the circle, everyone is their own planet.

J.

K. And the firepot in the middle represents the Sun.

J.

K. And the drum is like our grandfather on Earth.

J.

K. And so who ever comes forward to lead the dance will be dancing in front of the alter as if they were the planet in front of Sun.

J.

K. Every dance is significant and we are not just jumping around. And the person who is chosen to lead the dance, comes in front of the alter for a specific purpose.

J.

K. And so we all learn to follow that person.

J.

K. Without words.

J.

K. So in the tradition, we are learning through observation, not through speaking.

J.

K. Without going into to many details, every dance has its power.

J.

K Has its significance.

J.

K. And the dance is spiritual.

J.

K. Some of us use it for a spiritual means and other use it for as a cultural means.

J.

K. Here in the United States, we tend to lean on the cultural side.

J.

K. Because a lot of people have lost their cultural identity.

J.

K. And so the purpose is to teach the traditions to people that have lost their cultural identity.

J.

K. And so in Mexico, there's over a hundred different dances and different forms of the dance.

J.

K. But the particular style that we follow is called the Azteca, Chichimeca.

J.

K. And it is, it follows a military style where there is a regiment.

J.

K. It is commanded in a military style.

J.

K. Like a hierarchy.

J.

K. To be able to recognize the people who work to conserve these ways.

J.

K. So in Mexico, it's hereditary tradition.

J.

K. I did not personally inherit anything from the dance.

J.

K. I adopted these ways when I learned, when I was a teenager.

J.

K. And now it is part of my life.

J.

K. And so in 2010, someone who did inherit the dance, his name is General Rosendo Placencia.

J.

K. He gave permission for us to carry on these ways and named Jose Carlos as a captain of the dance.

J.

K. And our group is called the Aztec Ritual Huitzilopochtli.

J.

K. And our altar is dedicated to the, to the Virgin of Guadalupe.

J.

K. And in the traditional Catholic ways, we dance to the traditional saints, the catholic saints like Guadalupe and the Señor de Chalma.

J.

K. There's many saints that have appeared in Mexico.

J.

K. And we call them as if they were manifestation of, of the creator.

J.

K. And some of the different masculine names are referring to Jesus.

J.

K. And name that are, names that are, the saints that were symbolic of the women were symbolic of Maria.

J.

K. So all throughout the year we have festivities and prayers.

J.

K. So there's, we dance all year because of the manifestations of the different saints in Mexico.

J.

K. And because everything is dual.

J.

K. And before the Spaniards came, everything was based on duality.

J.

K. So we believe in duality but it's represented by masculine and feminine.

J.

K. And like a lot of cultures, the masculine is represented by machismo or what is strong.

J.

K. But in the indigenous version it is not that way and the feminine and the masculine have the same respect.

The class requirements were to transcribe 20 minutes of the interview. Because there was a translation during the interview, I transcribed 50 minutes (I am hoping for some extra credit here, the ten minutes took an extra hour to transcribe). There is an additional ten minutes of interview

followed by another 5 minutes of song for a total of 70 minutes of interview. With both parents involved with the interview, we could not continue with three small children at bed time (8:20 PM). When we finished, one was lying with her head in Kelly's lap and another was curled up by her feet.

Spelling for most of the N'ahuatl words are verified on the internet. Four of the N'ahuatl words were not found and required confirmation of spelling from Kelly and Jose during a short follow up meeting.