Filipino American Farmworker Oral History Project

Oral History Interview

With

Greg Morozumi

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Oakland, California

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Welga! Filipino American Labor Archives
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[Begin Audio File]

SARMIENTO: Alright it is March 17, 2015 and it is 4:56. This is Allan Jason Sarmiento, interviewing for the Filipino [American] Farmworker Oral History Project for the Welga! Filipino American Labor Archives and the Welga! Project. Today, I am interviewing:

MOROZUMI: Greg Morozumi.

SARMIENTO: Alright, and let us begin. So we are going to start out by talking a little bit about your child hood and early adult life. Where and when were you born?

MOROZUMI: I was born in San Francisco, but I tell people I was born in Oakland. I was raised in Oakland. My earliest memories growing up was at this little spot we rented across San Antonio Park, right in this neighborhood. We moved closer to the lake.

I'm Chinese and Japanese, third generation on both sides. My parents were both born here too. My mom grew up in the East Coast at Harlem and my father grew up in the West Coast at Japantown, J-town. I have been active ever since I was a kid. I grew up in the 60s. I am 61—I just had a birthday. The 60s were very much my upbringing in the Bay Area during the Vietnam War as I was draft age during the Vietnam War. A lot of that activism that was going on shaped me. The Black Panthers were coming up in Oakland and I remember exactly 50 years ago that some demonstrations that I went too, around Jim Crow—Anti-Jim Crow actions at the [Oakland] Tribune building. My father took me to this one demonstration when I was a kid, when I was around the same age as my son Amir. It was organized by this brother named

Mark Comfort.

MOROZUMI: Mark Comfort was part of this group called the Oakland Direct Action Committee. It was one of the first militant Black Activist groups before the [Black] Panthers. He came from Lowndes County in the South, I think it was in Alabama. He came here and brought this whole concept of the Panthers: the Panther logo, the Berets, the militancy, and he met Huey [Newton] and Bobby [Seale]. Anyways, he was the organizer for ODAC, Oakland Direct Action Committee and my father was involved somehow. We did a sit in [at the Oakland Tribune building], and I remember the cops were dragging us away and they were pepper spraying people. That was typical. The Anti-War Marchers hadn't even started up, they were starting up in 66, 67, 68, etcetera. My father, who was an attorney, ran for school board. It was unusual for an Asian at Oakland to run for the school board and his campaign manager was this Chicano brother named Burt Corona. He was a well-known labor leader, unbeknownst to my father, he was just a friend to him. Burt Corona later on—after my father lost the election [laughs]—started this organization called CASA. It was one of the first Chicano organization fighting for immigrant rights and it was a militant organization. Another friend of my father was a client who was this Chicano brother named Jack Ortega. He was working for the Farmworkers strike from the jump. That's where I got these buttons from [in reference to the Delano Grape Strike buttons from the *Greg Morozumi*

Artifacts collection].

[Brief interruption in interview]

[4:49]

MOROZUMI: [Ortega] would take me out, and I would jump out of the car delivering leaflets. There were debates at our family house with Burt Corona and Jack Ortega about the Farmworkers strike. Chavez was starting to feel that many of the Mexicanos were scabbing [the strike]. Burt Corona was saying "no, we're the same and you can't differentiate Chicano farmworkers and Immigrant farmworkers. You have to unite the struggle." So that was an interesting exchange. But they were allies—that was '65. Today, Eastside [Arts Alliance] is celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Black Arts Movement and the Chicano Arts Movements. They kicked off after the events of that year of Malcom X' assassination in February and when Amiri Barack started the Black Arts Movement with musicians, theatre and poets on flatbed trucks through Harlem. Teatro Compasino, in the fall [of 1965], did theatre on flatbed trucks through the fields of Delano. That kicked off a whole chain of events that started a cultural renaissance—the Chicano movement.

MOROZUMI: The cultural component of all Third World Movement is very important to any liberation struggle or any progressive movement. That's the way you express people's consciousness and draw people in to gauge the community. That's why we have this third world cultural center. This is our legacy and the legacy of those years. That is why we unite with different communities—the Chicanos, the Filipinos, Black, other South East Asian communities—and that's why we could do it in one spot. Also Native Americans, The Intertribal

Friendship Council is very much a part of this community and uses this space. It is the oldest Native American Center in the Country—the oldest urban Native American center in the country.

MOROZUMI: That was the beginning, and then I started going to Anti-War demonstrations. I joined the Chinese Youth Council when I went to Oakland High [School] and I was the head of the Asian Student Union there during the early 70s and 80s. I was the liaison for the Chinese Youth Council and the Filipino Youth Council because I knew a lot of the Filipino activists then. I grew up with a lot of those guys so it was the logical connection. There was this group called the Kalayaan, and they had a newspaper with the same name. It was a radical Filipino organization and they would come down to the center at Oakland to the Filipino Youth Council. It was called the Pilipino Youth Development Council, PYDC. They would do study group with their newspapers.. That was one of my first political studies classes through Kalayaan and they were stationed at International Hotel. International Hotel was the last building and institution at Manillatown, which was once 10 blocks long. That was the heart of the Filipino community back in the day, especially during the 20s and 30s of migration of Filipinos, who become farmworkers and cannery workers. We used to organized Asian students, particularly Filipino students, to work at the I-Hotel because somebody torched it to remove the tenants, which were mostly old Chinese and Filipino Manongs. Stationed at the storefronts were newly-emerging politicized Asian organizations such as Kalayaan and the group that was called the Red Guards, who became the I Wor Kuen, and another group called the Asian Community Center. The I-Hotel symbolized a

number of things, it was the center for Filipino culture and residency, but also a center for Asian American activists. It was defending that legacy. You still had the pool halls, the Mabuhay Gardens restaurants, Tino's barbershop. Tino was the Manong who was the Mayor of Manila town. You had these old cats over there every Sunday playing instruments

[10:25]

MOROZUMI: It was a vibrant community, and even then it was a bachelor's society because of the anti-miscegenation laws and restrictive immigration laws that would not allow Filipino or Chinese women to come over. So you had a large community of elderly Filipino and Chinese men. I ended up joining I Wor Kuen (IWK) and became a political activist from there. I was trying to remember when I met Philip [Vera Cruz]. We were trying to organize students from different colleges, such as Laney College at Oakland, San Francisco State and UC Berkeley. We would go to Delano and we'd bring a lot of Filipino, Chicano and other Asian Students to help build Agbayani Village. Agbayani Village was named after this brother named Paolo Agbayani, who was killed during the strike. Philip was always down there and he was always very respected. I think that was where I met him first. When I first saw his name on a poster, which was a piece I've done in the early 70s. [Note: Morozumi is referencing to an art piece he created which focused on Filipino American farmworkers]. Philip used to come to the I-Hotel in San Francisco and different campuses to speak to. Philip was the Vice President of the United Farm Workers, was one of the key spokesperson for the American Cultural Workers of California, which merged with the National Farmworkers

Association, which was primarily Mexicano and Chicano, to become the United Farm Workers. This is a piece of history that gets missed a lot, the fact that the Filipino farmworkers were the ones that really started the strike. It wasn't the first incident because there were a number of strikes. In fact, Philip's memory of that history was very lucid then. He was already in his 70s and when you come to that age you are usually sharper than your current memory. He would talk about the details of the different incidents of the strikes now, along with the collaborations with different nationalities. He also used to emphasize the 1965 Grape Strike in Delano that started the United Farm Workers was not the first strike that was a collaboration with nationalities. He was talking about Filipinos and Chicanos. Filipinos struck on their own, but they united with Japanese in an earlier period; not only in California but in Hawaii. Philip saw himself as very much part of that generation, and he saw himself as part of that overall struggle. I think that was something that was very particular about him that his wasn't just the immediate struggle or the lives of the brothers that he was with right now, but he saw it as an international thing. He also had some very progressive ideas about what was happening internationally and he would talk about that a lot. Cesar Chavez, who was a very important leader—and with this 50th anniversary I think it is important to not just say who started the strike first and make it a competitive brown vs brown or Asian vs Chicano thing—but the significance of that strike was that there was unity between the Filipinos

and Chicanos. It was an Asian-Latino thing, you know.

[15:03]

MOROZUMI: In some sense, he swallowed a lot of pride, and said "whatever the media wants to take it, as long as we have this unity." He was also adamant that we don't erase the memory of the Filipino struggle. Then there were some political differences even before the split. One is that Cesar Chavez was getting this pacifist policy, not that it was an armed struggle but he had a passive philosophy. He was studying Ghandi, etcetera, whereas Philip supported the Filipino Revolution—he felt it was an international liberation struggle that was relevant at the time. The Vietnam War was going on at the time and he supported Vietnamese and also supported the Filipino rebels. He understood different periods of Filipino History. The current period then was the 60s and 70s, which was a period of rebellion, but also the period of when he first came here of the 20s—post World War I—and the conditions that brought him over here. He knew that the Philippines was colonized and that there were a lot of labor struggles going on around the country, so he joined that. But he also understood the early history, such as why the Philippines was a colony in the first place. In 1898 it was colonized and annexed by the United States and that was the beginning of U.S. imperialism. When students would come down from all over California [to Delano], he would teach that. He wouldn't let people forget where Filipinos came from and that this country, the [agriculture] business, was built on people's backs and that the struggle that these students were engaged in were part of this legacy. In that regard, he was a very important leader. I don't think anyone saw him as a celebrity, they

saw him as an elder. They really weren't feeling the dimension on who he was, because he had led all these struggles

MOROZUMI: I think that was part of Philip, he was a very humble brother. He never tried to put a lot of attention to himself, but he was also a very good speaker. He had a very heavy Ilocano accent, but he could talk for a long time and he had a very poignant connection with history and his articulation with the current struggle. I don't know how I got to know him better. I was following around Linda Mabalot. She was this sister that was a farmworker from around the Sacramento Delta, heard she came from a farmworker family. She got involved on campus—I think she went to UC Davis for a while—and she got involved with KDP (Katipunan Democratic ang Pilipino, Union of Democratic Filipinos in English). For some reason, she decided to break off from the KDP. I met her in Los Angeles in the mid-70s maybe after the [Vietnam] War, so I recruited her into the IWK [I Wor Kuen]. Our base in the Filipino community was very weak because KDP recruited everybody [Laughs], and IWK was primarily Chinese and Japanese.

SARMIENTO: What was the Filipino one called again?

MOROZUMI: KDP…I am not even going to try to pronounce it. Katipunan Democratic ang Pilipino. They were a [Filipino] national organization; these were all revolutionary national organizations. We fell under their leadership on campuses and communities and labor struggles. People had chapters all over the country.

[20:00]

MOROZUMI: So we started to connect with Philip and go up to his place. Well, we would

see him at Delano when we were organizing the worker gigs for Agbayani. But what happened one year, martial law broke out on December 1972 and immediately Philip took a stand against the Marcos dictatorship. We were going to the Filipino Far West Convention, this conference had been going on in different cities all along the coast. It would go all the way to Seattle to San Diego, different every year in a different city. So one year I went with Philip and Linda, and KDP was very much in leadership of these conferences. There was some resolution that people were trying to pass to take a stand against martial law and for some reason KDP blocked it. [KDP] was leading the anti-martial law coalitions in the state. The Filipino Far West Convention was broader, so they didn't want to isolate people. So Philip was very angry and he stood up and said "this is a backwards stand, I think people are progressive enough to understand this is fascism in the Philippines and we all need to take a stand against that." So he argued it and argued it on the floor. And then during the break he went somewhere, and the KDP leadership surrounded me and thought that I was prodding him to say that. They said "so why are you coming here to disrupt the conference and getting Philip to mouth this stuff off" and I said "you think I have that much influence over Philip like Philip doesn't have his own mind?" So they kind of backed off.

MOROZUMI: Philip was very strong willed and took stands like that. I think he was right, that was the correct body to get an endorsement against martial law. After that, he would come to Los Angeles and he would stay at my place at Boyle Heights in East L.A. He got married to this lawyer, Debbie Vollmer. He got

into a big battle with Chavez over [Chavez' trip to the Philippines]. Chavez got invited over to the Philippines to bear witness to this so-called agrarian land reforms under the Marcos regime. Marcos was very slick; he thought if he had invited this iconic farmworker leader in the United States that would show that he was doing some democratic reforms in the Philippines. Of course it wasn't democratic and it was a front, but Chavez accepted the invitation much to Philip's disagreement. He didn't consult with Philip beforehand. Larry Itliong had already passed but Pete Velasco just kind of collapsed under the UFW leadership, he wasn't protesting it. So Philip got isolated by that. I'm not sure if he got purged from the UFW leadership or if he walked away from it; maybe a little bit of both. But I was with Philip during that period when he was really angry at Chavez and the leadership.

[24:18]

MOROZUMI: Not just because of the lack of democracy. I was telling you how when I grew up in the early years of the farmworker strike, Cesar Chavez was a God in my father's house, so was Martin Luther King, Jr. You couldn't say anything bad about him. So when I was with Philip, he would say "that Goddamn Chavez, he's doing all this stuff behind our backs."

MOROZUMI: He had to take a principal stand, so Philip said "I can't be a part of this thing anymore." So they banned him from Agbayani Village. How you going to do that? That's like this history of Filipino farmers based there. So we would take him there anyways [Laughs]. We would tell them "we are bring Philip back to Agbayani Village" because all the brothers wanted to see him, all the Manongs. So that was difficult but it was a principled stand. Philip was very

principled. He wasn't somebody that was sectarian or divisive, but he knew that when you had to take a stand he was definitely about unity. He wasn't just going to become obedient to anyone in position or leadership, he was part of leadership and he wanted people to know that.

SARMIENTO: But do you know if the Manongs had any strong opinions for Philip?

MOROZUMI: They were definitely supportive of Philip. Philip was their mouthpiece, their spokesperson. Itliong was a militant leader from the beginning but he wasn't around then during the early 70s, I'm not sure what year Itliong died. Philip was the man, you know. He was the spokesperson. Then he moved to Bakersfield. I stayed with him when I went up to Bakersfield, and it was cool to hear his stories all the time because he was always telling stories. And he could cook. You'd open up his doors and you had the fields right there, he was still living in farmworker country. That's the way it was down in Delano, when we were building Agbayani. I don't last very well under the heat, it was over 100 degrees out there. We were putting tiles on the roof and I was ready to pass out, so he was taking me to the kitchen. The Manongs who were cooking there, they would cook stuff like Kuliya [spelling?] Ilocano. They were grabbing just enough form the back yards, so everything was fresh. So that's where Philip cooked at his house, all these old cats could cook. There was this placed we used to go to in LA, called Traveler's Café, it was an Ilocano restaurant that the old timers would be hanging out at. They didn't really have a Manilatown in LA if I remember, but that was in the Temple district and that was really the Manilatown. It wasn't just concentrated

businesses, like hotels and things like that.

MOROZUMI: Then I moved to New York and I corresponded with him a couple of times and called. He wrote me a couple of times, but I just got caught up in a bunch of stuff that I lost touch with him. I always tried to stay in touch with him through Linda. So we had three projects that Linda and I had going on, I was telling you about that before. I was doing a lot of stuff, and our group just merged with a Black and Chicano organizations in LA and the East Coast, but the focus was LA, Bay Area, New York. Since Linda became the leader of Visual Communications, which was the largest and oldest Asian media organization. Linda became the executive director and she wanted to focus more on Filipino projects. We said "let's do something with all that footage you did with Philip." She was always involved with film festivals, community events and a lot of film projects. And then we wanted to something that was going on with the Philippines. We were going to do something with the NPA [New People's Army, Marxist-Leninist group in the Philippines], and we got the A-Okay to do it and then 2001 came about and everything changed. The third project we were going to interview a lot of leaders of third world movements around the country, from the Panthers to the Brown Berets, Young Lords, AIM [American Indian Movement], etcetera. We spoke to a lot of people, Angela Davis, Bobby Seale, they all said "yea, let's do this." We did some interviews, we interviewed a few folks, but Linda fell ill just suddenly.

MOROZUMI: We were working with this brother from the South Bronx, who was head of this committee against police brutality. So I was working in the South Bronx with him because he had a lot of history in the black movement. That same

year in 2003, they both got brain cancer and both succumbed within six months.

[30:38]

MOROZUMI: We had a lot of stuff in the works. The other idea was to build a Third World Cultural Center back here in the Bay Area. This is what this is [Eastside Arts Alliance], it was the concept.

SARMIENTO: Just to jump back a little bit to 1971, did you see any differences, I guess, of the opinions or outlooks of the multicultural, Chicano-Filipino movements after Philip left? Because Philip was pretty vocal against the UFW at the time. Were there any contentions?

MOROZUMI: There were other struggles with Chavez besides with Philip. Some people criticized Chavez for having an un-democratic leadership, he was kind of dictating a lot of the decisions. Philip as vice president was calling him out on it. I don't think that created a rift between the Chicanos and the Filipinos. For one thing, in '65 that was in the early years of the farmworker struggles and became the symbol of the Chicano movement. But by the later 60s there was a huge student movement, there was all these national conferences and a lot more militancy's like the Brown Beret, the Chicano Moratorium was happening, and there was a large demonstration against U.S. imperialism. A lot of it was with Chicanos in East L.A.

MOROZUMI: While they embraced the farmworkers struggle, there was a whole thing going on. I was talking about this brother I mentioned earlier, Reies Tijerina. During the late 60s he led a land struggle in Tierra Amarilla, New Mexico. He started his own group called La Alianza. And there was this brother named Corky

Gonzazlez at Denver, Colorado and this other brother [Jose] Angel Gutierrez, who started the Raza Unida Party. There was this united front at Berkeley, and there was a lot more militant demands besides just mainstream civil rights. It was about inclusion. While that was happening, there wasn't a division between third world people, there was actually more of a unity between third world people. For instance—for the Brown Beret, I Wor Kuen, Young Lords—all our platforms was based on the Black Panther Party, so we had a lot of unity. In fact, the first Rainbow Coalition that was built in '68 at Chicago, when Fred Hampton was chair of the chapter of the Panthers out there, he hooked up with the Young Lords, I Wor Kuen, AIM, and Young Patriots. That was not Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition, but it was the original Rainbow Coalition. There was this other unity being built. Off course the Panthers had a huge base in the White left as well. What was very particular about the United States was that there was a lot of national informed organizations, so if you were Filipino you would usually join a Filipino revolutionary organization, if you were Japanese you would join a Japanese revolutionary organization, if you were Puerto Rican you would join a Puerto Rican organization. They were all revolutionary, or at least self-proclaimed. It wasn't until the mid-70s that people began understanding the Vietnam War and imperialism, and started looking at the national liberation movements abroad.

[35:04]

MOROZUMI: People started visiting the Philippines, various places in Africa, or they would go to China and these guys would go "Okay, they're calling themselves

Marxist, maybe we should be that." Then they would come back here and turn their nationalist organizations into Marxist organizations. There would be Filipino Marxist organizations, Puerto Rican Marxist organizations, Chicano Marxist organizations [laughs]. So, that's America, it was so segregated. It took some time, it wasn't until that decade when people started getting together. People started saying "let's work together as a single organization," so some groups did that. But I think it is important to having national organizations, because it is important for our communities to have that. But it is also important to have third world coalitions and unity, and multi-national organizations, where you would work with White progressives and all nationalities. I think it's because of the history of this country it is important to organize in our respective communities to build empowerment. While sometimes it was conflicting philosophies, ultimately there is no contradiction because you're organizing your people. What Amiri Baraka would always say, if you're organizing for national unity in your community, then that's internationalism implied. That's why when we say Black power matters, not just black lives matter, that uplifts democracy and justice for all people in the United States. It demands democracy and confronts White supremacy. It doesn't exclude us. I think the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Liberation Movement was a huge influence on third world people.

MOROZUMI: That's something Philip really realized. We would have these long, deep, conversations about what was the state of the left, who were the different groups, what were the differences. He was always about multi national unity, but he always thought there should be Filipino unity in the community. I

think it is important to understand that. It isn't much different to what other people came to a conclusion, the most progressive. We celebrate Philip today, but not just as the Vice President of the UFW but as one of the most progressive forces in our history. One other thing, we think of Carlos Bulosan of being of another era but they were of the same period. I don't think they ever met each other—Carlos Bulosan was always involved in the Northwest and the cannery struggles. Carlos joined the CP [Communist Party] of the USA. That shouldn't be shocking, that period of the 20s and 30s they were the most organized force in the whole country…anybody that was organizing around labor. So they had a lot of Filipino members, a lot of Chinese and Japanese, a lot of Blacks and Chicanos. They had so many Black members that it was called the Negro Party at one time, but it was always predominantly white. They had thousands and thousands of members. But that was of another era, it is hard to imagine that today, but that's how it was. So, a lot of important organizers came out of that. A lot of Black writers like Langston Hughes, Richard Wright and Claude McKay were involved in the Party. A lot of Asian organizers came out of it too. In fact, when we were organizing in the I-hotel, a lot of the Manongs and the [older] Chinese would come and advised, they were old CP members back in the day, but they had to go under during the 50s of the McCarthy period. So they were ecstatic when they saw this new generation come up and organize in Manillatown. They gave us a lot of support. That was a very significant struggle, even though we lost. One of the lessons for me was even when you lose, you gain a lot, because the whole process of that struggle brought so many people together in the broader

struggle. Not just on the housing issue [of the International Hotel], but it was like a continuum of what Philip's generation did.

[40:29]

MOROZUMI: It was also a moment—it was right after third world strikes, so we were learning out history—when we found out we were activist. Kalayaan was teaching the first Filipino studies at UC Berkeley, because you didn't have colored people with masters and doctorates and shit to teach ethnic studies. That didn't exist. But we did have scholars who understood history, and they were teaching the first classes. The most important thing about that also was it was connecting communities, we would get credit to organize in our community. We were learning about our history and we were working with that generation of Chinese and Filipinos who came here for the first time. We were living that history at the same time. It was very multi-generational.

SARMIENTO: Was there any Farmworker Manongs who were one of the teachers that you recall?

MOROZUMI: One of the teachers?

SARMIENTO: Yeah, or at least the ones that would provide information at least?

MOROZUMI: The ones at the I-Hotel were not so much farmworkers, I think they came from the urban [environment], canneries. Some people were farmworkers. I don't know. I know I'm kind of getting away from the farmworkers thing but I can't remember any of the names. Terry…Terry Bautista would be a good person to ask about that.

SARMIENTO: Do you know if Katipunan organization, did they cause any strife with any of the Chicano organizations, because in the Welga Archives we have a

Katipunan interview with Philip Vera Cruz that was kind of inflammatory against the UFW.

MOROZUMI: Well like I said, there was Chicano organizations who were progressives and Chicano revolutionary groups, and they stood with us through the whole thing. Philip has a nephew who was Filipino and Chicano, and he was involved in the UFW. But he ended up organizing with Chicano revolutionaries. It just depends where you were coming from, I think more of the mainstream people would of thought critical of the Filipino leadership, but the Chicano activist, which was becoming the prominent force in the community, took a stand against martial law. They already took a stand against the War in Vietnam. The Philippines was were the U.S. was launching the Vietnam War, the two key bases: Subic Bay and Clark…what is it….the air force base—

SARMIENTO: Yeah, it was Clark.

MOROZUMI: Clark Air Force Base. So that was pretty clear, the collusion. So I don't think on the grassroots level [there was a rift]. We didn't separate ourselves from the farmworkers strike. There was a struggle with that leadership. We always supported it, we supported the boycott, the picket lines.

SARMIENTO: Do you recall any specific picket lines, during the 65 or 73 strikes, or just in general?

MOROZUMI: Well it lasted all the way to the 70s, the grape strike in particular lasted all the way into the 70s. We always supported it, and the Chicano left always embraced the farmworker strike. It had a very world population, as it still does. You got to fight for farmworker rights. It's a union and unions have

contradictions but you have to support them generally. It is the only place where you have some bargaining power to unify workers. But you got a struggle within the union as well. What happened was there was some red-baiting within the UFW too, so they kicked out a lot of communist organizers too at one point. On campuses, they would have separate farmworker support committees. I don't think that ever stopped, including in the Filipino community.

[45:38]

MOROZUMI: But generally people supported Philip because the whole martial law thing was picking up. Really, that didn't become a huge issue because Chavez was becoming more of a symbol, he was doing all this fasting stuff. I think I gave you a picture of Philip guiding Chavez from one place to another because he was too weak from a fast.

SARMIENTO: Do you still have that picture?

MOROZUMI: I'll give it to you. Philip always, throughout all those contradictions, supported Chavez. It was an important issue. He took principled stands. I think it was important for us to not abandon Philip just because he was getting isolated from the UFW leadership. I think that is something to actually be proud of. He was body, very brave and courageous to do something like that.

SARMIENTO: Before you lost contact with Philip and when he was in Bakersfield, was he still trying to support Filipino farmworker activism at the time?

MOROZUMI: Well you know the body of Filipino workers was aging, so that's why we were building a retirement home, so they weren't the core of the struggle anymore. The way farmworker history works in states like California, it was the Chinese,

then the Japanese, then the Filipinos, then the Mexicans. Each of those populations was aging, at least the farmworkers. They drifted towards the cities. He remained active in the community, he would support the I-hotel, he would go to the campus circuit and we would go to conferences. There was also state wide MEChA conferences [Movimiento Estudiantil Chican@ de Aztlán], which were Chicano student organizing. And we were trying to do a statewide Asian student network as well or an actual coalition. We would go to all the MEChA conferences up and down the state: One, for solidarity, and also to learn how to do that. I can't imagine there being any rifts between the progressive with him just taking a stand, it was the right thing to do. We work with a lot of Chicanos here and I school them right away on the farmworkers strike. Don't lay claim on something without putting the whole picture. What I was talking about over the phone [previous discussion between Sarmiento and Morozumi regarding May Day] is that we created this new tradition on May Day, ever since the immigration laws started changing. A few years ago there was an unprecedented demonstrations around the country, mostly Chicano and Mexicans, cities that you didn't even think Chicanos lived. That started this motion, when we started organizing around May Day, it became about immigrant rights. I mean just down International Boulevard, ten-thousand folks just marched down the street.

[49:27]

MOROZUMI: So then some people from Bayan and FAA, Filipino Affirmative Action, got involved with it. A lot of Filipino immigrants were getting harassed and deported as well. But now the committee is Filipinos and Mexicans or

Chicanos. I think it is a moment to celebrate that unity that happened 50 years ago. Am I taking too—

SARMIENTO: Oh no, whenever I see some good quotes I note it. Sorry. [Laughs]

MOROZUMI: We got into this thing at Oakland, we started the Oakland [inaudible], what happened was the mission started getting gentrified and became the base for the Chicano community. What was interesting was during the 60s and 70s, the Filipino communities were concentrated right next to the Chicano community, in the Fruitvale and the Mission. Things got shifted. There's always been some unity between Chicano and Filipino movements outside of the farmworker struggle. There's just a lot of similarities in history and struggle, so San Francisco still wants to do a [May Day] march, but we've been picking up so much momentum that it has been consecutively for five-something years at Oakland but we agreed to have the main march at San Francisco. Something might happen here spontaneously, but…[laughs]. I really want to impress the whole thing about Chicano-Filipino unity as celebrating that anniversary [of May Day], and it's the same struggle right now. All this immigrant rights focuses [on that topic], it is important to make those connections. We worked very tight with the MEChA's back then.

SARMIENTO: What is that?

MOROZUMI: The Chicano student organization, the network. Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán; MEChA. They still exist in some forms, on some campus. It's like the BSU's, the Black Student Unions. So when we would do these busloads of students to organize to help build Agbayani Village, I think this lead carpenter was this brother named Chris Braga, MEChA people would

come down too. Mechistas and Filipino organizers mainly.

SARMIENTO: They went down to…

MOROZUMI: Agbayani to Delano. A lot of the Asian Student Unions, so more Pan-Asians would support it too. But back then, the main populations and demographics [in California of the Asians] were Chinese, Japanese and Filipinos. You didn't have a whole lot of Koreans, South Asians, South East Asians. There was hardly any South East Asians, that came after the war in '75. It transformed the demographic and politics of the communities. So when people call for Pan-Asian unity today, the history gets a little more complex. You have a lot of different class forces, including military classes that got refuge first such as the South Vietnamese military, so that determines some politics in the community. But this is the 40th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War, '75…2015, so people are planning a big event so it will be interesting to see. It is organized primarily by Vietnamese students and organizers, but they are kind of making a broad coalition.

SARMIENTO: Just to jump back a bit to when Philip was banned from Agbayani, did they actually have personnel that tried to prohibit him from the premise?

MOROZUMI: Um…[pause] Not when we were there [laughs]. I don't think he tried to go there on his own, because he felt uncomfortable about it. There was moments of funk, I don't know specifically if it was from the Chavez family or what, and I'm not sure what his relationship was specifically with Dolores Huerta. I mean she stood by Chavez, basically, but I don't remember her making any

comments about the trip to the Philippines.

[55:15]

MOROZUMI: But he only felt comfortable going back to Delano when we went down there with a group, but he always wanted to go. I felt like he spent a lot of his life there and energy in that struggle. It was a painful chapter. Martial law was a fucking painful chapter [laughs], you know. He wasn't just against the farmworkers struggle, he was arguing against with other Filipino revolutionaries, he was asking "why are you endorsing this?" He felt very strongly to what was happening in the Philippines. He supported the Vietnamese and Philippine struggle. He was definitely a internationalist, and in that sense he was a lot more progressive than Cesar Chavez, he was a lot more militant. He seemed to be well informed about what was going on in the world. He kept up with the news. I think that's one reason why he liked hanging out with the young student movements, the young activists, to make sure that he was relevant and in tune with what was happening. That's the thing I always admired about all the old timers—the Old Timers, the Manongs and the Lowaquen [Spelling?]—who used to hang out at the I-hotel. I said "man, when I get that age, I want to be down with the [young] folks two." But they were all schooling us, they weren't just watching. They were going to meetings and chiming in their opinions, they had a lot of story.

MOROZUMI: A lot of oral histories, that's where a lot of the history was passed on then. No technology, even video was very primitive. That's why we can't get this video together. [Note: referencing oral history interviews held at Visual Communications] But it will happen. But Taiji keeps worrying about the

deterioration and Robyn wants to go down there soon, right before the year ends. We should do that trip. When you wait too long, you don't even know who the personnel is down there [at Visual Communications]. And then the person who was in charge of the archives was getting cut from the staff, so they were talking about at a moment's notice sending it to a different institution. Like they aren't interested in their own archives, like how is that possible? We need to that Abe Ferrer is still there, who is the last of the old timers [at Visual Communications], because he knows exactly where that stuff is. Abe Ferrer and Taiji Miyagawa was the two, but Abe is still part of VC. They aren't as political as they used to be. I mean this is all political history: the first major farmworker strike in the agricultural state—the heart of agro business in the state. That was major. That's why just that one strike alone could put the brakes on the functions on the United States. That's pretty heavy. KDP continued to organize cannery workers too, because a lot of Filipinos started doing that circuit up to Alaska and Washington, so they got involved in unions over there. Two of their key organizers—Gene Viernese and Silme Domingo got killed. Linda was working about a documentary about that with their family. They were both in KDP. What happened was Marcos sent some agents up there and said "hey, these guys can't be organizing against—I don't know what the Philippines stake in it—but they were trying to control the union, so they straight up shot these two brothers. Key organizers, really important organizers. So KDP was in shock, off course, but

they organized around it.

[1:00:22]

MOROZUMI: They had a national campaign and they actually sued the Philippine government and won. Off course, I don't know what that ended up as far as monetary compensation, as if anything can compensate that. But they won, and it was a very symbolic case against the Philippine government at the Marcos regime. Because Marcos family spirited the countries fortune all over the place, like the Swiss Banks, but that was an admission in a U.S. court, that the Philippine government actually assassinated some Filipino American organizers. That's pretty crazy. So that's kind of the continuation of that, the whole struggle on what went down in Delano: the farmworkers and the cannery workers. Someone told me that the Filipino workers worked in both the canneries and the fields, because it was all seasonal and they had to work where they could. If these cats are still around, they probably are still in their 80s or 90s, but if you could catch it. I have this Black-Chinese aunt who I interviewed in the 90s, and she could go way back in our family history. She could go way back before when she was even around, like during reconstruction to the 1870s, because that's where our family came from. I didn't record it, I just kind of hand wrote it, you know—it was a shame—but that's what I'm saying, you should track down these old cats. They could still provide some history, you know. Also Lillian Galledo, she came from a farmworkers family, she worked the fields before. That's why her husband, David Bacon, is documenting farmworkers, mostly Mexican farmworkers and farmworkers down the coast. She could tell you some of this history, like

where a lot of these Manongs went through.

SARMIENTO: What is her name again?

MOROZUMI: Galledo. G-A-L-L-E-D-O, Lillian. She was also in KDP, she's the head of FAJ.

SARMIENTO: Just wrapping up, currently in the Filipino American community, there is a lot of outrage against Chavez at the moment, especially with that biopic.

MOROZUMI: Did you see it?

SARMIENTO: No, but do you have an opinion—since you were really in it with the student activism—and how the media portrays it as a big schism. Do you have any comments on that?

MOROZUMI: Well, I haven't seen it, but I don't trust any Hollywood versions of our history in the first place. Not even a lot of the PBS documentaries, you know. These guys who did that went on—the one with all the busses that went down south---Freedom Riders. They tracked me down because I was working with Bobby Seale, and they wanted to do a documentary on the Panthers. It had its merits, but it was also very pacifist, and making a distinction between self-defense, which I believe in. They were saying was that the self-defense tactics that the Black Panthers were using would never would have work, which is not true. The self-defense tactics came from the South; Black people survived defending themselves, and they migrated over here. The Panthers are just an extension of that, so for them to make that statement in that documentary and then get commissioned to make a documentary on the Panthers. They wanted me to connect them to Bobby [Seale] and Bobby said "I don't want to talk to them, they already publicly criticized us and disparaged our tactics." So,

Hollywood is going to have a version of the farmworkers strike, they are going to have a version of Malcom X and any piece of history. I think there is some usefulness for it. I know [Amiri] Baraka was very angry at Spike Lee's rendition of Malcom [X], and where that came from and Bobby didn't like they did on the Panthers. But I still think they have some function. I wouldn't set up picket lines on it [the Chavez biopic], what I would do is initiate some dialogue. I know Itliong's son was pissed off against it, and he was picketing some of those theatres. But the most important thing is to show that there was Filipino unity and Chicano unity, and in that unity, the truth will surface, ike who initiated the strike, where the leadership came from and who took the principle stance. We have to do our own history. We have to make our own videos. That's why we have the archives for. We have to educate our own people and not wait for mainstream media and Hollywood to do it. Because they're never going to tell the truth, not the real truth. I mean I get scared whenever [the media] want to tell our history, I'm like "Damn, now I have to clear all the heads and solve that." But we need Ethnic Studies, for instance. Ethnic Studies wasn't very institutionalized. I remember I took a Black Studies class at Brooklyn College, and this Black Studies teacher—a Black dude—said that the Klan doesn't exist and that kind of oppression doesn't exist anymore. I'm the only Asian in the class and I'm going "that is simply not true!" I went to an anti-balky [spelling?] at LA and the Klan shows up in their hoodies. So I'm like, nah man. But at the same time, we need ethnic studies and we need to teach it ourselves and be truth tellers and have connections in the community. That's how the truth gets told and you have to

have cultural centers. The oral history of our peoples is what happened. This project. This is why we need a lot of projects like this. But to shift the emphasis, you know, it was about Asian-Latino unity at the highest order, man. We almost shut down America.

SARMIENTO: I'm pretty much done with my questions. Do you have any closing remarks that you would like to make?

MOROZUMI: I don't think so. If you could think of something later [laughs]

SARMIENTO: Alright, it is 6:05 and we are concluding the interview. Thank you Greg so much.

MOROZUMI: Thank you.