

2023_12_13_Frank Acosta Interview_HMA_Restoration.wav

Henry Apodaca [00:00:00] Is really, really good. It captures in 48kHz and mono cause we're, you know, voices are in mono anyway. But it's a really great capture. I enjoy it.

Henry Apodaca [00:00:10] And it sounds pretty clean, so I.

Henry Apodaca [00:00:13] ...I think so too.

Henry Apodaca [00:00:16] Okay,.

Frank Acosta [00:00:17] He doesn't have anybody tucking up in that region.

Henry Apodaca [00:00:22] Okay. Well, today is December 13th, [2023], Wednesday. I am Henry Apodaca, lead soundscape artist for A People's History of the Inland Empire's Live from the Frontline Art, Memory and Environmental Justice in the IE project. Today I'm joined with Frank Acosta and Audrey Maier, PhD, for an interview concerning South Colton or, you know, Colton in general. Before we get started with the interview, I do want to go over the background of our project so as to have as much transparency with you and for your understanding on what we're doing.

Frank Acosta [00:00:59] Thank you.

Henry Apodaca [00:00:59] So, you're very welcome. I'm going to go ahead and read the first couple of paragraphs here in the background. Background a People's History of the United, People's History of the Inland Empire Collective is a place based public arts collective using arts archives and story to amplify voices of community members who narrate a fraught past of historical inequities. Our social and artistic engagement projects projects uplifts experiences beyond poverty and illness to include multi-generational patterns of placemaking, cultural production, labor activism, and community building. We commemorate community members who have not historically been represented and draw attention to the arts to a long to the long histories of structural violence shaping where they live. With funding from the Inland, So Cal Creative Corp Grant, the People's History of the Inland Empire collectively seeks to creatively represent and historically contextualize the experiences of these frontline communities. To humanize abstract and technical issues regarding climate change, pollution, public health, energy equity, and land use planning. Our project Live from the Frontline memorializes people and the places along a route comprised of these targeted environmental justice communities, for instance, Westside San Bernardino, San Bernardino Valley Truck Farms, South Colton, Bloomington, Fontana, Jurupa Valley Sikh Enclave, East Side Riverside, where we are currently located, California's Citrus State Historic Park and the in the Mira Loma Space Center. We might be using Moreno Valley as a particular site marker in the future, but we're unsure in that in that point in time. And I actually just on a side note, I think Moreno Valley would be a great place because of the, the World Logistical Center right over there. It's.

Audrey Maier [00:03:00] Yeah, that's the reason we want to look at it. You just are getting, there's too many stories into all the other sites, so we're making our way.

Henry Apodaca [00:03:07] Yeah. Oh, man. Okay, so that is more or less what our project is looking to, to accomplish. Or at least the aim of our project. I'm going to go ahead and start the interview, if that's okay. And just we're going to make it nice here. I'm liking it like this.

Henry Apodaca [00:03:26] Now. Frank, just, you know, from the get go. Can you describe your background, where you're from, and how you got to Colton?

Frank Acosta [00:03:38] Alright, I was born in Linares, Nuevo Mexico. To 1946, June 18th. And, when I was still probably very young, my parents came back to the United States because my father was born in Santa Barbara, and then he.. his family was one of the few families that came to California and then went back to México. A lot of families came with that express purpose in mind, and they never made it back to México. So my father's family did. They went back to Abasolo in Guanajuato Americano. And then they show up in the 1920 census in Santa Barbara, and they show up in the 1930 Mexican census in, in Abasolo. So I grew up in the community of City Terrace in the Los Angeles area. It was primarily a Jewish community. It was a redlined, redlined area. However, we were fortunate to purchase the home. My father was fortunate to purchase the home from, a resident of the community whose husband had died just after they finished having their house constructed. And so we dealt directly with her instead of with a with a realtor. Otherwise we'd probably would not have been able to buy a house in that area.

Henry Apodaca [00:05:02] Yeah.

Frank Acosta [00:05:03] In a little bit further south, we would have been able to buy a house in East L.A. proper. City Terrace is right on the border between the city and the county. Grew up, went to City Terrace Elementary School and encountered a community that really welcomed us because it was a Jewish community, they were very much aware of the hazards of discrimination and the in the results of just being discriminated against. So our principal, Evelyn, Mrs. Evelyn Roosevelt I remember her very well, she made us feel proud. We celebrated Cinco de Mayo, of course, that's been the custom since before 1900. In the, in many areas of the United States. And so we, we felt supported and and welcome. And that that made a big difference. Our teachers were I thought they were all very good. As a matter of fact, in third grade, I had such a great teacher that I invited her to my birthday party, and she came to my party at home. Her name was Mrs. Littlefield, and, my kindergarten teacher made it a project to make sure that I. I could dominate English when the timeline was up. What? She. Well, she I'm sure she knew or was aware of the fact that I have been speaking some English at home because my mother, her father, my grandfather, my mother's side came from England. It was a mining engineer. And he worked in Africa, in Rhodesia, in, Kenya, in the, I think, the Belgian Congo. And then, then he transferred to Mexico, where he worked in, Zacatecas and then in Durango in different mines, silver mines, mostly in Mexico. But, because of those, because of that, I was exposed to English at home. And my mother started my started teaching me to read when I was three. Now, I was very fortunate because I when I went to school, I was four years old. And that was in 1950. The following year they they decided to help me meet the requirements for entering kindergarten. But, the, the the students being five years old by December 5th, but I got in a year earlier, so I was able to start kindergarten as a, as a four year old. My sister was very disappointed that she was only one year. She was only one year younger than me, but she had to wait an extra year so she would go to school. She felt cheated and then rightly so. Because the school, for us at least was was a big deal of fun. And, so sixth grade, I went to one of the last six years schools of the Los Angeles area. And I don't know what the reason was that it was one of the last six year schools. It was a junior and senior high combined on the same campus. Many of the teachers, would teach classes there, because if you had a elementary credential, you could teach up to eighth grade. If you got a secondary credential, you could teach down to, down to seventh grade. So there was no overlap. And, so I was there for six years, but we were three years

graduated from 9th grade went three more years graduated from, from 12th grade. I felt very supported. That's a really great teachers. I did participate in some special programs. I started out with a seventh grade math program that was being taught by a, um, a gentleman from from Germany who had left Germany before the war. And, he selected several of us to teach, teach us a little bit, to go a little bit deeper with mathematics than the average curriculum, allowed for. So that that was a good experience for me. Anyway, I specialized in high school. I kind of specialized in in science and math. Those are the two areas that that I studied. I took a variety of science classes, and, but I did well all the way through highschool. Junior high school. I won't say I got straight A's, but I came close to it. I was fourth in my graduating class.

Henry Apodaca [00:09:35] Oh, wow.

Frank Acosta [00:09:36] So I was [00:09:37]hit up by [0.0s] a friend of mine, Louis Revena. He had just a few a few extra points than I did. A few extra points more than that than I had. So, anyway, it was still fun. I did win the Bank of America Science and Math Award, and I also received the Bausch Lomb award for science, Excellence in Science. It was I. High School was fun. I wasn't athletic, but I succeeded academically and I there were cholos that were pachucos and they didn't. The ones from City Terrace didn't give me a hassle because I'd gone to school with them. Some of the ones from the other barrios or in the other areas in the year I got a little bit of flack from them. But, you know, it didn't didn't well in any way affect me too much negatively. Then I had an excellent counselor who took us to several schools to to visit the campuses. And because I was science math, I looked at Cal Tech, and I looked at, Harvey Mudd. I when I took the SATs and Harvey Mudd and Cal Tech didn't weren't interested in me. They wanted people, basically, who got straight A's and got perfect scores on both, both the SAT's. You know, the math and the the English part, general knowledge in the English. So I ended up applying to go to UCR, UC Riverside and got accepted. It was because I got the highest, combined scores on the S.A.T. I was considered a state scholar. If I'd gone to a private university, they would have pay for my tuition because I went to UCR they paid my registration, which at that time was \$110 a semester. And I our finally had to come up with a room and board halfway through to, well, just a year and a half into my, UCR, education. They opened up a language hall in the dorms. There was there were three languages three language hall. It was a Deutsches Haus. It was a Maison Francais. And there was a Casa Hispanica. So I moved into the Casa Hispanica and after spending a semester there and then they switched to a quarter system. I was asked if I wanted to be the assistant director, and R.A. it was a combination job, I lived on the men's hall that was the RA for the hall. There was an assistant director for the Casa Hispanica. And then there was my there was an equivalent on the girls hall of the women's hall who had the same position. So that was an excellent experience. I really enjoyed the time that I was in the, in the dorms of Casa Hispanica. We did a lot of cultural activities. We did, travel to the Los Angeles area to go to see plays. We went in to L.A. to see Man of La Mancha when that came out obviously. We also went to see Andrés Segovia playing at, at UCLA. So there were there were a lot of opportunities that opened up, by being part of the Casa Hispanica. It also put me in a leadership position made me feel more comfortable. Helped prepare me, I think, for being a teacher in the classroom. You know, you gain confidence from, from, from doing that sort of thing. So I feel that basically someone who lived in a minority community, that I had all of the right opportunities, partly because of my background, but also because those opportunities were there. Where I know in other schools with minority populations, those opportunities were not there, to the same degree, particularly for Chicanos. Oh.

Frank Acosta [00:13:34] We didn't have a significant Black population. There were some Asians, but they were at that time, they were more limited. Later on, as more Asians moved into the area, excuse me, into the area. Monterey Park was right next door, Alhambra was right next door. So, you know, a lot of Asians settled in those communities. But there were some in City Terrace. That was all of those things were positives. And when I went to UCR I started off as a math major. After about a year or a year or so being a math major, I decided I really didn't want to continue with math. Two reasons. When I was in high school, as a senior, I took calculus at East LA College. And, we, we there was a group of us who got accepted to to do that. And so we, we one of the students selected they had a car. And so we piled into this car four of us or five of us, and we drove to to, East LA College every, everyday. When I got to UCR and I, I enrolled in the Math department as a math major. One of the things that I did was I took my textbook from, from, from high school, from junior college. And the professor who was teaching the Calculus class at that said, oh, this is not really a good book for for theoretical math, because we're a theoretical math department here at UCR and all the physical problems of physics problems in the book, we're going to leave that for you to just solve those when you're in the physics class. We're only going to do theoretical math problem solve the book in this class. And I, I a concrete learner to a great degree and the theoretical made it very difficult and I also was was not happy with having to spend 6 to 8 hours doing math homework because I was I had to enroll in a couple or three math classes. And, I wasn't happy doing math for 6 or 7 hours every day. And I, I decided, no, I'm going to switch to Spanish. And I had not taken any Spanish in elementary school, not in elementary school. In high school I took French, and that was because I was already fluent in Spanish. I didn't have the grammatical knowledge, but I was fortunate to have parents who spoke grammatically. And they corrected me when I, when I used improper or substandard Spanish. My vocabulary was not very broad, because you have to live in an environment where you use that vocabulary on a daily basis. We used it at home, but it was home vocabulary. Not academic, not social vocabulary. Outside the home that impaired me to a certain degree. Living in the Casa Hispanica helped to remedy some of those deficiencies. And I loved when I started studying Spanish as my major. I took some French classes so I majored in Spanish, and minored in French. It was more satisfying to me. And living in the Casa Hispanica of course was, was a great opportunity to. We had, we even had some international students who joined us. They lived in dorms as international graduate students, but they joined us because they felt comfortable having their meals with, with, with the residents of the Casa Hispanica. So that's that's how we ended up, majoring in Spanish. And then when I graduated, I did my student teaching the year after I graduated. I graduated in 1968, five years, for my undergraduate degree. And that was partly because when I became director, assistant director of the Casa Hispanica, I dropped down to 12 units a semester. In order to have the time to work as the assistant director for the Casa Hispanica. And that that was a good decision. So.

Henry Apodaca [00:17:54] Excuse me. I apologize.

Frank Acosta [00:17:58] I, applied for a job in the Colton School district because it was close by and the only time I had ever set foot. Oh, no. The only time I had had any contact in passing through Colton was when, some relatives of ours who were taking used clothing and other, other objects to Mexico to give, not to give to the poor. They were going to sell them. We had, we had a, an aunt and uncle who were very, very, agarrados tight wads. And so they, they basically made it a money making proposition. They weren't going to go all that distance, spend money on their gasoline, and then not charge for those clothes. Then you, me, my aunt and uncle had a reputation for being tight wads. They had an accident in New Mexico, and my father, was the only relative who could go and pick them

up. So I accompanied my father, we went there and then and then came back. But, at that time, my father, my parents, they had originally intended to buy a small grocery store very, very near the the high school where I was attending, but that deal fell through. I never knew any of the details, but their next move was then was to buy a gas station on Whittier Boulevard in East L.A., and that was, that was an interesting experience because, it opened for me it opened up the community. I was from City Terrace. We would go places, but I wasn't that familiar with other parts of East L.A. Or other communities or others where Spanish was spoken. That. So that gave me an opportunity. We were five blocks just outside the city limits, and, so it was still county, but it, it gave me a broader view of the community in East L.A. and of course, there was Whittier Boulevard and all the all the myths and mystique that go about with that. My sister was the sort of semi wild one in the family. I was the conservative, scholar, and she was the party, party girl. So she of course, when, when I went to college, my parents asked her, don't you want to go to college? And she said, oh no. And she said, I want a car. So they bought her a Ford. It was a 50 year I think it was a 50 year old car. It was from the 19. Oh no, it was the anniversary, 50th anniversary car that was sold in 1953 with a medallion in the steering wheel that, indicated that it was the 50th anniversary edition of the car. And so she used that to cruise with Whittier Boulevard. She that's that's how she met her husband, her husband, to be. And they, they would cruise Whittier Boulevard. I, I experienced that vicariously because I wasn't involved in that sort of thing. I went away to UCR. She stayed behind the family, looked for another house. But we lived about in Monterey Park for a couple of months. My parents did. I think I visited maybe twice because I was at UCR, and I would have to take the the bus or the train. So I preferred the train because it only took an hour to get from Riverside back to, either to East Los Angeles, the station in East Los Angeles, or to Union station. That's a little bit longer. But, if I took the, the bus, I could go. I can't remember exactly how it worked. Oh, if I took the Greyhound, I could. I could go. I had to buy a ticket for the next town after. After Los Angeles. I think at that time it was Studio City. They couldn't. They couldn't provide transportation between Riverside and Los Angeles. I guess the RTD or some some agency wouldn't let them, because they had an exclusive, contract to provide transportation and it was bus transportation. So I had to buy a ticket to go to the next, next station after. And, and even though I had to buy a ticket to Studio City, it was only a few, maybe a couple of dollars more. Instead of, the Union Station, I could I could get off at East L.A., and I did, and my parents could pick me up. And that by that time we were living in Montebello and then Pico Rivera after that. So that's how, that's what I did just to get home. Graduated from high school, got my got my degree, and then started teaching at Terrace Hills Junior High School. It wasn't called the junior high school. It was still called Terrace Hill School because it had been a, a, an intermediate school, but at one time it housed fourth to eighth grade. So there were these tiny little chairs that fourth graders would use, and then some bigger ones that bigger eighth graders could sit in. And, it was it was because it was Grand Terrace. It's, you know, it's a more affluent community at that at that point in time. There were a lot of professionals who lived in the in the community. There were a lot of military from March Airforce Base. But especially from Norton Air Base. Who lived in that community. And I got to know a lot of the families who lived there. I came across probably the best principal I could've, could've gotten. He was a fantastic principal, really marvelous, truly, truly enthusiastic about education, very positive about everything, and really interested in making the school a place where students and teachers would want to live and learn. So look, what's with me? And I ended up working for him from 1969 until 1988. He was my principal for 19 years. And the best principal that you can work for.

Henry Apodaca [00:24:49] That's a great history and a teaching career for 19 years. That's.

Frank Acosta [00:24:53] I would say that as an as a, as an educator. He was probably one of the most influential in improving. The, the educational experience for the kids in Colton. We have a an important board member Ray Abril Jr. actually. Senior, senior was was important because he was the. He was the sponsor of the Boy Scout troop from South Colton. I think it was troop 43. So he's important. But Ray Abril Jr. Was a board member of the Colton School district. And he did help a lot of Latinos, Chicanos who worked in the in the school district. He was their voice. Oh, I didn't see eye to eye with him. But, you know, I could understand that the community, owed a great debt to him because he was a community leader and his father and, and Randee himself were able to. They were able to exist because there was still a division politically as well as physically between the two. Two parts of town, North and South Colton. So his influence was was very, very important in Colton.

Audrey Maier [00:26:09] For people who don't know. Could you maybe describe where the school that you were teaching at was located?

Frank Acosta [00:26:15] Okay. The original school was Grand Terrace. It was on the corner of De Berry and Mount Vernon. Which is so. Well, Mount Vernon is an important North-South artery. And, De Berry is a it's just a residential street. And the school happened to be located on the intersection of those two streets. The school was built on the hill. It was. The architecture was really impressive compared to the average school building. The the the D and the C and D wings look more ordinary, because they were they were added on to the school. But the original part of the school took advantage of the hill. And and it was very simple, you know, architecturally simple, but, but impressive building. It, it fit the hill. It fit the, its location. And. It was probably called, well Grand Terrace is the reason for the for the name of the community, cause it was a sort of on area of, flat area, basically on the east side of the channel that probably was, was dug or was created by the flow of the Santa Anna River. That may have been one of the one of the reasons that it existed. What else can I say about Terrace Hills?

Audrey Maier [00:27:45] I think that's I mean, I think that's fine. You gave a really good lay of the land.

Henry Apodaca [00:27:49] Yeah. Terrace Hills we share that in common. I was raised on De Berry, went to Terrace Hills junior high at the time. And, I appreciate that, the background on the actual school itself. But can I ask you a question? So, you know, I'm very fascinated with the background, your educational background, and looking at how your elementary school teachers were scaffolding your education, kind of like how you mentioned they understood oppression. And they were in a community teaching students to, I guess, be, how to survive, how to navigate the world. When you came, not necessarily to Riverside UCR, but when you were entering into your teaching field, which you have a vast, career in. Did you share that same feeling? Do you believe that your teachers from elementary shared in helping the student body, or at least understanding their concerns and needs?

Frank Acosta [00:28:47] Well, I don't know exactly. I guess the best answer would be to. To say that I. I wanted to do the best job that I could with my students and. My experience, I'm sure, influenced me to to view my my role as a teacher that way. And there were a couple of other strong influences there. The first addition influence was my principal, Dale Tracy He was very supportive. He, I was hired to teach Spanish, but when I asked him if I could teach for Chicano Studies, he said, sure, let's let's do some research and we'll get

some textbooks. Now, that was after we we moved to Colton junior high school. I was only at Terrace Hills for two years.

Henry Apodaca [00:29:41] Gotcha.

Frank Acosta [00:29:42] And, when he was moved, because, originally the school district started bussing students from Alice Birney, which was in the eastern portion of, of Colton, and they were bussed for two years. The year before I started there and my first year at Terrace Hills. Then the following year they decided the board decided I don't know what criteria they used to make the decision. But there was a lot of negative, pushback from the Grand Terrace community. They resented having students from Colton bussed to the to the, the junior high. They decided to take the students from Wilson, which was in South Colton. It was one of the segregated schools because they because it wasn't South Colton. That means its population was essentially all Mexican Chicanos with. Maybe. A smattering of Black students there might have. No, there never really were very many Black students. But when they started also including the Fiesta village, area, the base of Grand Terrace as part of Wilson's population. And they got some Black students from that area, and eventually the Black population increased in, in, at Wilson, North Colton never really got very many Blacks living in it. Most, most of the Blacks came from the Fiesta Village area. By the way that area at one time was known as East Colton Heights. Because there's a hill, you go up and it's a slightly more elevated area, not as high as Grand Terrace, but close, close to that. But that was East Colton Heights at one time, you could a little travel farther and you're heading towards Redlands, and there's a El... Montecito, cemetery. Where If you just go a little bit farther, you're in Loma Linda, and then you go even more even farther. You're into, Redlands on Barton Road.

Henry Apodaca [00:32:01] I believe you, passed through Cooley Ranch on that route as well. Wouldn't you?

Frank Acosta [00:32:03] You you you travel through Cooley Ranch. The Cooley Ranch is, is below Grand Terrace. But you do pass. You can pass through. You would go down the Cooley Ranch and you get to Washington, where Washington crosses, crosses, Mount Vernon. By the way, the bridge that's being the bridge that's between the west side of of, of the freeway and the east side of the freeway is being rebuilt. And. That was built when when they rounded the freeway, the 215 freeway, through to the Cooley Ranch, in South Colton. Anyway that the bridge is being currently being rebuilt, that freeway went in right around 1960.

Henry Apodaca [00:32:54] Oh wow.

Frank Acosta [00:32:55] 59 60. So that's how old. That area is.

Henry Apodaca [00:32:59] Yeah. I do want to touch on the freeways. Maybe later on in the interview. But you did mention something that kind of struck me. You were talking about a social and political, social and political forces that were kind of devised Colton into north and south Colton. I'm wondering if you could explain that a little bit further and and what you know about that, that division.

Frank Acosta [00:33:22] Well, South there are there are many communities throughout the southwest, actually throughout the whole country, where you're either from the right side of the tracks or you're from the wrong side of the tracks. And if it's not tracks, it could be whatever, whatever. Excuse they find...They creative a division. Even if there is no

physical division there. So that's a common thing throughout the United States. Basically, money usually has the most to do with it. There's one side of the tracks or one side of the of the river, where everybody is affluent, and the other side, everybody's poor. They're the the leaders, the owners of businesses and then the workers. And before that before, the Civil War, the slaves.

Henry Apodaca [00:34:17] Yeah, in my time in Colton, while there, a lot of it was devised through gangs in gang territory.

Frank Acosta [00:34:24] Well, no, now you're talking about Colton itself.

Henry Apodaca [00:34:28] Yes.

Frank Acosta [00:34:29] That had minimal influence outside of South Colton and North Colton. There never was, to my knowledge. There never was a West Colton. There was an East Colton for a while, and the east East Colton tried to dominate, and they put down North Colton and they put down South Colton. But the yeah, the main rivalry was North and South Colton until East Colton sort of developed, developed into a gang. Well, I have to deal with that in the school because they were students who, who were in my classroom. But partly because of the way the attendance zones were divided. When I first started teaching at Terrace Hills, South Colton students from and, you know, you maybe you're aware of that South Colton proper is the old South Colton and they don't consider any place outside of the old South Colton as part of a part of their community. The old veteranos. You know they basically grew up in South Colton, the rivalry, in my mind when I was at Terrace Hills, we had East Colton students attending there. The South Colton students were in South Colton. They went to school in South Colton, and when they went to high school, the ones who. Well, there were students who, maybe they enrolled at Colton High School but they didn't last very long. Some of them just dropped out. They just stopped attending or they they basically, got kicked out in in some cases. Let me gather my thoughts a little bit. The rivalry between North Side and South Side. You would see placas graffiti. NSC SSC. And then Con Safos was on the way out at that time. Con safos is not used very much anymore in placas right? In graffiti. What you see still on sidewalks and on in, in places. SSC or NSC or ESC for east, East Colton. I would say the gang activity never has gone away, but it has periods when when it's really a strong influence, a strong force in the community and other times when it just, it just it's influence wanes. You know, you don't hear very much about you don't see as much graffiti, but it never has really gone away. It's still there.

Henry Apodaca [00:37:20] Yeah. You know, I when I think about you, Frank, I think you have such an interesting perspective on Colton and writ mass. For instance, working at Terrace Hill School servicing, say, for instance, Grand Terrace or any students that were coming from South Colton, you're getting this perspective or East Side Colton and then moving to Colton Joint Unified School District where it's it's I'm not I believe that's more on the north side of the city if I'm not mistaken.

Frank Acosta [00:37:48] Colton Junior High?

Henry Apodaca [00:37:48] Colton Junior High.

Frank Acosta [00:37:48] It was supposed to integrate the city. You know it did initially on 1954, but then, well, just the barrios were always there. The, the the vision of the track

having the tracks there and then the freeway it just, you know, solidified the division for, for a long time.

Henry Apodaca [00:38:08] That's an interesting point. And, you know, the tenure of your career and as you've seen the city change has been equally important, I want to continue on with some of that division by way of the freeway or by way of the tracks. Cut in, again, understanding that you're not born and raised in Colton, but you have dedicated your teaching career in this area, I find your perspective to be entirely important. From your perspective, how, how did the tracks, impact, South Colton's community?

Frank Acosta [00:38:46] Well, the main the main impact was that it created a, de facto segregation of North and South Colton. It was it was not de jury. Jury. Jury? Jury?

Audrey Maier [00:39:03] De jure.

Frank Acosta [00:39:05] De jure.

Audrey Maier [00:39:05] Yeah.

Frank Acosta [00:39:06] That's the I. I have difficulty with that because you don't have a silent, final vowel in either Spanish or Latin for de jure, de jure or de jure. I don't know how to pronounce it, but you wouldn't leave it silent. So that's why I don't say de jure. Anyway, that that existed and Colton Police actually enforced it. It had no legal force, but they still would say. You're on the wrong side of the tracks to get back to your side of town. Now they also didn't patrol in South Colton after dark. They did have a policeman for a while. Are you familiar with Frank Gonzalez? Who was mayor of, of Colton for awhile?

Henry Apodaca [00:39:58] Yes.

Frank Acosta [00:40:00] Okay. His grandfather. Served as a policeman in South Colton. And his job was to patrol South Colton after dark because the Colton PD never went down there after dark unless it was a really massive emergency of some sort or another. To my knowledge, that's this. That's just from what I've learned about the community. But I do know I. I believe that Frank's family contributed some pictures to the Colton Area Museum that include a picture of the grandfather dressed up as a Policeman with his gun, uniform, from when he was serving as a police. He had no jurisdiction over over North Colton at all. He was restricted to South Colton.

Henry Apodaca [00:40:54] Now as far as South Colton is concerned. And this division, as we're talking about by way of tracks, how would you characterize South Colton?

Frank Acosta [00:41:06] It was a very tight knit. Very. Welcoming to, outsiders. To a limited degree. But. It wasn't a negative community. If people went to South Colton, and they felt uncomfortable it, it's because they don't feel comfortable among other people who aren't exactly like they are. At least that's my opinion. I don't think they were openly hostile. They weren't going to, you know, open up their doors and welcome arms and that sort of thing. But if you if you went to a visit of business in South Colton, I think you, you would be treated with respect as a customer. And there were people from North Colton who did go to South Colton because they knew there were at one point, I believe, I don't remember the exact statistic, but there were something like 32 markets in South Colton little tiny ones. And the reason that there was so many markets is because. Many of them had specialties. There, there would be a market that had really good meat. Another market that

that, would sell, the freshest vegetables and fruits. There would be another market that would have good tortillas, they sold or made and sold. La Esperanza, I think was one of those places La Esperanza was on, on O Street at the at the end of the street where it were sixth at the tracks. The, the Santa Fe and Union Pacific tracks traveled north south through South Colton and. Right. Right at the tracks alongside the tracks with sixth. Sixth Street and the market was what is at the corner between six and the tracks and, and O Street. And, it was a very popular market. In the a lot of people from North Colton, who knew about the markets and where they could buy some of the best things. They would go to South Colton and they felt safe doing that, especially in the daytime. In the evening, they probably weren't, would not venture into South Colton. They probably would have stayed north of the tracks because they knew that there was a curfew enforced for the South Colton people. So they figured, well, let's stay out of that part of town. And I'm. Guessing that that was the case. I can't I don't know that for certain.

Audrey Maier [00:43:54] When you're talking about this happening in the tracks and the curfew, is this occurring in the 1970s? Cause you must've. If you were at Grand Terrace for two years, you graduated in 68. So you were probably teaching in Colton in the 1970s, which, you know, usually when we hear stories about the curfew, it's taking place in the 30s and 50s. But to hear that that might have been taking place in the 70s and 80s is a different story.

Frank Acosta [00:44:20] Well, I don't think that the curfew was enforced, and I think people from South Colton felt more comfortable by that time. But then by the 1970s, the 1950s were a key, decade for the for the development of, of somewhat integrated community, servicemen coming back from, from, the World War II experience and from the Korean War. Oh, and some of the ones that we interviewed mentioned that they'd come back to the United States and they'd say, well, I went over there to fight for for my rights as a citizen to defend this country. I'm entitled to these rights. And so they started pushing the boundaries as far as being able to move and buying property in North Colton. So we interviewed, I believe let's see, we interviewed a Cervantes, a relative of the Cervantes market, which was on the corner of M Street and La Cadena. Just one of the first intersections that you that you cross when you go through the underpass. It was built to 19, 1950, 1956 or thereabouts. Just before they put in the freeway, the underpass went in before the freeway. So it would've been 50, 54, 50, 55 and then the. Let's see. What was what was your question?

Audrey Maier [00:45:52] I was just wondering, is in the 70s, students that you were having that were from South Colton did still feel like there was a enforced curfew, maybe not legally binding, but police at least policing a curfew into the 1970s.

Frank Acosta [00:46:06] Well, youths also have the gang problem to go contend with on a more direct level than adults did. The, the adults were faced with a two because there were it was violence that was was committed by both sides of the of the freeway, both sides of town, but more that I think that affected youth, especially boys. But the girls were involved too, because of, you know, you're going out with a guy from from the wrong side of town. You can't do that cause we're South Coltonites. Whatever. So the they weren't that it didn't influence them as directly depending on, on their age and, you know, and then how far into the 70s you go. But it was the influence that that division was, was gradually. It's it's. Influence and presence was gradually diminishing influence with time. It, it got to be. And once, once, the people from South Colton could buy houses of White Flight set in and as as white flight increased through the 70s and into the 80s. More people, more and more people from South Colton would move into North Colton. And it got to the point

where you could buy houses anywhere in Colton. It would. Nobody would withhold, the sale of a house just because it was a Mexican who was, was trying to buy it.

Henry Apodaca [00:47:47] Would you categorize South Colton in this time in the 70s as working class?

Frank Acosta [00:47:52] It always has been, working class. There were some some families that you could consider. I won't say aristocratic, but more educated. Possibly the families of people who came from Mexico who were part of an educated class in Mexico. I'm thinking of specifically of of of Oh. What's this? And his last name is Sosa. And I can't remember his first name. It's an unusual name. Who was very he would read the newspaper. La Opinión. That's one of the Mexican newspapers in the area from Los Angeles. And I remember that the La Opinión was not written at a very low grade level of reading. It was it was for people who knew how to read Spanish well. And it used a very broad and educated vocabulary. They included poetry in the newspaper, and there were people who looked forward to reading that poetry. They may not have been able to compose a poem, but they appreciated the poetry that was published in the newspaper. And they they discussed some pretty heavy, topics in the newspaper.

Henry Apodaca [00:49:08] Yeah. Thank you.

Frank Acosta [00:49:12] Luz, Luz Sosa.

Henry Apodaca [00:49:14] Luz Sosa.

Frank Acosta [00:49:15] And I, I always felt it unusual because Luz is normally reserved for females. Because what they do. A lot of people from Guanajuato are familiar with the Our Lady of the Light. And there's even a famous painting in the cathedral at, at Leon in Guanajuato of Our Lady of the night. And so there were a lot of girls in Mexico in that part of Mexico, whose name was Maria de La Luz, or Maria de Luz, who I one of my aunts was named Maria Luz. That my father was one of my father's sisters. And, you wonder why so many people were named Luz from that part of the country. Well, it goes back to the the religion.

Henry Apodaca [00:50:01] Yeah.

Frank Acosta [00:50:02] And but for a man to have the name. Unusual. But he was very educated, self-educated, to a very large degree.

Henry Apodaca [00:50:09] Yeah. I can I can relate with the.

Frank Acosta [00:50:14] His. One of his daughters was a professor at one of the UC campuses I don't remember exactly which one. And then oh his son, became an engineer and worked for Caltrans and was involved in some of the decisions that were being made around the time with the freeway system was was being extended. So I don't know how directly I don't think he had any influence, but he was knowledgeable about some of the decisions that were being made around the time when the when the the ten freeway went in and when the 215 freeway was. came in.

Henry Apodaca [00:50:58] Yeah, you know, I know we had mentioned a time or I had briefly mentioned with you previously about a time going to South Colton where, the Gutierrez family lived on ninth Street and being on ninth Street and looking at the old train

tracks that were paved over it. I think that's what you're mentioning. The north and south route of a train going through South Colton. It's very.

Frank Acosta [00:51:21] Not. Well, that train brings. It didn't it didn't go through South Colton. It just went into South Colton to deliver or pick up, whatever was being shipped. Originally those tracks were that were part of the Pacific Electric system. So they were they actually came through all the way to Riverside.

Henry Apodaca [00:51:42] Right.

Frank Acosta [00:51:43] And, for for a few years up until about oh, five years ago or so, you could look at a, you know, a view from a from the satellite. And you could trace the, the location of the tracks, even though the tracks weren't there anymore. If you have an idea of what path they had taken, you could still go from Riverside from San Bernardino clear to Riverside and follow the the tracks that that the streetcars used to take.

Henry Apodaca [00:52:16] Yeah I think I remember seeing the tracks for the end and the street just ends right there.

Frank Acosta [00:52:19] Well, that's on O Street.

Henry Apodaca [00:52:21] That's O and Ninth, right. Or or Ninth is a perpendicular street to O.

Frank Acosta [00:52:26] It would be O, between you know, right at the well, Ninth Street stops right there.

Henry Apodaca [00:52:33] Right. I think what I was trying to get at is it's interesting how in sight or and view this train or trains running or to the residential areas living in the area.

Frank Acosta [00:52:45] Now when you get to that, that barrier that's there now the track, the tracks continued. But and they were they were right next to a row of houses. That's on the on Eighth Street.

Henry Apodaca [00:52:59] Yep.

Frank Acosta [00:52:59] And then. Let's see. Did you did you meet, you know Henry. Henry Vasquez. Did you meet Chuck?

Henry Apodaca [00:53:09] Haven't met Chuck. We're looking to see him.

Henry Vasquez [00:53:11] He's, he's a reluctant participant. We he wouldn't he wouldn't accept an interview for the South Colton Oral History project. We asked him if we could interview him and he said no, no, no. He didn't want to participate. So he's, he likes to be an observer.

Henry Apodaca [00:53:28] And don't we all.

Frank Acosta [00:53:29] Yeah. But anyway, his, his mother's house. Is one of the houses across from Wilson. Right on that street. And she just passed away, earlier this year. She was 97, and she had a she had a great memory. She could still recall. But, Chuck dug up some pictures that she had, of her classmates in elementary school. And she was able to

put the name of first, first and last names to a third of the class. More of the girls than boys. And she was able to put at least first names to most of her. There were only a handful that she couldn't remember the first or last name for, but only handful.

Henry Apodaca [00:54:12] You know, in that Eighth Street area that you had mentioned, especially as the train continues where the street now ends? It's almost as if the train was in the backyards of these homes.

Frank Acosta [00:54:24] Yeah it was.

Henry Apodaca [00:54:24] My grandmother owned a home on Eighth Street, and there was another family that, I was in contact with in the 90s.

Frank Acosta [00:54:30] Where about on Eighth.

Henry Apodaca [00:54:31] I'm not entirely sure of the address if I.

Frank Acosta [00:54:34] Well, just about physically.

Henry Apodaca [00:54:36] Let's say. Say. Oh, wow. Where would that be?

Frank Acosta [00:54:44] O Street. Is is where it goes and then.

Henry Apodaca [00:54:47] I want to say from the end of, O, maybe 4 or 5 houses down, but on Eighth Street.

Frank Acosta [00:54:53] Across from Wilson.

Henry Apodaca [00:54:55] Around there. Yeah. But I, I just, you know, even in my childhood, I just remember it being like, rambunctious, you know, it was loud outside, kind of like here it is here. In Eastside Riverside. As we're having this interview, we can hear a logistical supply train just tooting away going east and west. But, you know.

Frank Acosta [00:55:16] You can't go anywhere Colton without hearing the railroads.

Henry Apodaca [00:55:18] That's right. Did you think the railroads had negatively. And aside from characterizing a community as being from the wrong side of the tracks. Do you think there were any negative impacts the rails had on the community.

Frank Acosta [00:55:31] Oh, I'm sure there was. One of the one of the reasons that a lot of people from México came to Colton was because the railroad companies recruited them actively in México, and there was a big enticement. If you were hired by one of the railroad companies, you had a lifetime pass for the railroad anywhere in the United States or Mexico. And many families took advantage of that to go to Mexico and visit there family. So once a year, once every couple of years. Now I mentioned earlier that, that my family was one of the few families that actually went back to México. A lot of families came to the United States because of the Mexican Revolution. Oh, that's the they didn't want to be involved in the revolution. They knew that was going to be violence. They knew that either Pancho Villa or one of the other well, Pancho Villa, was the one that they feared the most, they, they, they loved Pancho Villa, but they feared the fact that he might come in and then take half of the family, and force them to join his, his troops. And so they feared him at the same time that the they celebrated they were on his side against the government. But, you

know, they didn't they didn't feel safe. They knew that there might be some negative consequences if they supported Villa.

Henry Apodaca [00:57:02] Yeah. That's interesting, especially the recruitment of workers from Mexico.

Frank Acosta [00:57:06] So they came to the United States, but very few families actually went back. In, in a few cases a member or two of the family would go back. But the the core family stayed here in the United States. And that continued for quite a while, even after the Mexican Revolution was over, because they saw that there was an opportunity to to work in, by Mexican standards, very lucrative jobs. When you got \$0.03 for a box of for, for picking a one box of oranges, you weren't getting very much money, but it was more than you could get at any job in México. So they stayed here. Yeah.

Audrey Maier [00:57:44] When did your family move back to México? Was it in the 30s? No.

Frank Acosta [00:57:49] It was in the early to, I would say the early to mid 20s.

Audrey Maier [00:57:52] Interesting. I was just wondering if was part of it repatriation in the 30s.

Frank Acosta [00:57:55] No.

Audrey Maier [00:57:56] In the 30s. But it seems like before.

Frank Acosta [00:57:58] They chose to go back.

Audrey Maier [00:57:59] Yeah. Interesting. Do you want to ask?

Henry Apodaca [00:58:02] Yeah, actually, you know, I'm very fascinated with the history of the rails in the South Colton, and obviously they predate the freeways. Can you tell us a little bit about the development of the freeways and its impact on Colton or specifically South Colton?

Frank Acosta [00:58:20] Well, we've we've been working with Andres Ramirez. Who works at UCLA, and he's been studying, the whole issue of, of, the, the decisions that were made about where to route the freeways. And what influence it's, it's had in, in the communities that they've got where the freeway have, have gone through. And, and of course, one of his focuses is Colton. And so he asked that very same question. There was always a plan. Since. Since the time since before the freeway was built, probably at least the late 40s or mid to late 40s, there was already plan to put a freeway through this area. And. I think one of the one of the reasons that they looked at that particular route is that, Valley Boulevard. Actually started a new study. And you can there's a, there's a website devoted to the to the route that Valley Boulevard finally, finally took. In parts of Valley Boulevard have been wiped out partly by the Ontario airport in this area. Probably, the tri city airport. Well, actually, Valley Boulevard in this area coincided also with Redlands Boulevard, which originally was Colton Avenue. If you go back to maps from the 1930s and maybe the early 40s, and you look at a map of the, of the area between Pomona and Redlands, it shows Valley Boulevard as Colton Avenue not as Valley Boulevard, even through Colton. Now for a period of time there was a dream of having what they called the coast to coast Highway, and and there were parts of the of the route, of Valley Boulevard,

where it was labeled Coast to Coast Highway. And they received funds to widen Valley from two lanes to four lanes. And so some of those properties, you know, the property got chopped off. If you, if you drive down Valley Boulevard, particularly just slightly east between let see 9th, 10th Street, 11th, 12th, 13th. If you drive, drive down Valley you could see how much closer the road is to the buildings that are still there from before they widened the the freeway compared to other buildings that were built later with the set back a little bit further from from the street. And that's because they took what was there, move the road closer to the building. And, you know, they had to learn to live with that. They didn't need to widen it. That was one of the conditions for it being able to be designated as the coast to coast Highway.

Audrey Maier [01:01:39] When you're talking about Redlands Boulevard being the Colton.

Frank Acosta [01:01:44] Redlands Boulevard, the, the name Redlands Boulevard, Boulevard is predated by Colton Avenue.

Audrey Maier [01:01:50] Colton Avenue. What about Highway 99? Because I thought Highway 99. It was also called Highway 99, right?

Frank Acosta [01:01:59] Right.

Audrey Maier [01:01:59] Yeah. Okay. I just wanted to make sure I was the same thing.

Frank Acosta [01:02:01] There's a webpage devoted to Highway 99.

Audrey Maier [01:02:04] Yeah.

Frank Acosta [01:02:05] For a while, I think for about a year or two, I was a member of the organization. And then I thought, no, they're they're more focused on, the whole thing, not just Colton. Yeah. We're interested just in Colton. But anyway, met the the gentleman who runs that site. He periodically takes motorcycle rides through, through the different parts of the state. Just, just to see what the routes look like, the evolution, the history of those places. Anyway. So, yeah, Colton Avenue, was an important route at that time in, in, and. And if you look up the Valley, Valley Boulevard page, oh, you can see how it started in the I forget which, which community it is in, in Los Angeles and then goes all the way through to. Let's see it, yeah all the way to, to Redlands.

Henry Apodaca [01:03:10] Yeah. And you had mentioned, you had mentioned the widening of Valley Boulevard.

Frank Acosta [01:03:15] Right.

Henry Apodaca [01:03:15] Was that due to, like, a larger amount of traffic from your understanding?

Frank Acosta [01:03:20] I think we were trying to, to bring more business through the route.

Henry Apodaca [01:03:26] Cause it does kind of sound like, you know, this is a real predecessor to the construction of a freeway that has four lanes on the each side.

Frank Acosta [01:03:33] And and there were people who were thinking into the future. Yes. Before the concept of a freeway even existed, they were just thinking in terms of highways and in the in trying to increase the flow of, of traffic. Now, one of the side effects of the freeways is that they ended up by bypassing businesses. People in Colton were afraid that when they put in the freeway that there wouldn't be any traffic through Colton. There was a terrible problem with when the coast to coast highway was going through Colton. People complained that there was too much traffic, that you couldn't find parking, and that, that there were there were people who were just driving through the town and not bringing any more business to the town, just making the the pollution of the noise, greater. You know, there were businessmen I'm sure who did profit from the, from the outer traffic, but, there were, there were feelings on both sides of that whole issue. But it was a significant, problem for Colton. I do know that. I believe it was reported in one of the problems that the press very often is influenced by the business people to a high degree. We'd like to see. And so. I. I'm not sure if you can trust reports that there was an increase in the amount of business because of the of the, the freeway. They they did notice that the traffic through Colton was was less. Oh, one of the an interesting just an interesting aside for many years up until probably the. I'm going to say mid-sixties the the speed limit in all of Colton was 25 miles an hour. That was it.

Henry Apodaca [01:05:23] Wow.

Frank Acosta [01:05:24] Now there were a lot of policemen who would lay in waiting and wait, you know, an area where you might not be able to see them readily and they pounce on you and they increase the, the flow of cash into the city coffers that way they don't they don't even bother stopping anybody. You know, people just go zoom through Colton. A lot of places they zoom right through red lights all the time.

Henry Apodaca [01:05:51] It's funny you mention that. Fun fact my first speeding ticket was in front of Cal Portland Cement off, off of Rancho, and he was hiding in the corner just exactly like you mentioned.

Frank Acosta [01:06:02] When was that?

Henry Apodaca [01:06:02] This was night a I got my, this is 1994.

Frank Acosta [01:06:08] Yeah. I guess they were still enforcing, the Colton has, has had a problem with budget. Well, San Bernardino had the same problems. Still has the same problems. Now their budgets don't permit for enough officers to be able to be hired at any given point in time. There are only five officers working at the at that time in Colton. That's it. If something comes up, they can call people who are on call. If there's a real emergency, then just call everybody up. But they don't have their budgets. Those don't permit them to have any. Any people who are specifically on duty. They're only four their only force there used to be. Six. Six districts in Colton. Six six wards or districts, and they reduced to four. They eliminated, I think, two two of the districts. So there there's an officer assigned to each each district and then one, one officer. In addition, I guess he can go anywhere he's needed. And if they need more, they have to call up people who are off duty.

Henry Apodaca [01:07:23] Yeah, kind of getting back to the the topic of the freeways and the development of the freeways. Were you aware of any type of, like, displacement of community members or families?

Frank Acosta [01:07:37] Yes.

Henry Apodaca [01:07:37] As as the freeway was going through its construction and in which ways?

Frank Acosta [01:07:41] Yeah. Well, well, that's one of the issues that Andres is exploring. He's trying to find out if what alternate routes were proposed. Where would where might they have been rerouted to? And one of the things that he's, that he's found is that there was a proposal to build the freeway right smack dab through the middle of South Colton, not where it is now, farther south, just dividing South Colton in two. And, and there was a civic group, I'm not sure who the members or participants that were from South Colton that opposed, building through the middle of Colton and they, they what they, they lobbied to have the freeway put where it was so that it would it would influence basically North Colton. Because the tracks. We're below the proposed freeway route. So it just it took out, basically a block and a half. You lost half half of J Street. The southern part of J Street. There's still there's still only a 3 or 4 block section, on the west side of La Cadena, where the where J Street exists. And it's only the houses that were on the north side of J Street that a few of them survived. And then right across the street from from those houses, it's just the wall of the freeway. Yeah. And one of the decisions that they did make was to elevate the freeway as it went through Colton. That's that's basically. The rest of J Street, I guess J street used to go ten blocks before the freeway. And I think it's only 3 or 4 blocks that.

Henry Apodaca [01:09:53] You know, I just wonder. Not a question for you, Frank, but I'm just kind of thinking out loud, like with the infrastructure of the rails already intact and come in the development of the freeway. If there was any collusion or communication, even between the railroads, BNSF, for instance, or Union Pacific and the developers of the freeway, that's just a question. I would I would be interested in figuring out as far as the creating the system and the infrastructure for the freeway.

Frank Acosta [01:10:19] Well, one of the one of the things that that I think they had to take into consideration was the frog. Where the railroad tracks cross that crossing, where they can go in two different directions. That crossing was called the frog. And, there were there was, an incident that occurred while Virgil Earp was was marshall of Colton. Where the Union- Santa Fe, Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe railway wanted to be able to cross over the Southern Pacific tracks. And in order to be able to do that, they have to put in a frog that allowed the tracks to cross and allowed travel in either north-south or east-west. And, the Southern Pacific was fighting this as much as we could to prevent that from happening. And so there was an incident where there was a showdown that also involved Virgil Earp that who... He's a keystone in, Colton's history because his name was so well known, even though that era only lasted, what, 10 or 15 years? The Wild West. Anyway, they, the the governor had to intervene, but I believe that was. What was the last name? Can't remember the governors name. My, my memory is not that are great any more. Anyway, the governor had to intervene and basically say you will let them cross over, but that's referred to as the Frog Wars or the Frog War. As a, as as a result of that frog, the railroad. I think it's the Santa Fe Railway, renamed a part of their, structure on Mill Street. Where, where the, where there's a bridge that goes over the railroad tracks. And you look down. And there's a other lot of new cars parked there.

Henry Apodaca [01:12:41] Yes.

Frank Acosta [01:12:41] I think it's used as a distribution point for new, new vehicles. That that area and part partly south along the tracks shows up in maps as Rana. R. A. N. A.

and Rana, or Rana in Spanish is the the latin name for frog and also in the Spanish for frog. So that area was named after the Frog Wars to commemorate the Frog Wars and it was done by the Santa Fe railway because they were the victors.

Henry Apodaca [01:13:20] And that's this is the bridge on Mill where the right... Where the old Fedco used to be.

Frank Acosta [01:13:26] Yeah, yeah.

Henry Apodaca [01:13:28] Wow. That's interesting.

Frank Acosta [01:13:30] Now, they closed those, they closed mill. But because of World War II, they didn't want, the on the car traffic, you know, like this pedestrian traffic to interfere with the operation of the railroad during the war. And it took them until 1978 to build that bridge. It wasn't a priority.

Henry Apodaca [01:13:51] Oh wow.

Frank Acosta [01:13:52] And then, the congressman who was, the congressman for this area was the last. His last name was Shepherd. So it has the name. The bridge has a name. Something. Something. Shepherd. No. Congressman. Shepherd. But nobody uses the name of the man. It's like the Guthrie interchange. That's where the two freeways cross. That was named after. Well, he was a conductor for the orchestra San Bernardino symphony. And he was also the owner of The Sun.

Henry Apodaca [01:14:26] Oh.

Audrey Maier [01:14:26] So better to get a street named after you than interchange people will. People will remember street name but not an interchange.

Henry Apodaca [01:14:33] They changed them all the time. Yeah, but, you know, it seems as if, like, the railroad, industry had a heavy influence in Colton.

Frank Acosta [01:14:44] Well, of course it did.

Henry Apodaca [01:14:45] You know, as I'm thinking in terms of not just being there and the business coming through, but also employment and, if I may, right now looking maybe switching gears a little bit in the interview and talking a little bit about industries and tying in everything that we've discussed so far.

Frank Acosta [01:15:01] The three. The three most important industries in Colton. The citrus industry, the railroad industry, and the cement plant.

Henry Apodaca [01:15:12] Yeah. You know, we were talking about early migrations into the country. Your family. My family came at the onset of World War two, Mexican Revolution as well. Coming north. Same exact many stories from Guanajuato as well.

Frank Acosta [01:15:25] Oh. What part?

Henry Apodaca [01:15:25] Irapuato and Pénjamo. Those two.

Frank Acosta [01:15:30] Yeah, I think you mentioned that.

Henry Apodaca [01:15:32] That seemed like there was such a great type, a great mass migration that my grandparents met in San Bernardino. But they were their lineages from the same state, like pueblos apart from each other. And my great great grandfather, Longhenio Estrada. He.

Henry Apodaca [01:15:52] Longhenio or Longino it's probably, I think it's probably Longhenio I didn't know him personally.

Frank Acosta [01:15:57] Longino is the name of the guard who speared Christ. Oh, when he was on the cross.

Henry Apodaca [01:16:04] Now, it makes sense. But he mentions the railroads, at least through conversations with my great grandfather and my grandfather, who I did know, and citrus as well. We didn't get into, at least in that time when they were here. I don't think the cement factory was there, but, you know, understanding the industries of Citrus and Railroad was present at this time in the early 20th century.

Frank Acosta [01:16:28] Right.

Audrey Maier [01:16:30] It started in 1928, like, really doing a lot at Cal ports. So it would have been around the same time.

Henry Apodaca [01:16:35] Oh, I guess I guess it would maybe like ten years after.

Audrey Maier [01:16:38] But like the time your like settling down because my family's the same way. I don't actually know what state, but came from Mexico. Daughter was born in each state as they built the railroad. And then you lived in Colton, and then that's where you settle.

Frank Acosta [01:16:50] What's your family's last name?

Audrey Maier [01:16:53] Colunga and Saldivar.

Frank Acosta [01:16:53] Oh that's right. Have you have you done any research on on the. Ancestry.

Audrey Maier [01:17:00] I've been trying to do a little bit, but it's been slow going with all these other projects. But. You know.

Frank Acosta [01:17:05] It's difficult with Mexican records.

Audrey Maier [01:17:08] Yeah.

Henry Apodaca [01:17:08] Yes.

Frank Acosta [01:17:08] Certain families find all kinds of information and then others you did it and you didn't. You just don't find anything.

Audrey Maier [01:17:16] Yeah, depends on the name too. I feel like Colunga is pretty rare because it's from one area in Spain. It's actually a place called Colunga, so it makes it easy. But one of the things that they talked about a lot was, you know, the sounds of the

railroad and it was connecting all these things. So all the industries you're talking about needed the railroad because there was citrus that you need to ship stuff out, refrigerated cars. You had, you know.

Frank Acosta [01:17:40] Specific. Fruit express.

Audrey Maier [01:17:43] Fruit express. Yes. And then also the railroad that connected to Mount Slover, the little part that they would use to take.

Frank Acosta [01:17:51] The spur that went into the cement plant. There was, a cemetery at the foot of Mount Slover on the east side, and it was called some people called it, I guess, the M Street Cemetery. And that's where I think some of the, I think Isaac's Slover's, grave might have been that part of the cemetery, and Morgan Earp's grave was in that part of the cemetery also. If you've seen the the movie Tombstone, I'm sure. When, when they've got him in the back the wagon and they're leaving town and they're going to bring him back to California, they're bringing him back to Colton, and they're going to be bringing them to bury him in California. And they speculated that it might have been Hermosa no, not Hermosa no. It's, Agua Mansa but Auga Mansa was a, was a Catholic cemetery, and the Earps weren't Catholic.

Henry Apodaca [01:18:47] Is the Hermosa one off of Meridian, and it's like, off.

Frank Acosta [01:18:51] Yes.

Henry Apodaca [01:18:51] I guess you have to take Pepper to get to that one.

Frank Acosta [01:18:53] No. Well you would take.

Henry Apodaca [01:18:55] The Meridian.

Frank Acosta [01:18:56] You could take Meridian.

Henry Apodaca [01:18:56] Yeah.

Frank Acosta [01:18:58] The entrance is, in, Olive, and there's an exit on the, on the C street. But they, they usually don't open the, the southern gate unless it's, there's going to be some kind of a big event that will involve a lot more cars than normal. They usually keep that locked up, but they just refurbish the cemetery because the city, the city has owned it since the early part of the 20th century. It was originally owned by some of the growers that settled in the area. And then they sold it to the city. And the city never had really very much luck maintaining that, there were always problems. They, they were always, short of funds. Eventually the more recently, they ended up getting the Dignity. And the corporation that runs cemeteries and mortuaries. They operated it for a number of years, but they have a dispute with the city or the city had a dispute with them. And a lot of complaints have been wanting the care of the graves and taking care of the the lawns and the fountains and the cemetery. So the city kicked them out and they assumed operation. And I think they're looking for another corporation. Well, that that's in the undertaking business to take over the operation day to day operation of the cemetery.

Henry Apodaca [01:20:26] Oh. That's interesting. I really like the way Audrey kind of put framed industries dependance on the railroads. And then when I try to look at it from the community point of view, or even from an environmental point of view, thinking about

Mount Slover, of course, of what used to be known as Mount Slover, or at least how it used to be. I'm wondering, you know, there's, you know, people are coming to this country and have established roots.

Frank Acosta [01:20:56] Right.

Henry Apodaca [01:20:57] And they're looking for better opportunities and work, making money, being able to, you know, buy a parcel of land, raise a family, whatever the case may be. But for myself I, I can't help but to think, you know, a lot of these industries have impacted the community, maybe not entirely and in a positive way. Some of them probably bluntly, negatively, but at what point? And this is just a question that I'm just asking, you know, does that compromise or that need for the American dream or to make a better living? Does, does it come into conflict with these industries and the environments that they've created for the community around them? And one thing that comes to my mind, and if you don't mind commenting on this just to get your ideas, is pollution right? You know, pollution is something that I think. But could you provide any any other insight on that and ways in which industries, you know, have negatively impacted communities around them?

Frank Acosta [01:22:02] Well, I'm going to take a side trip or two. Sort of comment on that. I, I just happened to last week I felt the need to do a little bit of research on the early years for UCR. And of course it started up as a Citrus Experiment Station. And then in the 50s, 54, they had their first, first, full class. Actually they had they had students for all four levels for all four classes. And they started out with a very small group and gradually expanded. When I started there, I think we were less than 5000 students all together and then it started growing. They switched from the semester system to the quarter system. That meant that you had to pay your incidental fee three times a year, instead of two times a year, so they could increase their their income by 50% in that in that area. The UC system wanted to see UCR, UCR develop, and well get more students attending, but it was in the hot area and smoggy in the summer. But one of the things that slowed down the development of UCR, and it didn't hit that point until about the late 70s and early 80s, was the increasing air pollution. That wasn't just the problem here. We'd see the wall of smog traveling from the Mount Baldy area. And coming into this valley. And then just. Just completely engulfing everything every day. Well, except when the Santa Ana's were blowing, but that you experienced everyday. If you did any, any kind of exercise or exertion, you would feel that pain right in your chest. If you were an athlete, you suffered all the time. Because of that I remember that from going swimming. And when I was a kid in East L.A., we'd go to the Atlantic Plunge on Atlantic Boulevard. And you just finished the, the swimming lessons or the recreation with a big pain in your in your in your chest. Well, that started happening with increasing incidences every summer, and it got worse and worse over the over a decade or longer. And then the Southern California what is it? Air Quality District cracked down on that. And we start started to see an improvement in the smoke. Smog. Oh, what really stands out in my mind was, one of our teachers who was from Denmark. She got her credential when she was already in the 50s. Her sons were two of my students. The last name was Schluter. Did you know the Shluter's at all?

Henry Apodaca [01:25:22] No.

Frank Acosta [01:25:25] They she had her, her mother and her sister from Denmark come to visit a summer, a summer in the late 70s, I think, and we were having a casual conversation about how the mountains. Were close by and they said, what mountains? They had been here for a week. A week and a half. And they haven't seen any mountains.

Just hills, but no mountains. And they never got to see the mountains, because the whole time that they were here with you, about close to a month. There weren't any clear days. And that's when the, the smogs really started getting bad, bad in this area. So there was that negative effect. And it, it influenced enough students who wanted to go to UCR to not come to UCR.

Henry Apodaca [01:26:24] Wow.

Frank Acosta [01:26:25] And then I think the enrollment picked up at UCR after that because the air started getting cleaner and cleaner and cleaner. Anyway that's you know, that's addressing that, that same problem.

Henry Apodaca [01:26:38] Yeah. Who do you think was the culprit for this? Mass pollution?

Frank Acosta [01:26:44] Everything.

Henry Apodaca [01:26:44] Everything. Cause exponentially, exponentially.

Frank Acosta [01:26:47] You know, we'd get a lot of this smog from the LA Valley, you know, Pomona Valley come the coming this way. And then there would be on the smog produced by the traffic going through the area and then the the industries in the area. So it just got it just kept increasing and increasing and increasing and no attempts were made to mitigate, you know, all of that and, mitigate its effects. Yeah.

Audrey Maier [01:27:13] When you were here in the 1900s, you know, you were teaching early on, did you notice, like when my grandpa was in high school, he remembers seeing giant plumes of smoke coming out of Kaiser Steel, and he remembers giant explosions of dust and concrete particles, essentially from the explosion at Mount Slover. So were they still happening with the time you were teaching?

Frank Acosta [01:27:36] Yes. They were. I don't remember it when when Kaiser closed the steel mill, but I never experienced that. I never was in the Fontana area when the mill was operating. But I, you know, I could picture it. Colton, had a few industries that, Griffin Wheel to a certain extent, produce some pollution. They had a they had a furnace there. Curiously, they didn't burn any fuel or coal or anything like that. It was an electric furnace. But I'm sure, you know, it was a manufacturing plant. They were making the train wheels. But Mount Slover, yeah, if you lived anywhere in the South Colton area, you heard and you heard a siren first. And then shortly after that, you heard the explosions. And I never experienced that. We couldn't hear those. At least I wasn't aware of them when I was teaching at Colton Junior High. People told me about those.

Henry Apodaca [01:28:53] I remember Henry Vasquez mentioning, the sounds. We played this, the [air raid siren], and that was great. I'm glad that he was able to locate that in in his memory.

Audrey Maier [01:29:04] My grandpa has heard and agreed with it, too.

Henry Apodaca [01:29:05] Okay. It's a World War II, British made air raid siren that we used, during that time.

Frank Acosta [01:29:13] So, what was. And we'll see. Oh. He knows, he can pinpoint where the where the siren was located, in South Colton because there was only one South Colton. And then the. Chuck. I think. Chuck, can remember the one that was close to the junior high. I remember it being on a pole. Where Olive crosses Rancho just South of Junior High.

Henry Apodaca [01:29:48] Yeah.

Frank Acosta [01:29:49] There was a this, an air raid siren there. And, when I first started teaching at Colton Junior High on the third Thursday of the of the month, when they would turn on the sirens and everybody was supposed to duck and cover.

Henry Apodaca [01:30:03] Yeah. That's, that's that's interesting.

Frank Acosta [01:30:06] And they had they had shelters strategically placed in different parts in Colton. In the high school, I think had a, a shelter under the, the gym, the original gymnasium that, you know. Oh, what was it's name? McIntosh gymnasium, which which after they built the Ken Hubs gym but became the girls gymnasium. It was a coed. Coed one half on, in one sort of dressing rooms and the other half on the other dressing rooms. But when they built the the Ken Hubs gym, the girls didn't have to share the gym with the boys. But they got to hand me downs and the. And the guys, the guys got the brand new, well-equipped, brand new gymnasium. And of course they have to celebrate Ken Hubs because he's a member of the Cubs?

Henry Apodaca [01:31:01] The Chicago Cubs, that's right. That's right.

Frank Acosta [01:31:04] And he died, I think, after his third year.

Henry Apodaca [01:31:08] It was early on in his career. Yeah.

Frank Acosta [01:31:11] That he died in that plane crash. He was a pilot, and he and a good buddy of his died in the plane crash.

Henry Apodaca [01:31:21] You know, we're, you know, we were discussing Slover Mountain. Cal Portland Cement Company after speaking, you know, with a couple of other people. Henry Vasquez specific. You know, he, he talks about the indigenous world view of Slover Mountain. How it relates to Cahuilla, and Luiseno tribes.

Frank Acosta [01:31:47] And the Serranos.

Henry Apodaca [01:31:49] And the Serranos. But what I found interesting is, you know, that, you know. Well, what I find interesting is it being a part of the Luiseno creation myth or story. But when you look at industries like, say, Cal portland Cement that has mined this oar or for decades, it's a complete desecration of the land. You know, is it at the expense of progress? You know, being able to, produce cement transport it on the railway. From what I understand, it was used to build the Hoover Dam. Lay the cement for the county.

Frank Acosta [01:32:27] The Coliseum?

Henry Apodaca [01:32:28] Yeah. I mean, it's this is the act of progress, you know, which is kind of a big call for during the time. Yeah. Did you have any kind of sentiment with yourself about that, seeing the desecration of Mount Slover personally?

Frank Acosta [01:32:44] No, I, I wasn't environmentally aware until probably I got to UCR. It was that was the the topic that we were concerned with. My parents, you know, I can't remember my parents, but my parents complained about the smog and the traffic, but I don't remember them being concerned about about the environment. And and the, the destruction of the environment through mining or through through whatever industry.

Henry Apodaca [01:33:18] What about, like, say, work and work conditions? Were you aware of any of the work conditions that may have been present? So let's say, for instance, that.

Frank Acosta [01:33:28] As I was growing up?

Henry Apodaca [01:33:29] As you're going up or just in things that you've heard and and or know.

Frank Acosta [01:33:34] I think only after I was a teacher. Now, now, my my father, before he, we we bought our gas station. He worked for a furniture company industrial or business furniture. It was a a desk desk manufacturing company in Los Angeles. He, he operated the, lathe. And then my my my uncle, his brother my Tio Jesus, he worked there, but he worked in the shipping department. The, and I know that because of the 1950 census, it listed their occupations.

Frank Acosta [01:34:17] And I heard my I remember hearing my father talk about the place where he worked, and, I didn't I didn't know that my uncle had worked at the same factory. My uncle was a, you know. Unusual person. He was. He, ended up having two marriages. He had a wife that he married back in the late 30s, then had three children by that wife, then he divorced that wife and he got married to the the wife that I knew. I knew, now, I knew about the first wife. I knew her only because they called her Jesse. Her name was Maria de Jesus, but a lot of a lot of women born in the Guanajuato area are named Maria de Jesus. It just was a very popular name. A lot of women in México are named Maria and Maria de Jesus. You know, is, is you hear it occasionally, all of that from that area. But a lot of women from that area, a lot of girls had that name Maria de Jesus. I have a my, my tia Maria. I don't think was Maria de Jesus I think she was just Maria. Anyway.

Henry Apodaca [01:35:39] Yeah, you know we were going through over. Actually, Audrey did some research on the interviews and South Colton. And, I forget who it was. I'm not sure if it was the first interview that was conducted during your program. [inaudible] I'm not sure if it was him or not, but I remember going through the notes.

Frank Acosta [01:35:58] That I need to tell her. Sure. Adam was the first born, so of course we have to.

Audrey Maier [01:36:04] Oh, I that's the first. Yeah that makes sense. That's fitting. You have to start somewhere, right? If any one questions you why'd you begin with him? You're like Adam first men.

Frank Acosta [01:36:12] It was, it was strictly accidental, but thats what it took me . He was a barber. And as a matter of fact, I drove past his, his old shop. After after he closed the one South Colton. He moved to. See if I can remeber. I just drove through there, through High Grove.

Henry Apodaca [01:36:35] Oh, it's a smoke shop. Oh wow.

Henry Apodaca [01:36:38] Oh, yes. Is that off of Iowa?

Frank Acosta [01:36:41] It's on Iowa.

Henry Apodaca [01:36:42] And Center?

Frank Acosta [01:36:43] It just north of Center.

Henry Apodaca [01:36:45] The south of Center. Oh, I know.

Frank Acosta [01:36:46] It's the east side of the street.

Henry Apodaca [01:36:49] Yeah.

Frank Acosta [01:36:49] And then there's a barber shop. There's a small street there. Across the street there's a barber shop that that was there when his was opened. But they're still open. And of course, he closed a long time ago. We did. We did. One of our interviews was a group interview with about 9 or 10 interviewees, all seated on his barber chairs and benches and whatever seating they could find. That was a fun. That was a fun interview for me.

Henry Apodaca [01:37:18] But I, I was bringing up, Audrey's research and, and her mining of the, of the interviews, because there's certain certain interviewees that discuss, like, dangerous work conditions, unfair wages.

Frank Acosta [01:37:35] Well, they were aware of all of those things. Then there was the particularly the agricultural workers felt exploited more, I guess, more than some of the other ones. But there were there were disputes with the with the cement company over and over wages. But, in 1917 there was. A strike or I guess what happened was that the cement plant was paying- they gave a rise to their white employees, but not the Mexican.

Henry Apodaca [01:38:11] In 1917.

Frank Acosta [01:38:12] I believe so. And, and so there was a strike and, the, the owners of the of the cement plant and the newspapers, they colluded. And they reported that it was probably the. Oh, golly wall. Golly, What is it?

Audrey Maier [01:38:33] Oh, it was like you communists.

Frank Acosta [01:38:36] Yes.

Audrey Maier [01:38:36] Yes, the International Workers of the world or whatever. Yeah, I remember seeing them.

Frank Acosta [01:38:40] They blamed them.

Henry Apodaca [01:38:41] Wow.

Frank Acosta [01:38:42] There, there's even an article that came out in the Courier about how the the they were, the fact that they were being blamed for the, for the strike and for

influencing the workers. They they didn't see that there was anything wrong with the wages that they were paying their employees.

Henry Apodaca [01:39:02] Yeah and I imagine a lot of the workforce from South Colton, of course, participating in this and that industry in the cement industry.

Frank Acosta [01:39:10] And of course, they weren't smart enough to figure out on their own that they weren't getting just wages. So they must have been prompted by some outsider. You know, there were.

Henry Apodaca [01:39:19] Interesting.

Frank Acosta [01:39:19] Was trying to sabotage, you know.

Henry Apodaca [01:39:22] Was communists.

Frank Acosta [01:39:24] Yeah right.

Audrey Maier [01:39:25] Very common tactic amongst you know.

Henry Apodaca [01:39:27] Yeah but the paranoia of the time. That's interesting. 1917. That's, that's that's kind of.

Frank Acosta [01:39:35] Well communists were starting to have more influence. And I think they were they were afraid of what that meant for their profits.

Henry Apodaca [01:39:43] Absolutely. Absolutely. I'm kind of out of questions. Did you have anything?

Audrey Maier [01:39:49] I think I have a closing out question. We're almost at two hours.

Henry Apodaca [01:39:52] Yes, yes.

Audrey Maier [01:39:53] But I've been really, like, looking at old maps and looking at stuff. It, you know, Colton even at the National Orange show they're always billed as the Hub City.

Henry Apodaca [01:40:02] Yeah.

Audrey Maier [01:40:02] Right? And I think it's interesting, like, we've been talking so much about the freeway, about the railroads. So I don't know, it's sort of this I've been trying to noodle on. What does it mean to brand yourself as the Hub City? And who does it then have as sort of as it's expense to have these so focused on industry that does it. You know, I feel like you build strong communities despite that. But I wanted your thoughts on that name and that heritage of being hub.

Frank Acosta [01:40:30] People seem to always have been proud of the fact that it's opposite. In other words, I think the name comes from the fact that the railroads all have, if - any railroad going east has to pass through Colton and, and railroads going north south have to pass to Colton. And that's that was one of the reasons for the frog existing. They also, San Bernardino greatly resented the fact that the Colton got the railroads and not San Bernardino of course they were probably it would have been more expensive to build

through San Bernardino than it was through Colton, because there wasn't very much here, you know, there wasn't very much there in Colton at that time, Colton was basically an agricultural area built up by the railroad. The people were backing the railroad. The property owners came into Colton, the Colton area and started buying the property. The best use for the land that wasn't going to be oh, where the railroad tracks were going to go through was agriculture.

Henry Apodaca [01:41:40] Yeah.

Frank Acosta [01:41:40] The climate was perfect for so many crops, but especially the citrus industry.

Henry Apodaca [01:41:46] I really liked that question, Audrey, because I was trying to touch on that. As far as what's the compromise of earning a living or politically calling your city a Hub City? Who were the winners and who were the losers in this, entire.

Frank Acosta [01:42:02] They were so proud of in Colton that they took the concept of the hub and built a round, city hall. That's because it's the hub city. And, there was, former student of Colton High School back in the 70s. He was a tuba player in the band when he was in Colton High School. And he put together a Colton quiz, sort of trivia about Colton and one of his Colton and one of his. One his, one of his question, he created the quiz, but he got it wrong. He thinks that colton is called Hub City because of the way the city city Hall was built. But no, it was the Hub City before City Hall was built, and they built it that way because of its nickname as the Hub City.

Audrey Maier [01:43:00] Yeah, it's early, early Colton branding like as like Colton is becoming the city. They're really pushing that as their identity. And I think it is. It's probably right. It's probably a little bit of a snub towards San Bernardino. The other big, you know, one in the house. But it's it's an interesting branding. Whereas, you know, Redlands is more of like oh lovely city and picturesque. But Colton it's very from the beginning centered on industry.

Henry Apodaca [01:43:22] Yes.

Frank Acosta [01:43:23] Yeah.

Frank Acosta [01:43:23] Well you have every you have to get your, your workers from somewhere. And Redlands has always pictured itself as being a Paradise as opposed to up north of the home for the working people working plus in Mexico, I mean, Redlands has had its own problems with the the Mexican section north of Colton. There was a, there was a gentleman who did a series of interviews called Living on the Dime.

Audrey Maier [01:43:58] Yes we work with Antonio Vasquez. Very. We actually have his tapes as part of our collection. So familiar there. But it is, it's it's that thing, that common story that through throughline, you know, that connects in a lot of it is the dime, the 10 freeway. So.

Frank Acosta [01:44:12] We, he, he joined us at the museum one year. And, did, did a presentation there, and also joined us there doing a museum day. One of our councilmen, Doctor Gene calls himself. Luis Gonzales he was a music. He was a band director for about 20 years. Then he when he retired, he ran for city council, and he got the the museum started, sponsoring museum days and having the city declare, the first Saturday.

Can't remember if it's May or June. Anyway the first Saturday of one month in particular. Has been declared Museum day every year. And we had events, special events at the museum, and we've been closed down for three years because of Covid and because we received a \$900,000, allocation from the state to refurbish and remodel museum was supposed to be open in February. We were going to open it in December but we had to postpone it till February. So February 24th I think you'll see.

Henry Apodaca [01:45:42] Probably show up to that.

Audrey Maier [01:45:43] Yeah.

Henry Apodaca [01:45:43] As a a team.

Audrey Maier [01:45:44] That's a good note.

Frank Acosta [01:45:45] To be certain.

Henry Apodaca [01:45:48] Absolutely.

Audrey Maier [01:45:50] Oh wait. The last thing.

Henry Apodaca [01:45:51] Please.

Audrey Maier [01:45:52] We need to do though, is, I know it's sort of backwards, but we would love if you could just introduce yourself. So we have you on tape saying your own name. Just say hi. I'm so-and-so. I'm a retired teacher to da-da-da. Just a little introduction.

Frank Acosta [01:46:06] So let's see. Hello, my name is Frank Acosta, and, I'm a retired junior high teacher. After 41 years of teaching in the Colton Unified School district. And I'm a member of the Colton Area Museum board and was also, one of the, three members of the South Colton Oral History Project.

Frank Acosta [01:46:34] Thank you very much.

Audrey Maier [01:46:35] Wonderful. Thank you so much for your time.

Henry Apodaca [01:46:37] I'm gonna go ahead and cut the recording.