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Oral history interview with Delilah Montoya,
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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Delilah Montoya on August 2–4, 2019. The interview took place at Montoya's Studio, the Sanitary Tortilla Factory, in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and was conducted by Adriana Zavala for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Delilah Montoya and Adriana Zavala have reviewed the transcript. Their corrections and emendations appear below in brackets with initials. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

[Tracks montoy19_1of2_sd_track01 through montoy19_1of2_sd_track04 are test tracks.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. Alright, so we are going to begin. So I'm just going to adjust this to minimize noise. Okay? Great.

Okay, so, Delilah, let's begin by having you share with us what you feel to be your formative experiences.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So, in terms of my formative experiences—you know, I was basically raised in Omaha, Nebraska, even though I was born in Fort Worth, Texas. We were there for, I would say—until I was about [4 years old -DM]—well, actually, we did a lot of moving back and forth so we weren't real stable in any one place. We would go back and forth between Fort Worth and New Mexico, we had a small stint in El Paso, we were back in New Mexico, we're back in Fort Worth, and eventually, my mother—well, actually, my father went to Omaha first, and then my mother followed him to Omaha.

Actually, you know, thinking about early childhood memories, I would say one of the first memories that I have was being on the midnight bus, going to Omaha. And I remember that very clearly, because I was looking out at the windows. And there were people in the windows. And my little brain, my little child brain was wondering whether they were ghosts because I could see these reflections of people in the windows. [Laughs.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: The windows of the bus? [00:02:00]

DELILAH MONTOYA: And of course it was nighttime, and of course there would be all the reflections of people. But I remember just kind of like, trying to unpack that. What are they? [Laughs.] Who are they? All of that.

So when we went to Omaha, I went to school in Omaha, a little place called South Lincoln. It was an old brick school. You know, I remember the boiler with those—what do you call them—I don't know, they would be like, these little furnaces, right? Radiators.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Radiator, mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. And they would hiss. I remember the hissing of the radiators. You know, old schoolteachers. We used to be able to walk to school. And we would walk home for lunch, which is unheard of these days, nobody walks home for lunch. But they would let you out for lunch, and then you would come back after lunch. I remember the blizzards.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? So we would get these blizzards. And one was a very, very bad blizzard. And the schoolteacher tried to get us all to hold hands, so she could get us back to [our homes -DM] in the neighborhood, because it was such a hard, heavy blizzard. And I remember the snow would come up so high, [that year-DM] we dug tunnels inside of the snow. So I was, like, one of these Chicanas that wasn't afraid of snow. [They laugh.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: You had seen it.

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know? So because of that, I love cross-country skiing, right? [Laughs.] Because, you know, yeah, the cold doesn't bother me. Yes! Cross-country skiing, I love it.

But I would say, in terms of things that were very formative for me in my early childhood, was, you know, I was always kind of a quiet person. [00:04:08] I was more of a looker. And I liked drawing, I used to draw a lot. Those are the places that I could go to find myself. You know, the quietness, and to just kind of like—I had a very strong imagination, and I would just kind of live in these other worlds that I would draw, and put myself somewhere

else.

I remember this one time—very close to where we lived, there was a place where the grain elevators were, right? And the grain elevators were always [catching -DM] on fire, because it's grain. [Laughs.] And the grain had sparks, and static electricity, and all of that. So the fire engines were always going that way. But real close to the grain elevators was this huge mulberry tree, right? And we would go to the mulberry tree and pick mulberries, they were just so delicious.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, they were yummy. And we would bring mulberries back to my mom so that she would make jelly and mulberry pie, and all of that. But it was on a hill. So I noticed this hill had all this dirt on it. I remember all the dirt. And I thought, Oh, wow, that's amazing. So I would sneak away there, and I would start cutting into the dirt. And I would create things, like thrones or little houses or—I mean, I would just—I was doing sculptures, was what I was doing.

You know, just because I had that need to create, to make. [00:06:02] And this one time, I was in the middle of whatever was going on in my mind, right? And I hear this one guy and he yells up to me, he goes, "Hey, what are you making?" And I turned around, and I realized, like, behind me was the Purina Dog Chow Factory.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh! [They laugh.]

DELILAH MONTOYA: Which I never even saw, because—it was just not anything that was interesting me, right? And all the guys, the workers were sitting outside with their lunchboxes, and they were just sitting there, and they were watching me. And I don't know how long they were watching me, how many days that they were watching—because I went there for weeks.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? And finally one of them decided to, [laughs] you know, ask me, "What are you doing?" And I was a very shy person. I never went back again. I was just like, Oh, my gosh, I can't believe they were watching me! But I would say that was my first experience as an artist.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know, because as an artist, many times you don't realize that people are watching you, and they're watching what you're doing. For me, it's always been this kind of experience of allowing my mind to think.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So you drew, you sculpted.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. Anything I could get my hands on, I would make things. I was a maker. I would make things. And early on, my mother saw that. She saw that in my ability to—I mean, it just occupied me, you know? She always encouraged it. She was always telling me, "Oh, how beautiful that is! You're really doing a great job!" You know. So it was through her encouragement, you know, I kind of found myself.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: I was able to find my voice with that.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And did you have art classes in your elementary school, middle school? [00:08:06] Was that something that—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Well, yeah. Somebody would come in, I remember they would come in maybe once a week, or—you know. And those were always my happy days. It was like, Oh, the art teacher came! Yay! They pulled out all kinds of materials that I could start working with and play with. Yeah.

But, you know, one of the reasons why Laura Aguilar and I got along very well was that we both had just a—well, she was more dyslexic than I was. [Laughs.] I really understood the idea of dyslexia, you know? And it was one of those things that I struggled with. And of course, when I was a kid, they really didn't know what it was.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So you are dyslexic?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Well, I've never been diagnosed, but I never could figure out my left and right. And at my age, it's kind of, like, "There's a good chance I'm not going to." [Laughs.] I mean, I do okay if I concentrate on it. And I can figure it out. But if you were to say spontaneously, like, "Alright, which is your left hand, which is your right hand?" I would be totally confused. You know, I have to kind of process it.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Sure.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So that, and I've never been able to really spell that well. My reading takes a long time for me. Not that I can't understand and consume it. I mean, I can. But it just—it's painful. I'm, like, Ah, it's painful. I don't really want to do that. But, you know, I'm in a position where I have to.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Sure.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, I have to. So I do. I do what I need to do, so that I can make—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And talk about your own work, and write about your own work, because you've done that.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right, because I've had to. Yeah. [Laughs.] I prefer to let everybody else talk and write about it. If I could be very lazy about it, yes. There's been times when—you know, there's been a lot of very good art historians that have written about my work and I've gotten to know. [00:10:04] And I always ask them, "Can I use it? [Laughs.] May I please use it? Because you say it so well, you say it much better than I do." You know, and generally, they're very generous. They'll let me go ahead and use it. So a lot of the readings that you see, you'll probably find references about the art historians that have written it. But I agree with what they've written. I mean, they've done it very well. You know, Ondine Chavoya's one, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Holly Barnet-Sanchez is another person who's written about my work really well. Asta is another person who—you know, Ann?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Ann Marie Leimer?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah, and Asta has a Finnish last name, right?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Finnish last name, yes.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: I'll record that. It's Asta—I can't think of it right now, but I've noted it as I was reading.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. So I'll make a note of that. So you were talking about formative experiences, finding creative outlets as a child. Do you think that whatever your—your distinct cognitive process, we'll call it that, right?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Do you think that art was a way—I'll just use the word "compensate." But do you think that part of it was that it provided an outlet that felt cognitively more comfortable for you than, say, other forms of school-based learning, like reading, writing, arithmetic?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Oh, yeah, absolutely. You know, I never got the—you know, they would try to put, like, journals in front of me. Like, "Here is a journal, why don't you write about your day?" And I'm like, "And this is supposed to be fun?" [They laugh.] For me there's nothing fun about—writing is a painful process, you know? And I'll do it when I have to. [00:12:00] But, you know, painting or drawing or taking pictures, or thinking about things that way, come very easy to me. Yeah, it's a way that I negotiate my world. You know?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: And that's one of the things that, like I say, Laura and I had in common. And we kind of understood each other that way.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And how did you meet Laura Aguilar? Where did you meet her?

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know, Laura—I met Laura when I was at Cal State LA, in Los Angeles. And I had just graduated with my MFA, and I had picked up a CAA Fellowship. Which was really—it was the first year that they had these CAA Fellowships. So what they did was they gave me—I think it was like \$5,000 to complete my MFA.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? And then they paid a portion of my salary.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And you were teaching at Cal State LA at the time?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Or for any institution that would pick me up.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay. Oh, wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And what I was doing was a sabbatical replacement.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? The only thing was, is, they wanted it in Art History.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: It was like, Art History. But I remember, you know, they just wanted me to teach the Intro to Art History, and World Art 1, 2, you know, one of those. Also take care of the gallery that was there. And I remember telling them that, you know, I would be willing to teach the World Art History if I could teach a class in Chicano Art.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Uh-huh [affirmative]. Wow. And did they allow you to do that?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. It was the first time it was taught at Cal State LA. [00:14:01]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow!

DELILAH MONTOYA: Of course, and then they wanted me to teach Latin American Art too, and I thought, Okay, I'll teach Latin American Art. The only thing is, is that I never took a course in Chicano Art, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And I never really took a course in Latin American Art, either. [Laughs.] Which was like—oh, my God, that was my year of constant reading, constant putting notes together, constant—oh, yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, I really got my typing down really well. And then having to read papers. Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. It was intense.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And did you find that having a sort of free rein to put those lectures together—because those of us that have taught at the early moment when it was beginning to be recognized that Chicano art had a history, the Latin American art had a history—did you find that an outlet for your creativity, to be able to put that history—because history is narration, right? We're narrating what happened in a world.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So did that feel creative for you?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Well, you know, the thing was, is that I felt panicked. I was really panicked. [Laughs.] So I began just kind of contacting the art historians that I knew, and asking them for books. Holly was really helpful. Right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And then the other thing, too, as far as Chicano art, I realized, like, I'm in the middle of it right here. So I was able to get ahold of different pamphlets and different reading materials, and I started finding out who was who in Los Angeles.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. Because that wasn't your native environment, so to speak.

DELILAH MONTOYA: No. Not at all. You know, I knew of—because I had been part of CARA, right? [00:16:03] So I

kind of knew that, and I had that book. So that was really helpful. But then what I was able to do, I remember there was this one pamphlet I got ahold of, and it was all the pictures of the Chicano artists that were in Los Angeles. And I just kind of studied that. So when I was out and about in East LA, because that's where I was, I would run into them all. [Laughs.] Right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And I was, like, Wow, Leo Limón's standing right behind me! [They laugh.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That's great. And did you introduce yourself? Or did you begin to meet people?

DELILAH MONTOYA: I had to. I mean, I was always very shy, but I had to do this, because if I was going to, you know, be able to talk about it—and the idea was, I can just bring them into my classroom, and they can just talk. So I just brought them all into the classroom. You know, I would ask them, "Would you like to come to my class and just kind of talk?" "Oh, sure." You know, I didn't realize that you were supposed to pay everybody. And they were so polite they didn't tell me. [Laughs.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So do you remember who else? So did Leo Limón come into your class?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. I mean, I had—okay, this was the lineup that I had. I had Leo Limón, Frank Romero, Barbara Carrasco, Harry Gamboa—[laughs] I mean, I'm trying to remember—Laura Aguilar. Right? So this is like, the lineup. Yreina Cervantez.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow. It's a who's who.

DELILAH MONTOYA: It was a who's who listing of Chicano artists that were walking into my classroom.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That's incredible.

DELILAH MONTOYA: What was incredible was, is that the reason they were doing it was because they had never been invited.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Sure. Of course not. Nobody had taught Chicano Art at Cal State LA before. Probably most other places hadn't. Maybe UCLA, Shifra Goldman, but wow. [00:18:00]

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. Yeah. And one of my students was Sandra de la Loza.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That's amazing!

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? [Laughs.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: I was going to ask you if you remember who your students were, and if you were aware of what impact. So there's an example of the impact.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, but of course, she—I mean, she was already well-connected through her brother.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, right. Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So she already knew.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, but I remember that. It was like—yeah, in the Art department, I was teaching the Chicano Art class. And the other art historians were not happy with me, I remember that and all. They were not happy.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Do you remember what year that was, that you taught at Cal State LA?

DELILAH MONTOYA: That was in—I want to say—1994. Yeah. So I was there for two years.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And why were the other art historians unhappy with you?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Well, obviously I didn't have a PhD, right? And the other part was, is that they just didn't like the way that I had taught the World Art History, right? They really didn't care for it, because I just tore pages out of the book. Like, "This is stupid, let's just tear the page out of the book!" [Laughs.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Do you remember—were you teaching the entire sequence, like caves to the contemporary?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right, right, it was like, the caves to the contemporary. And then they separated the book, I remember, with—you know, like, of course it's all Western Art, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Sure.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And then on the other end of it was where they put everybody else.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Exactly. There's the chapter for everybody else. Maybe three chapters.

DELILAH MONTOYA: No, it was like, one chapter for everybody else. I remember opening the book on the first day and going, like, "You know what? This page right here, we're going to just tear this separation off here. [Laughs.] Okay. We're going to go from there."

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And how aware do you think your students were to who their teacher was, as an artist, as a person with an MFA? [00:20:07] Did you make that manifest to them, in terms of your version of the history of World Art? Or did you try to follow the script?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Well yeah, I did. You know, I did. You know, I just told them as a Chicana artist, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: And you know, I remember getting up and talking to them and saying, like, I remember the race riots. Right? And I remember "Burn, baby, burn."

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know, I saw those things. I know. It was right at the time when there was—the whole thing with OJ was happening.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow, right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: It was right there at that moment, too, when—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, so it was kind of—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So you were in LA in that period? Or—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, I was in LA during that period of time.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. I think that was, like, my first year. And there was also that big earthquake that had happened, too, about that time.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Alright, so we were talking about formative experiences, and we got to Laura Aguilar. And from there we got to your teaching at Cal State LA.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right, right.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: But tell me a little bit about how your growing up—because we talked about this a little earlier when we weren't recording—so a little bit about your growing up and how that shaped your sense of self, such that you've become the artist that you are and made the kind of work that you do.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: You talked about being—did you say "mixed blood," is that the term you used?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. Well, yeah, I really—when I was young, I became very aware of my mother being Northern New Mexican, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: And of course the Northern New Mexican perceives themselves as being Spanish, whatever that means, right? [00:22:00] And of course, those words always kind of were mixing. There was always Spanish, Mexican, right? It was always—but my mother would say, "We're not from Mexico." We're Spanish, but it was really clear that we came south, from the south, into New Mexico. But it was so long ago that there wasn't [any memory -DM]—there were just little *pueblitos* in and of themselves, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Was she from Albuquerque or from a smaller town?

DELILAH MONTOYA: She was from Las Vegas, New Mexico.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, from where? Las Vegas, New Mexico?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. And that was the first Las Vegas, okay?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: [Laughs.] Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Would you like to share your mother's name?

DELILAH MONTOYA: My mother's name is Amalia García.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Amalia García, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. And my father was John Merriman.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. M-E-R-R-I-M-A-N?

DELILAH MONTOYA: I-M-A-N, yeah, Merriman. So my father is—like, on his father's side, the Merriman side, they go all the way back to the Mayflower.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know, I can join the Daughters of American Revolution if I want.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: There you go.

DELILAH MONTOYA: [Laughs.] Right? I can.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: High on your list of to-dos, I'm sure. [Laughs.]

DELILAH MONTOYA: Oh, yes. And my mother's family, of course, has been in the Americas probably longer, or in the United States. Well, at that time it wasn't the United States, it was the viceroy, right? Of Spain, it was the Spanish viceroy. And they were here prior to the Mayflower. Right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: I remember when my father's family—they were trying to figure out who my mother was, because they thought she was Mexican. But she insisted that she wasn't Mexican, that she was Spanish. [00:24:00] You know, it wasn't making any sense, and—"Well, when did you come?" And she goes, "Well, we've been here." "No, really, when did you come?" Right? And she goes, "Let me put it this way. You know when you landed over there on the Mayflower? We were over here saying, 'We're over here! We're over here!'" [Laughs.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: "We're already here!" [They laugh.] Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: [Laughs.] And then they got it.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. And where did your father grow up? Or where was he born?

DELILAH MONTOYA: My father was born in Park City, Utah. And his mother came from Poland. And so the most recent immigrant in our family would be my grandmother, who was Polish. The rest of us were not immigrants.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That's right. That really challenges the sort of standard narrative in the United States about which part of your family must be the immigrant, right?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Exactly. On my mother's side, no, we're not the immigrant at all.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: You're not immigrants, right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: We were the ones that were here.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: So that part, I was always very kind of interested in. You know, that—and the other thing too is, since we did move to Omaha, which was of course where my father's family was at, they didn't quite know what to do with my mother, because they didn't quite understand who she was, right? She wasn't an immigrant, right? She wasn't Mexican. But she looked like a Mexican. [Laughs.] She spoke Spanish, for sure.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: She did?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. She is a Spanish speaker, but she is bilingual. You know, very bilingual. But—where was I going with that?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: I was asking you to sort of talk about how those experiences have shaped your sense of self.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And we were talking about the way that your parents' story, their individual identities—these are my words—[00:26:01]

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: —complicate the American normative narrative about who immigrants are.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: But I'm interested in your mother in the sense that—so she identified as Hispanic, Spanish.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Did she use the term *hispana*? *Hispano*?

DELILAH MONTOYA: I don't think that term had been—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: It hadn't really come into common—

DELILAH MONTOYA: It hadn't come into, you know, the vocabulary at that time. But she thought of herself as being Spanish. At times she would call herself Mexican.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Did she identify as indigenous, or as European Spanish? I mean, of course these are things that we take on, but—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, you know, they—it wasn't European Spanish, right? So I think what she really understood was herself as being Spanish colonial, you know. And that was kind of—when we moved into Omaha, we moved into South Omaha, which was the packing house district. So I kind of grew up with the smells of the packing house. You know? So you have, you know, all that cattle. I mean, it just smelled bad. It just did. My whole neighborhood always smelled bad.

So when we would leave, and my mom would want to, every year, go back to New Mexico, we would go back into this little pueblo that is Las Vegas, New Mexico. It's kind of nestled right at the base of the Gallinas Canyons, and mountains, you know, the Sangre de Cristos and all of that. And the air smelled beautiful. Right? And the skies were beautiful. So somebody who is very visual, like me—it was like heaven. You know? And then I remember we would be there for about a month or two, and then we would come back into Omaha. You know, of course that was the summertime. [00:28:03] And we would get outside of Lincoln, Nebraska, and you could start smelling it.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know? And I knew we were going back to that stench.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Did your father work in the packing industry?

DELILAH MONTOYA: No, he didn't. He was a mechanic.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, he was a mechanic. The joke was that he worked for MUD, Metropolitan Utilities District. [Laughs.] "My dad works for MUD!" Alright, yeah. Eventually my father left us, when I was about 13 years old. You know. So there was four girls and my mother. And we were in Omaha, and she knew there was no family. Right? So we all had to kind of pretty much fend for ourselves. You know, I started working when I was about 15. And I would work at night and go to school during the day.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah. And why do you think she chose to stay in Omaha? As opposed to going home—

DELILAH MONTOYA: There was a house.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: There was a house. And she felt like, Well, at least I have a house.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. And did she work outside the home?

DELILAH MONTOYA: She did work out—she did some cleaning. She worked as a cleaning lady for a restaurant. In the morning she would go there and she would clean the restaurant, and then she would come home. But other than that, she really didn't start working until my father left.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. So you finished high school in Omaha, and went to technical college there as well? Is that right?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. I did. I finished high school [at Arch Bishop Ryan High -DM]. I went to—South High was the name of the high school. [00:30:01] I remember taking art classes, and I really liked the art classes. The teacher there had encouraged me to maybe go on to college, and maybe there's scholarships and such that I could—you know, for art classes. I was working at that time, too. So I remember I would work at night in a Mexican restaurant.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh. Were you a waitress?

DELILAH MONTOYA: I was a waitress. Right? I would work about 20 hours a week there. I got hired by the Espejos. They owned El Charro. And I used to babysit for them, and they had offered me a job there, you know, after school. And so that's how I met a lot of the Chicano community, was working at El Charro's, right? And about that time was when the Brown Berets had come in. And they started up an organization—well, an organization called the Chicano Awareness Center.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Awareness?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. Chicano Awareness Center started up. And it was kind of a cultural center. That's where I really became politicized and began to kind of find the issues, and learn about other artists, and, you know, began to identify myself as being a Chicana. So it was in Omaha.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So there was a Chicano movement in Omaha?

DELILAH MONTOYA: There was a Chicano movement in Omaha.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And were there other artists that—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. There was Linda—I think her last name was García.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: She was an art major in college, and she would do a lot of volunteer work there at the Chicano Awareness Center. [00:32:03] And so, you know, I remember getting together and making little magazines. Zines?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Zines, as they call them today.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. So we would make little zines and Xerox them off. You know, theater. Right? We learned about the different theaters and the different plays and things that were happening.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: In the sense of Chicano political theater?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, interesting.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. You know, and kind of find out what was happening. I remember when the Chicano Moratorium was happening in Denver, because Denver was a big hot spot, right? So we would get some of—you know, people coming out from Denver to Omaha to talk with us, right? And I remember they were talking about the Chicano Moratorium that was going to be happening there, and I really wanted to go to Denver, but my mom wouldn't let me go. [They laugh.] And that's where, of course, the Plan de Aztlán and all of that—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Sure. Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: That had happened at that time. Yeah.

One of the things that had happened to me that really kind of changed my direction—because at that time when I was at the Chicano Awareness Center, there was this one scholarship that was being offered. And that was a full ride to nursing, RN nursing.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And I got it.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, really?!

DELILAH MONTOYA: A full ride. They would even put us up in the—I think they had dorms, and all of that. But I got pregnant.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Alright? And so my idea was, I just won't tell them I'm pregnant. [Laughs.] Well, eventually, yes, they did find out that I was pregnant. And they took it away from me.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow. So were you already in the program at that point?

DELILAH MONTOYA: I was just about ready to start the program.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: To start. So you might have become a nurse.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. And they—yeah, I remember they took it away from me. [00:34:02] And I remember thinking to myself at that point, But I need it more now than never. Don't they understand that?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Sure. Of course.

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know? And my mother would help me. She had already said she would help me with the baby, right? And I remember they told me, If you give the baby up, you can have this scholarship. So I had to make that decision. And I was not going to give my baby up.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Wow, those are the coercive forces.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, I mean, how dare they! I mean, I think about it now, I think, How dare they.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Sure.

DELILAH MONTOYA: I mean, you know, to put it to me like that, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: But you already knew that that was not a choice you were going to make.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, it wasn't even a consideration. I mean, it's like, yeah, there was no way I was just going to throw my baby to strangers.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And did you have a boyfriend, or were you on your own?

DELILAH MONTOYA: I did. I had a boyfriend, Martín Remijio. But, you know, it was kind of like—I tried to get him on board with, like, "Hey, you're going to be a father!" [Laughs.] And he just wasn't putting it together very well. He just wasn't, you know. Yeah. So eventually, you know, I did leave him, and decided I would be better off just kind of doing this by myself.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Doing it on your own.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Do it on my own, because it was going to be too difficult with him. You know? I realized that. I think I had made a—I had gone to him, I says, "Look, I could"—because at that time we had lived together for just a little bit of time, about 10 months or so. I told him, "Look, I can go back to waitressing." And I found a job, and I told him, "I can waitress, and I want you to finish your GED," because he had dropped out when he was in the ninth grade. [00:36:04] Told him, "Finish your GED, get your GED, get into trade school. I'll work, you get this done. Then I'll go finish up with nursing. I'll go back into nursing and I'll get my nursing degree, and we're going to be fine."

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: "It'll be fine." I remember him telling me, "No."

ADRIANA ZAVALA: It wasn't his plan.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mm-mm [negative]. "I'm not going to do that." And it was at that point I felt my brain just switch. "You're gone. [Laughs.] You're totally gone. You don't understand what we have in front of us." Right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: We've got to provide for our daughter.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: And your plan's not—isn't doing it.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So when did you make the decision to go and study at the—I'm sorry, what's the name of the school?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Metro Technical Community College.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Metro Tech. And did you go there to study photography? Or did you go there—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Well, you know, first I started off—I went there to study commercial art.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? And it was there that I got onto my first camera.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? And my first camera was a process camera. And I don't know if you've ever seen a process camera, but—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: I have not.

DELILAH MONTOYA: —process cameras are huge. They have bellows that are longer than I am, right? Really like—at least, I would say, they're about three feet by six feet. That's just the bellows.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: The lenses are these huge lenses, right? And the back of it, it has a section—that is this kind of door that has a section on it, right? And what you would do is shoot PMTs.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: What's a PMT?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Photomechanical transfer.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. [They laugh.]

DELILAH MONTOYA: And those are used in for printing, right? [00:38:02]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So what you would do is, you would shoot a PMT, and then what they would do is, they would make plates from the PMTs. And of course, they would shoot just high-contrast. You know, black and white, and you would get your dot systems and things like that on it, with that. So I learned how to shoot that to

make my PMTs. So I always say, that was the first camera I cut my teeth on, [laughs] was that big process camera that they had.

And so—a lot of drawing. You know, I had to learn about type and fonts, and all that. Of course, that was prior to the computer. So you were pressing those things down, you're pressing the lettering down, and all of that. I remember the professor that I had there, he was a tough one, right? We would start off with a class of like 24 people. And by the end of the class, there would be like four of us left.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: I remember because my daughter—you know, I got daycare. So I would kind of just stay there, and it was like a table. I had a table that I could work on. I would just sit there and just try to do as much of the work as I could, you know? I would find a table in the back, and classes would come in and out, and I'm still there working, because that's when I had to do it.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right, while your daughter was in daycare, wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So that I could get the work done. And then he—you know, he was just—I don't think he was—now that I look back at it, I don't think he was a very good teacher. You know, just because it should have been my clue, because everybody else was leaving and I was not leaving, [laughs] right? It was just that I liked doing what I was doing, so I could just kind of turn off a lot of things. I remember at one point, he started really attacking the stuff that I was doing. [00:40:00] And I started taking a class in photography. It seemed to be a good fit. I mean, I was getting As, and the camera was making a lot of sense to me, and such.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: What kind of camera were you using then, in the photography classes?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Well, we started off with a four by five.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, we started off with four by five cameras, and then they let us start using roll cameras. But first you had to just kind of like—so given that I first started off with a process camera, and then I went to a four by five, it was a smaller camera. [Laughs.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: It was similar but just tiny, right?

DELILAH MONTOYA: It was tiny. It was smaller. [Laughs.] So I could deal with that because—yeah, I can deal with one of those cameras. Then eventually they gave us a 35-millimeter camera that we could start working with—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: With a roll of film?

DELILAH MONTOYA: With roll film.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So you had drawn and sculpted as a child. Did you continue to do some of that in high school? But did you do any photography in high school?

DELILAH MONTOYA: No.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Or was this really new?

DELILAH MONTOYA: It was really new, yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: New medium, new technology.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. And I was in my early 20s at that time. I think I was like 20, 21. It really made a lot of sense to me, and the processing and all that. I remember talking to one of my classmates, and she told me, she goes, "Why are you basically with that guy? If you're doing well with photography, just take photography."

ADRIANA ZAVALA: I see.

DELILAH MONTOYA: I thought, Well, that makes a lot of sense. Maybe I'll just take photography. One of the things that I liked about photography, I could get it done really fast. It was quick, so I could get what I needed done, and then I could get home. You know? Yeah.

So what occurred was, in the way that the Chicano Awareness Center and photography and my school all kind of started coming together, was that, you know, at that time I was on welfare, and I realized that if I was going to

get a job, I would not be able to get a job without any experience. [00:42:09] And the only camera that I had—and the camera that I bought—I mean, I had, what, about \$500 to my name that I had kind of squirreled away from working as a waitress—was this \$250 Pentax that I bought.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And it was a real struggle, in terms of even buying that Pentax. Because if you only have \$500 to your name and half of the money is going to go on a camera—right? I remember just literally, baby on hip in the store, staring at that camera.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: "Is it going to open up possibilities? Or am I spending half of my"—wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. And I'm just kind of—like, not even thinking whether or not it's going to open up possibilities. Like, it's the desire to have it. Just wanting that camera, right? That way I didn't have to, like, check out a camera all the time.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right, use the camera at school. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: I would have my own camera, right? And I just remember my palms were sweaty, right? The idea just went right across my head saying, like, "Just get it!" [They laugh.] "Just buy it!" Right? And I did. I just put the money down, and I walked out with my camera, and I'm like, Oh, my God! [Laughs.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow. That's big.

DELILAH MONTOYA: It was a big move. It was—you know. So at that point, I was committed.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. That was that symbolic, "This is what I'm going to do"?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: I was committed to that camera, and committed to photography, but also realizing that nobody's going to hire me with this Pentax, right? [00:44:00] The interesting thing was—for me anyway—is that I was able to get awards with it. I was able to get good pictures out of it. I realized, like, It's not the camera, it's the eye.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow. What kind of pictures were you taking then?

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know that picture that's in my living room with that little girl with the hat?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah.

DELILAH MONTOYA: That was one of my first pictures.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow. Who's the girl?

DELILAH MONTOYA: My daughter.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That's your daughter, okay. Do you want to share your daughter's name?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Lucianna. Lucianna. Her current last name is Trujillo.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Trujillo? Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So that's her. So that was one of your first pictures with your Pentax camera.

DELILAH MONTOYA: With my Pentax camera.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. Yeah. And, you know, I look at it—I really was looking at the lighting. It was about the light. And my daughter, since I photographed her ever since she was little, she's actually very good in front of a camera. [Laughs.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That's great. Well, it's your manner.

DELILAH MONTOYA: She's well-trained. [Laughs.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And she didn't mind?

DELILAH MONTOYA: No, but she also realized that mom needed the picture. So when I was shooting the *Codices*, right—when I was shooting the *Codices*, there was this one page on La Llorona, right? La Llorona. And there's this girl that's kneeling down, her hair is all wild, right, and her eyes are wild. Well, that's my daughter.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. And the thing is, is that the only way that I could get that picture was that I had to let her have the car for the weekend. [They laugh.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wait a minute. So she was already a teenager at that point. So she's not Six-Deer.

DELILAH MONTOYA: No, she's not Six-Deer.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. Alright. So for those who might listen to this interview, let's just give a little bit of context, but I want to come back to your—so we're talking about the *Codex Delilah*, which was an important project that you did—is that 1992? The year of the Quincentenary. [00:46:10]

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And this is the project, the *Codex*. Why don't you talk about it?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Okay, the *Codices*. So *The Chicano Codices* had been commissioned by the Mexican Museum in San Francisco. Was it Tranquilino-Sánchez?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, Marcos Tranquilino-Sánchez, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, Marcos Tranquilino-Sánchez had asked me to put a codices together. And of course I said, "Yes!" One of the things that I was thinking about was, I was studying codices with Flora Clancy at UNM.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And it was a course that she was teaching. So I was kind of learning about all the different codices. And I was looking at how they had functioned, and also how there was [the top Bands—like, you know, the deity Band. The body of it was kind of like the contemporary Band, what was happening. Then below that, there was mapping Band -DM].

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right, so the different registers in the page of the codex.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. So I decided, You know what would be really kind of fun to do, is to create a codices where this little girl, she's almost like—I was thinking of—you know, "Off to see the wizard"?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, Dorothy.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Dorothy, right? *The Wizard of Oz*, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: I was thinking it would be fun, like a *Wizard of Oz* sort of story. But instead of the people that she encountered, would be women of the folklore tradition. And as she's moving, she's moving not only through—she's moving through space and time, you know, as she moves towards Aztlán. [00:48:08] So that was the idea. So starting her off, you know, like in the Yucatán area, right? And of course then she would see—gosh, I would have to read back in my old notes, this has been going—this happened so long ago. But basically what I wanted her to do was being sent off by—what was the name of the woman? [Ix-Chel -DM] There was a woman in the *Codices* that I'm thinking—I would have to look at my notes.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And she was being sent off to find a fictitious woman by the name of Crow-Woman.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. So she's going to travel across the Americas, from the Yucatán region all the way into

Aztlán, which is in the modern day United States.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right, but—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: She's traveling both spatially, and as she's moving through the codex, through the migration, time is passing, right?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. Right.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So the time is passing. And I realized, like, I needed help writing this. So at that time I was with Cecilio—I'm running blank on names—García-Camarillo. Cecilio García-Camarillo.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. A poet, right?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. He's the poet. Actually, he started *Caracol*. He was the editor of *Caracol*.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. So he helped you write the narrative that occupies the lowest register of the codex, right?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Exactly.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Exactly. So I had more or less the story. I was saying, like, What I want her to do is to meet all of these women of the folklore tradition, and then end up basically in New Mexico by the *manzanos* where the missiles are buried. [00:50:01]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Alright? And what she's going to do is she's going to save the world. [Laughs.] Right? Yeah, she's going to—she's Six-Deer, the little girl who's going to save the world, because at that time we had 2012, right? And 2012 is soon to come, and somebody's going to have to kick-start everything. And it's going to be Six-Deer who is going to save everything, and she is going to kick-start our new age.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow. So you did this in 1992. So 2012 would be 20 years.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So that was your vision of the future in 1992. Incredible.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. Right. Exactly. She's, you know, kind of trudging along in space and time. She meets La Llorona. That's going to be one of the first people that she meets, right? Because, you know, everything is falling apart. That's the apocalypse.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. The weeping woman, Llorona being the weeping woman.

DELILAH MONTOYA: The weeping woman. Also the sixth omen of the Aztecs, right? She's also considered to be part of that.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: So I needed my daughter to play the part. Because if you look at it, I was thinking it was going to be like Chicano theater, too.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow. Okay. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? Because I was really interested in that idea of Chicano theater. So I had asked an actress that was living here in Albuquerque, I'm trying—Angie [Torrez], I think is her name?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: I'll have—once again, I would have to take a look at my notes. And she had performed in a lot of movies. She was willing to do this for me, you know? She played the part of the old woman.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Of Crow-Woman?

DELILAH MONTOYA: No, the woman who sent her off. [Ix-Chel, the Mayan Goddess of Fertility and Death -DM]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay. Okay. [00:52:00]

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? Ix-Chen [*sic*]?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, Ix-Chel, it's the goddess of the moon, I think.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. Ix-Chel.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. I-X-C-H-E-L. Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So Angie plays Ix-Chel.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. And so what I did was, I just kind of took stills, so it's all collaged in.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So little Six-Deer is my niece.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, I was going to ask you who plays Six-Deer. [Samera -DM]

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And your daughter is La Llorona.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And my daughter is La Llorona.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Was she a teenager at the time, then?

DELILAH MONTOYA: She was very much a teenager at the time. Yeah. [They laugh.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Kind of makes sense.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? I mean, the only thing that she could think about was, like, How can I get the car away from my mom?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So that was the trade.

DELILAH MONTOYA: That was the trade.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: She would play La Llorona, with the wild hair, the weeping woman. You would let her have the car for the weekend?

DELILAH MONTOYA: The weekend. I mean—yeah, the weekend. So yeah, I had to turn over the car keys to her for the weekend. Oh, she was happy!

ADRIANA ZAVALA: I'll bet.

DELILAH MONTOYA: [Laughs.] She was.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow. And tell me, the *Codex Delilah* is such a rich and complex project. We may need to come back to it later, but as a placeholder, tell me about Six-Deer. What does that name mean for you? Where did that come from?

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know, I was learning how the people were named, right? They were named after days.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: In the calendrical cycle, right?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And I had learned that if you put the little head of a deer, and then you—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Six dots, or—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Six dots. Then it would be Six-Deer. Right? And I really liked it. So I just said, Six-Deer.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? So if you take a look at the codices, you'll see right by her name, her head, you'll see the little Six-Deer that kind of follows—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah, so it's the pictograph of the animal's head, for the given day on which a person was born, and then the sort of temporal is the six dots.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. So that's how I came across Six-Deer. [00:54:00] I think I had seen other codices that was using that sort of way of naming things. So I thought Six-Deer would be a really great way of doing that. Yeah.

And my little niece's name is—Ruben is her brother, and her name is—why am I blanking on her name? We'll come back to it. It'll come to me. [Samera -DM]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Was it one of your sister's daughters?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, it's my sister's daughter. It's—I want to say—Samera.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Samera?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Samera.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. I haven't seen her for a bit, but she's so beautiful.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, Samera's, like—you know, she's a movie star.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Even to this day I look at her, I go, You're a movie star, [laughs] is what you are. Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So did you take a lot of—did you dress her up as Six-Deer?

DELILAH MONTOYA: I asked my mother to make the outfit. And I showed her one of the codices. I go, "Look, can you make something that looks like that?" And she goes, "Yeah." So she sewed it up for me.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow. So then you posed your niece, Samera, in different poses, and took photo—how did you do that?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Well, Ruben had a lot to do with that.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. Her brother?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Her brother.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Because at that time she was—well, she was just—well, you can see her. She's just little, right? And she had that beautiful hair. Long, beautiful hair. I think she was about maybe four years old.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: She was just a little girl. So he would like, move her for me. So I would bring Ruben with me, and says, "Ruben, get your—have her walk." "Come on, Samera, walk!" And Samera would walk, you know. And she liked the attention. She just loved the attention, yeah. So I got her to do a lot of the different poses that I wanted, and then I could like, just start mixing those poses together. Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So I've never had the privilege and pleasure of looking—I've only

seen reproductions of the pages of the *Codex Delilah*. [00:56:05] But can you tell me about the collage process? How did you do that? So if I were holding it, what would I be seeing—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Well, Six—well, while you're here in town, why don't you go look at it?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: I was thinking I might try to do that.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Over there at Zimmerman Library.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: I don't know, we would have to do it today. We would have to do it today. Let's go see if we can get them to pull it out.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That would be fabulous. So is it—but is it actually—did you actually cut out the photographs? Or did you do a layout and then photograph it?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Okay, so—it's a collage.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: It is an actual collage. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: So what I was doing was cutting these images into the amate paper.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And I was also painting on the amate. So there's the full sheets of amate. So the *Codices* is large. It's a large book, about—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, it is? Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: It's really large. And it's accordion fold, like the way the one—that book that I was showing you.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. There's an accordion fold, and you were just gesturing the size, so what would we say? That's about 20 by 22? Does that sound right, each page?

DELILAH MONTOYA: I would say more like about 20 by—I would say maybe 12. It's narrow.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: The pages are narrow.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. So it's 20 inches in height, each page, and about 12 inches in width?

DELILAH MONTOYA: And 12 to 15, yeah. I would have to actually measure it.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah. Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: But it's right around that.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: On that. So each one of the pages has features, you know, actual people that I had to photograph, right? So the first page, of course, is Ix-Chel. The next page is La Llorona. Let me think. The next one is La Virgen de Guadalupe. Right? And then La Conquistadora.

And La Virgen was—when I was working as a medical photographer at that time, and I was also working at that time, this one woman came in, and we would take portraits for passports.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, that's one of the things that we did as well. And she came in—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: At the University of New Mexico?

DELILAH MONTOYA: At the University of New Mexico. And I'm looking at her, and I'm thinking to myself, she looks like the Virgin of Guadalupe. [They laugh.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That's great.

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know? So just one thing—I get obsessed, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: I do. And when I'm that obsessed with something, usually I can talk people into it. I don't know what—it's some sort of energy that I have, you know? It's just like, this intensity that I get. I don't know what it is. I'm like a snake. I charm them into doing these things.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So you charmed this woman that came in for a passport photo to be the Virgen de Guadalupe. Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? And later I found out she was a *curandera*.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, really? Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. She was a healer, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And she did. She showed up, and I was able to hold her hands out, I had her kneel, I had her doing all the poses that I needed, right? And then I was able to bring the images of Six-Deer in with that.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. And did your mother make her outfit as well?

DELILAH MONTOYA: No, I painted it.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay. Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, I'm trying to remember—yeah, I'm pretty sure I painted it. So a lot of it's—it's mixed. It's a mixture of painting and collage, and then also rubbings, you know, off of actual codices, so images off of actual codices.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: The next one was an image of La Conquistadora, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. That's the Virgin of the Rosary here in New Mexico, is that right?

DELILAH MONTOYA: She's La Conquistadora. [They laugh.] Yeah. That's who she is.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And she's the one that they used to reconquer—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right, the Pueblo people. [01:00:01]

DELILAH MONTOYA: —the Pueblos. Right. And she was—yeah, it was called La Conquistadora. And the person I got to play for that was Soledad Marjón. And she was also another photographer here.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Soledad Marjón?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. Who was also a photographer.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And at this point, I think she got more into theater. She doesn't do so much photography anymore, but she does more theater. Beautiful work, though. I mean, amazing photography. I was really impressed with the work that she had done. She had graduated from the program right before I did.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. From the program at University of New Mexico?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And she's still here in town.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay. Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. She's still here. So Soledad—and that, I rented the costume. I went to a theater company, and I—it's really interesting, because now she's in theater.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Wow. Maybe that was the start—

DELILAH MONTOYA: I don't know.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: —playing La Conquistadora.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And she was, like, La Conquistadora. And then the next one, of course, was the Soldera.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Adelita.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Of course, by that point, you know—we see La Conquistadora was in the desert, trying to gather her troops together, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. To reconquer the Pueblo people.

DELILAH MONTOYA: To reconquer the Pueblo people. And she's a little bit on the snobbish side. She looks at Six-Deer and says, "Six-Deer, what kind of name is Six-Deer? You should name yourself something more appropriate, like María." [They laugh.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Of course!

DELILAH MONTOYA: And you know, Cecilio did such a great job just putting the narration on this. You know, like if you read the story itself, and it's just really beautiful. Very poetic, you know? Yeah, he did a magnificent job with that.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And then after that—after Adelita, right? [01:02:03] Of course Adelita's like, "Yes, who are you? You're"—

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DELILAH MONTOYA: —"beautiful," you know? And we're going across the Rio Bravo, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Then the next person that we see is a Chicana activist.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. Oh, right, so now we're all the way up to 1968, right? Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. And you know, of course Six-Deer was kind of asking her, like, "So where is Aztlán?" [Laughs.] And so, you know, so there's this whole discussion of where Aztlán is, and you know, "It's in your heart," you know, all that.

And let's see, who was the person who played the activist? Once again, I would have to go my notes. But she was actually an activist here in town.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay. And any chance you remember who played Adelita?

DELILAH MONTOYA: She was another person who was an actress.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Once again, it's been so long that I would have to look at my notes, so I can remember everybody.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: I think Ann Marie Leimer has written a lot about—I think she wrote her doctoral dissertation

on the *Codex Delilah*.

DELILAH MONTOYA: She did. Yeah, she did.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Anyone who's listening to this oral history and wants to know more, maybe should read her work.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And then come and talk to you, and learn more.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. [Laughs.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And then so after the Chicana, is it Crow-Woman after that?

DELILAH MONTOYA: The Crow-Woman, yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. And then of course, Crow-Woman reveals that she is very ill.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh.

DELILAH MONTOYA: She's sick, and she's sick because they put missiles in her breasts.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So she's the Earth?

DELILAH MONTOYA: She's the Earth. And the world is going to be destroyed, and then Six-Deer realizes what she must do. So she has her little flint that Ix-Chel had given her. So she's going to cut out the missiles so that the world will live.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow. [00:02:00] Amazing.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. You know, I think that if I was going to redo that—now, what I know—right, I would probably talk about global warming. [Laughs.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Sure.

DELILAH MONTOYA: But then—but at that point, it was like—well, even so, even now, I mean, where we're at, you know, they're gearing up for war. And that's one of the things that you'll see on the very top register of that is, you know, I start off with the Bacabs, and those are the four deities, they're holding up—you know, the four directions, right, they're holding up the world. They're in harmony. But as we keep progressing through those 500 years, you'll see the Bacabs starting to war with each other, right? So when you see that last register, they're in complete war with each other.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? So we're at this kind of like, point of destruction.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So using the Bacabs and the women of the folklore tradition, and the division of the codex into registers, this was stuff that you learned—you drew from what you learned in Flora Clancy's class?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, absolutely.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That's amazing.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And Flora was an amazing teacher. What she let me do was, I produced the *Codices* for a grade.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That was your class project.

DELILAH MONTOYA: That was my class project.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow. Wow. And then you exhibited it in this show.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And I remember when I finished—well, the thing was, is that I was able to finish it because I got into a car accident.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. One of my many car accidents. [Laughs.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know? It's crazy, it's like, my mother goes, Again?! And my daughter tells me it's because I'm short, nobody sees me. [Laughs.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh. Well, but if you're in the car, they should see your car.

DELILAH MONTOYA: No, I got hit.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, you got hit?

DELILAH MONTOYA: I got hit.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: By a car? [00:04:00]

DELILAH MONTOYA: By a car.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, my goodness!

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, well, you know, it's like, I've been hit! I've gotten hit on my bike, I've been hit in cars. And I've been very fortunate, you know, I've never really gotten terribly purpled off of it, you know?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, I've been very fortunate that way. So this one was, I was—my daughter had wanted my car for school—I can't remember. I was letting her take it. It was a little truck. I got out at the corner where my work was, I was going to go where the hospital was. And I was just going to walk across the street. She pulls out, you know, because the light was green. I'm walking across the street. One car comes up, making a left-hand turn, stops, because I'm in the crosswalk, like I should be. Car behind him says, Why is he stopped?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Goes around.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Goes around. And as I move into that space, this car's engine is like—I hear the engine revving up. And I turn around, and this car is on me. I mean, it is—so I just kind of like, jumped. And I jumped on the hood. And I grabbed the windshield wipers, and I looked her in the face, like, Here I am. Do you see me now?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? I just—she's stopped, she's freaked out, right? I slid off. Well, I didn't slide off, I held on while she stopped, and when she stopped, then I kind of just got off the car. And I was just trying to process what had just happened. And the only thing I could think was, I've got to get to work.

So we settled insurance things and all that, and I just walked to work. I walked the rest to work, and I get to work, and all of a sudden I realize, like, Wait a minute, I just got hit by a car. I have lots of sick time. [Laughs.] So good! [00:06:00] And I've got this project that I'm just itching to get to. So I thought, You know, maybe what I should do is, I should go to emergency care right now.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Ya think?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And register that I was hit by a car.

DELILAH MONTOYA: By a car.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: But I did wrench my back a little bit, so it was good that I had that time off. It was—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So you took the time to finish the *Codex*. Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: I took the time to finish the *Codex*. So I would start off in the morning, I would go swim because my back was hurting me. And then I would spend the rest of the time just kind of working on the *Codices*. And I got it to a really good point. I remember they called me up and were like, "Delilah, really, can you start part-time, maybe?" I'm like, "Hmm"—let me see how much sick time I have—"maybe part-time. I'm going to start back half-day."

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: But the good part was, is I was able to get the *Codices* out.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. Wow. So you must have really taken a deep dive into sort of thinking about those Mesoamerican codices, and how they could inform your practice. And I'm really struck just by the way you articulate the women of the folklore tradition. So tell me a little bit about your relationship to feminism, or your own sense of yourself as somebody who sort of valorizes women's contributions, women's experiences?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Well, you know, one of the things with the *Codices* that I was really committed towards, that I felt that was very important, it had to do with the fact that my mother's a very strong person. I always thought of her as being the first feminist. And then all the other women in my family—I come from [a family - DM] of matriarchs.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: They're all matriarchs. You know, I'm kind of thinking back, like, my—I came from an all-woman family, right? My mother came from an all-woman family, because she had five sisters, right? [00:08:02] And then, you know, through those generations, like, the women just were very strong. You had to do it, because there was nobody else that could do it, right? You had to do it. My grandfather went blind when he was in his 50s. And so the women had to just kind of continue on, because there was so much that he could do.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That was your mother's father?

DELILAH MONTOYA: My mother's father. Right? I was thinking, also, my father's father died when he was about four years old, so he was raised by a single mother.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So it was just all these very strong mothers, women. And I know when anything is coming down, women have a lot to say and do about it. But you didn't see it in history. I thought to myself, You know what, there is a story there, there is a history there that has never been recorded. And you know women just didn't sit back and just wait. Not the women in my family. And I don't think my family is that different, right? So that's one of the reasons why I wanted to just kind of pull it out as a female vision.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. Through space and time.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Through space and time. Because I know that the women were all there, you know?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. That's great.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So that was one of the things that I was looking at.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So has that world view informed other projects that you've done? I mean, you did—what is it, *Llorona in Lilith's Garden*? Or *Lilith in Llorona's Garden*, I can't remember.

DELILAH MONTOYA: No, it's *La Llorona in Lilith's Garden*, yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So you've done that, or—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. I think from that I just began to—obviously I did the *Guadalupana*, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Oh, right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know. Then after I worked with the *Guadalupana*, you know, I began to kind of think about the *malcriadas*. [00:10:02] So I really wanted to look at the *malcriada* as being this really strong, powerful

woman, right, that really had something to say, but was completely misunderstood. [Laughs.] People really didn't get this very opinionated woman, right, that had a vision, could move things, and that had an importance in the world around her.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: I love the way you appropriate that term, because, *malcriada*, of course, in Spanish means "poorly raised."

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. Right.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right? So it's a bad girl.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: But you're really investing her with a sense of power.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Power, and the ability to make changes, right, and to be honored. You know? I felt that that was really one of the things that I wanted to kind of think of.

So I thought of the baddest girl that I could possibly think about, you know. At first I started to think about the folklore because, you know, obviously after the *Codices*, and then kind of thinking about the Guadalupana, right, I was kind of like—my mind was in that direction. I thought, Sebastiana. Doña Sebastiana. She is real—I mean, you don't get any more badder than death.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So she represents death.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. You know.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So how did you come—what was your relationship to that legendary figure? Where did that come from for you?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Doña Sebastiana?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know, I think the—my first kind of thoughts or thinking about her was when I was at Cal State LA. [00:12:02] I think we were looking at a *calaca*. And it was just assumed that the *calaca* was male. And you know, I had to say, "No, the *calaca*'s female."

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And the *calaca* is a skeletal figure in the Mexican tradition.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. Right. And *muerte* is always female, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, interesting. So people around you were interpreting the *calaca* as a male? But you're thinking about death, *muerte*, as female.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. Yeah. Because of Doña Sebastiana. And I thought, Well, that's very interesting. And then I began to think about the name Sebastiana, and the only Sebastiana that I was kind of cognitive about was San Sebastián. San Sebastián, right? St. Sebastian, and how he's shot through with arrows, and he's—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: And also, he's used by the LGB community, you know, the gay community, as—you know. So I began to think about that. Like, syncretism has always been something that I have been interested in, especially particularly when I was looking at the *Sacred Heart* images. Right? And it was that kind of collision between two cultures that come together in that third way of seeing things, so that third vision begins to happen, right? And it changes. Neither one is actually pure anymore. But they're changed.

So when I was thinking about Sebastiana, I thought, Well, here is this vision of death coming from Europe as being male. But the indigenous vision is female. So when those two came together, you have a Doña Sebastiana, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: So it's taking on the Sebastián and taking on the Doña, and it becomes this kind of—almost an androgynous image, which I thought was really interesting. [00:14:10] So when I did my Sebastiana—and you'll notice that she's called "San Sebastiana." I changed her to a San Sebastiana.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, as opposed to Santa Sabastiana. So you're really trying to play up that kind of

androgyny.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. And actually, she's known as Doña Sebastiana, so I put the "San" on there, you know?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: That's clearly just me doing this.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: But what I wanted to do was create an image, a female, that is so female that you question whether or not she is actually female. Like, it's almost like she's in drag.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. So you're sitting there—is that a man in drag, or is she a female? Right? So you don't know, you know? The thing that I loved about that was talking to my mother, and she had told me the story that Doña Sebastiana did not want to be death. She didn't want it. She didn't want the job. But God had to convince her to become death, because the souls had to be taken. Right? And the only way that he could convince her was that he had to explain to her that he was going to make her a saint, so that the people would know that death came from him and not from her.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: That all she was going to do was be the deliverer. Right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: And as I got to thinking about that, and I got to thinking about bad girls, *malcriadas*. And I could see, Yeah, she could see this is upward mobility. [Laughs.] Right? I could just see her bartering with God, right? [00:16:02] You know, just kind of trying to get God [laughs] to move in her direction, you know? Who else would have, you know, the *ganas* to do that, right? [Laughs.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Oh, that's great.

DELILAH MONTOYA: But Doña Sebastiana, right? And the thing is, is I thought, Well, she's called "Doña Sebastiana," so she must not see herself as a *calaca*. And I thought, Oh, I know people like that. You know? When people looked at her: "She's a *calaca*!" And they're scared of her, right? But when she looks at herself in the mirror, she's beautiful!

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So it was, you know—so that whole idea, the Doña Sebastiana, you know, this beautiful, over-the-top female—you know. I'm thinking, you know, like a gorgeous movie star, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Glamor.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Glamor, just pure glamor. Like Diana Ross.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know, that was the first thing that came to me: Yeah, just kind of get her looking like Diana Ross, just beautiful, right?

So it just so happened that Mónica Sánchez had come into town when I was getting ready to find my Doña Sebastiana. And Cecilio, he was—at that point, had been diagnosed with cancer. So I had asked him if he would want to write this for me, right? Write the script, because he was a script writer. And he said yes. You know, when you read that script, which you hear so much of the time, and there is Cecilio coming to terms with his own mortality. You know, that's really—when you read that script, you can hear it. It's embedded into the script itself. And one of the things I had talked to him about is that I wanted—if we could do it through *dichos*.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, so little proverbs, little sayings. [00:18:02]

DELILAH MONTOYA: Little sayings, little proverbs. Because so much of the old *españoles* or the *mexicanos* from Northern New Mexico, those old *dichos* and proverbs were very much a part of the speech, and how they would talk and, you know, communicate.

So we did. If you listen to the dialogue on that, it's just one *dicho* after another. And God and her are going back and forth, back and forth, you know? And she's not interested in the job. She lets him know right away that this is not anything that she really wants, and he's over there trying to charm her into taking this job on. And finally, right there at the end, he offers—he makes the offer, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: And she has to think about it, of course. [Laughs.] And of course, at the last end, she takes the job on. And she walks out. And this is all done—just her. And the God voice.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay. And this is a video, right?

DELILAH MONTOYA: It's a video.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: It's a little video. It was at the Fowler Museum, yeah. It had shown at the Fowler. And so the thing was, is that the way that I thought about it was, She's so narcissistic, right? I have her in her boudoir, and she sits down and she sees herself. And she's just in love with herself, right? As she's kind of being very coy in the mirror, all of a sudden, God's voice comes through the mirror, you know? And I go back and forth. Because when she's looking at herself, she sees this beautiful Diana Ross, right? And when we look at her, as we're looking at her through the mirror, right, we see a *calaca*. So she just goes back and forth between a diva and a *calaca*. [00:20:04]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And did you do that in the editing?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And Mónica was so great at this—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: She plays Doña Sebastiana.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Is she an actress?

DELILAH MONTOYA: She's an actress.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. She's an actress, and she's very, very good. Very talented. And she was in California for a while. She's from here, she was in California for a while, did a lot of movies and things like that out there. And now she just picked up a teaching position.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay. At UNM? Or—

DELILAH MONTOYA: No, she picked it up in Colorado College.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: I haven't told her yet that I'm going to be going out there, that the codices is going out there. She'll find out.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: The *castas*?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, the *castas* are going out there.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. Yeah, we'll come to that.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So then—but she was so talented that I just had one camera, right? So she had to have—you know, she had to block herself.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: When she picked up the lipstick, or when she did this with her hair, like that, it had to be at certain words in the script.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? She was able to do this, right, twice. Once as Doña Sebastiana, and then the second time as San Sebastiana.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know, so that I could actually go in there and edit those two things together, and they would hit.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: So I could push it back and forth, back and forth. It's really—I mean, she did—I mean, I couldn't have done it without her—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: A really talented actress. Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Without—and to make it feel seamless, like she's not really thinking about it.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, she did a great job with that one.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So she's part of this through-theme in your work of bad girls, *malcriadas*.

DELILAH MONTOYA: That's where I started.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. [00:22:00] With her.

DELILAH MONTOYA: With her. I started with her. And then after that, what I did was *La Llorona*, of course.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. *In Lilith's*—

DELILAH MONTOYA: *In Lilith's Garden*.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: And that came across—I began thinking about that when I was teaching at Houston. I had just started teaching there. And I had a student [Tina Hernandez -DM] who was really interested in Lilith. And she was the person that got me thinking or understanding that Lilith was Adam's first wife. And I'm, like, "What?! Adam had a first wife? No!" And I started looking at this, and I go, "Oh, he did!" He did have a first wife. "How come—well, why did nobody tell me?"

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So why do you think that is?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Well, Catholicism, of course. I mean, they weren't going to make the story convoluted like that, right? But the story was. It was already convoluted. And so when I started researching and looking at Lilith, I began to realize, like, Lilith has a lot of attributes of La Llorona. But there's certain things that La Llorona does that Lilith doesn't do, with the sixth omen of the Aztec. What is her name?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: I don't know. Maybe we can look her up.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. We need to look her up.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Sixth omen of the Aztecs. We'll come back to that. Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: *Chalchihuitl*? Is that her? We had better look her up. Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. She has attributes that are unique—that Llorona has. So I thought, That's another one of those circumstances where you see Western and Native American coming together and creating this third entity, which is La Llorona. [00:24:03] And so that's why you have *La Llorona in Lilith's Garden*.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: I see. Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know? And that's where that came from.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So it's this sort of process of syncretism that you're interested in.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Sort of Western traditions, archetypes, mythologies coming together with indigenous Native American.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And then the product in between, that third space.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And that's who we are, right? That's who the Latino is, right? Is that product in between. You know, and of course, what is also part of that product that's in between is the Sub-Saharan.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know, and that's one of the things that I think people are beginning to realize more and more now, that is not—it wasn't just two, there was three.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Sure. The third root.

DELILAH MONTOYA: The third root is definitely there.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And the one, at least until pretty recently, rendered invisible, right? But you're interested in that.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So where does that come from?

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know, when I was in Omaha—it was very interracial in Omaha. And I remember there was a strong black community in Omaha. There was, of course, that immigrant community that was in Omaha, which was Polish, Italian, Czechs, right? And then of course the *mexicanos* came in a little bit later. So we were just kind of like this big mix.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And earlier you mentioned the Native American as well.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. Right. So when I was there in Omaha, I became very acquainted—some of my friends, my high school—mostly in high school and in middle school, friends were racially integrated, right? So there was kind of a group of us, we called—we were like, half-breeds. All of us were half-something, right? [00:26:00] So there was Chiquita, Diane Hayes Chiquita. And then, who was the other woman? [Debbie Loback - DM] She was half Native American. But from up in Washington.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Washington State?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. She had said that she was related to Chief Seattle.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, I'm trying to remember her name. I can see her, but I don't remember her name.

And then myself. You know, and I was half Mexican. So we were just kind of—like, we always thought of ourselves as this little mod squad of half-breeds, right? [Laughs.] And also, as we were growing up, there was a lot of blacks and Native Americans, and Italians and Mexican—you know, all of that, and we were all together. We were just kind of this little group of who we are.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: But was it relatively harmonious? Or were there also racial tensions?

DELILAH MONTOYA: That's a good question. The people that had racial tensions with us, they didn't hang around us, you know?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: We were kind of like the misfits. [Laughs.] We were just—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Who were comfortable in that mixed state of being.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. We were the misfits, you know. Yeah. I mean, we would have names like—I

remember Dennis Clark. There was Dennis Clark, The White Boy. [Laughs.] Because there was another Dennis Clark who was black.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So we had to make the distinction, so he was the white—you know, Dennis Clark, The White Boy.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Okay, yeah. Dennis Clark. Yeah, okay, we got it. Yeah. So there was like, those sort of distinctions had to get made. And I think the thing was, is that when we moved out of Omaha, like, my younger sisters all had children from black men. [00:28:09]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Alright, so little Six-Deer?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: She's a *mulata*.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. She's a sweetheart. She's beautiful.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So that really is sort of intrinsic to who you are, is this deep understanding that the world, or the U.S., is a very mixed-race place.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right, well, that's what I grew up in. Right. Very much so. And also, the other thing that I grew up with is, my father became a vigilante.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: In what sense?

DELILAH MONTOYA: In what sense? He joined a group of white men that decided they were going to blow up the Near North Side. I mean, you know, they were crazy. They were just kind of crazy. And I was, like—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So what was the Near North Side?

DELILAH MONTOYA: It was the black neighborhood.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, I mean, you know. And it was, like, we were really glad when he left. He needed to leave.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So was that estrangement permanent?

DELILAH MONTOYA: For a very long time, yeah. For a very, very long time.

So when he left, that's when, you know, us girls—we all had to, you know, get together, and this is when we all became stronger. Of course, we had to be pretty strong to make sure that our dad stayed [laughs] away.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah. Yeah.

DELILAH MONTOYA: "You just need to stay away." Yeah. You know? And I've always kind of—like, at that point, I just really—I understood, you know, the ideas of that kind of racial collision and such. You know, because I saw it in my father, right? [00:30:05]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: And there wasn't anything that I, you know—yeah. There wasn't anything that I thought was good. Let's put it that way.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. And I think a lot of my work and my influences was, you know, kind of reactionary to that. You know, to what I had seen in Omaha. That people could form these groups and could behave that way.

And it seemed to be okay, and it was not okay. Right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Definitely that kind of, you know—what I do I think is kind of reactionary to that.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So how are you doing?

DELILAH MONTOYA: I'm doing okay. How are you doing? What time do we have?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Well, my computer says 2:00, but—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, and mine says 1:00, so it should really be 12:00.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. [They laugh.] So we've got three time zones working right now.

DELILAH MONTOYA: This is right, that's—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That's funny. You're Houston time, I'm Boston time. But we're in New Mexico.

DELILAH MONTOYA: We're in New Mexico time.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: All right, so it's 12 o'clock. Do you want to take a break? Or do you want to keep going?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Why don't we take a break?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So we're going to take a break.

[END OF TRACK montoy19_1of2_sd_track06.]

[Track montoy19_1of2_sd_track07 is a test track.]

DELILAH MONTOYA: Delilah Montoya.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay, Adriana Zavala, trying again. We had some ambient noise, so we turned off the recording for a minute. But we're going to give it a try.

So we were going to pick up this afternoon, Friday, August 2nd, giving you an opportunity to talk about your work. All the various life and work roles that you've carried simultaneously to making work as an artist. So you mentioned mother, woman, student, artist, worker.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. [Laughs.] Exactly. You know, actually, these multiple roles started off pretty early for me. You know, having a daughter at 18 really kind of threw me into this mode where I had to figure it out. And the only way that you could figure it out is that I had to work and go to school, and take care of my daughter, and just try to keep as many balls in the air as I can. Since I started working when I was 15, and going to school, that just brought in another layer, which was my daughter. So I just kind of kept the balls going.

But I've always been really fortunate. Once I decided that what I wanted to do was be in the visual arts, in other words either photography or commercial art, I had decided at one point that photography was the way that I wanted to go because it was a lot quicker than the commercial arts. And it seemed that—you know, I just really felt like the camera liked me, you know?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: And I liked the camera. So I knew it was a good fit. It was a good match. And I had my daughter at that point. At school, I was very fortunate that I got work-study positions that allowed me to work in the field. In other words, either I was working in the photo lab at school, or I was working in the production house at school. And so that kind of gave me a little bit of the background, so that the idea was that hopefully somebody else would come along and pick me up. [00:02:04]

And at one point, I had decided that—you know, I had this Honeywell camera, and I knew that they weren't going to hire me, welfare mama with a Honeywell camera. So I decided what I needed to do was to get myself into position where I could basically hire myself. And that's when this whole project in Omaha that I decided to start moving on through the Chicano Awareness Center as my umbrella organization—we applied for a grant, do a whole series on *The Mexican Nebraskan*, through the NEH. And I got the grant. I mean, I was really desperate to get it.

And I remember I had to bring in a professor from the University of Omaha, so we could fulfill the requirements on the grant. And I had talked to him once on the phone, and he said, Yeah, he was interested. You know, we got the grant written up. Everything was in place. All I needed was his signature, and I couldn't get ahold of him. He was not answering my calls, you know, and I was just desperate, because I needed this in order to get that work experience.

So I remember I found out where he lived, and I literally sat on his doorstep. I did. I just sat on his doorstep, and I waited for him to come home. And it was like, hours. I didn't care. I was doing my homework, I was reading, I was doing whatever it is I needed to do. And he showed up, and he was really surprised. And I'm, like [laughs]—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: "Sign this."

DELILAH MONTOYA: "Sign this." [They laugh.] And he signed it. And now that I look back on it as a professor, I just handed him a gift. Because he was on a big grant. [00:04:02] And he didn't have to do anything. All he had to do was just sign it. You know? Yeah. And you know, he took that to his—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Sure, of course he did.

DELILAH MONTOYA: —department. You know, he took it. Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: "Look at this grant I got!"

DELILAH MONTOYA: [Laughs.] It was like a total gift to him.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So did he actually participate in the project?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Not much, no. I think he showed up to the talk. [Laughs.] Yeah. He was on the panel. Yeah. Because one of the things that they told me is, I had to put together a symposium. I told them, Sure, I can do a symposium. So I had to go to the dictionary and find out what a symposium was. [They laugh.] You know, but I was desperate. I really—I wanted this.

So I got the money. And the script needed to be written. I was very fortunate that Alurista was in town, and he wrote the script for *The Mexican Nebraskan*. So that was really great. And with that, you know, a door kind of opened up for me, in that he was able to introduce me to other Chicano artists, and tell me about what was going on in terms of—nationally what was going on with Chicanos, and who the Chicano artists were. He was the first person that introduced me to Yolanda Lopez, and the work that she was doing. Judy Baca; he talked to me about Judy Baca and the work that she was doing with SPARC. So, you know, I began to become more aware that this is more of a national—there's many people that are working and thinking along the same lines.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh. And why was Alurista in Omaha?

DELILAH MONTOYA: I believe they brought him in as a visiting artist.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow. Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, for I think a month or two months or so. Yeah. So that was really great. [00:06:01] I mean, yeah, and he wrote it really well. [Laughs.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow. Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, he did a great job with that script.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow. So he wrote the script, and you took photo portraits? Or was this document—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. Photo portraits, and also I got the imagery together, because it was historic, so I had to find old pictures from the families and then also just kind of find the graphics, and build the graphics for it, and then also do video recordings on it as well.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So video recordings as in, like, oral histories of Omaha—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Well, the script. I needed somebody to read the script.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay. Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? Because it was one of these—that was back in the day before the computer and all of that. Basically, what would happen was, is that you would have the recording, and then there would be these little codes that would happen in the recording that would actually move the slides.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? So I was able to plug this in, and then the slides would automatically move itself. You just had a little box that would—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay. So it was like a historical slideshow, recounting the history of Mexicans in Nebraska?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Latinos in Nebraska.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: So we started off with an early account of Omaha, which was founded by a *cubano*. Right? Then of course the Lewis and Clark that came through, there was a lot of *mexicanos* that were basically taking care of the horses and being the workers, as well as kind of knowing the route, right? [Laughs.] Yeah.

So talked a little about that, and then brought it into the labor, the labor in the beet fields, and then also in the packing house industry, and just kind of moving it. Talked a little bit about the migrations. There was these huge migrations that were happening, particularly at the time of the revolutions. [00:08:00] And then also the massive deportations that we're seeing again now. The same thing had happened, I believe it was in the '30s?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. During the Depression.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. There was these massive deportations, which I found really interesting because there was also a period of time where they had the Bracero Program, you know? So they needed more workers. So they went down there and they got workers to come across the border. I was talking to my mother about that, and she was saying, "Well, you know your grandfather was part of the Bracero Program." I'm going, "Mom, but he was in the United States." She goes, "Yeah, but that was work."

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So you had U.S. Latinos that were jumping in on the Bracero Program as well, you know, so they could get the work as well.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, because they would transport you, and they would give you housing. Which, prior to that, they didn't do that. When you went up to the fields, you had to get yourself there, and then you had to figure out where you were going to stay.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So this, like, is really—this is a great program.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So that raises an interesting question. That sounds entirely true. I wonder how much historical recognition there have been that not all Braceros crossed the border from Mexico, that there was a U.S. population of Mexican American, or New Mexican, that joined that program. That's interesting.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. Yeah, as they were pushing through, they were—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So your mother said that her father had participated in that program?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. In the Bracero Program.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Which, you know—so by doing this study, you know, I would find so much about my own history, and how it kind of overlapped with a lot of the Latino history that we know coming in from Mexico, and how the border has always been porous. It always has. [00:10:00] People have always gone back and forth between Mexico and the Southwest. That's nothing new.

And it seemed to me, The United States is okay, you know? We didn't have terrorists. Right? There was families that live on both sides of the border, you know, they like to visit each other, right? You know, some people don't stay in the United States. Some people go back to Mexico. Some people are in Mexico and they stay in the United States. It's been like that, you know? And all of a sudden, now there's this whole push for the militarization of the border, as though Mexico has never been our friend.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. Or that entire communities think about that whole border space, the borderlands, as a porous community, and they move back and forth.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. You know, and they have been, before the United States was the United States.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah, for centuries.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. Yeah, so it's all of those things that I—these are things I tend to think about in terms of my own work. And as far as the work goes, once I was able to get that grant and really create a body of work—and that was what I was looking for, that I could prove to somebody, I could prove to potential employees that I had the ability to start a project, complete a project, and get good solid imagery in pictures. And that was what I was hoping for.

At one point I decided I wanted to leave Omaha, and I went to Denver, Colorado, because my sister, my elder sister, Page, was living in Denver. And I was able to secure a job at Photosynthesis. And at Photosynthesis, they had a thing called a Marron Carrel and Forox, and basically what they were doing was creating slideshows for businesses and corporations. [00:12:02] Three-, four-, five-projector slideshows, using what they call soft slides so that they can merge images together. Think about it as a big panorama.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? And a slide duplicator. The high-end slide duplicators were called Marron Carrels.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Marron Carrols?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Marron Carrols and Foroxes. And since they had a Forox over at Metro Technical Community College in Omaha, I knew how to run one. And they hired me. So what I did was, I started helping with slide productions there in Denver, Colorado. I did that for about not quite a year.

I realized at one point I didn't—it was so much like factory work. I really wanted to get back into school. I felt like I wanted to complete my MA. Well, the BA, my undergraduate. Yeah. And also, I wanted—when I moved into Denver, it was the first time that I was in a total Chicano community, which was really pretty amazing. Coming out of Omaha where we were just racially integrated, there was a lot of different cultures that were together, and then going into a neighborhood that was just Chicano. And the Chicanos there were basically coming out of Northern New Mexico. There was this migration from Northern New Mexico into Denver. And I found it really interesting, and I really liked it a lot.

Of course that was when Corky Gonzales was there, and there was this real attention towards Chicano. I had been pretty much politicized in Omaha through the Chicano Awareness Center. [00:14:02] And so here I saw—it was the pinnacle of all of this, is where—this is where the Chicano Moratorium happened, this is where the Plan de Aztlán had happened. You saw a lot of Chicano murals, all of that. So that was reaffirming for me, right?

When I was in Denver, I did photograph the community. And it turned into a book that I collaborated on with Cecilio García-Camarillo, which was called *Cricketts in My Mind*. So this book, what it is, is a series of his writings, talking about *sensualismo*, and the imagery or imageries that I took while I was in Denver, Colorado. And it was all printed, [by hand -DM]—well, it was lithographs. So I made lithographs and handmade papers. It's really a very beautiful book.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow. What was the print run of that book?

DELILAH MONTOYA: It's a handmade book.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, it's a single, handmade book. Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. And I think I made about, like, six of them.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. So yeah, I gave one obviously to Cecilio. One is, I think, over there at Zimmerman Library. Two of them went over to—whose is it? Bill Foster? He's actually in San Antonio. He collects Chicano books, and he bought two of them. I'm trying to think if there's another one. Or, you know, where the other ones

are. Unfortunately, I don't know or—I don't have a copy.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: I thought I had one, and I think I sold off my last one. And it was, like, Oops! [Laughs.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: But I do have pages. I think I have enough to make one more book, I think.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Really?

DELILAH MONTOYA: I do, I think. But it's one of those things: "I'll get to it." You know, that sort of thing, right?
[00:16:00]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. So the *Crickets in My Mind* came out of my time in Denver. But the thing is, is—what I want to point out is that I'm doing a lot of things all at the same time, right? Taking these pictures on the west side of Denver, getting to know the community there, the Chicano artists that are there, which I did. Maruca Salazar and her husband, Daniel—what is his last—Salazar, I got to know them. And eventually Maruca became a curator over at El Museo de las Americas.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. And we did—you know, do some trades back and forth with each other. You know, traded artwork and such. Yeah. In Denver I found—that's the first time I saw a really active Chicano community.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So even more so than the organization you were working with in Omaha?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. I mean, it was kind of like a full-blown Chicano art community, which was really pretty spectacular for me to see that.

From there, I went to—and, you know, the other thing too—one of the other things, because I'm a mom, I'm a mother, right—I was really trying to find a safe place for my daughter. Omaha was not a safe place. A lot of my friends had become prostitutes, and people had died. There was a lot of violence, you know. These were things that my mother didn't really understand, you know, because she came from a really small town where everybody was friendly, you know, and there wasn't a lot of violence, or anything like that. So she wasn't really aware of all of that that was happening within the Omaha community that we were at. [00:18:01] And I just didn't want to raise my daughter around that. So that's one of the things that motivated me out.

So when I got into Denver, Denver wasn't much better in terms of the community that was there. And my mommy instincts came out, and it was like, "I don't know, I don't think I want to raise my daughter here, you know? It's too dangerous for her." Because I remember one time coming home from work—and I would walk home from work—they were like, shooting from the rooftops, right? These kids had gotten up there and they were shooting police. They were shooting at the police, right? I was, like, "Well, I don't know. Maybe this isn't quite the place I want to be to raise my daughter." It would be okay for me, I mean, because I would understand things. But she wouldn't, you know?

So then I decided, well, I'm going to go to the University of New Mexico, because I heard they had a really great photo program there. And I wanted to learn more. So I just kind of picked up everything and I just went down there, and I applied for financial aid, and I got myself into school starting in the fall.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: To finish your BA, or to—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. To continue the BA. [Background noise.] Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: I'm getting some ambient noise here. Alright.

So you moved back to Albuquerque, to go to the UNM. Was your mother back here at that point, yet? Or was your mother still in Omaha?

DELILAH MONTOYA: She was still in Omaha. But she had decided that she wanted to come back to New Mexico as well. Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: We're going to pause.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Okay.

[END OF TRACK montoy19_1of2_sd_track08.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So this is Adriana Zavala interviewing Delilah Montoya. It's the afternoon of Friday, August 2nd. We changed location because of some ambient noise we were experiencing, as folks at Delilah's studio building prepare for an opening this evening. So we're now in the living room of my Airbnb in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

So shall we try to pick up where we were? You were talking about your time in Denver, and then your decision to move back to Albuquerque to resume your studies towards your BA, and also find a community where you could raise your daughter.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. One of the things that I've experienced, and I'm sure this is something that most women with children—single women with children, women that are married and have children—you just have to learn how to juggle a lot of things, all at the same time. You know, and kind of pick your priorities. Of course, my priority was making sure that my daughter had a secure place to grow and become the woman that she is today, right?

And one of the things that I was very aware of in Denver was—especially on the west side of Denver—that there was a really—the same thing that I was experiencing in Omaha, Nebraska, which was heavy drug use, a lot of dropout rate. And you know, opportunities that should be there for young people, for children, it just wasn't there. The school systems weren't as robust as they could be.

I remember in Omaha, when I was growing up and going to school, there was, particularly in South Omaha, in the high school, we had books that were held together with rubber bands. [00:02:08] You know, there just was not the kind of attention to the academics that I really wanted to see my daughter have. So that was one of the reasons why I left Omaha. And I go into Denver, in this very larger city, and I'm experiencing the same things. And I just wasn't satisfied with that. I did have a job, and the job did pay. It paid, [laughs] right? And that was pretty exciting for me, to actually be working, doing something that I had studied to do.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And that was the job at Photosynthesis?

DELILAH MONTOYA: That was the job at Photosynthesis. But one of the things that I did see at Photosynthesis was the first digital files coming in, slides that were done digitally on the computer.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And that was back in—I would say that was ['78 -DM]. And I looked at this, and I thought to myself, "I don't know if what I'm doing right now is going to be viable in the next 10 years." And part of the reason why I wanted to get back to school was, I was thinking that this digital file is going to put me out of a job, you know?

One of the things I have to say, in terms of doing photographic works, it's always been this trajectory of straight-up, in terms of technology. It just was constantly changing, and you could constantly see everything that you thought you knew, you were going to have to un-know. And the way that I explain it is just about—like, gray matter was just draining out of my ears. [They laugh.] Just continually, always having to put something new in there, and try to learn something new, just to keep active in that field, right? [00:04:03] I clearly saw what I was doing at Photosynthesis—working with slide duplicators, and running E6 processes, and all this—this was something that was no longer going to be viable. That's one of the reasons I thought, if I'm going to go into this field, now is the time to keep moving forward, because the pendulum is moving. And it's going to swing in a direction that I—you know, I want to be able to swing in the same direction with it. Right?

So I went back into—I was looking at UNM, because UNM had a really strong Photo department. One of my teachers at the Technical Community College that I went to had told me that there was the major photographers, major historians in photography, at UNM, at the University of New Mexico. And I thought, I want to go there. And you know, the thing is, is I have to say that I sat in on Beaumont Newhall's last course he taught.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow. Yeah, that's a big name. [They laugh.]

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, right? Van Deren Coke. Right? Van Deren Coke was there. So there were these really powerful thinkers in photography that were at UNM. And I remember with Beaumont Newhall, he would just kind of like—he was almost just—you could barely hear him, you know? But the way—he was just talking about all these people like he knew them. And guess what? He did. [Laughs.] And I would sit right in the front row and just kind of like, listen, just tried to listen to what he had to say, and all his anecdotal stories, and all of that. I

remember his last class that he taught, everybody stood up and just clapped. [00:06:02]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow. And you were there.

DELILAH MONTOYA: I was there.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That's powerful.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. Yeah. That was pretty amazing. You know? And of course, one of my colleagues that I went to school—he was in graduate school, and I was an undergraduate at the time, is Joel-Peter Witkin.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? So Joel-Peter Witkin was a graduate student at—you know, we got to know each other. And, you know, I remember I was at one point trying to find a job. I was trying to—and I think I had mentioned to him, like, "Oh, man, I need a job." And he was working as a waiter. And he came up to me one day and he says, "You know, I think I can get you in as a bus girl." And I told him, "Oh, darn, I just found a job." [Laughs.] So, yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: How many people can say that Joel-Peter Witkin got them a job as a bus girl? [They laugh.]

DELILAH MONTOYA: "I can get you in as a bus girl."

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know, but I was already a waitress.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So what was your experience of—you were, I mean, an older student, a returning—"resumed adult learner," as we call them, right?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. Yeah, exactly.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: With a daughter, having had a career. I mean, you had had an NEH grant.

DELILAH MONTOYA: I know.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: How many undergrads can say that?

DELILAH MONTOYA: I did, I had an NEH grant. And when I received that NEH grant, I was 20.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That was an indicator of things to come.

DELILAH MONTOYA: I was 20 years old, and it was a *movida*. I mean, I didn't think about the grant as being, like, "Oh, wow, I got an NEH grant." It was like, "My *movida* worked!" [Laughs.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Now the—well, yeah.

DELILAH MONTOYA: [Laughs.] Right? Yeah, because I wanted to be a photographer. And I got myself into position where I was the project coordinator, and so therefore I could hire who I want. [00:08:06] And I hired myself [laughs] as the photographer.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And your sister too, right? When we were off recording, you told me you hired your sister to do some of the interviews, or some of the research—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Some of the research.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: —for that project in New Mexico.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Not New Mexico, sorry. *Mexicans in Nebraska*.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. Yeah. She quit on me. [They laugh.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, but—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That's quite something. So you were—we sort of backtracked there. But so, you know, I'm

interested in what it would have been like for—at your age, even if you were only 24 at that point, or—you know, with an adult awareness of what it means to go back to school.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And what it means—do you think you had appreciation at the time of what it meant to be in Beaumont Newhall's last class? Or did that come later?

DELILAH MONTOYA: I think it came later. You know? I knew that Beaumont Newhall was very important, I knew there was a book. We had to use the book at Metro Tech, and his name was on it. So I knew that he was an important person.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah.

DELILAH MONTOYA: But now, I look back and I realize, "Wow, that was Beaumont Newhall," you know?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: It was kind of like touching the stone, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. I think that—I think one of the things that really motivated me was, I remember when I was—shortly after I had my daughter and I knew that I had to get back to work, I needed to—and so I went to an agency to see whether or not they could help me find a job. And I remember the woman told me I was—I just didn't have any qualifications to be hired anywhere. And when that hit me, it was like, I'm 19, you know, and nobody's going to hire me. [00:10:01] And I think that experience really motivated me to, one, get back into school, right? To get myself into a position where I knew something, that somebody would want to hire me, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: And I think that's one of the reasons—it kind of gave me that drive, you know, realizing that I am somebody. And I can do this. I know I can do this. I just have to prove to everybody that I can do this. Right? So it's been kind of a process, of trying to keep all of that going. You know, to—yeah.

When I decided to go back to school and finish my BA at UNM, right, one of the things that I decided to do was try to get back into the work-study programs, to see whether or not I can—you know, what sort of jobs that I could pick up through work-study. So I started doing commercial art for SUB Entertainment [Student Union Building -AZ]. It was like, the student organization, and I would make flyers and do a little bit of drawing and all of that, and do kind of like marketing and advertisements.

And what we would do is, we would market things. We would kind of come up with the strategies on how to make things work. And we did really well. We were able to, through distribution and all of this, we were able to just bring all these kids into the SUB Entertainment. And we would get bands and all of that working. We did so well that they decided we did it too well, [laughs] because we would get the crowds in there, and the school didn't know what to do with these crowds of kids that were showing up from everywhere, right, for the bands that we were bringing in. [00:12:03] They were just getting a mess on their hands, so they decided they needed to scale back [laughs] what we were up to.

And during that period of time, it was my mother who came forward, she says, "You know, I noticed that over here in the student newspaper"—because she was going to school at the same time I was, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: "There's this job over here for Biomedical Communications. It looks like they would want you to go and take pictures at the Office of Medical Investigators. And look how much it pays. And they want a work-study." And I'm looking at this, I'm thinking, "Wow! That's an amazing pay! It's \$5 an hour!" [Laughs.] It was a lot more than what I was getting, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right, the minimum wage was probably \$2.37 or something, right?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: It was like, twice the amount of money that I'm getting. "I think I could probably do that."

So I go down there, and I get hired. All I have to do is just go in there with a camera, right, and take pictures of dead bodies. [Laughs.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: But you were undaunted.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Well, the thing was, it paid twice—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Paid \$5.00 an hour. Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: [Laughs.] And the person that was there before me was Joel-Peter Witkin.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Of course it was! Of course it was. Oh, my gosh. [They laugh.]

DELILAH MONTOYA: And so I remember talking to him. He says—and I told him, like, "Hey, you know, I just got this job over at Biomedical Communications, photographing." He goes, "Oh, you got that job? Oh, that's great!" He was congratulating me on that. I'm thinking, like, "I don't know."

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So he wasn't doing that anymore?

DELILAH MONTOYA: He wasn't—well, the thing was that they did find those fetuses in his [laughs] studio. So, yeah, I don't think he was welcome that much anymore. [00:14:02] Yeah, no. Mm-mm [negative].

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. Oh, wow. Yeah, because that really informed his practice. [They laugh.]

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? So I remember, I would go there in the morning, and you know, they would kind of pull out all these people that I had to—you know, bodies, really, that I had to photograph. And they would be very specific, what it is that they wanted me to photograph. And I also remember not watching the news in the morning or in the—no, I mean in the evening. I would not watch the news in the evening, because I didn't want to know what I was going to walk into.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right, or who you had seen on the news whose body you were going to see in the—wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. Yeah. Yeah, I just thought, you know, better to be just a little surprise for me, so I could see what was going on there.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And how long did you do that work?

DELILAH MONTOYA: I would say about a year. And I was graduating just about that time. And to tell you the truth, it got to a point where I really didn't want to do it anymore. It was—for me, it was very depressing. You know, especially when I saw, you know, kids that were raped, and women that were just—I think there was this one image, I remember, where this woman who—she must have been in her, maybe 70s. Right, she was an older woman. And she had been just stabbed, just multiple times. I mean, we're looking at hundreds of stabs, and you know, I had to photograph every stab mark that was on her body.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, my gosh. Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And it was her husband.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: [Gasps.] Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know. And I saw that, and I thought, as I'm photographing every one of those stab marks on her body, right, I'm thinking to myself, "At what point did you know that you should have left this man?" [00:16:11]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: "At what point should you have just fled?" You know, being married to this man for decades. I mean, I would have been gone at first sight of a knife, or first sight of choking you, or whatever. And that's clearly what I did with my daughter's father. I mean, the first time he pulled a knife on me, that was it. "No." You know? And the reason I felt that way was because I knew that not only was it abusive for me, but it was abusive for my child. My child will never see that happen to me. Right? Yeah, and it's just like, those sort of things that just kind of like, boggle my mind. I mean, at what point—I mean, you know she must have known, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah. It can't have been the first time.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mm-mm [negative]. It was like those sort of things, and—yeah.

So I went back to my boss at Biomedical Communications after I had been shooting for about a year or so, and I just told him, you know, I just can't do this anymore. He really felt like I had skills, and I was doing other things than that, you know, like processing. I was printing, I was photographing other things, you know. So he kept me on board and got somebody else to go in there and do that. But eventually, and it wasn't much longer after that, in about two or three weeks after that, they actually really just kind of lost that contract. [00:18:02] Which was fine.

So when I got ready to graduate, another position—a position opened up at Biomedical Communications. And I thought, Well, I'm going to apply for that, right? And I didn't get the job. And I had been working there for a while, and I was like, "I know the job. Why aren't they going to hire me," right? So they hired somebody from another department called Medical Illustrations. So that person's job opened up, so I went over there and I applied for that position, and I got it.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: [Laughs.] Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. And I got that position. So I was able to stay there for about 10 years.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: And that was the one, the position that I had where it was a full-time position, and I would get tuition waivers, right? So I could take six hours of university credit for free. Then I applied it to the graduate program in printmaking, because I really felt that they wouldn't pick me up as a photographer if I applied to the photo department, because they don't necessarily bring their own graduates in.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: I see. Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know? And the photo program had such a high profile, and there were just so many people that were applying.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Competition, mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. I thought, No, they're not even going to open up my application. But the printmaking—which I had already taken a lot of printmaking, because I was interested in photo printmaking—I felt like I had a better chance of getting brought into the graduate program there. Which was the case. So they brought me in there.

That's one of the reasons why you see the collotypes, because collotype is a 19th century printmaking process, a photographic printmaking process. It's like, the first photographic printmaking process. And I was really interested in that. I felt like I had already had a lot of photographic experience. [00:20:03] Which I had. You know, I had worked as a photojournalist for a small-town newspaper when I was in Omaha. Yeah. Which was really interesting. I got some really pretty good shots there, and just kind of like, you know, a little bit of that journalistic experience and such.

So what I was doing was then, once I got into the program, I was going pretty slow because my daughter was in high school at the time. She was at like, middle school, and then she was going into high school. Had five years to graduate before they kicked you out, right? [Laughs.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. Right, right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So I think I took up to five years, or something like that. I was right on the edge of that.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. But you were working full-time.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Working full-time. So here I am, working full-time, I have a daughter [Luciana -DM], and I'm going to graduate school. Right? And then also, my art career. That was during the period of time that I got into the CARA exhibition.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right, so the Chicano Art Resistance and Affirmation, CARA. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. And that's when I met Holly. So when Holly met me—Holly and Marcus Tranquilino-Sánchez, that's when I met both of them. And they were really instrumental in just kind of opening up another door for me, so that I could see everything that was happening in terms of the Chicano movement. And they were the ones that got me into California at Self Help Graphics. And I pulled a print over there, since I was doing

photo printmaking, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And the first print that I did there for them as part of that Chicano Atelier, was *Angelito Negro*.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. And *Angelito Negro*, right, had all these *chicharra* wings on it. And if you're real quiet, you can hear the *chicharras*. [00:22:01] [Laughs.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right, right. Yeah, yeah. Let's see if we can hear them. So *Angelito Negro*, can you describe that?

DELILAH MONTOYA: It's a picture of three children, youth. And they're kind of lined up. They almost—the way that they had lined themselves up when I took the picture—and it wasn't some—because they didn't realize I was taking the picture, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: You didn't pose it, mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: I didn't pose it at all. It kind of reminded me of, you know how with—oh, my goodness, why am I blanking on their names? I shouldn't be blanking on their names. Oh, my gosh, this is horrible. It was on an album cover—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: The Beatles walking across Abbey Road? [Laughs.]

DELILAH MONTOYA: Thank you!

ADRIANA ZAVALA: You're welcome.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Thank you!

ADRIANA ZAVALA: You're welcome. Yeah, there's that band, called The Beatles [laughs]—

DELILAH MONTOYA: The Beatles. You know, the band called The Chicharras. [They laugh.] You want to call them The Monkees, but that wasn't right. No. [Laughs.] So the band, The Beatles.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: So you see them kind of lined up like that, and they're just right in order. And they're going into this little church, right? Because they were going to go in there to clean it.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: To clean the church. And I photographed this. What I did with this one kid that was just all dressed in black, right? And then I put the little *chicharra* wings on him. So I called him the *Angelito Negro*.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow. Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And that's where I began to start thinking of saints and sinners.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know? That's kind of like, the first iteration of the idea of the saints and sinners.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So I want to make sure I have this down right. So that was the print that you pulled at the Self Help Graphics Chicano Atelier.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. And where did you take that photograph? [00:24:00]

DELILAH MONTOYA: It was right outside of Las Vegas, New Mexico, in Mineral Hill.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. And that was the sort of inception of *Saints & Sinners*?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Which was a significant series that you did in 1990. I don't have my computer open right now, but I think that's—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Actually, that was done in the late-80s.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay. Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. That was the '80s work. That was work that just as—I think I had graduated from my undergrad, and I was just kind of like, just working on different types of works, different types of bodies, work, and I was just about ready to get into [buzzing sound]—there's your refrigerator.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah. It's okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Okay. I was just about ready to get into graduate school.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Either I had just gotten in or I was applying. And I can't—I think what it is, is I had just gotten into graduate school.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay, wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. Yeah, and I was doing my MA at that point.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? So the MA was made up of doing these silk screens and lithos of *Saints & Sinners*. Also, I did *Crickets in My Mind*, that's when I put the book together.

I remember with that one, I was—I wanted to do *Crickets in My Mind* as my MA thesis, right? So I started working on that right away, because books take a long time, especially if you're going to do multiple pages, and you're going to make handmade papers and all of that. And I was talking to my—I think he was like, my counselor, or something like that. And I was telling him, "And I started working on my thesis and then"—and he stops me, he goes, "You can't work on your thesis now. Whatever you're doing right now cannot be your thesis work." And I'm looking at him, and I'm thinking—I mean, I had hours and hours on it, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: And I remember just looking at him and just, like, the tears just started welling up, and they just started coming down, because I just knew, like, What am I going to do? [00:26:07] I mean, that was—the money I had put into it, the hours I had already put into it. You know, and all of that isn't going to count? You know. It was just going to—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So was this because the thesis was supposed to be a kind of time-limited project?

DELILAH MONTOYA: It was because you have to start it at a certain point in your—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: I see.

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know? And I was already taking these other classes.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: You were taking coursework and—right, wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So I thought, Well, I guess I'm going to stop that. And then I thought, Well, I'm a creative person. I can do a lot of things. I can finish that up later. I can do a lot of different things. I don't have to—you know.

So I started another project, right at the appropriate time, and that one was that large photo mural of *Saints & Sinners*. And I don't know if you're aware of this one, but it's a photograph inside of my grandfather's *morada*.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: No.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. I don't think you've seen it. And actually, Judy Baca curated it into a show at the New Mexico Museum of Art.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh!

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right, and it was called *Saints & Sinners*. And what I did was, I fit the large photo mural into

a corner of a room, and I photographed it with two different films; one film was daylight balanced, the other film was a tungsten balanced. So you have one picture that is blue, and the other picture that is, like, in full color. So these are full color photographs, right? [00:28:00] And I mixed them together like a mosaic, so that in the middle, where the corner is, is a cross. So visually, you can see a cross that on one side of the room is blue and the other side of the room is this kind of golden color, like that. And then I threw an altar on the ground on the bottom. What I was looking at was the *Hermandad*.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So I did my whole research on the Brotherhood.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: I'm sorry, what is a *morada*?

DELILAH MONTOYA: A *morada* is where the *Hermandad*, the Brotherhood, meets.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh. So your grandfather was in the—

DELILAH MONTOYA: The brotherhood.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: The brotherhood. The *Hermandad Penitente*, or *Penitente* Brotherhood?

DELILAH MONTOYA: *Penitentes*.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative], the *penitentes*, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? So he was a *penitente*, right? And he had a—when he was coming into manhood, what they did was, they broke glass and they cut a cross on his back and then they rubbed salt into it, so that he would always be carrying his cross. I mean, they were like—and my grandfather would pray. I mean, my grandfather could pray for like three days at a time, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And he could drink for three days at a time. [Laughs.] Hence the "saints" and "sinner." Or the saintly sinner. Right, so I wrote this whole kind of thesis on the *Hermandad*, and kind of my grandfather's participation in it, and what that meant in terms of cultural syncretism. So that was really my first text on thinking about cultural syncretism. And how that worked, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And—

DELILAH MONTOYA: And so what I did was, I got to know a man who was part of the *Hermandad*, and my grandfather at that time—let's see, had he passed at that time? [00:30:02] While I was working on it. He passed while I was working on it. Because he passed in 1990, and I think I presented it in—yeah, in '90.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, what does my resume say? When did I graduate? [They laugh.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: When did Judy Baca curate? So was it—did you finish the project, and then Judy Baca curated it?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So it had gone up for my MA thesis, right, at the museum. And—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: At UNM?

DELILAH MONTOYA: At UNM.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And I kind of like, pushed it into the corner, and there was all these candles, and there was this earth. I had an informant, really. He was a *penitente*, and he began to talk to me about the *Penitente* and, you know, the stations of the cross and all that. So I kind of—I was highly influenced by—his name was Juan Sandoval. And he took a lot of time to explain how the *Penitente* worked, and what they were looking at, and how they prayed for world health. You know, it was the world—they prayed for their children.

And so what I started doing, and this was because of Cecilio García, he used to like to take glass jars and put things in the glass jars and wait for a transformation. So he would put, like, a banana in there, right? And watch it transform, this sort of thing. I began to think about the idea of how the *Hermanidad* had a lot to do with transformation, right. To transform the earth, or to transform themselves from one state to the other, so there was this idea of alchemy, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: So what I did was, I took glass jars, and each jar represented one part of the stations of the cross. [00:32:00] But they also discussed kind of a prayer that the *Hermanidad* would have, right, for the health of their children, or the health of the world, or—yeah. So I would put things inside of it that would kind of represent that, but also something that represented that particular station of the cross. And I painted the top of the jars with this red paint, and then put a gold cross on top of it because I had a dream about a gold cross. And—yeah. So when the candles got lit, it was like everything kind of came to life again. Of course they didn't want me to light the candles in the—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: In the gallery?

DELILAH MONTOYA: —in the gallery. So I lit them and then blew them out, so it seemed as though something had happened, right, where you could see the wax that had kind of spilled onto the ground. Alright on that.

So then there was this real push in Santa Fe, because they had never represented any Chicanos in the New Mexico Fine Art Museum. So there was a real push by the community to have a show in the alcoves that represented the Chicano community. They hired Judy Baca to come in and curate the show. So she was coming into town. She had contacted me, saying that she wanted to take a look at my work, right? So I had just finished this piece. And I remember I was sitting there with a group of friends, and Cecilio was there. And Mari Elena [Alvarez] was there also. And I was telling them, like, "Yeah, Judy Baca's going to come in and take a look at my work, and gosh, I would really love for her to see that installation." You know, it was all packed away. [00:34:00] And Mari Elena just shamed Cecilio into, like, "You need to go help her put that up!" [Laughs.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And who is Mari Elena?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mari Elena Alvarez. She's a—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Velez?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Alvarez.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, Alvarez, sorry. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. She, at that time, was working as the editor for the *Albuquerque Journal*, and she was doing the arts, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. And actually, for my thesis show, for my other—my MFA—she did a whole full feature on the work, which was really great.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow. Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. She has always been such a strong supporter of the work, of my work and things that I've done. She shamed him. She just totally shamed—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: [Laughs.] To get him to help you reinstall?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So where did you reinstall it so Judy could see it?

DELILAH MONTOYA: In my house.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: [Laughs.] I mean, where else could I—because I didn't have a studio or anything like that. So we had to pull all the furniture out of the way, we put it up, I got everything working, the candles, put the glass jar up. So when she came to the house, she saw it completely installed, and it made it into the—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Into the show.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Into the show.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So I wanted to ask you a question about that, because I hadn't—somehow, it just hit me. How aware were you of other Chicanas, particularly, who were drawing from the altar-making tradition of home altars, or sort of temporary spiritual *ofrendas*, and melding them with contemporary art world sort of practice of installation art? You know, I'm thinking of Amalia Mesa-Bains.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: You know, who very intentionally describes her work as altar installation. [00:36:01] That it's both honoring and drawing from that Mexican Chicano tradition of *ofrendas* and *altares*, but doing so in a way that is very self-aware of contemporary installation practice, of site-specific work.

So were you thinking along those lines? Or was your motivation to build this altar sort of coming from a different place? From the *Penitente* or from your own family tradition? Was there a family—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Of building altars?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Not really. My mom wasn't an *altarista*. She didn't really build altars. We had crosses around the house, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: But not necessarily building an *altar* or building something like that. That was, like—and I'm trying to think about my grandmother's house. And I don't think that she really did that, either. In Northern New Mexico, they're a little bit different with things. Right? They're very stoic. They're very—well, my grandfather was a *Penitente*.

What I do remember of my grandfather's house, since he had gone blind early on, around his 50s or so, there was a picture over his bed of—I think it was Santa Lucía, right? And she's holding the eyeballs.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. Saint Lucy. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? Yeah, and she's holding these eyeballs, and it's kind of like, I knew my grandfather was blind. And when I was a little girl, I would think, Why does she have my grandfather's eyeballs? [They laugh.] Right? I thought, Why is she holding his eyes like that? Now I know different. But I mean, I think that would be the closest thing that I saw to kind of—like an *altar*, really.

My grandfather's house that he built had three rooms. There was the front room that was the living room, and then right behind it—it was all in a row. [00:38:01] And right behind that there was the bedroom. And then right behind that was the kitchen.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh! And did you have to pass through the bedroom to get from the living room to the kitchen?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, you had to do that. And then what he did later on, was that he built a staircase going up to the attic, right? And the attic was—you know, it wasn't—like, the tin roof. Like, the tin roof was over your head. So you had just, like, a high point, which you couldn't exactly stand up all the way. I mean, I was a kid, I could stand up. But like, a full-grown person couldn't stand up. And they had beds there where the kids could sleep. Yeah, you know? I remember that. We lived right behind a railroad track, so you could feel the train. And the house was built out of adobe. And it was heated by wood.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. My mother talks about how they didn't have any plumbing, so all the water had to be carried in, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And the bathroom was outside.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: I remember my grandfather's *bacín*, right, that he kept right by the bed. [Laughs.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, the chamber pot.

DELILAH MONTOYA: The chamber pot.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: What do you call it? A *bacín*?

DELILAH MONTOYA: A *bacín*.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Huh. V-A-S-I-N?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, I guess.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, I remember that. There was the *bacín*.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. What had your grandfather done for a living before he went blind?

DELILAH MONTOYA: He shoveled coal.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right, he shoveled coal. He also worked in the fields.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And he also grew up in Albuquerque?

DELILAH MONTOYA: No, this was Las Vegas.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Or in—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Las Vegas, New Mexico, yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: This was in Las Vegas, New Mexico. Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. I remember my mom talking about how she never felt poor. They never thought of themselves as being poor. [00:40:01] You know, but she looks back at it and, you know—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Sure. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: How many siblings did your mother have?

DELILAH MONTOYA: She had a total of four. Four siblings.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And you said it was all women, right?

DELILAH MONTOYA: It was all women. My grandmother had—I think she had 12 children. Only four lived.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So that was the infant mortality rate in Las Vegas, New Mexico.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And did your grandfather's employment—was that part of the source of his blindness? Do you know?

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know, there's a lot of talk, discussion of what caused the blindness. But we have to also remember they never went to the doctor's, so it's kind of hard to—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Sure.

DELILAH MONTOYA: —determine how he became blind. Some people say it was syphilis. Some people say that it was from a game that he was playing as a child with fish bones, and the bones got into his eyes, and they just

weakened the eye. And eventually they deteriorated, because he never had strong eyes. Eventually they just deteriorated and he became blind.

You know, so there was a lot of discussion as to what caused his blindness. But, you know, I can't really tell you for sure what that was, because they didn't go to a doctor, you know? They went to *curanderas*, and—you know.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. So did your grandmother then support them once he was blind? Or was he able—

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know, I think at that point, my grandmother was really ill. She passed at like 65, so she couldn't do it. But my mom was able to get him his Social Security. So they were able to live on his Social Security check.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, so—yeah. And he owned the property, he owned that land. So there wasn't a mortgage or anything like that. But—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Is that land still in your family? [00:42:00]

DELILAH MONTOYA: No. No, it's not in my family. My grandfather was illegitimate. His mother was about 47 when she gave birth to him. And his mother had been married once—well, first marriage was when she was coming out of Pojoaque, and they were going over the mountains in a covered wagon, right, because he had—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And what is the name of that town?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Pojoaque, and it's north of Santa Fe.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And he had land in this area Rociada, that's right outside of Vegas, Las Vegas. He was killed by Indians as they were crossing over the mountains.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That was her husband?

DELILAH MONTOYA: That was, yeah, her first husband.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Her first husband, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? And then she married a second time over there in Rociada, right? And then he also died. He got kicked by a horse and he died. And she had children from both of her husbands. And then there was another—I think he was more of a boyfriend than a husband. And they say he just simply ran away. [They laugh.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And that was your grandfather's—oh, it was still not? Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: No. And then my grandfather came along, and they say his father was Charles Iffeld. And Charles Iffeld was a peddler that would go all around the area peddling pots and pans, and things like that. Eventually he became very wealthy. He became a wealthy trader in the area, well-known in Las Vegas. Like, the auditorium was built in his name. I mean, that sort of thing. And I remember talking to Pola Lopez, right? [00:44:01] And I was telling him, "You know, they say my grandfather was Charles Iffeld." And she goes, "Half of Las Vegas, New Mexico's grandfather is Charles Iffeld!" [They laugh.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay, then.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Alright, Charles! [Laughs.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow. So she—so your grandmother had your father when she was 47?

DELILAH MONTOYA: My grandfather, yeah. So my great-grandmother had my grandfather—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, your grandfather, sorry. Right. Your mother's father, when she was 47.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, at 47.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: With, allegedly, Charles Iffeld. Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. Right. But she never did say who the father was. But although they did say that my grandfather had great credit at his store.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, really?

DELILAH MONTOYA: He could go in there and order almost anything.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So that would suggest—mm-hmm [affirmative]. What was your grandfather's name?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Reyes García.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So you're probably wondering, Well, where did the Montoya come from, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah, at some point I was going to ask you. [They laugh.]

DELILAH MONTOYA: Well, while we're on the subject.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: The Montoya came from my mother's mother. And she was a Montoya.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. So your mother is Amalia García.

DELILAH MONTOYA: García. And García's her father's last name. Reyes García.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah.

DELILAH MONTOYA: We don't know where the García came from.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. Right, because it was Ilfeld's—so his mother wasn't García?

DELILAH MONTOYA: She took the name García, but we're not too sure whether or not—was that a maiden name?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Was it from one of the other husbands?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: So where did the García come from, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So we're not too sure where that came from. And then so I picked up Montoya, because one, we know for sure that we're Montoya, because that was my mother's mother's maiden name.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: What was her first name? [00:46:00]

DELILAH MONTOYA: Lucianna Montoya—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Lucianna Montoya.

DELILAH MONTOYA: —García, right.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. So that was your mother's mother.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. And so I picked up the last name of Montoya, because my feeling was, is I really didn't know my father's family because, you know, his father died, right, when he was three. So what do I know about the Merrimans? I don't know Merrimans, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: It was, like, then the Garcías, where did the García come from? We don't know who the Garcías are, really.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: I see.

DELILAH MONTOYA: But we know who the Montoyas were. So I decided to pick up the last name of Montoya.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: When did you make that choice, that decision?

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know, that was done in the '80s. Yeah, about '88, '89. And I found out that it's really an easy process to change your name, so I just legally went ahead and changed my name to Montoya.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And before that you were Delilah Merriman?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Deedee.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Deedee Merriman.

DELILAH MONTOYA: [Laughs.] Right. So yeah, no, and—you know, my baptism—well, my birth name is Delilah. But when I was a kid, they would just call me Deedee. But I really like the name Delilah better than Deedee. And, you know, Delilah Montoya sounds really good with—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: It's a good name.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: "I know of a great artist named Delilah Montoya." [They laugh.]

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know? So it's that whole idea of self-invention, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Sure. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. And you know, of course this all comes from the—we were talking about the *Saints & Sinners*, and that large installation.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So when Judy curated it in, we needed more work so that we could fill the alcoves out. So what I decided to do was to take the glass jars and then superimpose them against New Mexico landscapes, and the landscapes that begin to kind of suggest what was inside the jar themselves. [00:48:03] So I went out and started photographing all these different landscapes with a four by five camera, using transparency. And what I did was, I created Cibachromes. So they're all Cibachrome prints.

So just like, one story with that is, I had decided that what I wanted to do was go up onto the West Mesa and photograph these telephone lines that were going way far back in the distance. You know, you would just kind of like—and they all looked almost like crosses to me, that were just kind of like, you know, running way in the distance. And the Mesas are really flat, right? But they're up high. And I had a four by five, and I had a tripod, and I needed to get this up onto the West Mesa. And I had gone to my boyfriend and asked him to help me do this, because I wanted to get it as the sun was coming down, so I could get this really wonderful sunset. I knew the picture that I wanted, right? So I go to him, and I ask him, "Hey, come on, help me with this." Right? "Can you carry the four by five for me?" And he told me, "No." He told me no! [They laugh.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Was this Cecilio?

DELILAH MONTOYA: No, this was—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, a different boyfriend.

DELILAH MONTOYA: A different boyfriend.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And he told me no. I'm, like—[gasps]. And I thought, I don't need him. I can do it myself. I don't need him to carry it. I'll just do it myself. So I just grabbed that—and this is all borrowed equipment anyway, right? So I grabbed the four by five, I grabbed the tripod. I go over there to the West Mesa, and I have to climb up the Mesa to get the shot. And I grabbed them both, and I start going up the Mesa. And all of a sudden I realized I can't do it. [They laugh.] And it was really hard! [00:50:00] So I thought, Well, if I relay it, I can do it. Right? Because I can't carry both of them together.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: I see. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: So I dropped the tripod, and I started relaying up the Mesa. Then I dropped the four by five, and then I would go back to the tripod and then I would relay it further, right? I would just keep going back and forth, back and forth, back and forth, like that. And I got all the way to the top of the Mesa. And I got it to the

point that I wanted it. The sun was almost ready to come down. But I had scrambled, I fired off the shots that I needed, right, did multiples of it. And I felt really good about myself. And then I realized, like, The sun is going down.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And you're on the Mesa.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And I'm on the Mesa. And this is borrowed equipment. And I need to get this thing back down the Mesa. Fortunately, it was June, so you had these long twilights, right? So I thought, Well, pack it up. Let's start relaying it back. And as I'm relaying it back, I'm looking back over there. And there's this pack of *coyote*, and I can see their little ears, and they're watching me going back and forth like that, as I [laughs] realize this thing.

And at first I was a little scared. I was, like, Oh, man, I need to break up that pack. I grabbed rocks, and I started throwing rocks at them, you know, see if I couldn't break up the pack. Nope, nope, nope. They were just happy. And I would run this way and they'd go over this way, and I would run this way and they would go—and they were just following me, like, What is she doing? And all I could do is just try to ignore them. And I got down the Mesa, I got everything into the car. Everything was fine. But I've always kind of laughed about that little pack of *coyotes*, like, She has got to be the craziest woman we've ever seen! [Laughs.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: It was all for the shot. Wow. Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. But that's one of the glass jars that was put up over there, at the *Saints & Sinners* installation. [00:52:01]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So were those your first landscape photographs? Because now you're well-known for *Trail of Thirst*, right?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Oh, that's right, yeah. Yeah. I would say.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So this obviously predates that by quite a long time.

DELILAH MONTOYA: It does, yeah. It really does, it predates it. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah, I didn't think about that, but that's true.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: By at least 20 years? 15 years?

DELILAH MONTOYA: I would say that was done in—was it '92? Let's see, when did—1990? I think that was done in—what did Judy call that? I'd have to look, once again, at my resume.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: But *Spiritualities and* something-or-other.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, but—so that was, yeah, '90. And the *Sed: Trail of Thirst* was done in '04. So 14 years, yeah. Yeah, 14 years. I didn't think about that. And that was all done in color. The ones with the glass jar series.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: That was all color.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Color photography, mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. Cibachromes.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right, that's right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Nobody ever does Cibachromes anymore. It's kind of, like, What's a Cibachrome? I mean, so many of the processes are gone.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Thanks to digital?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Thanks to digital. And Cibachrome was just really nasty stuff too.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, really?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Oh, my gosh, yes. I was processing Cibachrome for Biomedical Communications, and they

didn't have good ventilation.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: I remember getting a headache so bad. I mean, I was crawling on the floor, because it was just—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Toxic.

DELILAH MONTOYA: It was awful. And I went to a—you know, just one of these school—what do you call it, clinics? [00:54:00]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: With a headache. And I think they gave me some Demerol, put me to sleep. And I woke up in the morning, the headache was gone, which was good. But my eyes all got bloodshot.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow. From the powerful effect of the Demerol? Or from the chemicals of the Cibachrome? Or both?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Both. [They laugh.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Because something was going on in that brain, right. You know, it just kind of—yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: But the nevertheless, you did Cibachrome again [laughs] when you did the *Saints & Sinners* landscapes.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. But I was more—[laughs] listen to me: But I was really careful, I didn't inhale! [They laugh.] But I did it one more time. I went for those Cibachromes one more time. Yeah. But yeah, Cibachromes was nasty. It was just a—yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So did you document this installation? Are there photos of the installation?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah, there are photos of the installation. I think it's actually up online.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, a lot of that early work is up online. I need to put more of my current work up there.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So what next, then?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Okay, well then after that—after that, you know, I actually left Medical Illustrations because I received a CAA Fellowship. And my daughter at that time, she was in her first year of college.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow. So this is when you went to Cal State LA.

DELILAH MONTOYA: To Cal State LA, yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: We sort of started there this morning. Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. That's when I left and went to Cal State LA. You know, I had already worked 10 years as a medical photographer. And actually, it was very interesting working as a medical—and there again, you know, I'm looking at the cameras.

By that point, the digital camera is starting to come into play, right? We're starting to see that happen. I'm beginning to realize that it's just going to be a lot easier for the doctors to photograph, do their own themselves. [00:56:06] I'm thinking to myself, you know, I need to jump out of this field, because it's not even going to be viable anymore. You know?

So that was part of the reason why I was thinking, like, Maybe what I should do is try to get into some sort of teaching. So if that opportunity opened, I'm going to go through that door. And that was the CAA Fellowship.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. While at the same time adjusting your practice, depending on the new technologies that become available.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: It seems like you've always been sort of with that curve. Realizing that what you've been doing might quickly become obsolete, so then mastering the next thing. Is that an accurate representation?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Exactly, yeah. Oh, my gosh, it was always so very painful. Okay, so this is—I remember at [Medical Illustrations -DM], we got in what was called a slide film recorder.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: A slide film recorder. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. So what you were able to do was to take slides, digitize them, and get a file out of it. And this was prior to Windows. Okay? Everything had to be done with DOS. So DOS means that you had to type in the codes in order to run the film recorder. So I had to learn DOS, and I'm like—I'm busy trying to learn DOS. And you have to type really accurately, because if you don't, just one wrong keystroke, you know, it's not going to work, right?

I remember we got the film recorder in. I'm desperately trying to get this thing working. It's just not working, and there's something wrong with it. I had to literally call the guy who engineered it. And we were working—I was talking to him, and he's giving me codes to type in, and I'm not as fast as he thinks I should be. And he's, like, "Get somebody on the phone that knows how to run a computer!" [00:58:03]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? And I tell him, "I can do this." I just kind of got that phone in my ear as close as I could, and I just concentrated as hard as I could to make sure that I got all the keystrokes that he wanted me to put in there. And we got the job done. And we actually had to move some jumpers.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: What does that mean?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Like, in the back of the film recorder, there's these little pegs, right? I had to move the pegs to get them into the right position so the film recorder would work.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? And so we got it. Got the film recorder to work. We had to download fonts, I mean, there was all these things that had to get done. I remember during that period of time, my sister called me. Paige. And she was always on the leading edge of whatever—like stocks and bonds, and things like that. She calls me up and she goes—I'm desperately trying to learn DOS, okay? And she calls me up and she calls me, "Delilah, I want you to take everything that you've got. I want you to take your rent money, I want you to take your food money, I want any kind of money you can get your hands on, and put it onto this new startup company." And I go, "What?" "Yeah." I go, "What's the name of that startup company?" "Microsoft." [They laugh.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Did you take her advice?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That's hilarious.

DELILAH MONTOYA: I'm going, "Microsoft? What is Microsoft?" She goes, "It's an operating system, and it's going to change the world." I'm thinking she's nuts! [Laughs.] I mean, and just in that tone, because it's like, "What, you don't know? It's an operating"—and I wasn't even sure what an operating system was. Right? Because I'm still trying to learn DOS. So this is what I'm talking about, the technology that was happening so quickly at that time. [01:00:01] Right? So who cares about DOS now?!

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. Right. Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, well, she did. She's doing okay right now. [They laugh.] No, I was still trying to learn DOS!

ADRIANA ZAVALA: You didn't have time to invest your rent money and food money in Microsoft stock. Wow. So you've had an interesting relationship to technology.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. Yeah, that's the relationship to it. So I think the thing is, is that—and that's one of the reasons why I started seeing the digital technology is really going to shift everything. It's that period of time that I actually saw the first image come up on a computer. It was a TARGA file.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: A TARGA file?

DELILAH MONTOYA: It was a TARGA file. Right? [Cell phone buzzes.] So a TARGA file—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That's someone's phone.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Okay. Alright, so the TARGA file would stretch.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: I mean, that was one of the things—and I knew it was just a matter of time before they would figure out how to keep it from stretching like that, so it would stretch its borders. But what we were able to do is take that TARGA file and transfer it through email. When I saw that, we took—you know, through our email accounts. And email accounts had just started, had come on, right? So we uploaded the TARGA file on one end of the office, and then emailed it to myself to see whether or not it would open up. And it was there, and it was a full image on a computer.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And I thought, That's it. Once they start transferring these images like that, the whole thing is just going to change. The whole world is just going to change.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. No more darkroom.

DELILAH MONTOYA: No more darkroom, you know, no more chemical processes. [01:02:00] And this was right on the cutting edge of it, so it was still there, and they were still having to use it. But I—

[END OF TRACK montoy19_1of2_sd_track09.]

DELILAH MONTOYA: —also knew that it was done.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: How did you feel about that? I mean, was that a new horizon? Was it—

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know, what it was was I knew that I had to know about it. That if I was going to survive, if I was going to be viable, if I was going to understand that new world, that I had to get on board and really learn what it was, and use it, you know? Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So a lot of artists—maybe of your generation, I don't know, maybe a little older—have often sort of dug their heels in and said that these new technologies are going to change the quality, the aesthetic quality, you know, the decisive moment. How have you felt about that? Or have you—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Well, you have to remember, I was a printmaker.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right, and if you think about printmakers, what we do is, we transfer the image onto different surfaces. And we use the different processes to do that, right? To make those transfers. So for me, I was looking at this, I just saw this as a different process. You know, this is just yet another process that I can learn how to do, to transfer images and it would be open up kind of like a new vocabulary for me. Since printmaking just took so much time to get a photographic image onto a paper surface, onto different surfaces, this process would probably speed up what it was that I could be doing, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: I also remember the first Photoshop. We got the first Photoshop at Medical Illustrations, and I was the person that had to try to figure out how to use it. [00:02:01] And I remember it had no layers. Photoshop 1 had no layers. All it did was, you could brighten it and darken it. Right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And you had a cutting tool, but it had no memory to it. So if you made a bad mark, you just had to revert to the beginning. So either you did it with the first, or you had to keep trying to get what you wanted, until it got right. And I thought to myself, God, this really takes a lot of time. Really, I don't know why anybody would want to use this. Why don't you just print it out and cut it out?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right, what you had been doing much earlier.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. It would just be so much easier to—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Print it, cut it, collage it.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Exactly. You know? I was like, Why—I mean, other than to transfer it. You know, transferring would be so much easier, right? You know, from one computer to the other. But eventually, what we started seeing was the upgrades. And as the upgrades came—and prior to Photoshop, what did they use to use? There was another program that we were using for making slides. It was called—I'm trying to remember—well, I know the architects, they still use—what is the one that the architects use?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: CAD?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. AutoCAD. But there was another program prior to AutoCAD that was very similar to AutoCAD. But you know, AutoCAD was kind of complex in the way that—because what it's using is, it's using point by point, right? So you have to kind of learn how to use the tools so that you can get point by point. So it's a raster. We rasterized the other one, yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow. [Laughs.] You're way ahead of me on the technology.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Well, yeah, because what they're doing is, like, [vector-based -DM] point-to-point. So it's more like a mathematical equation. [00:04:00] The other way which you do with Photoshop, it's not mathematical, but what you're doing is you're using pixel.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right, okay. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Askey. The other one's more like an ASCII.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: How do you spell Askey? A-S-K-E-Y?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, I think that's it. [ASCII].

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: It's more like an ASCII file.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. So given your sensibility as a printmaker, these technologies have just provided an opportunity for you to get the image onto whatever surface.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. Right. And you can start doing a lot more with it. And a lot of the Photoshop and a lot of that technology has embedded—like, more of a printmaker's language is in there. So I felt like I could really understand what was going on with it a lot quicker than a photographer could understand with it. Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So I've read some pieces about your work, and about you. For example, I'm thinking of the short essay that Chon Noriega wrote about your work for the *Phantom Sightings* catalog.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Now I have a deeper understanding of kind of where he's coming from, right? And he talks about sort of your early work in photo documentary, you know, thinking back to the photojournalistic work you did in Omaha, or to *The Mexicans of Nebraska*.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Right.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: But then he also talks about how you're very deeply a conceptual photographer, manipulating images. So it seems like these technologies have really allowed you to sort of grow and expand and exploit all their possibilities to create images that bring forward the ideas that interest you. Is that an accurate—I mean, those are all my words, but—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right, they are, you know.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: I really want to hear you sort of—you know.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: I'm just sort of running with it. But it's interesting to hear you talk about your relationship to these technologies, and the possibilities that they've allowed you to—[00:06:08]

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Actually, yeah, there was—yeah. I've always kind of worked with technology. You know, if you think about what I did with *The Mexican Nebraskans*, you know, just cueing up sound, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. Because that was a slideshow. Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: To slides. It was a slideshow. And it was really kind of interesting, because I was pretty proud of it once I got it done, you know? And we put it together for the Cinco de Mayo that was happening there at the Pig Palace. [Laughs.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: What was Pig Palace?

DELILAH MONTOYA: The Pig Palace at the stockyards.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: [Laughs.] Right? It was an auditorium.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And they gave me a room where I could show the slideshow. And we had a scheduled time when it was showing. And it filled up, standing room only. And it was—you know, after I showed the slideshow, people were crying. They had never seen their own history. You know? For them, it was just like, really—it was amazing to see that, right? Because it had never been discussed.

And just at the end of it, the state representative or senator came in, you know, just to make a show. And you know, I was very naïve, I had no idea of what he was doing. I thought he really came to—he missed the slideshow. I felt bad that he had missed the slideshow, right? And so I thought I was being very kind, and I told him, I go, "That's okay, I'll play it for you right now." [They laugh.] In front of all of these people, standing room only, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: I see this look on his face, and I can't read the look. I just really don't get, well, why he was stuttering. [They laugh.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: He had timed his entrance exactly how he wanted it. [00:08:00] And there you were.

DELILAH MONTOYA: [Laughs.] Feeling bad, sorry for him that he didn't see my slideshow. Right? So he said, "Well, I'm sorry, right now I can't because of my time. But I will come back into town and schedule a time when you can show the slideshow to me."

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And that's what I said: "Right."

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah. Needless to say, that didn't happen.

DELILAH MONTOYA: It did. [Laughs.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, it did! Whoa, you are tenacious! Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Because, you know, as he said—"Right," that's what I told him. He says, "Well, I'll schedule time to come and see this." And I looked at him, and I said, "Right." And I just turned my back and started unplugging, because that's the way I really felt. I was like, "Yeah, no, you're not going to come back. That's fine, go do what you need to do." I mean, you know? Apparently, he must have just kind of remembered that.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Because I was ready to write him off. You know, "So what?" You know?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So he actually came back to see the show and learn about his constituents.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: He must have been very embarrassed if he remembered to do that, right? [Laughs.] He must have been embarrassed. Yeah. So, you know, the idea in terms of technology, and my work and my growth

in terms—you know, that's something that has always happened, and I've always felt the need to be on top of. There's times where it just got over my head, you know, and just either was—because I'm not great at math.

So when we started seeing the—where once again, you had to go in there and start writing code, I really hated that. Especially Flash. Flash, there's a program called Director, in Flash. And they were using a kind of JavaScript. And they wanted me to teach it. [00:10:03] And, yeah, I was going, like, "Oh, my God." I mean, so I would just kind of sit there and go through manual after manual, trying to figure out how the scripting was working, and how to move objects, and how to animate. I spent hours trying to just move the little stupid circle [laughs] on the computer, right? This was back in, I would say, 2002, 2003. This was before the smartphones, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: This is just on the cusp. And you see the cellular phones are beginning to come into play. And I remember they wanted me to—over at—Suzanne Bloom wanted me to teach Director. And at one point, as I was—because I had done a little bit of work in Director, and I could do—make some of the functionality. But it was really getting way out of hand for me. And I realized that either I'm going to be a scripter, or I'm going to be a photographer and an artist.

And I thought, No, this is who I am. I put too much energy into being a photographer and an artist. I really don't want to take all of my time to write script. That's not who I am. And then I began to kind of watch. I realized, like they were—like, Director was being shelved. And I went to Suzanne, I go, "Suzanne, they're going to start shelving Director. Do you realize that"—it was called Micromedia—"just got bought up by Apple?" I go, "They're going to shelve it. There's no reason why we should even think about"—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative], you teaching it.

DELILAH MONTOYA: —"me teaching it, because it's going to get shelved." And she just kind of like, looked at me. I told her, "The best that we can do for our students is teach them how to learn it, because it's going to change. [00:12:05] All of it's going to change, and it's going to change continually." Because at this point, it's moving so fast, I can't even keep up with it.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And was this at the University of Houston already?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Because you started there in 2001.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, it was at the University of Houston. I had taught at Cal State LA for two years.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. And you were teaching Art History there.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Art History, and taking care of the gallery. And then I got a—you know, that position gave out. Right? So I came back home and started looking for another job. I was picked up over at Hampshire College, doing like a part-time teaching there. So I kind of got in my car and drove all the way over there—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Over to Massachusetts.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Massachusetts, you know? And I was staying at Leeds. There's a little town called Leeds, right? It was right outside of Northampton, right? I had a position at Hampshire, and then I got picked up by Smith College. So I taught at Smith College. And for a little bit of time, I was teaching both at Hampshire and Smith College.

I was also just beginning to work with the computers, and kind of still trying to get my chops into Photoshop. And Photoshop now had layers. And it was starting to become a little bit more viable. So there's some early work that I was doing in terms of image-making, with computer files, right?

And when I was in California, since I had been introduced to a lot of these really great artists, I was taking pictures of them all. So I did a whole body of work that was called *To Be Invisible*. So a lot of the images—and I had people holding their hands in front of their faces, like this, because thinking of the idea of what it is to be invisible, to have that kind of barrier. [00:14:00] I was also thinking about—and something I never finished, really—I wanted to take the hands and turn them into masks, right, and just kind of do a lot of hand work. But my life just got out of control, and I never got that finished the way that I really wanted it.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So those are portraits of artists that you met in LA? Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: There's a lot of them in there. Frank Romero was in there, Leo Limón, Gronk, Barbara Carrasco, Laura Aguilar—you know, the listing just keeps on going on and on. A lot of the LA artists are in that

series. Along with my students, you know. I took pictures of my students as well.

So then I was digitizing some of those, because they had a scanner there, so I was kind of learning how to use the scanners. I was digitizing, then I was going in and manipulating the images, and just trying to kind of like—you know, I was teaching myself. I was learning while I was there. That's when I did the *Guadalupano*.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay, mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: The *Guadalupana*. There's two versions of it. There's the *Guadalupano*, which is without any of the manipulation on it. And then with the manipulation—you know, like if I toned the back, background, and such—that's *Guadalupana*.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Okay? Yeah. So the *Guadalupano* is, you know, about the Guadalupan-oh [ph], the person. You know. And the *Guadalupana* is about the icon itself.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So when the icon becomes embellished, right, then it's the *Guadalupana*.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. And that's you, using different Photoshop technologies to—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Or I'm toning the background.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Toning the background, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, so there's a certain amount of manipulation on that.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. [00:16:00] And so the *Guadalupano*—is that the mural we were talking about offline before, of the prisoner in the Albuquerque Penitentiary? [Detention Center awaiting trial - DM]

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So it's really focusing on him.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. The *Guadalupano* is focusing on him. The *Guadalupana* is that full-scale mural that was [exhibited -DM] in France. Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. How are you doing?

DELILAH MONTOYA: I am—I'm doing okay. What time is it?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: We're going to take a pause, decide if to continue or to pick up tomorrow.

[END OF TRACK montoy19_1of2_sd_track10.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Today is Saturday, August 3rd. This is Adriana Zavala interviewing Delilah Montoya for the Smithsonian Archives of American Art. We're at Delilah's studio at the Sanitary Tortilla Factory. This is day two of the oral history, and this is now card number two.

So Delilah, let's pick up where we were. Do you want to talk about the *Guadalupana* series?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Well, the *Guadalupana* series actually started off—I was doing that in—okay, so the *Guadalupana* series was conceived for the international show of *Ida y Vuelta: 12 New Mexican Artists*. The *Guadalupana* has been exhibited extensively as—well, as included in two traveling exhibitions: *Only Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self*, that was hosted by the International Center of Photography, and *Imagenes e Historia: Chicana Altar-Inspired Art*, which was actually hosted at Tufts University. It has been published and reviewed in many, many journals, publications. One in particular, *Secrets of Survival* by Sandra Matthews, *Behold Their Natural Affinities*, Victor Alejandro Sorrel, and ["Ojo de la Diosa: Becoming Divine in Delilah Montoya's Photography" -AZ/DM] by Asta Kuusinen, also in the *Chicano and Chicana Art Critical Anthology*. [00:02:00] It was reviewed at that. It's also housed currently at the Museum of Fine Art in Santa Fe, and also there's a larger version at Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts. That was actually the original installation.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That was in France in the *Ida y Vuelta* show, right?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, exactly. Basically, it was designed so that it kind of spoke to the 17th century easel painting that was actually there in Rodez.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative], of the Virgin of Guadalupe.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Of the Virgin—the Guadalupe in their basilica. So when I started thinking about this, one of the things that I really knew that I wanted to do was think about the Guadalupe going in the other direction. In other words, she's our New World entity, right? Our New World icon. And now she's traveling back, you know, to Europe. It's not really traveling back, it's traveling to Europe, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. You know, I'm getting some mic interference. Let me re-clip here, just a second.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Okay.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: I'm going to pause.

[Tape stops, restarts.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay, let's try again.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Delilah, one, two three.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay, yeah, I think that's good.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Is that better?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Okay. So what I wanted to do was to take it to the Old World—and I was really clear about, in my mind, that it was the Old World—to France, as this American, you know, genesis. And, you know, I wanted to begin to talk about all the things that she represented, right? And the main focus was her position in terms of colonizing, right? [00:04:00] And why she was so important, and why does she still resonate with the colonial peoples, the colonized peoples of the Americas?

So one of the things that I began to realize is that she wasn't—you know, we know that she came through Tepeyac, and that her apparition came on the top of the Temple Tonantzin, so we know this. And it's because of that kind of syncretism—and of course I'm very, very interested in these syncretic acts that happened during the colonization. But what I became really aware of, it wasn't—so she was an image. You, know, she impressed herself on the *Tilma*. And so one could even think about that as being the first photographic image, because she—you know, according to myth, she was impressed onto the fabric. And then the *Tilma* was very important too, because the *Tilma* was the sacred cloth as well.

So I began to think about that. And I thought about how the *Tilma* was worn. So one could begin to think about that as being a second skin. And then I realized that she's still being worn on the skin, on the backs, right? Generally it's men. Generally—well, with the first time—way that she was first being used, as a tattoo, of course, was within the prison systems of the United States. So we see a lot of the Guadalupe tattooed on the backs of prisoners.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Can you talk about why prisoners put her on their back?

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know, I know that there's—some people say that they put her on their back as an act of trying to ward off people from stabbing them in the back. [00:06:03] Which, you know, I really didn't see that.

And the reason I said that is because if you begin to think about history, and you begin to think about how important she was, and how important it was and how important it was for her to be worn in the Nahuatl practice, you know, I began to realize there was kind of a collective consciousness. And I think that it had more to do with the collective consciousness than it had to do with trying to protect themselves. Because they still got stabbed in the back, I mean, you know, they got shot in the back. It really didn't stop anything. But it was that act of wearing.

And I thought about the collective consciousness as being something like a traffic jam or a traffic pattern. So people are going down the road, and just kind of think about history, and the way customs are, going down the road smoothly. And then all of a sudden, there is a crash, and people slow down, right? Then the crash goes away, but people are still slowing down at that crash, that site. And I thought this wearing of the Guadalupe is kind of part of that slowdown. People don't know why they're still slowing down there, they don't know why they're still wearing her. But it seems to be the proper thing to do at that particular point in time. Right?

So when I began to think about it that way, I thought, That's what I want to do. I want to photograph people wearing her as tattoos on their skin, as the second skin, you know. And thinking about it as the second skin. And so I started contacting tattoo parlors and I started talking to as many people as I could.

And it was good old Cecilio, you know, he showed up again, [they laugh] as he always did. He showed up, and he says at that time he was going into the prisons. [00:08:00] At that time he was going into the prisons, he was working for the *consulado de México*, and he would go into the prisons because the Mexican nationalists, you know, they were going to be deported or whatever. You know. So the Mexican government was providing a certain amount of translation for them, and things like that.

And so what he did was, he started talking to the counselors there to see if there was any Guadalupe tattoos. And there's one particular counselor that says, "Do we have Guadalupe tattoos!" [Laughs.] You know? So that's how I got in contact with Felix Martínez.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: He's the man who appears—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yes, he's the man who appears in the *Guadalupano*. And then once I start working the back, and once I start elaborating with the Guadalupe herself, then I call it the *Guadalupana*. So there's a kind of distinction between those two images that way.

So, you know, back to the idea of the colonial, and wearing her, and thinking about how she many times represented hope, and that transition. But also with that was the violence of colonialism, right? So I was really kind of thinking about that violence. And particularly since I was able to get inside of a detention center, able to photograph Felix Martínez, I was able to just kind of like, narrow in my statement, talking about these things as I brought the image to Europe. You know?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Where we could begin to talk about colonialism. I had paid Felix \$50 to photograph his back. And I told him, When I come back, I'll bring pictures so that you can see how it's being used, and I'll pay you another \$50. And he was good with that.

So by the time that I came back from France and I got hold of the counselor, the counselor says, "Well, I have some really bad news. He was killed inside of the detention center." [00:10:01]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? So at that point, he kind of told me—I knew he was in for a drive-by shooting, and the counselor told me, Well, you know, the police really didn't think that he did it, but they determined that he probably knew who did, because he was a *veterano*. So they picked him up on it, on the charge, so that he would finger whoever did it.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: What is a *veterano*?

DELILAH MONTOYA: A *veterano* is somebody who has been in prison for a long time already. So he had just gotten out. This was, like, some of his first free moments out, right? So they picked him back up again. So the upshot was that he had—his wife at that time had just had a baby, and he decided that he wanted to be with his daughter. He wanted to watch her grow. He didn't want to be inside of the jail, in the prison anymore, so he decided to go ahead and finger the shooter. And they took him out.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. So, you know, it was at this point I began to realize that—or think about how these theories and these ideas, they truly had consequences.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know? It was still working its way out. Yeah, that was still there.

I did that while I was at Hampshire College.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay. Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? So that piece was done during the time that I was teaching at Hampshire College. And Hampshire had some actually really great equipment there, and I was able to print everything out at Hampshire College.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So the larger-scale version of the mural you printed at Hampshire College.

DELILAH MONTOYA: I did. Yeah. I did. Twice, actually, I printed it there. And I did it on Forte paper, which is a Hungarian paper that is no longer being manufactured and made. But the reason that I liked the Hungarian paper was because it was heavy on silver. [00:12:01]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So there was a lot of silver in that, in that piece. Eventually, I have to say that that piece has become more or less my hallmark, you know?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So it's the body of work that you're perhaps the best known for?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right, it's one—yeah. I would say that was probably the—well, you know, the *Sacred Heart* images were pretty well-known. They were picked up by the Smithsonian early on. That was Helen Lucero.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Helen Lucero?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, the curator.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: She was curating at the Smithsonian at that time. And she was—you know, it was really thoughtful and it was wonderful that she picked up five pieces out of the *Sacred Heart*.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow. Okay. So those are in the Smithsonian collection?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. Those are in the Smithsonian collection. And so after that, I left Hampshire College, started teaching at Smith College for I would say two—I was two years at Hampshire—trying to remember how that worked. And then I taught another two years at Smith. So I was actually—there was one year I was teaching at Smith and Hampshire at the same time. Then I finished a year off at Smith. The visiting gave out. So then I started looking for another job, right? I went back to Albuquerque. Actually, at that point I did *Guadalupe en Piel*.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So with that piece, what I started doing was just kind of elaborating a little bit more on the Guadalupe, and thinking about the idea of the Guadalupe being worn. And I was also trying to learn the digital programs as well. So I decided what would be interesting to do is, Can I do a body rollout? [00:14:05] Because I was thinking about the Xipe Totec, and the way in which Tonantzin was part of that Xipe Totec, right? And how the *Tilma* was worn to represent Tonantzin. And the sacrificial—what do you call it, I guess you would call them victims, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, sure. Human sacrifice?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, what they were doing. They were flayed?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Flayed, yeah. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: So then the woman would wear the *Tilma*, she was flayed. The male would wear her skins—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And the embodiment of Xipe Totec. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. And then he was flayed and then the priest would wear both of the skins. So what it was was you're putting them together, and that was empowerment. So it was the female and the male energies, right, to deliver empowerment. And I began to realize, Well, that's why it seemed to be right that the men, the prisoners, male prisoners, were wearing Tonantzin.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, I see. So they're sort of taking on both sources of energy?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Exactly. And that's the empowerment.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know, as they wear the female Tonantzin with their male bodies, then you get—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So when they talk about empowerment and protection and all that, that's the protection.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? So I began to kind of think about that, and it created a piece called *Guadalupe en Piel*.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And there you were using digital technology?

DELILAH MONTOYA: I was using digital technology, exactly.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative], in toning the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe, I think you mentioned the other day.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. That I did with the silver gelatin. So I was working with the silver gelatin—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: —so that was toned. [00:16:01] But then when I took it to the computer, then I could colorize it. Right, and also you start kind of straightening things out, and make it feel like a piece of flayed skin, like you saw the front and the backs, and all of that. Just kind of rolled it out. I had a male version, with the Guadalupe on the back. And then I had a female version, and the female version was actually Laura Aguilar.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, I've never seen that image. Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. It was Laura Aguilar. And what I did was I drew the Guadalupe on her back. I have some really wonderful little Polaroids of that.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. Was the male version always the image that you took of Felix Martínez?

DELILAH MONTOYA: No, this was another—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Then you did other—okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: This was another one. So I actually have a whole collection of different men with the Guadalupe on their backs. So then, after that, during that period of time I was looking for another position.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Can I just pause and ask you: Is there anything you would want to say about your time in New England, in terms of the community you had, in terms of how being there—versus in the Southwest—shaped your work? I mean, if it's not relevant, we can pass over it, but—

DELILAH MONTOYA: No, actually, that's a really great point. When I was in New England—you know, when I first got there, I was really fairly frustrated, because I was used to this expansion of space that you have here in New Mexico and in the West. And in New England, everything is just, like, right in your face. And I remember thinking, like, Nobody can see anything here. You just can't see anything, you know? And I just felt kind of stifled. And then when I realized, Wait a minute, change my vision and start looking up close. And I realized there was a lot of things to see. But it was at a shorter distance. Then I could start seeing things. [00:18:01]

I thought Western Massachusetts was really interesting. I know that I had a little bit of problems there, because they didn't think I behaved properly, right, as a woman. I remember a couple of times, I was at like a FedEx place, trying to get some work shipped out, and people were kind of ignoring me, you know? So I just got loud, and, "Hey!" You know? And they—this woman comes up to me, and she goes, "We don't behave like that here." I'm like, "What are you talking"—you know, I'm just like, "That's the way we behave."

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. "Well, you've been ignoring me, so"—[They laugh.]

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. I just thought you didn't see me.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Then I realized—you know, at that point I realized I was in a very different type of culture. And I remember the other thing is the way they used the peripheral vision was very different, you know? I became really aware of that. People had this whole idea of like, that there was a certain amount of their space. And they get really upset if you got a little bit too close into their space, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: I remember this one time I was, like, waiting for some coffee, or something like that. And I used my peripheral vision, because that's what—I think it's a very native thing. I really wasn't aware of it, but we use our peripheral vision. We look through our peripheral vision, right? And I notice this one woman. I stepped in—it was kind of a cramped place, I stepped in, and she stepped back. And so I just assumed that she was still looking for something, or whatever so I stepped in front, because I saw her step back, right? And she got very annoyed with me, you know? And I couldn't figure it out. Then all of a sudden, I realized, Wait a minute, she was telling me something else. [00:20:03]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right, I see.

DELILAH MONTOYA: I thought she—you know, because we watch each other in our peripheral visions, and if somebody steps back, that's an indication that you can step forward. She was telling me, You got too close to me.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. "You're in my personal space."

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. And it was those little nuances, that I was just kind of, like—you know.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Interesting.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, that I found really interesting. And yeah, we do. We use that peripheral vision, if you stop to think about it. So those are some of those things—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. So it's about learning to see in new ways, and becoming aware of different sort of cultural norms.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right, exactly. You know, and just kind of like—yeah, trying to kind of understand those a little bit better. I had an opportunity to go into New York, you know, and I met some really great people in New York. There was this woman who had kind of a studio space. She was teaching at Hampshire. I'm trying to remember what her name was. Kara, I think it was. And she had invited me into her studio where I could stay, and I was able to spend a little bit of time in New York.

One of the things that I wanted to do was kind of connect with the Latino community in New York. So what I had decided was that—I got in contact with En Foco.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And they had just put together this show that still had been traveling. And they were asking me, "Well, do you think maybe we could get it to Hampshire?" And I thought, "Sure, let me see what I can do." So I wrote up a little grant, and I submitted the grant. And we got the money to bring it to the little museum that was there, right? So that's how I met Charles, and I met the people at En Foco. And I met—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Do you remember Charles' last name?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Charles—well, actually he's the founder of En Foco.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. I can find his name.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. And then also, I met—who was the other man? [00:22:04] I'm trying to remember his name. It starts with a G. He was a photographer over there, and he actually let me stay—he had a little studio in New York, and he would let me stay there when I needed a space to stay. [Frank Gampoya -DM]? I haven't thought about it for a while. Let me think about it.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And when you brought the En Foco show to Hampshire, was your work in that show?

DELILAH MONTOYA: No.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: No. That was—yeah, that was a lot of Puerto Rican photographers. It was a whole collection of Puerto Rican photographers. You know, and that's how I kind of got to get introduced to the community.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. So that was really interesting.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And did you have a show with En Foco?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, I did.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, and then also I had some—they published some of my work. Some of the *Sacred Heart* work, actually. That's how I knew about En Foco.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? So yeah, so I was able to make some of those contacts and such while I was out there on the East Coast.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Okay. But then you came back to the Southwest.

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know, yeah, I did. I got really sick out there, I think. I got pneumonia, and it was like, You know what? I can't take this damp cold. [They laugh.] I can't do it.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: It's time to go home.

DELILAH MONTOYA: It's time to go home. And it was during that—I was also looking for a position, and I had been actually offered two positions, and I turned down two positions. I had thought—at that time, I was feeling really desperate, and I was just putting my application everywhere. And there was two places up in Washington state, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And they both offered me a position. And I went out there, and I realized it was too far north. I couldn't do it. You know, I wouldn't be able to take that short day, right? [00:24:07] And there was a damp cold that was there. And I just knew I couldn't do it. So I turned them both down. Yeah. One was at Yakima. Yakima has a really interesting Latino community there.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: It's a big, large community in Yakima. And the other one was in Bellingham, and it was really close to the Canadian border. Yeah. So I decided to go home and give it another year, and try again. You know? This time I drew a line. [Laughs.] I was like, "I'm not going any further north than this line, right here." Because I can't take it. And although I did get a interview at the Chicago Art Institute, and it was kind of, like, "The Chicago Art Institute, I could do."

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. It's a great school.

DELILAH MONTOYA: [Laughs.] I could do that. Yeah. I could—yeah. So eventually what happened is that I was actually offered two positions, one at Kingsville, and another one at Houston.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So I went out to Kingsville. It would have been a good place, but it was so isolated, you know? And one of the things that was very important for me was to be able to get out when I wanted to. And Kingsville was going to be really difficult to—you know, I would have to go to Corpus, and then from Corpus to Houston, and—you know.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So when Houston came in, I thought, No, Houston's easy to get out of. I can—right? And it's a large enough city where I think there would be a lot of opportunity there.

So, you know, looking back, I would say Houston was a good move. It was a good move. I would have loved San Diego, I got real close to San Diego. I would have liked California, but yeah, I couldn't. Those offers didn't come in.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. So now you've been in Houston for almost 20 years?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yes. Almost 20 years. [00:26:00] And I've met a lot of really great people. That's where I met Luis Jiménez.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, was in Houston. He was a colleague at the University of Houston. And they had told

me that Luis Jiménez was teaching over there. And there again, there's that name, came back up again, right? You know, Luis Jiménez.

So I was in a show at—what was it? What was the name? It was in Chicago, and actually the Smithsonian had put together a show in conjunction with Mexico. So the two First Ladies were there. And it was at—I want to say—it's not Tufts. What was the name of that show? Let me see. That was back in, like, 2001. Let's see if I can—if I still have it here in my—I should have it here. Oh, it's probably "Group Shows." Oh, yeah. That was Tufts University in 2001. Well, go ahead— [Arte Latino: Treasures from the Smithsonian American Art Museum. -DM]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Do you want me to pause it?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. Let me just—

[Tape stops, restarts.]

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, so it was at the Terra Museum in Chicago.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And it was a show that was originated by the Smithsonian with their Latino collection. So obviously, Luis Jiménez's *Man on Fire* was there. And they had asked us to stand by our artwork, because the two First Ladies were going kind of do a walkthrough.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Of the U.S. end of Mexico? [00:28:01]

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. So it was Mrs. Fox and Mrs. Bush, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? And there was going to be this luncheon, where we would sit with all these dignitaries and such, which was really great. It was a wonderful moment, really. And I was standing by my work, and right across was Judy Baca. Right? So Judy Baca had curated me into a show. We were just kind of like, talking just a little bit and such. We were on the second floor. I remember there was kind of like, a balcony or a rail, and we looked down, and there was the *Man on Fire*, right? And there was Luis. And he was standing right by his artwork. And Luis looks up, and Judy looks down, and she's like, "Hey, Luis!" And Luis was, like, "Judy! You saved my brother's life!" [They laugh.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And all of this, and I'm just kind of just standing there watching this whole thing. And the next thing I know, Luis is like, "Wait, let me go up there and talk to you!" So he, you know—of course he breaks order, right? We were supposed to be by our pieces.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: No.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: As the First Ladies walked through.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. Right. So he bounces up the stairs and he comes up to talk to Judy. He's thanking her for saving his brother's life, because he was very ill. I guess his brother had called him, he was in California. He lives in California. He sounded really sick on the phone. And Luis had gotten really concerned. So he called up Judy and said, "Judy, this is my brother's address. I want you to go down there and check on my brother." [Laughs.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: I see. Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And she did, and he was really ill. They had to call an ambulance, and take him to the hospital, and all of that.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? So he was thanking her for that.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: So that's when I saw him. And I says, "Ah, Luis, Delilah Montoya. I understand we're colleagues. [00:30:00] Maybe in Houston we can get together and have coffee or tea or something." Right? And

he said yes. And, you know, after that, we were able to get together, and he became a really good friend and good colleague. Yeah. And he was really a source of inspiration, and a mentor. You know, he was a very generous person with a generous heart. Yeah. I'm so—and I knew him for the last four years of his life. Yeah. Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So, are there particular bodies of work that you developed during that period when you were close to Luis that you feel—I mean, there are bodies of work that you did after his death. But, you know, sort of being in community with him, being in Houston, how did that begin to shape your work?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right, you know, I think that—you know, I always had definite ideas of what it is that I wanted to do, right? And Luis was very good at kind of encouraging me, and really giving me just very good practical feedback about the work itself, and also good practical feedback about how to negotiate these politics that I had no idea what to do with. One of the things was, is that I was trying to negotiate the academic politics, and I just felt like as if I was not really getting a good foothold in it. [00:32:00] You know, it felt as though my hire was kind of a strange hire. And you're probably wondering, "What do you mean by that?" Well, you know, when I got hired there, it was very late.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: In the academic—or towards the academic year? Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. In the season, it was. So when I came on board, there was—you know, I could feel a lot of tension.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Interesting.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. I never quite knew what was going on, but I had a feeling there was something that was there, and I didn't know what it was.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And was your position a tenure track position from the beginning?

DELILAH MONTOYA: It was a tenure track. It was a tenure track.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: It was. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. But it came late in the season, and then you sensed that there was some politics.

DELILAH MONTOYA: There was some politics that had probably gotten kind of pulled in. And I was the first Latina that they had ever hired.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And which department were you in?

DELILAH MONTOYA: In the Art department. I was very clear in my mind that I did not want to get put into Cultural Studies, and I did not want to come in as an artist that way. And a lot of my friends as artists, Chicano artists, were coming into Cultural Studies as a Chicano Artist.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Sure.

DELILAH MONTOYA: I mean, it was never Art. And in my mind, it's like, I'm going to come in as an artist in an Art department. And that's what I want.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And Luis was also in the Art department in Houston?

DELILAH MONTOYA: He was also in the Art department. And he got hired on because—you know, and this was just like some of the politics, but he got hired on because there was another Latino artist they did not want to hire.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Interesting.

DELILAH MONTOYA: They were getting kind of pushed into hiring this other Latino artists that were coming through, like, CMAS, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh. What is CMAS?

DELILAH MONTOYA: CMAS is the Center for Mexican American Studies.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, I see. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: And they could go to the provost, and they could ask the provost to hire somebody, or at least make the ask, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: They had brought a Latino artist in their program, and then at the end of the fellowship, they could ask the provost to ask the program if she would open up a line for that. [00:34:08] You know, for that position. And so the Art department came back and said, Well, we want somebody better than that. We want Luis Jiménez.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Got it.

DELILAH MONTOYA: They had already started negotiating to bring Luis Jiménez instead of the other artist. I mean, it was—but, you know, that's politics. Right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Sure.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So I know Luis had a really, really—got a really great offer. So, full-time, came in tenured.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? He only had to work one semester.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow, of each academic year?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Of each academic year.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow. So he really was a star—

DELILAH MONTOYA: He was a star.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: —at that point already. His career had evolved at a point, and the Art department wanted to bring somebody in with a lot of luster, and—

DELILAH MONTOYA: A lot of luster, and definitely not the one that Mexican American Studies wanted.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Interesting. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know. So there was all of these little politics that were going on. So my hire came in. Luis was already there for about four or five years, right, and then my hire came in. So that's why I was saying the politics were really kind of strange.

So I remember talking to Luis, and I was saying, like, "You know, I just don't know how to—I don't think like I'm really reaching anybody. I just don't feel as though—I feel like I'm on a slippery slope here." And he told me, he goes, "Oh, don't worry about it." He says, "Just do your work." [Laughs.] You know? I thought to myself, like, "I can do my work. That I know I can do." So I just went ahead and went full throttle with my own work and the ideas that I had. And I just kept pushing those.

So those ideas were—*Sed: The Trail of Thirst* came out of that period of time, and that was because Orlando Lara, who had just graduated from Stanford—and I had been talking out at Stanford, I had a couple of—[Yvonne] Yarbrow-Bejarano had brought me out to Stanford. [00:36:25] And he had heard my talk. By that time, I had completed the *Guadalupano* and certainly was talking about that. And he got in contact with me when he came back from Houston. And he wanted to—like, "How do we do work together?" You know?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Orlando Lara?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So he heard you speak at Stanford, and then he graduated. As an undergrad?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay, and moved back to Houston and got in touch with you. Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And got in touch with me, right? And he wanted to make artwork. He wanted to make Chicano work, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Had he been a photo studio major at Stanford, or—

DELILAH MONTOYA: No. Mostly it was in writing, literature. In literature and in the Spanish department. But a lot of his work that he was doing had a lot to do with documentary, and there was some photography in there and

such. So I had asked him when he came to talk to me—I asked him, "Well, what did you study?" Right? Because I figured, Well, Stanford, you know his thesis was on something that was pretty interesting. So I wanted to find out what that was. And he says, "Well, I've been going down to the border," right? And I go, "Oh." "Just kind of looking at the migrant trails and looking at border crossings, and things like that." And I go, "We can do something with that." [Laughs.] Right? Since he had already did the field work out there.

And so Fotofest was coming on at that time. And I had decided, Well, what we can do is—let's do an installation and we'll tie it to Fotofest. [00:38:05] And Fotofest's theme this year is water. So what if we thought about the lack of water, you know? So that's how we came up with the idea of *Sed: The Trail of Thirst*, right, and really started looking at those border trails and what that looked like. So he went out there, just kind of scouted it out.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: In Arizona?

DELILAH MONTOYA: In Arizona. And I was able to get some money, some funds together to get out there. Brought a student with me.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Another student?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Beatriz. Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. Do you remember her last name?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Beatriz's last name? No, I don't. I would have to look it up.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That's okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So Beatriz came with me, and we spent three days just going from place to place and shooting the migrant trail.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: In the Sonoran Desert.

DELILAH MONTOYA: In the Sonoran Desert, right outside of Tucson. And it was at Tucson sector, and it was at the O'odham Reservation. So we were able to get onto the Reservation because of Mike Wilson. So there's that one image where you see desire lines, and you see Mike Wilson with his wheelbarrow. So what we did was, we went on site where he was putting out the water jugs.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And he's a member of the Reservation?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. So that's how we were able to get onto the Reservation itself. And the thing is—what's so interesting, of course, is where it's located, where that Reservation's located, right on the border. You know? So it became a metaphor for what's happening right now, in that half of the Latino population is in the United States, the other half is in Latin America, in Mexico.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: In Northern Mexico.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And the border is being cut.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So the Reservation is bisected by the U.S.-Mexico border. [00:40:00]

DELILAH MONTOYA: By the U.S. border. Right. So the tribe actually straddles into Mexico, and also into the United States. So yeah, for us it was like, very much a metaphor.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And does the U.S. government, quote-unquote, manage the border on the Reservation? Or does the—

DELILAH MONTOYA: They can't.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: The Reservation has sovereignty over how they manage the border?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Has sovereignty, right. And that's why that trail goes right up through the Reservation.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. But it's a grueling trail.

DELILAH MONTOYA: It's a grueling trail, and people die.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah. Yeah, so I think this relates to the militarization of the border in places like San Diego. Other places that had been widely used as crossing points, as those started to get shut down, my understanding is that migrants start seeking other routes. And this particular route, through that Reservation became—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. Viable.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. And also, I think what you've described, or I've seen described, in relation to your body of work as a—what is it, a trail of desire, or desire trail?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yes. Desire lines.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Desire lines. Sorry. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. Desire lines.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So can you talk about that? I thought that was fascinating, the way you described that.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right, and that was actually something that Orlando—you know, he's such an intellect, and really very smart. I felt very honored to be working with him. We were talking, and he talked about—he says, "Well, you know, have you ever heard of desire lines?" I'm like, "No." He goes, "Well, it's an architectural term."

And it's those lines that you see, you know, the architect will make pavement, right, to a building or something. They will pave a trail, they'll pave a sidewalk. Then you're kind of walking along, and you'll see that there's a place where, in the grass, where it's kind of brown. And people have decided to take that path, rather than the one that the architect had designed for them. And the architect calls those the desire lines. [00:42:02]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, yeah, because I've heard them called "herd paths." But "desire lines" is more poetic. [Laughs.]

DELILAH MONTOYA: Isn't it? Yeah, I like "desire lines." You know, when I thought about that, I thought that's a perfect way of thinking about the migrant trails. Those are the desire lines. Yeah. Yeah, so we went down there.

And all the time that I was there, Luis was actually in Kansas, and he was doing a lithograph. And he would call me up, and he asked me, "What do you see on the trail?" And I would describe to him, "Well, there's water jugs, there's bullet casings. We see shoes that have been discarded. There's clothing, there's some backpacks, you know, medicine, pain killers." All of these things, right? So he did this really beautiful, at that time, lithograph of a snake and an eagle in a death fight, right? And on the ground, you'll see all the things that I was describing to him that were on the trail. So we were both simultaneously working on the same sort of idea of the border crossing.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, you know—yeah. Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So there was a conversation going on between your work.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right, yeah, at the same time that he was producing that, I was producing *Sed: The Trail of Thirst*. Yeah.

The other thing that I started working on during that period of time was *La Llorona in Lilith's Garden*. That was the other project. It was a huge photo mural that I decided to do, and it was a site-specific installation at the Museo in Santa Fe. [00:44:05] They had asked me to do something. And I pulled in a student of mine, Tina Hernández, who had kind of introduced me to the idea of Lilith. Right? So we worked on that together, and actually Tina is Lilith.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: I always used to call it, "And it's the Tina Show!" [Laughs.] Because it's Tina all the way across, right? All the Lilim, and Llorona, and Lilith and all that. That's all Tina posing. But she does a lot of self-portraits. So for that reason, I felt like I had—whenever I presented that work, I presented it as a collaboration between Tina and myself, because Tina knows how to pose herself. She understands the camera. And it was really kind of—the same thing like Laura. Laura knew how to pose herself, and she understood herself and how the camera would see her, you know? So I felt like it was really important that acknowledge this as a collaboration.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And was there something about the museum in Santa Fe in relation to that subject matter?

DELILAH MONTOYA: It wasn't the museum in Santa—it was the Museo, and it was the Cultural Center.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, the Cultural Center, okay. Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right, the Hispano Cultural Center in Santa Fe [El Museo Cultural de Santa Fe -DM] that had asked to put up this body of work, or to produce something. And that's what we produced together. It was *La Llorona in Lilith's Garden*, which I found what I wanted to do was still keep kind of working on that whole bad girl, you know, repertoire that I was doing. I think we talked a little bit about San Sebastián.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah, we did. We talked about that.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. Right.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And you also invoked syncretism. And when we were offline yesterday, you were relating the story of Lilith and Llorona as another sort of syncretic—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right, exactly. And then that's what I was trying to demonstrate with that photomural, is that it was the coming together of the story or the myth of Lilith. [00:46:08] And if we think about the sixth omen of the Aztecs [Xōchiquetzal -DM]—right? So it's the coming together of those two myths to create the story of Llorona, because in the myth, Lilith is not a crier. She doesn't cry. But she's a seductress. And she's also a baby snatcher, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: [Laughs.] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: But the sixth omen of the Aztecs, of course, is a crier.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Like a wailing woman?

DELILAH MONTOYA: She's a wailing woman. She cries. But she's not a seductress. And she's not a baby snatcher, right? So when you see those two things coming together like that, you know, she's crying for her lost children, and Lilith of course is the baby snatcher. You see all of that coming together. And of course Lilith is also the seductress, right? And we know with the stories of La Llorona and all that—she's all of it. Which I found really interesting. And of course I find the story of Lilith to be so much fun. I enjoy telling that story, but we'll leave that one for another day. [Laughs.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah. Somebody else can come in and interview you and have you perform who Lilith is. So in relation to the syncretizing of these two myths of bad women, *malcriadas*, was there something you were wanting to communicate at the Hispanic Cultural Center in Santa Fe in relation to converging cultures—that's my word—syncretic cultures? Because you mentioned it was site-specific.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. Right, it was. And the reason I called it site-specific, they had given me a space, and the space already had this kind of fake wall that was supposed to kind of look like an adobe or something like that. And there was the two walls that were facing each other. [00:48:02] And I knew I wanted to do something with Lilith. So what I did was, I went back to the center and I made eight by 10 transparencies of the wall itself. Measured the wall, so when I did the printout, it was the size of the wall. And it looked as though this image had been embedded into that adobe. Because what I did was, I used the actual wall itself as part of the digital—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, I see. So you were actually using digital technology using a transparency of the wall itself.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And then montaging—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, digitizing it, putting it into the computer. And then I was able to place images in this kind of very—like, I used the live oak trees, right, because the live oak trees, they looked snaky. For me, they looked kind of primordial, and so I was able to just start collaging through Photoshop and just kind of making this very twisting, kind of snake-looking tree, which of course symbolized the Garden of Eden. And that's why it's called *La Llorona in Lilith's Garden*, because in my mind that's what Lilith's Garden would look like.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So did you photograph Tina Hernández at the live oak trees in Houston? Or did you, again, use Photoshop to superimpose that imagery?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Exactly.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. So it's all kind of manufactured, digitally.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: It was all put together digitally. And by that point, my chops had gotten a lot stronger. You know, and I figured out how to do those things, and how to kind of, like, make panoramas. You know. So I was making the panoramas—like, for the *Sed: Trail of Thirst*, I was shooting film and then digitizing it and then blending it together. At that time, they didn't have the programs that would automatically do that for you, so I had to—you know, I did it by hand. [00:50:03]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So did you shoot the landscapes for the *Trail of Thirst* with a 35-millimeter camera? Or a four by—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Oh, no, no. I—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: No, no. A digital camera?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, no, I used medium format.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Medium format film.

DELILAH MONTOYA: [Large format, and actually six-by-nine -DM].

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. And then digitized it.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And then—because the thing is, you have the real estate.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So it just gets a lot sharper. You know, there's a lot more clarity to it.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? It's the equivalent of using a high-end digital camera. You know, of course I couldn't afford the high-end digital camera. Now it's getting to this point where one can't find anybody to process the [color -DM] negatives, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know, you have to send it out to the very few labs that will actually still do that. You know.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. So when you shot the live oaks, what technology did you use? Did you use, again, a—

DELILAH MONTOYA: A five by seven camera.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: A five by seven camera, wow. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: A five by seven camera.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So you get that really crisp detail, mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Exactly. And then scan it. And then once I got it in as a digital file, then I could start manipulating it, and cutting things out, putting things in. You know, and at that point is where I think I really began to feel like I was using my drawing skills again.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know, the drawing skills and the painting skills, and all that started. You know, I was able to really—I felt like I was at that same point when I was doing printmaking. When I was able to use inks, right, and take negatives and kind of manipulate the negatives and stuff like that too, in order to—and get it onto a plate. Now, you know, it was more fluid.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Using computer technology, but it felt like a similar process. Interesting.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. Right. Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So then, how are those images printed? How is the photo mural for *Llorona in Lilith's Garden* printed?

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know, I fell in love with canvas. And one of the reasons I liked canvas is because it

doesn't damage that easily. [00:52:02] Like, paper damages really easily.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And so with canvas, you can just roll it up, and it—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So is it cotton canvas?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, it's like a cotton canvas. But it's been coated for the digital inks. So one of the things I was able to do is just kind of roll it out, and then you just staple it onto the wall, and you have this huge mural, and then you can just kind of pick it back up again, roll it back up and store it. It was beautiful.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. It's really interesting, thinking historically about all the different material traditions you're employing to create this work. You know, I'm thinking about the transition from easel painting and Mexican muralism to fresco, and then the need of the muralist to come up with different mediums to create portable frescos. De Mayo was painting big easel paintings and calling them murals. And in a way, you're in that tradition, but you're using photography, five by seven camera, digital technology, digital printing on canvas, rolling it [laughs] on a wall, right?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right, stapling—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: I mean, it's the continuation of that tradition of utilizing whatever technology is available to you to make a mural. Right?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right, yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mural just means big painting on a wall.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. A big image, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right? But there's any number of different mediums that you can use to make that. That had never occurred to me before.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. Exactly. And now it's kind of—at this point, it's pretty common to see a large digital output. You know, at that point it was not that common.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Sure.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Now it's like, "We'll just blow it up, mural size!" [Laughs.] Right? It's another world.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So were you thinking of yourself as a muralist at that point?

DELILAH MONTOYA: I always wanted to do a mural.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Uh-huh [affirmative]. Because you know Judy Baca, and she transitioned from literally painting on walls—you know, unsanctioned and sanctioned paintings on walls—to utilizing digital technology to make murals. [00:54:12]

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. Right. Yeah. Seeing it as like, I think, a safer way for—yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So now I can think of you as a Chicana muralist. [Laughs.]

DELILAH MONTOYA: Well, I guess you could.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah, in some ways.

DELILAH MONTOYA: I mean, they were huge. I did make some really big prints, rollouts, yeah. But I haven't—I've kind of calmed that—well, I guess not. [Laughs.] You know, you stop to think of, you know, the cyanotypes that I did for *Detention Nation*.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. Oh, is that that work that's hanging over there? Or is it—it was just—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Well, that was a study. Trying to figure out what process that was going to use in order to make the cyanotypes.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: I see. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: But the—I don't know. Have you seen *Detention Nation* at all?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: I haven't. So that's a much more recent body of work that you mentioned to me, that you did with the Sin Huellas collective?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. Right, exactly. So after that was—well, let's see, should we stay chronological? No.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: We could. Or, I mean, your choice. We can jump to that.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Okay, well, let me do this. Let me just kind of call it up so that you can take a look at it. Do you want to go ahead and just stop?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Go ahead. I'm going to pause this.

[END OF TRACK montoy19_2of2_sd_track01.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Alright, so it's Saturday, August 3rd, picking back up with Delilah Montoya. We had sort of wrapped up the conversation about *La Llorona in Lilith's Garden*. So we thought right now we would segue and give you a chance to talk a little bit about *The New Warriors*, the *Women Boxers*.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. Right. So really, that's kind of the large project that I did in terms of the *malcriadas*. What I had decided was that I wanted to kind of move away from the myth, and think about women that in our kind of contemporary modern world can be understood as *malcriadas*. And for me, that was the women boxers.

Certainly the person that introduced me to the idea of female or women boxers is Teresa Marquez, because she had been writing about that and kind of championing that, and talking about female boxers for quite a while, and it just really kind of caught my imagination. So I got with her and asked her if she wanted to—maybe we could collaborate on that together. She could do the writing and I could do the shooting. And she was really open to that idea. At that time also, I thought, Well, I need to have kind of like a hook, so that I can—I mean, you can't just go up to somebody and say, "Hey, I want to photograph you!" You know? Usually you need a little hook or some kind of reason why they would want you to photograph them, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: So I thought, Well, what if we put a book together? So I went to Arte Público press, and Nick Kanellos was really open to that idea. So I was able to find some of the funding, and then he would be willing to print it, so it kind of gave me that hook. [00:02:04] So I was able to start contacting women boxers, and of course Teresa was able to tell me who the women boxers were around the areas that I was interested in, or I could get to. Right, because there was a whole travel situation where, you know, I would have loved to photograph Ali's daughter, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah.

DELILAH MONTOYA: I mean, that would have been, like, amazing, but how was I going to get there, and how would I—right. So I had to go with the women that I knew that I could speak to, and I could get to the boxing rings and such. So of course that was Houston, and that was New Mexico. And I found that both places had a lively female boxing community.

So I started off by—you had to contact the promoters first. That way they would get me in touch with the boxers themselves, right? And of course it was because I'm putting a book together on female boxers. And so what I wanted to do was to photograph them in the ring, and training. I think I had this idea that I really wanted to photograph them after the fight, too, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh.

DELILAH MONTOYA: I wasn't quite able to get to them to do that, because after the fight, they just get secluded. It just—it was—I couldn't do it.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And how much did you frame the project to them in relation to the archetype of the bad girl, of the *malcriada*? Or did you frame it more as an interest in the phenomena of female boxing?

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know, I was—I didn't know. This was like a complete unknown to me. So I had—and there was not a lot written about it, either. It's one of those subjects—actually if you look for female boxing literature or books, my book comes up. [00:04:03] [They laugh.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: You wrote the book on female boxing.

DELILAH MONTOYA: [Laughs.] It comes up. Right.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And how did you know Teresa Marquez? What was—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Teresa Marquez was part of the Albuquerque community.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know, and the Albuquerque community is kind of small, and people know each other, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. But she's not a boxer, she's just somebody that knows somebody—

DELILAH MONTOYA: A librarian.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: She was a librarian. And the thing was, like, she was the boxing librarian, right? She actually started training.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, she did actually?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, she did. She started going to the gym and training a little bit, and just really learning all the ins and outs of boxing.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So she was a kind of insider informant that opened those doors for you. Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. Exactly. That's why I went to her, because she knew of me and she knew of my work. Yeah. And she was open to that. And became a very good friend. A good person.

So one of the things that I started doing was just going to the fights, right? So I was able to get press passes so I could get to the fights, and photograph them fighting. Of course, I did mine a little bit differently. At that time, all the sports photographers were using digital cameras. But I didn't want to use a digital camera. I wanted to use a film camera, because I wanted—the files, the digital files weren't that big. You couldn't get them that large at that time. And I knew I wanted that resolution, and I wanted to kind of get them up as large as I could.

I really felt I wanted to go with the black-and-white tradition. Because there was such a tradition of black-and-white boxing photography. You know, Larry Fink comes to mind, and his black-and-white work and such. And I thought, What I want to do is I want to kind of give it that kind of sense of history, and that kind of legitimacy. I felt like the black-and-white media was the way—you know, it would do that, it would give me that. [00:06:05]

So I decided to use a medium format camera with no automatic anything on it. Right? So, like, there is no automatic focus, right? There is no automatic exposures. I had to change out film every 20 shots. Right? I remember these photographers, they were looking at me like, This woman does not know what she's doing. Because I'm over there with a Pentax—big Pentax camera like this, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Because I did a lot of sports already when I was in Omaha.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, really?

DELILAH MONTOYA: In that small town. I was shooting a lot of sports. And I didn't have an automatic camera or anything. And I was able to get the shots, because I had learned how to— what they called—pull focus. So I learned how to pull focus. I learned how to load really fast. You know, you learned to shoot at the peak of action. You don't shoot as many as you can, but what you do is you wait for the shot, right? So I had a little bit of different skills that I knew about than what they were doing, contemporary—you know.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah. They can just shoot 300 pictures, and one of them will be good.

DELILAH MONTOYA: One of them is going to be good. But, you know—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: But they're looking at you and thinking—and you're the one that's actually got the skills.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. You know? So the other thing I knew was that you had to show up early, because there was going to be all of those other journalists. They're going to show up and they're going to stake out their spot. So I thought, If I want a great spot, I have to show up early. So I would show up early. I would throw my camera right there on the curtain, and I would just put my elbows on the table, [laughs] just kind of wait, because I knew that they wouldn't move me out of the way if I, you know, made my presence known. [00:08:00]

And they would come and they would look at me, like, Who is she? What is she doing?

And I just keep showing up, right? So eventually they wanted to come find out what I'm about. "Yeah, I'm shooting film, yes, I'm shooting medium format." "What are you going to do with these?" I go, "I'm a fine artist. I'm going to make fine art out of this." And so finally, I was printing up some of the work, and I bring it back, and then I would start showing them, "This is what I'm getting," you know? The photo that you have right behind you, you can see I got that shot where she connected that punch.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah, yeah. Absolutely. So you shot at the peak.

DELILAH MONTOYA: I shot at the peak. She connected the punch. You know, and I saw that. I got some where Holly wins, Holly flips. So she would do these flips. And I caught her flipping in the air. So I was really able to get back to that old photojournalistic, peak of action stuff. And I was having a great time doing it. You know, sometimes I would miss the shot, sometimes I would get the shot. But, you know, it was just kind of like, getting that intuition back again on a lot of that. Yeah.

Then also I was able to talk to the boxers, and I found out a lot of insider information that I thought was really very interesting. You know, things in terms of gender, and how different it was for the female boxer versus the male boxer. For instance, one of the things that a female boxer has to do every time they go up for a fight, is they have to prove that they're not pregnant.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? And that's something that a man doesn't have to do, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So they have to take a pregnancy test. You know, they don't make as much money.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Sure, of course they don't. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: They make significantly a lot less money. And then of course, there's that whole idea of steroids. [00:10:03] Of course men have steroids, but steroids are a little bit different for women, because it makes them more manly, right? So there's always this kind of, like, wondering whether or not this woman is on steroids, you know? And looking at her like, Is she getting that jawbone? What's that jawbone looking like? You know, what is the physique looking like? Does it look as though she's doing steroids?

And then there's that hermaphrodite. You know, how many of the women are hermaphrodites? Because they would get the upper body strength. So then there's always the question: Is she really a woman?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So it's this interesting sort of tension and contradiction of having women, and about femininity, in an environment that is hyper-masculine. So they can't be pregnant, they can't be taking steroids, they can't be hermaphrodites. So it's about kind of trafficking in the femininity, but then ultimately these are women who are building their bodies, and being empowered to be in the ring. So that's a really interesting sort of tension there.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right, exactly. You know, so I found all of that interesting. The other thing too is: The way in which they would promote the fights too were really interesting, where they would put a foxy boxer next to a butch.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know? A couple of times when I went to the fights, you could hear the crowd just going wild in terms of, you know, the butch, right? And they would just say horrible things to her. You know? It was, like—yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And then of course, there as—I'm thinking of Holly Holm. She was very good at what she was doing, but yet there was this kind of sensuality to Holly Holm too. [00:12:00] But she always kept pushing back on—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Is that Holly Holm there?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. You know, she would always kind of push back, but there was always this kind of like, allure to her, because she was tall, blonde. And you know, I went into the whole thing thinking—you know, because you always—you do, you always kind of like, have your own—I don't want to call them biases, but misconceptions, right? And one of the conceptions that I came up with is—I thought, like, When I go there, I'm going to find a lot of *cholas*, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: That's what I thought. There would be a lot of *cholas*, and I'm going to find Latinas, and all of this. And when I got there, all of a sudden, I realized I was completely wrong about this, because we're talking—it goes across. All the races are there, right? Asian, Middle Eastern, white boxers, you know, African American, Latinas. But what did segregate them was on weight class.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? So the heavier weights were usually the African Americans and white women. They were the heavier weights, they were the taller ones, right? And then as you started coming down on the weight class, that's when you start seeing the Chicanas and the Asians showing up.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That's fascinating.

DELILAH MONTOYA: I know. And I wasn't expecting that at all to be the case. But that was.

So I would say, when I put the book together, and I had my show at Project Row House—and actually that was Luis. He would say, "You really want it at Project Row House." So I went after that. They gave me their—kind of like this office space that they had. [00:14:01] And I put it up there. It was actually during a Fotofest year. And my gallery dealer in Dallas was in town, and he saw the work. He really liked it a lot. And he introduced Dee Williams to the work, and Dee Williams was an editor for *Art in America*. And it got put into *Art in America*.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And who's your Dallas dealer?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Photos Do Not Bend.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. Okay. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: And that's Missy and Burt Finger.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. So then Dee Williams put it in *Art in America*?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. So it really got some really great play. And it actually was—it traveled quite a bit, and it was shown quite a bit. It eventually made it into Los Angeles and New York. Yeah, it really got a lot of good play.

What I did do also was I started printing everything out as—what they call Piezographs. So it's carbon-based inks on Hammermill paper. So I was really interested in that process. I had an older printer, Epson 9000, that had fine print heads in it. And I was able to print out the whole thing with these carbon-based inks. They're just really gorgeous. The one behind you—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So is that—

DELILAH MONTOYA: —that's carbon—no, this one right over here. That's carbon-based ink.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. Yeah, the quality is beautiful.

DELILAH MONTOYA: It is, and that's because of those fine print heads that were on it. My printer broke down on me. And I never was able to finish the editions.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, really? Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: I know.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So this one is carbon-based ink that you printed. So I'm pointing behind me, because we're in Delilah's studio, and she has three of the photographs from the series up. So one is a triptych that shows Holly Holm fighting. And those—that's sort of live action scenes. [00:16:02] And then two live action scenes—no, one

with her coach, trainer?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Trainer, yeah, right.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: One live action scene where she's connecting a punch, and then one where she's won the fight?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. Exactly.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And then on the opposite wall, there's two large photographs. So were these among the two that MoMA PS1 printed?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. These are the ones that eventually—where it was shown last was for *Body Armor*.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: The show *Body Armor* that Jocelyn Miller curated. One is Yolanda Swindell, Stone Hands.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Stone Hands. Yolanda Spindell [*sic*]?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Swindell.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Swindell. Known as Stone Hands. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. and the other one is Lil' Loca Cruz, and that's—actually, her name is Terri Cruz. But she calls herself Lil' Loca. And on her shoulder, she has, "Smile Now, Cry Later," which I thought was just really appropriate. And both of them were done. One of them was in Houston, over in the Fifth Ward of Houston, and that was Yolanda. Then Lil' Loca, that was done up on the Ute Reservation in between Colorado and New Mexico.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay. Wow. So did they see the book? Did they see—

DELILAH MONTOYA: I did, I gave them all copies of the book once it was completed, right? And then I had the exhibition at Project Row House. So I invited the female boxers that were—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: —from the Houston area. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Houston area. And they showed up. And I projected, like, one of these boxing scenes that Storm did, and she was just doing some sparring. And I just projected it up on the building. [00:18:01] At Project Row House—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, outside?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Outside. So, you know, you have this whole fight scene.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Is Storm a boxer from the Fifth Ward, where—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Well, Storm—actually she wasn't in the Fifth Ward. She was more in Sugarland, I think, area. Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And she's in the book.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And she's in the book.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So you were projecting images of her sparring?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, sparring.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: On the other side of Project Row Houses.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So you mentioned that Luis really encouraged you to show it there.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right, he did. He did. He knew that I was kind of going into these, you know, boxing. And I had this one fight that was going on over at Española. Of course, I was in New Mexico. He was in New Mexico.

And we were talking about it. He wanted to come, and I'm going, like, "I think you're going to have to get a ticket." He goes, "No, I'm not." And I'm like, you know, "I really have to try really hard to get these press passes, you know? And I was just trying to let him know, like, "I'm the only one that has the press pass."

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Well, he just kind of shows up, right? [Laughs.] And he wants to go. And I'm just really uncomfortable. I'm going through—you know, like you have to go through the back door with your press pass, and I'm like—and Luis is behind me, you know? And he grabs my camera, and—you know.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: What, he's your assistant? [They laugh.]

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? And he acts like he's my assistant. He's carrying my camera, right? I walk through like this, and he points to them, and he just—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah, "I'm with her."

DELILAH MONTOYA: "I'm with her," right? And they just let him right in, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, that's great. No idea who he is.

DELILAH MONTOYA: [Laughs.] They just let him right in. It was like—so he got, like, a front row—you know, so he could watch the fight. And he brings out his sketch pad, and he starts sketching all the female boxers. Yeah. Because, you know, they have that physique, they have that Luis Jiménez physique.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah. Last night we walked over to the UNM campus and we saw the *Fiesta Jarabe* sculpture that's there. [00:20:04]

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And the female figure in that, she's cut.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, she is. She's cut.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And she's unapologetic, the way he depicted her. Unapologetic in her musculature, her stance, her sort of sense of self. And yeah, I can see that to the female boxers, to the women boxers.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. Yeah. So, yeah. So, but he got himself in.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah, that's great.

DELILAH MONTOYA: [Laugh.] My heart was going, like, "I don't want them to turn me away. Please don't turn me away." Yeah. But that was just the kind of charisma that he had, he was just able to get himself into these places like that.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Well, but you facilitated it. Yeah.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ADRIANA ZAVALA: He was your assistant. That's fabulous.

DELILAH MONTOYA: He was my assistant.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That's great. What a great memory.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. So yeah, I think that's—in terms of the boxers, I think it was a very successful—you know, particularly since last year it was shown in PS1 MoMA.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So that was last year?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. Yeah. So the work was still viable, it's still being seen. You know, that's one of the things I always find really kind of interesting in terms of some of my work. You know, it still gets shown, and it still is seen as being contemporary, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: And I think the subject matters that I have. Like, for instance, with the *Sed: The Trail of Thirst*, that work is still being shown. Actually, it's going up this year in Tucson, which I think is interesting because that's where I shot it all, was in Tucson.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: But I hasn't been shown in Tucson yet?

DELILAH MONTOYA: It's never been shown in Tucson.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow. Where is it going up at Tucson?

DELILAH MONTOYA: It's the art museum there.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, at the Center for Creative Photography? Or at the Museum of Tucson, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: No, at the [Desert Museum of -DM] Tucson.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow. And it's such a live topic. And Arizona is a tough place in terms of immigration. [00:22:03]

DELILAH MONTOYA: Exactly.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Very tough place.

DELILAH MONTOYA: The thing is, the conditions haven't changed.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know? And that was shot in 2004.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah. Wow. And here we are, 15 years.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Fifteen years later, and it still—it's still viable. Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow. Really impactful.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

You know, I think later—after the female boxers, actually, I tenured. That was my—that's what I tenured with.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay, so tell me a little bit about that.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. I tenured with—that was part of my tenure portfolio. It was doing really well. I had one-person shows all over with this piece, because it was a full-body work. It was in Dallas, it was in New York, it was in California, right? And then the book came out too, with it. So that was really helpful. But it was also that year when Luis died, too.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That was the year you were coming up for tenure?

DELILAH MONTOYA: That was the year I was coming up for tenure.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, so it was really kind of a difficult year for me. A lot of really good things happened, a lot of tragic things happened that year. And I think that the thing is—the great part was, is I did tenure. You know? I did receive tenure. But in terms of the work that I was doing, a lot of the work became more introverted, and trying to just kind of unpack that death. Right? So that's when you see *When My Heart Trembled*, when I did that piece. Also when I put together the book, the *Memories My Love Gave*. [00:24:04]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. The accordion book you were showing me yesterday.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, *Memories My Love Gave, To Me For You*, right? So, you know, a lot of that work hasn't really been shown much, but it was just like, that period of time that I had to just kind of rethink and

reset.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: And then after that, then I started thinking about the *castas*.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And I felt like I needed to get to another body of work, right? You know, I guess if I were to say there were certain pieces that I did that was really dealing with that tragedy, would be *When My Heart Trembled*, also *Modern Democracy: After Goya's Disasters of War*, 2009. That was another piece that just was my way of kind of unpacking things.

And then what came to the forefront after that was, of course, *Nuestra "Calidad."* And *Nuestra "Calidad"* was a contemporary *casta* series. And my mind started really thinking about what race was, and how so much of—that we're mixed races. And most of us are. We're not any one thing. Nobody's ever one pure thing, you know? Because that's the hallmark of being human. [00:26:02]

Migration is our hallmark. We didn't stay in one place, you know? And even coming back to the idea of who modern man was, or, "Who is modern man?" You know, coming out of East Africa, and how they pushed up into Europe, and they pushed up into Asia, and to all these areas of the world. They encountered other people. They encountered other hominines. And our DNA reveals all that, all the other hominines that we came across. And those were hundreds of thousands of years ago. So this idea of migration shouldn't be a scary thing at all. It's what we do. It's who we are. You know, and I find that we're in a place now where all of a sudden they want to rewrite the script.

So I think that as I was putting together the *Nuestra "Calidad"* series, what I wanted to do was—[. . . -DM] I looked at other photographers.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And I was thinking about—what is his name, he's in Arizona. His name is—I want to say Kent? Clint? He did a whole series of work where he would go back to places that had already been photographed by O'Sullivan.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, right, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? Then he would re-photograph it the way it looks now, and trying to find that exact spot.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Exactly.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And I found that really interesting. And I thought to myself, Could I do that with the *castas*? Is it possible for me to go back to the Mexican *casta* series, and re-photograph it, but as a contemporary version? [00:28:05] And what would that look like, right? So what I began to do was just kind of research the Mexican *castas*, and all the writings that were done in terms of the *castas*. And I found that it was such a rich subject. And there was so many ideas and so many theories that were kind of, like, just rolling out of there.

But one of the things that I like doing is I like using my eyes, right? And I'm looking at these *casta* paintings, and I'm thinking to myself, Wait a minute, I know that. There's something there that is really familiar. And I couldn't help but remember how my first encounter of the *castas* was at the Chicano Awareness Center in Omaha—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: —when I was a teenager. And I remember looking at those, thinking, Well, these are mixed races. And I'm mixed race. So does that mean I have a unique name?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know? In many ways, it was kind of like this identification of, like, particularly at the time when I was growing up and there was all of the civil rights movements going on, and there was race riots, and there was really a tension to the splitting of black, white, you know, relationships, and where did the *mexicano*, where did the Latino fall into all of that? Of course, that's when we saw, you know, the Brown Beret and we saw Corky Gonzales and Cesar Chavez, and all this was happening, all of these things were happening. But when I was looking at those *castas*, I began to realize, like, This is the long history, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So did someone at the Chicano Cultural Awareness Center bring in some reproductions of

casta paintings—[00:30:00]

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: —as a way to sort of think about who Chicanos are?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, well, just to put it on the wall, because of the *costumbres*, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? There was the *costumbres*, and then they showed some of the earlier pictures, and they just had them on the wall. And I'm just looking at these *casta* paintings. So that really stuck with me. And I think that at the time, in 2012 and 2013, when I was really starting to kind of develop that idea, it was all of those—all of that memory started coming back. And that feeling—like, I think now is the time for me to re-look at it, to begin to think about it. How would I go about making that contemporary version of it?

And what I began to realize, with the Mexican *casta* paintings—it was the 17th century, they felt as though—this was enlightenment. And they felt this was their science. You know, this was a unique way of categorizing and seeing this kind of globalization, or the Baroque, if you want to call it, right? And how it was kind of evoking a new—something new that had never happened before. And what they were doing was, they were documenting it, they were categorizing it. They were trying to explain it to themselves. But in doing that, they created this whole idea of nationalism for Mexico.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right, kind of came out of that. But it wasn't that clean, you know? Because it was really messy.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah. I mean, ultimately, in the 20th century, it gets just boiled down to *mestizaje*. But in the 17th and 18th century, you can still see the messiness of it. How are we going to reconcile the multiplicity, and account for it, and taxonomize it, organize it, rationalize it? [00:32:01]

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. And how we understand in terms of our own social structure, because they were really showing their own social structure. You know? In those *casta* paintings. And then when I started reading about the idea of—like, there was actually three books, right? There was three books. One was the book of the *indígena*, the other one was the book of the *casta*, and the other one was the book of the *español*. And when they were baptized, they went into one of the three books.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right, at the parish churches. Right. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: So they were kind of keeping up with that, and it was like, Why are they keeping up with all of that?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah, parish records. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: And I found out because they needed to determine who was going to pay the taxes. You know? So it came back to the tribute. Definitely the Native American were going to have to pay tribute, right? But the *castas* were going to have to pay tribute too. Because they weren't pure.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: But if you were *español*, you were not going to pay those taxes. And I'm thinking to myself, does that sound familiar? [Laughs.] Does that sound familiar? Because I know that there's a lot of, you know, corporations that aren't paying taxes, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That's right. That's right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: They're not paying taxes. There's a lot of very wealthy people that are really not paying taxes.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: It's everybody in the middle and at the bottom.

DELILAH MONTOYA: The middle and the bottom that are paying the taxes. And I'm like, So is this where the structure first began? You know? And we're just kind of—like, we just got used to it? It's part of the collective consciousness, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So how much is this a part of the collective consciousness? Then I'm reading about this, and they're talking about the 16 different *castas*, right? And if you take a look at it, the majority of the *castas* are demonstrating where the black blood is.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: And that's because that blood, according to the *castas*, could never be cleaned. And they had to kind of keep up with who had the black blood. [00:34:02] And I'm like, Wait a minute, hold it. Hold it. I think we have a president here who is really mixed race, and they keep calling him black.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So, right. So how much of the *castas* has influenced, you know, the colonial structure of the Americas? And that includes the United States.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Sure.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So I thought, like, What I can do is, I can show the old colonial families and use our current state of technology and science the same way that they did with the enlightenment and the *castas*, to determine what the bloodlines are.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. But now you have DNA analysis.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. So do the DNA analysis. But the DNA analysis is also very icky and sticky, right? Who's determining all of that? And who's deciding as to where this person is supposedly supposed to be coming from, right? According to the DNA? I mean, somebody's making those decisions. And who is that person making that decision? Right?

So I started just kind of really, like, thinking about it in those terms. And there was a number of DNA kits that I could have gotten, but I decided that the one that I wanted to go to was the most political and the most controversial of all of them, just because of who they are. And that's *National Geographic*.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh wow, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: All right? Because *National Geographic* has this kind of like, questionable past, because of the way, then, which they looked at culture, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right, the sort of ethnographic eye.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. So they would be the one that I would want to follow. They would be the one. And the thing is, they really try very hard to kind of clean up their act. They really do. Sort of. But they also really kind of use a stronghold in terms of the research too. You know? [00:36:06] And I've heard of occasions where *National Geographic* would go in there, and they just really kind of let the anthropologists or the ethnographers know what it is that they want out of it. Because, you know, they're in the business of selling images. And, you know, they make really beautiful images, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah.

DELILAH MONTOYA: They're beautifully done, and they're beautifully aesthetic, and people look at *National Geographic* and they want to believe *National Geographic*.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah, sure, the history of the images in *National Geographic*, and the way that they've shaped how we've thought about human society and culture, and particularly people of color, whether it's been in different African contexts, in indigenous contexts in the Middle East.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Those famous sort of iconic images.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. So for me, I thought, That is the perfect place that I wanted to go for the DNA testing. The problem was that this project was extremely expensive.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Sure, because DNA testing is not cheap.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Especially at the time that I was doing it. Now it's getting a lot cheaper. But at that time, it wasn't. It was, like, \$200 a pop.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? And I wanted to do mother-father.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: So that was \$400 for every person that—because I'm not asking. You know, I'm just handing them the kits.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And did you conceive of it as a book from the beginning? What was your original idea for how you were going to—

DELILAH MONTOYA: That's a good question.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: —find the families, get them to agree, and then how you were going to represent it?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That both invoked the *casta* series, maybe opened up conversations about the way that *National Geographic* had depicted Other—with a capital O—people.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. Yeah, you know, all of that was just kind of like, I was doing it as I was doing the research, as I was trying to get the money. I did a crowdsource to help me get the money. [00:38:03] I wrote different grants to see if I could—and I was able to secure a number of grants, and then also crowdsource it. So I was able to get the money that I needed in order to do it.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Did you open a Go Fund Me campaign, or how—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Basically, yeah, I did! [They laugh.] I totally did it. And I swore to myself I would never do that again. It was so hard to do that. I mean, it was like—I got down to where I even asked my dad to put money in there. [Laughs.] I mean, I kind of told him, "Dad, you've got to put some money in there!"

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow. And how did you find the families that you ultimately ended up featuring?

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know, at first I was thinking—I mean, ideally, because what I wanted to do was like, a core sample, you know? Just the way in which the *castas* were—it was kind of a core sample that we were looking at, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: I wanted to do it like a contemporary core sample. And I was thinking, Well, prison culture—you know, I even sat there and just kind of thought about what we saw here with the *castas*, and about how would you relate that to contemporary, you know? So they start off with the barbarian Indian, right? And then they went into black slaves, right? And so I saw that was possibly prison culture.

So I thought, Okay, look for a prison culture. And I need to kind of work for working class, right, a service industry. Then think about people who owned things, like owned restaurants and such. And then kind of think about professionals, right? Like professors, teachers, doctors. And then bring it all the way up to the one percent, to the people that own corporations, right? [00:40:02]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Did you get some one-percenters in there?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Well, I don't know how I was going to—I mean, I tried all kinds of things. I did. Like, people that I thought that would be open to this. Or, I mean, how—and I found that it was easier for me to—what I began to realize is, I was actually really stuck in my own class. I really didn't understand class until I started trying to move out of my class. And I began to realize, like, I'm really not in prison class. And it was really hard for me to approach, you know, that class. And to get into, you know, "I want your DNA, I want to go inside and take pictures of your family, I want to be inside your home, I want"—you know?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah.

DELILAH MONTOYA: It was really hard. It was very difficult to do that. And then the one percent. I can't just go knock on their door. I have to be introduced, [laughs] right? So the upshot was, first I tried just by getting hold of

maybe other organizations, people that were—like, historic societies and places like that. You know, I tried even putting it up on my website, and trying to get traffic going onto my website. None of that was really working.

But what was working is the people I knew. Just talking about what it is that I wanted to do, and then seeing whether or not they were interested in it, or if they knew of somebody that might be interested in it. You know, and just trying to get the word out. And then I would say, Well, go to my website. I have it up on my website as to what it is that I'm doing, and da, da, da.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Fascinating.

DELILAH MONTOYA: It took me five years to get this thing done.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, just because all the dynamics were very difficult to work with. And I'm really kind of proud of the fact that it's done. [00:42:03]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And in the meantime, part of that—you know, you asked about the catalog—I realized that I could actually put a catalog together. I found funding through a grant, and that was through CMAS. CMAS was the one that—Center for Mexican American Studies. It came through for the funding for that. And that was Pamela Quiroz.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, right. Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. Yeah, so she helped with that.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And the book is so great, because you're able to create maps for each family that shows how migration patterns have shaped what their DNA profile shows.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right, exactly.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And explain sort of who in the picture had their DNA done, so what those different migration patterns show within a single family. So the book really lends itself. So how has it been exhibited?

DELILAH MONTOYA: So the work itself, what I did was—and this was actually kind of, like, work in progress. I mean, I had a couple of different iterations of it. But what I really wanted to do was to—and I was working with Surpik Angelini. And she's a really great person to bounce ideas off of.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: What is her name?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Surpik Angelini.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: What we would do is we would sit and talk, because she wanted to use—she loved the idea, and she wanted to use it for her grand opening for Transart in this really beautiful building that she was putting together. This was in Houston.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: In Houston, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. Just a—and actually—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: It's called Transart?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Transart, yeah. And it's out there on Alabama Street. And so the work was used for her grand opening of the space. The building, at this point, has won awards for its structure, and—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. It's a wonderful architectural feat. So I felt really honored to have that work in there, in this—yeah. [00:44:00] So the thing was, is—and talking with her, she was saying, she says, "Well, why not do monologues with the families?"

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know? And I'm thinking, That is just right on the money. Because what I—because I

was thinking of using the QR code, right, and people could just kind of put their phone over the QR code and then you would get a page that would come up with the maps and the DNA, and maybe a little small explanation. But then I thought, What would happen if you could hear their monologue? They themselves could be talking about the piece, and what they saw, and about their DNA, and a little bit about their history, and just kind of keep it at one minute and a half.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. So is that what you did? You had QR codes that would then—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. QR codes were embedded into the print itself. Of course, the idea was the idea of labeling.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative], right. Just—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. Just the way that the *casta* paintings of the 17th century, they put labels over everybody's head, my label now is the QR code.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That's great. Then you hear someone from the family—

DELILAH MONTOYA: —discussing the portrait.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So it would be as though you're standing in front of it, and that family's kind of telling you about what you're seeing. One of the family members is telling you about what they're seeing. And at one point, I thought maybe I could put it into the catalog. But I thought, No, what I want is—you have to be in front of the picture. You know, to hear it.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So that raises an interesting thing, is that part of the enticement of *casta* paintings, and so many different artists in New Spain painted them, you know? Some of them are very, very good. Miguel Cabrera's series.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right, yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Some of them are—you know, we don't even know who the artist is. [00:46:01] And you can see that the quality of the painting is much lower. But what is generally understood across the board is that they are so naturalistic, but they're not actual—they're not known subjects. They're not portraits. They look portrait-like, but they're idealized social types. Whereas in your project, you're actually working with real family units.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Exactly.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So did that come into it at all, part of what you were thinking? You know, because you're taking photographs of actually living people. So obviously, they belong to a family, and the DNA reveals something about their family story. So that adds another wrinkle. You know?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right, it does. And one of the things that I was really clear about is that I didn't want to use their names.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. I noticed that in the book.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Leave them nameless. That way it gives, like, the same kind of anonymity that we see with the *casta* paintings. And the other thing too is, I would like to kind of question that idea that these were not actual people.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. Because they are so naturalistic.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. I think that the artist knew people. And he may or may not have actually did a planar, right? But I think he had some referencing.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Sure. Models—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Models, I think there was people that he knew. Yeah. So I really question whether or not they were really that anonymous. So by not using their names, at least trying to put it on that kind of same level, where they became more types, maybe?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah. But it raises that question.

DELILAH MONTOYA: It does raise—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: About the historical example.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. Yeah, exactly. Because you look at them, especially with Cabrera, they look like somebody he knew.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah, there's so much individuation going on there.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And in some instances, I'm thinking of the famous Cabrera series from 1763. I can't remember which museum that one's in. [00:48:00] It's the one that I always teach. And in the very first panel, it's the *español* and *india* makes *mestiza*. And what's interesting about that one is that the *español* has his back turned. So you actually don't see his face. And so it raises that question: Why? It's actually a rather unique example in all the *casta* paintings that the one that opens that particular series, the Spaniard has his back turned. So was that someone?

DELILAH MONTOYA: And they just didn't want to be—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Is there a kind of tongue-in-cheek reference that we've—that is lost to history?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. Or he did not want to have his face seen.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Or was Cabrera lampooning someone famous? Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So that's interesting, I had never thought about the fact that they're so individuated and so naturalistic, and yet the sort of standard art historical narrative is that these are not actual family groups, these are not known sitters. These are idealized social types that represent their caste. But you're really questioning that.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. I am.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That's great.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. I am. Because I'm an artist, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And I know how artists work.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. Right, of course! You're inside Miguel Cabrera's head. [They laugh.]

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right, exactly.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That's great.

DELILAH MONTOYA: You're not just going to do it as part of the imagination, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. You need source material. And just as—

DELILAH MONTOYA: And the source material was in front of them. And that's my point, you know, especially since I did do the DNA testing. And what I saw—and of course I can't say that I'm doing a scientific, right—but what I am doing is, I'm just sampling. In this very limited sample that I have that I did, what we see is, the Latino community is global.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: It happened over and over.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So were you really focused on the Latino community, and then you show the globality, the globalism within that single community? So is that—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, well, what I decided to do was, I liked the idea of colonial, right? And then I was asking myself the question, Who are the colonial people of the Americas? [00:50:04]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So it links up to that issue as well.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. So the colonial people of the Americas, of course are from 13 colonies, right? It's the diaspora that happened, right? And that was part of the colonial process, the diaspora from Africa. And the Native American, right? And then of course, all the mixing that went in between the three groups.

So what we see is, you'll see portraits of people from the 13 colonies. So there's a family portrait, they're on both sides, 13 colony. And she was telling me that her husband had Native American blood, that they walked the Trail of Tears and all of this. And, "Well, that's great, let's find out."

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. Let's do the DNA.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Let's do the DNA. Let's find out. And she was very helpful. And I have to say, if I was to say there was one group that was really helping me a lot, I would say it was my fellow artists who were willing to do a lot of the—you know. So there's a lot of artists that are in there.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay. That's great.

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know, a couple of artists, actually. And so I says, "Sure, let's try it." We did. And what occurred was that he had no Native American blood.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: She did.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: But her family wasn't the Trail of Tears. His was. That's fascinating.

DELILAH MONTOYA: She did. And she was like, "Oh, my God, there was rumors about that. I guess the rumors are true!" [Laughs.] And I go, "Yes, the rumors are true." You know, so it's that kind of, like, colonial passing and misconceptions and all of that that come to play. And she was asking me, she goes, "Well, why is it that they said he was the Trail of Tears?" [00:52:04] And they have the name, and I go, "Well, you have to remember that was a lot of human trafficking being done." It's quite possible that she grew up in a Cherokee family, but she was trafficked.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. She could have been a white captive. Wow. That's really interesting.

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know? Because there was a lot of that that was going on. You know, it was all that mixing. You know, people didn't stay in one spot. Not even in the 13 colonies, they didn't.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Of course not.

DELILAH MONTOYA: They didn't stay in the same spot. And so I'm thinking about *Casta* #—I think—15, where you see a Muslim family, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Of course they picked up the Muslim religion during the—what do you call it—Civil Rights. So it was an African American family who became—who had converted to Islam. Right. And, you know, he was kind of like, wondering—he had heard that there was a great-grandmother that was white, and—you know, so he was kind of curious to see what was in there, so to speak, right? Yeah, come to find out, yeah, sure was. [Laughs.] There it was. You know, so you see that mixing that's in there.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. Whereas in this cultural context, we might just see a Muslim family, and just assume that their heritage is in the Middle East. But here is an example of a multi-racial family who converted to Islam by choice. So you began to show the complexity of what it is to be a Muslim in America.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Precisely. You know, and the thing is, is his monologue is really strong, where he talks about, you know, the consequence of slavery and not knowing who you are. [00:54:01]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Sure.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And that's one of the reasons he wanted to do the DNA testing, so he could reach back further than slavery.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know. Really, really interesting monologues. There's another monologue in there where they talk—because I was really having—Native Americans really were not fond of DNA testing, right? Which I understood.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah, sure.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So, you know, it really kind of took me a little bit of time to find somebody who was—a family who would be willing to do this, to do the DNA testing. And so there was a friend of mine, who—her sons were Inuit from Alaska. And she goes, "Why don't you DNA test my sons?" Right? I went, "Okay, great!" And so I did. And when we came back on that, I'm like, "You know, your sons are Russian. [Laughs.] You know, there's a lot of Russian there." And she goes, "Well, it makes perfect sense."

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah. Of course. Migration patterns up there.

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know? Because this was Alaska, right, and the Russians were in Alaska. And she goes on to tell this horrific story about the first contact in their family, and how her—it would be their great-grandmother, was stolen from the tribe by a white prospector, and he was mean to her, and would beat her up. I mean, she was like 15, 14, something like that, when he took her. She had children from him, right? He always felt remorseful because he got drunk and beat her up. [00:56:00] And one time he gave her a gun and told her, like, "If I do this again, I want you to shoot me." And he did.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: She did?

DELILAH MONTOYA: And she did.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And she killed him. Right? So they didn't know what to do with her. You know, the court of law there, it was the territorial courts, they didn't know what to do with her. So another prospector came up and said, "I'll take her." And so they hand her over to another prospector.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: She has more children with this prospector. Eventually, she was—you know, the children made it back to the tribe. But she was eventually killed by American soldiers, raped and thrown off of a train. And when I heard this story, I began to realize, like, Brown women really had it tough, you know, during the colonial process. And, you know, most of the Latinos that I DNA test, the Native American is on the mother's side, it's on the matriarch's side. And I thought to myself, We lost those stories.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah.

DELILAH MONTOYA: I mean, the DNA is there, but the story is lost. Here is one instance where the memory was still there.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: They remembered the violence that happened to the mother.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And how contemporary society grows out of that.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Exactly. You know, so a lot of these—what came together with the *castas* is, all of these pushing and pulling and questions—you know, it's all sitting there.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. To be unpacked by your camera, and DNA, and their stories.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And their stories.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Should we take a break?

DELILAH MONTOYA: I think we're done.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Alright. [00:58:00]

DELILAH MONTOYA: Let's go. [They laugh.]

[END OF TRACK montoy19_2of2_sd_track02.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay, so today is August 4th, 2019, Adriana Zavala. Third day—third and final day, we think

—of the oral history with Delilah Montoya, and card number two continuing. Picking up at Delilah's studio at the Sanitary Tortilla Factory.

So we left off yesterday having had a pretty robust conversation about *Nuestra "Calidad,"* the *Casta* series. But we were thinking of picking up there to have you talk a bit about how that project relates to your sense of community.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Right. One of the things that I was really trying to get at when I was putting together the *Contemporary Casta Portraiture* series, *Nuestra "Calidad,"* was this idea of the colonial community. I kind of felt as though that community has kind of been buried underneath all of these ideals of immigration, and that a population that is intrinsic and is actually native to the Americas is now being perceived as foreigners. You know? It's just kind of, like, one of those kind of colonial distancing from the actuality and the truth of a community.

So one of the things I wanted to do was to kind of reposition ourselves back to being understood as that kind of colonial community. That we have been here, right? And certainly in New Mexico, in Northern New Mexico, given the history that's there, there's a whole group of communities that understand themselves as being native. [00:02:01] As not being immigrants, as not coming from the South, but as always having a presence in the United States. The same thing as happens in Texas, you have the *tejanos*. You know, the border truly—they never crossed the border, the border crossed them. And certainly now what we're facing, we are militarizing the border. The border has always been porous, people have always gone back and forth. And that is why you have families in two locations, right? And now it's this criminalization of that movement that's been going on for centuries, if not millenniums, right?

So I think one of the things that I was trying to do was just kind of, like, begin to give recognition to that colonial community. With that, understanding that the United States has a colonial community that is as old as the Latino colonial community. Maybe they're a little bit younger than that community, because the Latino colonial community is much older than the 13 colonies. But I decided, like, We'll just overlook that.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right, right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know? And begin to just kind of bring them all into the same conversation. So with the *Castas* series, what you're going to see is, you're going to see African American. You're going to see the Native American. You'll see the 13 colonies and also the Latino community all kind of coming together and addressing themselves as this larger colonial community. [00:04:00] And also to see the bloodlines. And what I was really interested in was the idea that the longer we are here in the Americas—because the Americas is where the globalization really first started happening on a large scale—what you're going to see is—you're going to see the mixtures of all the different places start showing up in the bloodlines.

So that was the theory. But what came about when I started looking at the DNA and started trying to kind of reach out to these communities, right, it actually really did happen. [They laugh.] It's there. All of that mixing and that community is actually there, and it's thriving, and it's alive. Even though we don't think about it in those manners, it doesn't mean that it doesn't exist, which it did.

And so a lot of my work has—within, I would say, the last eight years, maybe a decade—yeah, I guess it would be a decade coming up—well, we could even go back further than that. I mean, if you stop to think about what's going on with *Women Boxers*, right? Think about the *Sacred Heart*. You know, I have always kind of reached out to community to bring it together, to give it a dialogue, to give it a narrative, you know? And it's the community that's in front of me, the one that I see. So this is my world. This is my world vision, it's the world that I live in, right?

As I was working with *Nuestra "Calidad"*—you know, I always want to reach out and bring a community together. And one of the things that kind of fell in my lap was, over at the Station Museum, Jim Harithas contacted me and asked—[00:06:04]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: What is his name? Sorry?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Jim Harithas.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And he owns the Station Museum.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: He asked me to put together an installation dealing with the recent migrations that were

happening along the Southern border. And this was back in 2015, when we first began to see those caravans of unaccompanied minors. And his concern was, What's happening to them, and where are they going? And at that time, there was only like three months. He was giving me three months to get this done.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow. [Laughs.]

DELILAH MONTOYA: So I was having to really scramble. So I began to realize, at this point, I could reach out to my community. So it would be a community of artists and activists, and bringing them together to where we could form one unified statement. And I remember getting in contact with Orlando Lara again, because he had always worked as an activist. And I knew he was working that way in Houston, and that he was—what he would do, he would contact people that had been detained, and try to find them legal help, try to connect them with their families, and just doing a lot of this activist work. As he was doing this, he was seeing a lot of human rights violations that were happening in the detention centers at that time.

So, you know, I reached out to him, I asked him, Could we reach out to other activists? And I reached out to other artists so that we could all kind of come together and decide: How do we want to kind of present this and create a statement so the rest of the Houston community can see what sort of crisis is beginning to unfold itself? [00:08:10] You know, along the borders, and through these horrific detention centers that were being ran by for-profit prison organizations. Like, GEO was one of them, that was out there.

So there was a collection of artists and activists that came together. So we're looking at Hope Stanford, we're looking at Dee Trevino, Orlando Lara, Carlos Carrasco, and Brenda Cruz-Wolf and myself. And later on through the process, as *Detention Nation* kept getting re-installed in other locations, we started bringing in other people along the lines to do this.

So we all sat down and called a meeting at my house. And we all sat down at this round table that we had, and we just started kind of like, talking. You know, "How are we going to do this? What can we do? What kind of timeline do we have? What can we put together?" You know, Jim was really generous in that he told us, "Don't worry about money, I'll go ahead and fund everything."

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Just, "You tell me what you want," right? So again, that took away that kind of stress.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative], of having to go find grants, or—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Grants or anything like that, right. He was just going to go ahead and just fund the whole thing. But the thing is, it still had to get done, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: In three months.

DELILAH MONTOYA: In three months. So the first thing that we did was, we thought what we would like to do is—you know, since we were a collective at that point—is to give ourselves a name. [00:10:04] And so the name that we gave ourselves Sin Huellas. And Orlando Lara, who was just a powerful writer, wrote all the narratives. All the artist statements, all that. And I found his writing to be so profound, and it was a way that I think all of us became inspired. You know, through his writings, and also through the discussions that we had.

So what we see is, like—Brenda was very good with video. She's a video artist and a sound artist. And what she contributed was the sounds of what the inside of a detention center would sound like, right? So she put this kind of sound piece together. As well as—the activists got us in touch with people that had been inside of the detention centers and now have gotten out and were waiting for their—either their trials, or they were waiting for some papers to come in. One of the immigrants that I encountered [background noise]—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: We were listening to that sound. Let's see what happens. It sounds like it's a table saw.

Alright, let's continue. So you were saying one of the immigrants that you encountered—

DELILAH MONTOYA: One of the immigrants—the migrants, actually. One of the migrants that we were looking at for *Detention Nation*, she was actually deported while she was on a bus. She was on a bus. She was a DREAMer. [00:12:00] She had a full-ride scholarship, she was a valedictorian in her high school, she was on a really great track. She was on a bus going to go see a friend, and they stopped the bus and they pulled her off of it because she couldn't demonstrate papers.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Which I think is actually illegal, right?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. And then threw her into a detention center.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. Illegal because they didn't have probably a judicial warrant to search the bus.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Exactly.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: I'm not sure, but—

DELILAH MONTOYA: [. . . -DM] And she was deported, and she turned herself in at the border with hopes that through the DREAM Act that Obama had just signed, that she would fall under that DREAM Act, and she would be able to come back home again. All of her family was in Texas. Her mother, her father, her sister, her brothers. Everybody was in Texas. So, you know—and she basically didn't know very many people in Mexico. So she was there alone, her family was freaking out. I mean, at the time, she was 18 years old.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know? So what happened was, she got sent back again.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: She got sent back to—she got sent back to Mexico again?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mexico again.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So then she was left by doing—coming back in the traditional manner.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know, so we saw a lot of these cases come through. And what we wanted to do is to go the individual accounts like that. We would ask them, What did they think about when they were in the detention centers? What were their fears? How did they get detained? [00:14:02] And then we made a video out of it, and it was a montage of all these images and all these fears and thoughts, and their dreams and everything.

And with Selene, what I did was, I made a cyanotype body print of her, and then projected that video down onto the body print itself. And then the other thing that we did is, we had two other accounts, and we had bunk beds. We kind of inserted the video into the bunk beds themselves. So when people came in, what we had ultimately decided to do is recreate the inside of a detention center. And at that time, nobody knew what a detention center looked like.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: I was going to ask, how did you—was it through talking to Selene and having her describe what it was like?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. And all of the other people that had been detained, and just asking them, What did you see? What was it like? And what they described was really pretty horrific, you know, where it was like a prison. Well, it was a prison, because it was ran by a for-profit prison industrial complex.

So what we did was, we started to—you know, we got this big chain link fence, we put that across the opening where our section of the gallery was, and then put a gate on that, razor wire on the top. Put cameras, because they were always watched. And we wanted to get a prison toilet in there, because there was no privacy. And then some said they had bunk beds, so we found bunk beds. [00:16:03] But most of the people were on mats on the ground. And the one thing that they all talked about was this emergency blankets.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: The Mylar blankets, yeah. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. And how the Mylar blankets would mark them. In other words, they would get gray streaks and stuff like that on their body, because the Mylar would come off, right? And how it was very suffocating, because a Mylar blanket doesn't breathe.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: It's plastic.

DELILAH MONTOYA: It's plastic, it doesn't breathe. And how cold they kept the facilities. You know. And of course they were keeping the facilities that cold to keep the—you know, in their minds—the prisoners lethargic, so that they don't move. They had talked about how poor the food was, and how expensive anything that they wanted was.

So one of the things that Orlando did was, he was able to get all of these letters that were coming out. And he went through hundreds and hundreds of letters, and just pulled the ones that began to speak about the issues that we needed to talk about. And we were able to put all of these letters up on the wall.

So when we opened up the exhibition, it was a big exhibition. It was actually a group show, and our piece was towards the back. And people started coming around, up from Houston. There was, I would say, maybe 3[00], 400 people made it to the opening. So our—the *Detention Nation* was a bit of a surprise.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So the group show wasn't around the issue of detention, or—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mm-mm [negative].

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Just our installation.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Just your installation. Wow. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, the *Detention Nation*. So when they came back around the—they were just kind of like, "This doesn't happen here. [00:18:00] This doesn't happen here in Houston. This isn't going on, is it?" We were like, "Yeah, it is." You know, there's a huge facility very close to the airport. There's another facility, the Joe Corley Facility. There's 3,000 people over here. I mean, this is people's reality that's happening now. And so, you know, it was kind of an eye-opener for the community.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah. Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. Yeah, so the exhibition has been showing every year now, since 2015. In a number of venues. The next place it went to was Colorado, at the Museo de las Americas.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, right. Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And Maruca Salazar brought it in. And we went—when it came to Denver, there was a lot of press that we got on the show. Prior to that, in Houston—Houston being Houston, you know—it was almost like—the press was almost like, crickets. They weren't going to touch this one. They weren't going to—you know. Although the community itself was talking about it. And also there was some outreach that came. And during that period of time, that was when the women—do you remember the students that got killed in Mexico?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah, Ayotzinapa?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Well, the parents came into Houston. So we had a discussion in the detention center, in *Detention Nation*. About what was happening, in terms of the—[background voices]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Let's pause for a minute.

[Tape stops, restarts.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. [00:20:00] We took a break because of ambient noise. So you said the parents of the 43 from Ayotzinapa that disappeared, student teachers, they came to Houston?

DELILAH MONTOYA: They came to Houston. We had a press conference there at the Station Museum.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. So like I say, there was a lot of outreach that had gone on, but to get any kind of national coverage, or any—even the local, English-speaking papers, of course, it was crickets with them. With the Latino community, Telemundo came.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? So there was coverage there. But when we went to Denver, we got it all. And the word spread.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Why do you think that the Denver public media was more receptive to it?

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know, I would say it's the location, because Colorado is more of a blue state than it is a red state, in the way that Texas is. And there's a really strong Chicano political community in Denver. So these would be issues that they would be really interested in. And so when we put the *Detention Nation* up there, it just kind of spread like wildfire. Went into Latin America. It actually went across the ocean to—Spanish TV picked

it up too.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow. Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. So we got international coverage on it at that point, which is really important. That's exactly what we wanted. The idea was to create a platform so that we could begin talking about what was going on inside these detention centers, because there was nobody talking about it. There was no—you know, there was no understanding that you have this prison system that had co-opted immigration. [00:22:08]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know? And that—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: As a profit-making—

DELILAH MONTOYA: As a profit-making, money-making facility. You know, everybody that goes into a detention center, these for-profit institutions are getting \$150 per day per person, and they're living in squander. There is no reason why they should be put on the floor. There's no reason why they should be given foil blankets, right? And there's no reason why they can't even contact their lawyer.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So if they want to contact a lawyer, it costs them \$5 a minute—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow!

DELILAH MONTOYA: —to talk to a lawyer, you know? And if they don't have the money, they can't talk to a lawyer. And now what we're seeing currently, they're not even being put in front of a judge.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Monitors.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah, they're using video monitors for their amnesty hearings. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know? Exactly. So you know, has it gotten any better? No. As a matter of fact, it's—you know, and given the system that has been set up for it, of course it's going to get worse. You know? And you have people that are just raking in the money. You know, the lobbying efforts to keep the shelving of human life. And turning them into commodities. Yeah.

So, you know, going back to the idea of community, as I kind of think back about, you know, "What have I done through the duration of my art career?"—is to look at a community that has not necessarily had a voice. [00:24:04] And one of the things that I had always said is that I wanted to create an aesthetic from my own community, one that my community would understand. And that has really been kind of like, the thrust of everything that I've done. And so if you look back at my work, you'll look back that community is intrinsic to everything that I do. Even from the very beginning, I realized that I had to organize it. In other words, the first project that I organized, I did it in such a way where I was the project manager.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right, that was the *Nebraskans* and—or—

DELILAH MONTOYA: *Mexican Nebraskan*.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. [Laughs.] *Mexican Nebraskans*. Right, and you were the project organizer on that.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. We'll probably go ahead and pause.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah, let's pause.

[Tape stops, restarts.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Alright, we're back.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, so—you know, one of the things that I've always done, and what I have been interested in from the very beginning, is the idea of community, and how to give voice and create an aesthetic that would reflect the ideas and the issues of my own community. And I would say through the duration of my work, as I start looking back at it, even going back to the *Mexican Nebraskan*, it's always been about community. It's always been about the Latino, or the community that I'm involved with, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: And even all the way to *Detention Nation*, not only was I interested in creating a community of artist activists, but the interest was to be able to give voice to a community that had no voice, which would be the migrants that have been incarcerated. [00:26:15] And they were basically voiceless, because nobody had seen inside of those detention centers. Nobody was aware of what was going on with those detention centers. Hence, nobody was aware of the human rights violations that were happening, and are happening, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: So I guess, you know, if I were kind of wrap it up and say, you know, what is my position, or the art that I've done in terms of American art—I would say one of the things that I would like to think is that I had a hand in helping to create that aesthetic. You know, how to begin to discuss a history that had not been looked at—a history that was voiceless—and give voice to that. But give it the voice in the perspective of who we are and what we think, right? And that's based on the history, uncovering new histories, uncovering issues, right? And the tenacity of spirit that keeps us going. [00:28:00] That even though—right, we're still here. And we have something to say, and we have contributed, and we are contributing to the very fabric of the aesthetic presence that's here in the Americas. You know—[background voices.]

[Tape stops, restarts.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So, you know, in terms of the aesthetics that—what I like to think about is, just even within the *casta* project that I did, I look at the Mexican *casta* paintings as being something that's very similar to jazz, in that this is one of the—this was born out of the colonial process. And it's unique to the Americas. It's unique, it's our unique voice, right? And what I was doing was responding to that. And embedded in that voice that was being expressed during that period of time, what we see are some really significant statements. And those statements are: "This is who we are. This is our social structure. This is how we are perceived, and this is how we perceive." And that's really everything that I've always wanted to address, you know? And that becomes our own unique way—our own unique genesis that is, you know, a fundamental part of the American voice. [00:30:10]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Wow. And this is also part of what—a couple of days ago when we started, you showed me the project that is going to go up at the High Line.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. Right. And that project is—it's a High Line initiative. They asked 25 artists from five different locations—so five artists from each location—which was Houston, Austin, Chicago, Toronto and New York, to make a poster, basically, a digital file, of monuments for new cities. And when I saw how many different places it was going to go, and where I was going to go, I knew that I had to make a statement that dealt with the family separations. You know, this was something that just could not go away. It was the epitome of this privatized prison system, of that atmosphere that is kind of percolating throughout the United States. And this is the consequence of this, and it's dark. It's the dark side to all of that hatred and misconceptions, and not even knowing your own history, right?

And the way I—I was really busy at the time that they asked me to do this. There was a lot of things that were going on, and LAN! was coming. [00:32:00]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Latino Art Now!, yeah.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Latino Art Now! was coming. So I was having to organize around that, and there was, like—the *Casta* series that I was just wrapping up, and it was going off to other places, there was just a whole lot of things going on, but this kind of fell in my lap, and I just felt like I had to kind of take it on.

And so what I did, I remember school was starting up. And I walked into Jimmy Castillo's studio, and he was doing these pictures of people hugging each other. And they were photographs, but what he did was he put a bitmap on it. That means you get a dot system, and blowing up the dot system so when you get very close to it, it kind of like falls apart. Then when you walk back—and actually, this has been done before. I mean, it's nothing new. And I'm looking at this, and I'm thinking, like, "Wait a minute, [laughs] that's pretty good." And I remember telling Jimmy, "Jimmy, you're a genius!" [They laugh.]

And I knew at that point, what I was really wanted to do was to go in to get mediated image, one that had been up on the Web, one that we had seen, where the mother and child were being reunited. But I also knew that if I put a dot system on that the way that Jimmy had done, it just felt like, Yeah, that's too much of biting what it was. [Laughs.] So I asked him to collaborate with me to do this. I felt that was—you know, and get his name on it as well. Right? So that's why it's a collaboration.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And then I invited him to become a Sin Huellas, so he would be a Sin Huellas. [00:34:01]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. So that it would be a Sin Huellas action.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Got it. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: That way we could really begin to start pushing the idea of *Detention Nation* and all of the writing that has already been done, that Orlando had done, and all the images, and just kind of like really bring it all in.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Keep it going.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Just keep it going that way.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: So of course the problem, the issue on that one was, the image that I wanted to use was a Getty image. Yeah, it was like, Oh, my goodness. And of course it was taken by—what is it?—Reed. His last name was Reed, a journalist. So I had to go and begin to research, Okay, who is he? How can we get usage on that particular image? Because this is going to be everywhere. And I didn't want to bring copyright issues back to High Line.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah, of course.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So I was able to secure the copyright on it for a really hefty fee. [They laugh.] But we did. And I felt that it was really important, because—part of those, we were also thinking, like, "Well, maybe what we could do is just kind of re-enact them." Like, you can't re-enact something like that.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know? There is so much visual language in there. There is this kind of like, body movement. I mean, because the image we used was this mother holding her son. And you can see, she's kind of like, kissing him, and he's shut down. You can just see he's just shut down. And she's desperate to bring him back. You know? And this is the consequence of this kind of violence that is committed on these young children. And these young mothers!

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah, the lasting legacy of that trauma is yet unknown on these people's lives. [00:36:02]

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. And what I wanted to do is just kind of like, show it. You know, this is the ugly truth. This is what this kind of consequence, these actions to a community. And a community that has been violated throughout the colonial process. You know, brown women have been violated. And yet it goes with impunity. Right?

And I just wanted to put it up into—like, in your face, "This is the America that you refuse to see." You know? You know, I can't help but think of the work of Violette Bule, where she collected all of the—when the Whitney opened up, and these little cards that said, "Can You See America From Here?" You know. And I think of that image, and I would like to lay out the question, you know, to the powers of the United States. Asking them, Can you see America from here?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah, that's intense. And there's so many different ways to interpret that, right?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That's a really sort of heavily laden question, right? It can mean, from the subjectivity of the women and the children, what are they seeing about the United States? This place they've come to seeking amnesty asylum, right, from horrific conditions that had been created—

DELILAH MONTOYA: —by the United States. [00:38:01] You know, and that other little piece of history that they

forget to acknowledge, that it was the United States that has a hand in that violence. You know, just by what they've already done to the brown communities that are in the United States. And when that gets exported out, it went out like a wildfire, into Latin America, into these communities that have no idea of what they were dealing with. You know?

And I saw that early on in the '90s, when I was teaching at Hampshire College. I clearly saw what was happening. Because I remember I had a student, had gone into San Salvador, and she—I guess it was like a halfway house. It was a halfway house for these young men that had been incarcerated in the United States, in the prisons. And they had been assimilated, indoctrinated into the gangs. And they didn't even know Spanish. And they get deported back to San Salvador. There's no way for them to be integrated back into that community. So what they did was they did what they knew.

And I remember she was taking pictures of these young men, and I'm looking at this, and I'm going, "Are you in LA? Is this LA?" She goes, "No, this is San Salvador." But those are all LA tattoos.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah, LA gang tattoos, yeah. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah, kids that fled the Civil War in El Salvador, supported by the Reagan administration and prior, radicalized here in gang culture and sent back home.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. And that's basically what started the cartels.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah, wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. So like I say, I saw that early on. [00:40:00] I saw that clearly, so, you know, all of that just kind of came back, particularly with *Detention Nation*, when we started seeing the backlash of the so-called cartels and the violence. And then you see people fleeing from that because nothing is being done.

And as an activist, as a Chicana, I mean, how can you not do anything or say anything about that, or create some kind of visual response to that? These are huge, huge crises that are not necessarily being discussed and understood. Yeah.

So those are the things, those are the communities, those are the things that I think about and that are really important to me. And that's what—I think that's what I want my work to begin to—if I was going to say, "What do I want, how do I want to be perceived," I would want to be perceived as somebody who is willing to take that chance and that risk. To make work that may or may not be commercially viable, but had something to say.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That's great.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Are there any other questions?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Well, you know, what we've been touching upon today is both how the world that you've lived in and the world around you changes and stays the same. [00:42:06] You know, the ways, the strategies that you've developed as an artist over the course of your whole career to create community, to create an aesthetic that speaks to and with and for that community. I'm curious, you know, you've lived in different places: Omaha, Albuquerque, New England, Houston—

DELILAH MONTOYA: —Los Angeles.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Los Angeles.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right, yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: How do you think the art world—has the art world changed, stayed the same as you've operated through it?

DELILAH MONTOYA: That's a really good question. I think I really can't really speak too much about the art world itself, other than saying that I've changed. And I've changed because I learned more. I've changed because I've seen things, right? I would say that when I first started out, you know, back when I was like 16, thinking of myself as being a Chicana artist, and people saying, "There's no such thing as Chicana artists"—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That's right. [They laugh.]

DELILAH MONTOYA: I'm going, "Well, I'm going to be one! That's what I'm going to do." I was very, very naïve. I just knew that the work that I was going to make, or the work that I was thinking about, was important. And I was part of something. And I was part of something that was really viable, and it was going to change the world, right? You know.

And as I started kind of navigating all of that, and trying to figure out, "Well, how am I going to make that happen when I have no resources?" [Laughs.] Right? [00:44:02] You know, I just had to begin thinking out of the box. You know, and I had obligations to my daughter, I had obligations to my family and that I had to work. But I also had the drive and the need to make art as well, and just really kind of talk about what it is I was seeing.

I would say there was a lot of naiveté early on, which was a good thing, because I was that little bumble bee that didn't know that I was not supposed to be flying, and I was flying. [They laugh.] It was, "I'm going to fly, I'm flying, I'm two inches off the ground, but I'm still flying!" Right? [Laughs.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That's a great image.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? And then coming across a lot of people that were willing to just kind of open up their hearts and give me really good suggestions and make me feel as though I can be an artist, you know?

Of course, some of those people, like Yolanda Lopez, she was—I remember I had just gotten—yeah, my work had just gotten into the CARA exhibition. And Holly was very good at getting me onto certain panels and such. And Yolanda and I were on a panel together. And was just really pretty excited, because I really loved her work a lot. And I remember, she was very adamant in her talk, like, "And we must mentor! We must mentor the young!" And that's Yolanda, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: And I was thinking about that and what she was saying. Then I thought, Gosh, I would really love to be mentored by you! [They laugh.] And we were coming down an elevator, and I was standing right next to her. And I go, "Yolanda, I want you to mentor me." [00:46:03]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, that's great!

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? And, you know, I could call her up at any time, and she would just give me advice about what it is I needed to do, or what I was thinking about, and all of that. So Yolanda was a really great person.

Early on, of course, Alurista, who wrote the script, right, and introduced me to a lot of the activities that was happening in Denver. That was great mentorship there. When I was in Denver, when I lived in Denver for a little bit and I was photographing there, there was Chispas. And Chispas, of course, was Maruca and Danny Salazar. And they were very good mentors. And you know, kind of helped me understand the volume of things, and how they were—I watching how they were trying to make things work, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. Then of course when I made it into Albuquerque because I wanted to go back to school, you know, the people that were really helping me a lot understand all of these kind of complications and all that was Bernadette Rodriguez.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Rodriguez? Mm-hmm?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Was she at the University?

DELILAH MONTOYA: And LeFebre.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: LeFebre?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, Francisco LeFebre. Right? And what they were doing at that time when I came into town, they were trying to get together a cultural center, a Hispanic Cultural Center. So they were some of the first movers and shakers on that Hispanic Cultural Center.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, I didn't know that. Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. You know, and they were kind of like, pulling me in and asking me questions, and connecting—and that's how I connected to CARA, was through them.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know, they were the ones that were instrumental. [00:48:02] They were married at the time. So they were having a lot of meetings and trying to bring the community together. And, you know, that's

where I saw this kind of community activism really begin to happen, and how they were very instrumental in doing that. So I saw that.

And then of course Cecilio. Eventually I was introduced to Cecilio. Cecilio was, you know, very helpful. And just kind of watching and seeing how he was pulling together communities, and how he was making things happen, you know?

So all of these people, you know, really—I had two lives, I remember going to the University because all the facilities were there, and I could work. It was like having this really amazing studio that I could just kind of like, walk into. And I lived four blocks away from it. And then my source of inspiration was coming from the community itself. The Latino-Chicano community out there. And I was beginning to see a lot of the issues and the way people were working, and how it was very interdisciplinary. You know, the musicians and poets and the visual artists, everybody was coming together to create this unique community. And in the universities, of course, you don't get that. Everything is silent.

So I would have to say the University was really great there, getting me into the facilities I needed to get into, and providing just the technology. But it was the community that gave me the inspiration. Yeah. You know, I would have to think about it that way. [00:50:01]

You know, eventually, I was able to—which was really surprising, because usually this doesn't happen—but I got my undergraduate at UNM, and then I was able to get into the graduate program. Usually you don't see somebody being able to go—you have to leave to go somewhere else to get into the graduate program. So I was really fortunate I could stay there, and mostly because of my daughter. I didn't want to pull my daughter away from family and all that, you know? And the person, I would say, that was really very, very helpful at the University for me was Patrick Nagatani.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: What is his last name?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Nagatani.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Nagatani. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Was he in the Art department?

DELILAH MONTOYA: He was in the Art department, a photographer in the Art department. He actually came in from California. So he was really aware of how impactful the Chicano arts were. So he understood how important that was, whereas my other professors, they were kind of along the lines of, "There's no such thing as Chicano art!" [Laughs.] Of course I knew there was, which has always been the story of my community, because we're so invisible, that, you know, we're—yeah. We were never acknowledged and recognized, even though it really did happen.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And that's a whole part of education as well, right? It's not just what happens in the university setting. Here, you know, what you're articulating is that there was the educational experiences and the facilities that you were able to access at the University, but there was a whole parallel and intersecting education that was happening within the community here.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Exactly.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And those two things, it sounds like, were really what set you on a path.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Absolutely.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Is the ability to have access to both communities, and to be the kind of lynchpin through your work. [00:52:03] Of connecting those experiences.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Exactly. So that I was able to—at least I was able to create the work, right, and have that space to create it, but also be able to have the inspiration and understand those huge issues that were out there, and begin to be inspired by other artists, other than the printmaker or other photographers, but be inspired by poets, musicians, dancers, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Actresses. You've talked about Mónica.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mónica's amazing, yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah. I mean, I see your face light up. The people who are going to listen to this oral history

can't see your face the way that I can. And I can see, every time you mention certain people, the way your face lights up. And it's so clear that they're such an integral part of this place and what feeds you, and how you make work, and why you make work.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And, you know, the other thing too, I have to say there was a point where the academic started intersecting with what it was that I was doing. And there was key people in there.

For instance, Flora Clancy. Flora Clancy was super important. Even though she did Mesoamerica, she was very aware of how Chicanos were using that information. So she was very curious about me, right? And I remember taking class after class, because what I wanted to do was pick up that Mesoamerican aesthetic. I wanted to make sure that that was part of my vocabulary, right? And of course with the *Chicano Codices*, right, she let me use that as my class project. So rather than having to write about it, it gave me the chance to visually create that aesthetic. [00:54:05]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: To internalize it, and to contribute to it, to the lasting life of that form, of those images, of those mythologies. I mean, that, to me, is so profound about that project. It's not just an artist appropriating something. It's an artist participating in a living tradition.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Exactly. You know, and I was very clear that's what I wanted to do. That's the way I wanted to think about myself.

You know, the other person that was really important on my graduate committee, of course, would be Chon Noriega. He was on my graduate committee.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, I didn't know that.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So tell me—can you talk a little bit about that?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Well, you know, Chon had just come on over at the University of New Mexico. And it was Holly who told me, "You should get him on your graduate committee." So, you know, I did. I went over there, asked him. And he was very helpful. And I would say the way in which he was extremely helpful was on my—when we had to write the thesis. And he kept making me rewrite it! [They laugh.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Because he is a beautiful writer.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? I'm going, like, [groans]! I really didn't want to keep rewriting this thing, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So which project was your graduate thesis?

DELILAH MONTOYA: It was *Sacred Heart*.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: The *Sagrado Corazón*, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: *Sagrado Corazón*, yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So Chon kept making you rewrite the written portion of your graduate thesis.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. He was the last one to sign off on it. Would not sign off on it until I rewrote parts of it. And it was very annoying. [Laughs.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: But now as a professor?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, of course.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: [Laughs.]

DELILAH MONTOYA: No, of course.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Are there other folks that you can think of that we haven't touched on, who—you've talked about Judy Baca, you've talked about Laura Aguilar, the people in the community here. [00:56:10] I didn't know that Chon Noriega, who's now at LACMA and at UCLA, was on your thesis committee. I forgot that he was here in New Mexico. Today you mentioned Yolanda Lopez.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right, yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Are there any other artists that—either here or there, or someplace else?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Well, I would say Pola Lopez. Pola Lopez was another artist that, you know, and Goldie Garcia. And it was at the time when Alma López's—with her Virgen—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. The whole scandal around her Virgin of Guadalupe, and Sirena, and the show that was here in Albuquerque, right? That got—

DELILAH MONTOYA: No, it was in Santa Fe.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, it was in Santa Fe, right, that the archbishop tried to shut down—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Let's pause for a minute.

[Tape stops, restarts.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay, picking up again after some sips of water. So you were talking about Alma López.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. So right about the time that I was going off to Houston, there was this whole incident that began to happen around the work of Alma López that was curated by Tey.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: I always get her last name wrong.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, Nunn. Tey Marianna Nunn, who is now the curator at the National Hispanic Cultural Center. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. And so what had occurred is that—and I think it probably had more to do—had a lot to do with the timing of it, because it was right during Lent when this went up, right? So of course, you have a very stoic Chicano community, and then you have this image, and it was more—the image of the show was kind of lined up like Stations of the Cross, and they put a computer at the altar. [00:58:10]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: In the Folk Art Museum. Right? So that kind of—and then, of course, the last lynchpin, of course, was the Virgen revealing what's under her robes. And I think for the most part, it probably would have been overlooked, but it was Lent.

So what occurred, of course, was all of these protests and busloads of people from—you know, the different churches and church organizations started coming in and protesting, wanting this piece down. And I think it just kind of got out of hand. A lot of it had to do with the way that the media was covering it, you know, and it just really kind of snowballed out of control.

And of course, I knew Alma. And she was calling me up, like, "Delilah"—[they laugh] you know, "What's going on in there?" Right? And I was talking to my friends at that time, Pola Lopez and Goldie Garcia. And we were saying, Well, as Chicanas, we really need to support her on this. You know, she shouldn't be hung out to dry. I mean, you know, this was really hard, it was difficult.

So at the time, Pola had a studio. And it was over there in Santa Fe. It was up where the Blue Corn Restaurant was at. It was just almost right across from that. And she says, "Well, hey, let's just have a show, and we'll just call it, *Las Malcriadas*." [They laugh.] [01:00:02]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Let's just have a bad girls show, right? We'll bring Alma, and we'll bring her work in, and then we'll just put all of our bad girl work up, right? So that's what we did. And then during that, as in support of Alma López, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow. What did you show?

DELILAH MONTOYA: I decided I was going to go really deep, bad-girl, right? And I had this image of—I called it St. Sebastian. And it was an image of this young man's crotch that had seven piercings on his [genitals -DM], right? [Laughs.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? I blew it up to about four feet.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: It was, like, in your face.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Haven't seen that image. [Laughs.]

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. Most people—well, you know, at that particular point in time, all you had to do is come to our bad girl show, and you would have seen—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: You would have seen that piece, yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow. Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So yeah, so that was one of those images that was interesting, because people really didn't want to get too close to it. [They laugh.] But they wanted to see it.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: But they didn't want anybody knowing that they were seeing it. [Laughs.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That's interesting.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And so it was really kind of causing a lot of tension. I think it made the exhibition kind of interesting, right? But it did kind of cause—you know. And at the same time, Judy Chicago was having a show. And there was another piece that I had done a long time ago that was called, *Sometimes I Think You Are Afraid of Me*. And it was a mango that I had split open, and had pushed teeth into it, right? And I put it on a plate. And it just said, "Sometimes I Think You Are Afraid of Me." [01:02:00] So we put that piece up, and always called it—that was the dinner plate that Judy Chicago forgot.

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DELILAH MONTOYA: [They laugh.] And she was having a show, and of course there was all this noise about this bad girl show that was happening, you know, in town. And Judy Chicago showed up.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow. She came to the show.

DELILAH MONTOYA: She came to the show, right? So she saw the dinner plate that she forgot. [Laughs.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow. So are there other Chicano artists that you wish you would have met, that you could have met?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, there is. I would have really loved to have met Louis Bernal. He was the one Chicano photographer that I was introduced to when I was just starting out at Metro Technical Community College. They had given me this—the librarian there had given me this big kind of, like, zine I remember it was. It might have been like 24 inches high and 15 inches wide.

And in that, they had—it was just all of his current work. And I remembered looking at that work, and how beautiful the color was on that. And it was just this very—you know, in the quiet work of Chicanos in their homes. I remember the homes reminded me a lot of my grandmother's home, you know, with the Virgens that were up, and pictures of the families, and just very humbly decorated. And the faces were so haunting, as they were looking back. And I really wanted to—and it inspired me. This is what I wanted to do.

And I think it had a lot to do with the ideas of putting together the *Mexican Nebraskan*. [00:02:05] You know, and just to really kind of like, look at that. Then really getting excited about documentary photography, because this was documentary photography that had its own unique aesthetic look, and it resembled me. And I had never seen that in any of my classes that I was looking at the work, other than maybe *East 100th Street* by Bruce Davidson. And I think maybe that's why I liked that work as well. I mean, because of the way that that community was being seen. But it was clearly Louis Bernal's work that—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. And later, I found out that Luis Jiménez was close friends with Louis Bernal. And that he was really profoundly affected by his death. And I later met—you know, at the time she was his girlfriend. Let's see, what is her name? She's over there in Mexico right now. I can't remember her name.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: She was Louis Bernal's girlfriend? Is she a photographer?

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know, she basically was a promoter. At that time, she was promoting Chicano work. What is her name?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Let's pause for a minute.

[Tape stops, restarts.]

DELILAH MONTOYA: And so later I met Marietta Bernsdorf. Who currently is married to Antonio Turok. [00:04:02]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. But she had been with Louis Bernal?

DELILAH MONTOYA: She had been with Louis Bernal. So that was kind of my connection to him. So she was able to tell me a lot more information about Louis Bernal. And then also, Louis was able to kind of like, fill in a lot more for me about who he was, and what he was thinking about. And that early on, he was actually doing abstract work, right?

And then he started doing his documentary work. I remember Luis telling me that he was on a committee, and they were reviewing for, I think, a grant that he had put—Louis Bernal had put in for this grant. And the committee wasn't going to look at the work because it was so documentary, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And Luis says he kind of stopped the committee, and he says, "Wait a minute, wait a minute. Take a look at the compositions here. These are unique compositions. There's a quality eye, they're very painterly." You know, and he kind of had the committee begin to look at it differently. And then they began to see all of that that was going in, in terms of the way his eye was working. And I think that was one of the things that I was really drawn to, in terms of Louis Bernal's work, is that how painterly it was.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And you mentioned another photographer just now, whose work inspired you. Bruce—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Oh, Bruce Berman.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Bruce Berman?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. Well, Bruce Berman was a friend of Luis Jiménez.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. And I just saw some of his work, and we were able to just kind of very briefly recognize each other.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Got it. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. [00:06:00] And I saw a lot of his work in Luis' collections. And I began to realize that he's a really strong kind of border photographer. And the influence that he had there, in terms of the work that he was doing.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Other Chicano artists you wish you had met?

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know, the artists of the Border Art Workshop. A lot of the work that was being done with the Border Art Workshop, I really wish that I had a chance to go there and just kind of collaborate with them, and just even kind of watch to see what was going on there. You know, because a lot of these very strong artists came out of that Border Art Workshop, right? And I think—wasn't Coco Fusco part of that?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Guillermo Gómez-Peña was.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And that was right around the time they started collaborating. I don't know if she was actually formally part of the BAW.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Uh-huh [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: So, you know, I guess Gómez-Peña is another person that I wish I would have met.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: It's not too late. [Laughs.]

DELILAH MONTOYA: Nope, it's not too late. Coco Fusco is another person that was really instrumental in—you know, I loved her work. I love what it is that she's doing, right? And I've had like, brief encounters with Coco Fusco, and they've always been very amazing. Yeah. And she was the one that got my work into *Only Skin Deep*.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right, of course. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. And she brought in that huge photo mural [laughs] into the discussion. So she's really very instrumental in helping me in terms of a career, as [curating my work -DM]. [00:08:00]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That's great. And so, speaking of curators and being instrumental in people's careers, why don't you maybe talk a little bit about your own curatorial work? Because as I've been here in Albuquerque, you've been organizing a show. But it goes further back than that. Yesterday you told me you collaborated with Laura Pérez and *Las Hociconas*. And now you're working on a show for Lubbock, of women photographers.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Correct. Correct.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So you're paying it forward, or paying it backward, or [they laugh]—

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know, it goes back to that whole thing about community.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? That, you know, I think it's important for us as image makers, as artists, to not only inspire our own work, but to inspire everybody else's work as well, and to bring everybody forward, together. Because that's truly, when those voices coming together, that things begin to happen. Right? And you can move things and change things that way.

And so, you know, there was a period of time when I got involved in a group here in town that was—we called ourselves Mezcla. This was just about the time when I had come back into town, I'm trying to remember. It was in the '90s. It was Oscar Lozoya, Cecilio García.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oscar?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Lozoya.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Lozoya? Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: The other person's name, he was—actually he was kind of heading up on the whole thing. What is his name? [00:10:00] I'm forgetting his name. It was myself—give me two minutes here. [Patricio Trujillo -DM]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Want to pause?

[Tape stops, restarts.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Alright, so we just took a short break. So you were talking about this group in Albuquerque in the '90s, Mezcla?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mezcla, that's right. And it was—you know, some of the artists that I had become acquainted with. And of course Oscar Lozoya was one of them, and Cecilio was the one who kind of like, brought me into it. And what we were doing was putting together shows throughout the city. All of our works. And what came out of that was, you know, I really started getting involved in putting a show together. Right? And kind of putting some of the things that I knew about shows. So eventually, what happened was, is that I was approached by 516 to—they wanted to do a show on Chicano artists. And they asked me to curate that.

And so what I did was I went to Cecilio, because Cecilio had such a long history with the community and artists,

and throughout New Mexico. And he started going through his Rolodex, people that he knew. And we started, just kind of like, putting together all of these kind of key artists that were starting in Albuquerque, going from Las Cruces to Albuquerque to Santa Fe, you know, working up our way towards Taos, and just really following the Rio Grande that way.

And I remember going into artists' studios, and just—it was an education for me. It really was. Because I knew of other people, but I hadn't really gone into their studios and sat down and had a lot of conversation with the community. [00:12:04] And it was a really big eye-opener there for me. And we called it *Chicano*—the show was called something *Chicano*, I wish I could remember exactly what that was. [*Nuevo Xicano* -DM]

So the whole thing was, is once it got put together and we had the opening, it was just spectacular. I mean, we had people coming in—because that never really happened at 516, where we had this huge, you know, the New Mexican Chicanos coming together like that. And of course, that had a lot to do with Cecilio. And I was able to start picking out works that I thought were really significant and such. And using my eye and what I knew about Chicano works and Chicano art at that time, to kind of like, pull it together.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: So that was actually—it was a lot of fun. But it was hard work. And probably, as you know, curation is really hard.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: It's work. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: It's work. It's hard work. And you have to—you're working with a lot of different people, and they had a lot of different ideas, and trying to kind of pull it together in kind of a unifying voice, right?

And the other show that—then 516 came back to me again, and they wanted to do another Chicano show. And it was at that time that Laura Pérez had just put out her book. And I remember at that time I was in Houston, and I realized, like, it would be really nice for her to—maybe she would want to collaborate with me. And she had already gone through a whole listing of artists that she had written about. And I thought, Well, it would be interesting to bring back some of the New Mexican Chicanos, then also bring kind of international artists as well. [00:14:02] And then just putting all of this together, right? And we decided to look at women artists, right, the Chicanas. And we started to call it *Las Hociconas*.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: [Laughs.]

DELILAH MONTOYA: So it was another one of those kind of, like, bad girl shows. And part of that was the idea of bringing Alma López back. So one of the people that we had in there was Alma López. There was Diane Gamboa, another one of these really marvelous bad girls, right? Elisa Jiménez was in the show, right? And *santeras*. We brought a couple *santeras* that did some bad girl pieces for us.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: That was really—that was a lot of fun. And one of the things that they asked was for me to put some of my own work in, and I remember at that time I was, like, Yeah, but a curator is not really supposed to put their own work into a show. I mean, that's just not done. Then they told me, No, no, no, you have to be a part of this.

And Pola Lopez was a part of the show. Right? All in all, there was about, like, 18 artists. Connie—I want to—is her name Jiménez as well? She does these really wonderful fabric work. I may not have her right name, but I remember the piece that she put up was just magnificent.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: The show was really good. It was really strong. And when we had the opening, we really packed them in.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. Yeah. And Elisa had the main gallery, and she did a whole fashion show for us, which was—and it was all based on the idea of the snake in the apple, you know, the Garden of Eden. And so that was kind of some of my first experiences of pulling together a community of artists, right? [00:16:03] And I saw how powerful that was, you know, where it gave everybody kind of a sense of belonging.

So the next kind of like, pulling together Latino artists and Latinx artists came with organizing a directory. You know, a Latinx directory in Houston. And we were doing this for the Latino Art Now!.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right, which just happened this spring of 2019.

DELILAH MONTOYA: That's right, in 2019. And one of the things that—what I was interested in, in terms of Latino Art Now!—it was kind of like this perfect time for the Latinx artists in Houston to get some sort of, like, play. Because it's a desert there in terms of Latinx artists to be able to come together as a community. Because there virtually is no community center that has been funded well enough to where they can bring all of the artists together, and to have some sort of international recognition. I mean, I think of TBH that has been there for a while, but—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: TBH?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: What's that?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Was it Talento Bilingue?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, Talento Bilingue, okay, Houston. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? And there's also MECA. But they don't have anything that is substantial for visual artists. And there's no artist-in-residencies, there's no outreach to the larger international community, there's nobody there that actually curates. There's no curator. Right? [00:18:00] So virtually, you know, it's half there. But yet, you have this huge population, 45 percent Latinos. Right?

And so I began to think, like, Is there any way that we can pull something together virtually? You know, and one of those ways of doing that, I thought, was like, Why can't we make a directory? Right? A registry and directory of Latinx artists in Houston. And there again, I kind of pulled together a collection of people I thought could really be instrumental, because they all had reached to certain pockets of Latinx communities. And there were some curators that I knew, and other artists that had been really actively building that kind of community.

So I pulled together Moe Penders, Theresa Escobedo, Tina Hernández, who I had worked with before, right? And Gabriel Martínez. And, what is her name, Julia Barbosa Landois.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Lobida? [ph]

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, Julia. Let me see. Landios [ph], Julia [inaudible] Landios [ph], and that's L-A-N-D-O-I-S [sic].

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. D-O-I-S? [sic]

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Francis Almendárez. [00:20:00]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: But what we decided to do was, first we had to come up with the name, you know, back over there to that naming thing again. And the name we came up with was Manteca. And it was, like, Manteca. And that's because we're using the acronym, Latinx Artist Registry Directory. So you look at that, and that's LARD. [They laugh.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: I was, like, Where are we going with this, Delilah? And the word for lard in Spanish is *manteca*. I love it.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And so we went online to see if there was any *mantecas* up there, and there was, like, the shoe company that was Manteca. So we had to add the H-T-X. So that's mantecahtx.com. And so the dream was, is that it was going to be a registry, directory, where people would self-post. Because that was going to be the fastest way, and that was the way in which people could really get their content up there without—you know, what they wanted, without us having to do so much intervention. And we could get as many as possible, right? And also kind of like, form a community.

So I was charged with trying to figure out, How are we going to pay for the interface? [Laughs.] How are we going to pay for the interface? How are we going to get this going? How are we going to get this marketing? You know, and probably all of those skills that I learned about project management, starting off way back in Omaha, and then later working at the SUB Theater, where we were marketing these events and such, so all of those

skills kind of came into play for me. [00:22:01] It's like, Okay, yes, I think I can do this. We can make it happen.

So we started—yeah, I had told them, Well, we need to write a grant, and we have to go through the HAA, you know, Houston Arts Alliance. Because they were very interested in Latino Art Now!. And I knew that there was potential for funding that would come through there. And I was really busy at the time. I had asked all these helpers, Can anybody help write this grant? I remember that really clearly. And I had just come back from [Boulder -DM], where I was—they had asked me to go out there and review portfolios and things. And I came back, and it was due in three days, and nothing had happened.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, boy.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? So I remember just kind of literally getting off the plane, and then just starting to write up the grant. I just—I put hours and hours and hours, as fast as I could. Called a quick meeting together, Let's look this over. Okay, you straighten out this part, you straighten out this part, I'll straighten—and we just all sat there and we—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Fixed it?

DELILAH MONTOYA: —fixed it. [Laughs.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Don't you love that kind of project management?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Delegate. Manage and delegate, but it means doing a lot of the work.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. That's exactly what that means. I mean, when they say "the project manager," I just look for the person with the twitch. You'll find the project manager.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That's funny.

DELILAH MONTOYA: But the beautiful thing about it is, we got the money.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow. From the Houston Arts Alliance? Or—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Well, it's through the Houston Arts Alliance, but it was a city initiative grant. And we got the money. Of course, the money came in December.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: LAN! was in the spring.

DELILAH MONTOYA: We weren't going to get any of the money until February, right? [00:24:00] Right? So I had to figure out, how do we put up a whole website where people can self-profile, all of that. And I remember, it was right around Christmastime, and I was just frantic. I was just getting on the computer and I was just researching. And I found this one company that was called eDirectory. And they were in-budget. It looked like we could work with them, it looked like everything was going to—we would be able to do it with them, right? And they were kind of a little startup that was happening. And they had already wrote all the scripting. So it was just a matter of bringing in the template, and then we had to just kind of like, customize the template.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. Okay. Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So that really launched for LAN!, but it was—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. It was done by the community.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Wow, that's great. So it's still up and running?

DELILAH MONTOYA: It's still up and running. So the wonderful thing about it was, is that—let's see, what was her name? Oh, my gosh.

I was introduced to Yeiry. And Yeiry had just come in from—Yeiry Guevara. She had just come in from New York. She had been out in New York for about eight years, working with nonprofits, just kind of being that one person that was putting together, you know, websites, and just kind of doing all that administration. The money had come in, and I was able to just hire her and say—and she did not have anything to do. And it was like, perfect. I mean, it was literally—Moe told me about her. I called her up. She was looking for work, right? I says, "Can you meet me in two hours?" [00:26:00] "Yes."

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And what is her last name? Yeiry—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Guevara. So G-U-E-V-A-R-A.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: And I sat down and talked to her for about an hour, two hours. "We just bought this, open it."

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right. Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: "Open it up."

ADRIANA ZAVALA: "Get it going."

DELILAH MONTOYA: "Get it going. Let's customize it."

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: And she was just amazing. We went in there, you know, we were able to get everything customized the way we want. She was able to talk to the tech people, because I knew—I was looking at this, I just didn't have time to do this. I mean, this was like, 24/7 for the next two weeks because this thing has to get up, like, now. Right? And she did it. She got it up.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That's great. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: And then of course, the logos were designed by Theresa Escobedo, designed the logos and such. So then it was a matter of, How do we get people to sign into it? So what we decided to do, and we wrote it into the grant, is that we would have a series of exhibitions that was going to be done in conjunction with LAN!.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And then if they posted, what we would do—we had three curators, and that was of course Moe, Tina and Theresa, that were going to put shows out from the postings. And it worked out great. I mean, currently there's—let's see, how many? I think there's like 180-something postings. Yeah. So if you just kind of, like, look down—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Here, visual arts, 187.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Thirty-four out of the performing arts, and 37—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Literary.

DELILAH MONTOYA: —from the literary arts.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. That's great.

DELILAH MONTOYA: That's like, over 200 postings of Houston artists.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah. Delilah and I are looking at the website right now. [00:28:00] So I pulled it up. And you can see that artists have been posting stuff. That's fabulous.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. And what's really beautiful about this Manteca is that they can also post their events, they can post events there on their page. They can put five images up. There's an artist statement they can put in. They can upload their—they can get PDF uploaded onto—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, their CV?

DELILAH MONTOYA: CV. They can link to videos, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That's great.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And they can also link to their Instagram accounts.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That's great. So you created a community to create a community, that is now creating community.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Exactly. That is now creating community.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That's really great.

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know, for a community that had no voice. Right? And of course, you know, you can't do these things by yourself. It truly takes a village. And a project manager. [They laugh.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: And a project manager. It takes a village, and a mayor. [They laugh.]

DELILAH MONTOYA: And a project manager who is willing to make sure that everything is going on target.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Wow. So what next, Delilah? We have about an hour left.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ADRIANA ZAVALA: If you want to keep talking.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Well, let's see. Where can we go from here?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Well, you're working on a project now.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, that's right. I am working on a project now. You know, there again, thinking about where things are at, just kind of—I guess I—you know, looking back again, it's always been about kind of watching this progression of Chicano-Latino-Hispanic—I mean, you know, there's so many words that we can throw [laughs] in there, which comes down to a population whose ground has been pulled out from under them. [00:30:09] You know? So when you come across these many names to identify basically the same community, it means that this community has no grounding.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That's an interesting way to look at it.

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know? And I'm one of these people that, you know, I'll go with the flow. Sure, we can be Latinos and Latinx, and, you know, however that point in time is, that reflects where we're at politically and how we perceive ourselves at this given point in time, because we're talking about a community that is continually reinventing themselves. You know, we're continually in that process. It hasn't stopped.

So one of the things that I began to think about is the whole idea of postcolonial, and ideas of decolonizing. And certainly these are words that other artists have been using, you know, and it's given me kind of pause to reflect and think about it. And it's a very—you know, emerging artists that are using these terms, right? They're using Latinx, they're using decolonizing, postcolonial. And so one of the things I've been doing is just kind of really looking at, What does this mean? Of course I'm very familiar with it, because that's kind of what we've been doing all along, you know? The terms are kind of changing, and the ways in which we think about ourselves are expanding, which is great. I think this is very important. So it's not just the *mexicano* and the Chicano community, but it's expanding to reach out to the rest of—all the community that's there, that's us. [00:32:05]

You know, I don't see any hard definitions. And what brings us all together, you know, in terms of people of color, is that we're dealing with the same colonizer. And that's really what brings us together, because there's so much overlap in our experiences, and that we experience the same struggles. Right?

So, two things that I'm working on. One is a panel at the SPE, which I—usually I don't. I've never really worked with SPE, just because I've wanted to just really kind of concentrate on Latino and Latinx.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. What is SPE?

DELILAH MONTOYA: Study for Photographic Education.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: And it's coming to Houston, so I thought, You know, this would be a really great time to put a panel in there where we can talk about postcolonial and decolonizing in photography. And because of Manteca, I started seeing a lot of artists, photographers that are kind of working in those same lines. And so what I thought would be really important to do is create a panel of photographers that are working that way, so that we could begin to talk about ideas of decolonizing. And the panel is called *Double Vision [sic]* [*Rephotographing the Boundaries: A Double Consciousness*].

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, okay. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: You know, postcolonial photography.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow. And when is that going to take place?

DELILAH MONTOYA: That's going to happen in March.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Let's see, the people on the panel are from all over Latin America, because what we see in Houston of course is, there's a lot of—it's kind of a gateway from South America. [00:34:14] We see Central Americans coming in, of course the *mexicanos* are there. So it's kind of like a nexus. It's not strictly what is experienced in Florida, but it does have the Florida experience. It's not strictly, but it's experienced in the Southwest. But it does have the Southwest experience, right? So these two forces are actually coming together in Houston, which makes it a really unique place.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: So, let's see if I have—so the other thing too—what makes Houston really unique is the Fotofest is there.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? And Wendy Watriss is really interested in Latin American photography. So I had asked her if she would be the moderator for the panel.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: And she was very willing to do that. So we wrote it up that way. And Latinx photographers that we're looking at—of course, I'll be on the panel. Jan Rattia, that's R-A-T-T-I-A, Christina Velásquez, and Francis Almendárez. So us four will be on that panel. And what we're doing is discussing our work as both a reclaimed and a hybrid identity.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah. And now—I'll just kind of read this a little bit, "This condition generates a double consciousness, one that goes to the United States to live, and then returns to find it can no longer identify with the communities left behind." [00:36:00] And so we're going to discuss our work along those lines.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: That sounds amazing. And you mentioned another project?

DELILAH MONTOYA: The other project that we're working on—I'm still waiting to see whether or not they'll accept this panel.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, I thought—okay. Oh, I hope so. I'm planning to go. [They laugh.] Wow.

DELILAH MONTOYA: So I don't know, maybe they'll think that Latinx photographers don't exist. [Laughs.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, wow. Well—

DELILAH MONTOYA: We'll find out what SPE thinks, right? [Laughs.]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Right.

DELILAH MONTOYA: I'll get back with you on that one. Because I have been told that I don't exist.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah. Yeah, wow. Okay. So, pending, but—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Pending. So the one that I'm working on right now is, Lubbock had asked me to curate a show. What I decided to do was curate a show with the title of *Seeking Tongues: Postcolonial Photographies*. And there again, looking at the idea of postcolonial. But this would be six, you know, what I would consider postcolonial photographers. People that are working more or less in that genre. And I'm looking at the works of Lupita Tinnen—and that's T-I-N-N-E-N—Nydia Blas, Sandra de la Loza, and Violette Bule, as well as—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Cara Romero.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Cara Romero.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative], who we met yesterday.

DELILAH MONTOYA: That's right. Cara Romero, and then also—now she's my student, why shouldn't I—I should know her name.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh, Hulleah. [00:38:00]

DELILAH MONTOYA: Hulleah. And also, I'm looking at the works of—sometimes my brain just doesn't function with names—what is her name? If I can just remember her first name. She hasn't gotten back with me either, so it was like, [groans]. But that's—

ADRIANA ZAVALA: I'm going to pause.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah.

[Tape stops, restarts.]

DELILAH MONTOYA: And the other person, of course, is Monica Kennedy.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Okay. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So you're still in conversation with these various artists and figuring out who will be in the show.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ADRIANA ZAVALA: But the theme is really interesting, *Seeking Tongues: Postcolonial Photographies*. That's great. And that will be up in Lubbock.

DELILAH MONTOYA: It'll be in Lubbock, right? So I'm pretty excited about that.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. That's great.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, I'm very excited about that. And, you know, at this point of course, I'm going to have to come up with the writing. So, you know, I'm reading about postcolonial literature. Because there's really not—nothing, I think, was every really written on postcolonial photography, right?

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah, that's great. And as you told me yesterday, as we were talking about this, that it's black women photographers, Native American and Latina.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right. So we're looking, yeah, at two black women, African American women, two Native American women, and then, of course, two Latinx women.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah. So it's really in keeping with what you said just a few minutes ago, of a community that's changing, and—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And expanding, too.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Expanding, yeah.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Right? You know, it's that change and expanding, and really coming up with these key themes that are very American. [00:40:04] Right? And then just try introducing the work that's being done as American work, but taking on these issues that they've confronted, and they're confronting within their own work.

And what I see right now, and of course it's still in progress and I'm still trying to think about it, Nydia and Monica, their work is somewhat similar, but not, you know? So there's this whole thing with words, right, and the way of contradicting what you see.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Oh. Yeah, using words to—

DELILAH MONTOYA: To form that contradiction.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DELILAH MONTOYA: Really amazing. I mean, I'm just blown away by what a lot of these emerging artists are doing, and I'm so proud. I'm just really proud of what it is that they're doing. And it's so inspiring to see this. And then of course, with Sandra and Lupita, and also with Violette Bule, it has to do with their communities. Violette Bule and Lupita really talk about labor. Right?

And then when we look at the works of the Native American artists, what we see coming to the forefront has a lot to do with—you know, I look at it as being like, walking through this apocalypse and being the survivors of this

apocalypse, and still having the community and the ability to negotiate this modern world. [00:42:09]

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah. That's great. We'll see how that comes to fruition.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ADRIANA ZAVALA: So is there anything else you would like to share? As we start heading towards—

DELILAH MONTOYA: Well, I think we're good. Yeah.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Alright. Great.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Yeah, I think we're good. So thank you. Thank you so much!

ADRIANA ZAVALA: This has been amazing, Delilah. I've learned so much. And whoever makes use of this oral history—and I know many people will—you have so many connections across your career, such a vibrant career, and still so much work that you'll do.

DELILAH MONTOYA: [Laughs.] I hope so.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Yeah, this will be incredibly useful. So thank you so much.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ADRIANA ZAVALA: On behalf of myself and the Archives of American Art.

DELILAH MONTOYA: Thank you. Thank you for thinking of me.

ADRIANA ZAVALA: Of course.

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]