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Interview with

Cruz Reynoso

Conducted by Alan Houseman

August 12, 2002

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AH: Hi, my name is Alan Houseman. I am Director of the Center for Law and Social Policy. Today, Monday August 12, 2002, we are interviewing Cruz Reynoso. We will be focusing most of the interview on Cruz's tenure as Deputy Director and Director of California Rural Legal Assistance, otherwise known as CRLA. But I did want to begin by pointing out the background and the achievements of Cruz Reynoso. Cruz has been a law professor at the University of New Mexico, UCLA and now at University of California Davis. Cruz has been a justice on the California Court of Appeals and an associate justice on the California Supreme Court. Cruz has been in private practice for a number of years both before and after his public service. He has also been associate general counsel of the EEOC in addition to his public service at CRLA. Cruz has won many prestigious awards including the Lauren Miller award for legal services, the Presidential Medal of Freedom and the National Hispanic Foundation award in education. We are very pleased to interview Cruz today and focus on his involvement with the critical struggles that CRLA faced in the early years of the legal services program. Cruz, before we focus on your tenure at CRLA it might be helpful to know some of your background before you got to CRLA, where you were born, where you grew up, a little bit about what brought you to come to be the deputy director of CRLA.

CR: I was born and raised in Orange County, California, a great liberal center of politics in California in 1931 so it was during the Depression. My dad was a farm worker

in Orange County, it used to be a rural area before Disneyland. And my brothers and sisters and I grew up as farm workers originally. I ended up having five brothers and five sisters. So it was the custom then to start working very early picking oranges. I probably started at age 8 or 9 going to work with my older brother. The older brother would be the one with the Social Security number, they were big enough to climb ladders and pick oranges on top of the trees and we would go and we were so small we couldn't carry the ladder so we would just pick the orange at the bottom of the trees and they referred to us in Spanish as ratas or rats I guess we nibbled at the bottom of the trees. Then after a while I was old enough 14 or so to have my own Social Security number and then my younger brother would become my rata. During the summers we used to pick fruit in the central valley mostly around the Fresno area sometimes we went as far north as Tracy and Stockton in the central valley. When I was a youngster I was born in the then little town called Brea. We were only one of two Mexican families in town. We spoke nothing but Spanish at home but out in the streets we played and fought and did everything in English so we grew up bilingually. At age seven we moved to a little barrio called Alta Vista about a mile and a half outside then small town of LaHabra and Alta Vista means high view you know the poorer the barrio the fancier the name, the only barrio that was poorer than ours was none called . . . or marvelous so we signed up for school that summer the three of us who were old enough to go to school but we were told we couldn't go to a certain school we had to go to another school which we did but when we went there we found all the youngsters there were Mexican or Mexican Americans. And we asked why we were being sent there and we were told we were being sent there to learn English. Since we already knew English we were moderately suspicious that wasn't the reason and it turned

out that we were attending a segregated school. In those days when there were congregations of Mexicans and Mexican American families many communities had segregated schools. La Habra did, Brea did not. I went through public schools that segregated school through the sixth grade. We then went to an integrated school for junior high. I went to high school in Fullerton, graduated and went to a community college. I had wanted to be an artist so I took some art classes and eventually worker for a commercial artist for several years but through high school or college I changed my mind and decided I wanted to a lawyer in large part because of the injustice that I saw around me some related to segregation, some related to the lack of services for the barrios and so on. I was socially motivated so I decided to become a lawyer.

AH: Did you go to Pomona?

CR: In junior college I was quite active in student government and so one day the dean of men of Pomona College showed up and we talked for a couple of hours. I think he must have been invited to come meet me by the dean of students at Fullerton Community College. We talked for a long time and at the end of it he said well apply to Pomona if you would. If you get admitted we'll give you a scholarship. So I had assumed I would go to UCLA or some other public institution. He said that, I applied, I got admitted, I got a scholarship, I went to Pomona and graduated from Pomona College in a couple of years and then went into the military and ended up in the counter intelligence corps in the military being trained in basic training in California at Fort Ord and in Baltimore for the counter intelligence corps. The Korean War was about coming to an end so everybody was being sent to Korea even then. I was ready for adventure so I asked to be sent abroad even if it were Korea. All my buddies asked to stay in this

country. As you might imagine they were all sent to Korea and I was sent to Washington, D.C. I worked here. Those were the days of Joseph McCarthy and a sense that anybody who believed in civil rights was somehow suspect but interestingly during the time I was in the counter intelligence school was the time of the McCarthy hearings and so suddenly McCarthy went from a hero in the military particularly counter intelligence to an enemy so it was an interesting time. I served here in Washington, D.C. doing some interesting things including reviewing files of individuals who were applying for federal jobs in the files of the House on Un-American Activities Committee, a committee that I had long opposed and my opposition was confirmed by my experience there. Their files were just a mess and they had sometimes they had files on a person by the name of Smith, J. now who is Smith, J. anybody could pick up on that and charge with somebody else with having a file in the House on un-American Activities Committee. But I had gone into the military, I was referred to a volunteer draftee. I was drafted but I called when I finished college saying I'm finished, I'm going to be drafted. They drafted me and I had wanted to go in and get out and come to go to school. I had already decided to go to law school so when I got out of the military I went to law school. I graduated from Boalt Hall at the University of California at Berkeley. I had a fellowship to go study Mexican constitutional law. Incidentally when I was in Washington I met my wife here so it was a time well spent. And went six months to study Mexican constitutional law, returned and it had always been my dream to be a small town lawyer. So when I came back I interviewed with a lawyer in San Bernardino who had been in touch with me and then I went down to Imperial Valley and interviewed with a lawyer there. They were looking for both a lawyer and a person who would be an assistant to a then state senator from

Imperial County, first Democrat ever elected from Imperial County so I accepted the position in El Centro and became the assistant to the senator and work in his law firm for a couple of years and then I opened my own law firm and I was in private practice. A time came I ran for public office in 1964, a great Democratic year but I lost in Imperial County. I was running against an incumbent for the Assembly. Exciting primary race as I had never run for public office and I was running against the mayor of Brawley which is the second largest town so nobody gave me a chance and yet we won and things got sort of exciting. But maybe of that maybe because of some other activities on my part, and apparently I came to the attention of Governor Pat Brown and in '67 or so no '65 I guess I was appointed to be the assistant executive officer of the then Fair Employment Practices Commission and then later I was invited by the governor to become the staff secretary in Sacramento. I took a leave of absence from my law firm. I had been a solo practitioner and business had expanded, I had two associates at that time so I also had the dream of having my own firm and then taking the time out for public service. That is exactly what I did. Then after Pat Brown was defeated by one Ronald Reagan I returned to my firm and continued working there for six months or so and then I got a call from Washington, a new chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, I guess I had that experience working in employment so he invited me to come to Washington to be interviewed. He offered me a job as associate general counsel so I came to Washington for about a year and a half or so. Meanwhile while I was in California and while I was still working with the Fair Employment Practices Commission Jim Lorenz who actually started CRLA contacted me and he said he was contacting to me because he had been quite active in trying to be in contact with lawyers in rural areas who were

sympathetic to farm workers and he said I was one of the very few lawyers he found in rural areas who had worked for farm workers, who had done civil rights work and so on. And so he and I talked several times as he was putting the proposal together for CRLA. I remember in his proposal he quoted me as saying that it was a Herculean job to be able to put such a program together to serve the rural poor. And so I forget exactly when the formation actually happened but Jim contacted me and I became actually the chair of the board of CRLA, the first chair of the board since Chavez and others were on the board at that time, then when I left for Washington, D.C. to work with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission I resigned from those positions because I couldn't work with them. In Washington after a while I started being contacted by Jim himself, by members of the board and others asking if I wouldn't join CRLA. I was reluctant to give up my private practice that I had been building by that time for about a decade. And they said and the governor had said oh well you can continue with an interest in your private practice even if you join CRLA which so long as they weren't on the other side of cases I guess it would not have been unethical but eventually I decided to join CRLA but I terminated by that time I had gone into a partnership with one of my associates and we terminated that partnership. I just didn't want to be in any sort of position of any possible conflict of interest. So I joined the CRLA in late 1968 for a few months as deputy director I think the idea was that I would be deputy director for a year or so but there was some internal problems in CRLA that propelled me into the directorship just a few months after I joined CRLA.

AH: Why don't we talk a little bit you talked on this a bit, the CRLA before we get into the battles that CRLA entered into, how was CRLA organized and how was it structured, what kind of a program it is, a little bit about that.

CR: Well folk would be surprised at some of the problems we ran into initially. The CRLA was basically a non-profit organization established under the war on poverty at that time before the Legal Services Corporation was established. There was opposition to the establishment of CRLA by practically everybody in authority including the state bar and the local bars. There had been a tradition until CRLA having local bar sometimes had legal aid and the legal aid normally were under the aegis of the local county bar association. To have a program like CRLA that was going to be multi-county in fact statewide, the idea was that we were going to be representing rural Californians including migratory farm workers so we needed offices up and down the state and there was opposition to that by many folk in the legal profession and politically. Nonetheless Sargent Shriver who then headed OEO became convinced based on discussions and articles that he had read that there should be a legal portion to the war on poverty and so he started funding legal services programs and CRLA was actually one of the first and certainly the first large program to be funded. So even though there was opposition I remember particularly the vice president was very much in favor of the program and so within so I think

AH: That was Vice President Humphrey at the time.

CR: Yes despite opposition by many folk including friends of the administration he felt he had the support to establish this program so he was quite taken by the proposal that Jim Lorenz had put together. Jim in turn had put it together, he tells, because he was

working with a large private law firm in Los Angeles and he had been doing some pro bono work for farm workers. On one occasion he got a phone call about a certain problem dealing with farm workers and he was too busy so he recommended that they call somebody else. Several days later he got a call about the same problem and he said I just got that call, I recommended that these folk call somebody else, it turned out they had called somebody else who recommended they call somebody else and finally got back to him. He said he just realized (1) the need and (2) such few lawyers that were involved in it so he became convinced a program like CRLA was very desperately needed and that why he got involved. He's really the genius behind the idea of CRLA. And so then I got involved with them through consultations and then on the board.

AH: One of the interesting things that CRLA had and still does as I understand it, was advisory councils to each of the offices made up of poor people.

CR: Yes, we felt very strongly once the office began to be established that there is always a danger that lawyers as professional people will get away from the real problems that folk have so every office had advisory committee of poor people from that community. That advisory committee would meet and set the priorities for that office because very often the priorities had sometimes little to do with sometimes related but sometimes not that related to litigation. I remember for example the advisory committee in Medera had as its highest priority the education of their children on one occasion and in fact that led to some interesting law suits but more than anything it meant it led to community organizing, it led to meeting with school officials to place before them the demands that the community had so it wasn't just litigation. And I always thought that was a very important part of how CRLA functioned and did its work.

AH: CRLA in the early days brought a number of major cases that in fact were the sort of the framework for some of the opposition that was later generated. Do you recall any of those early cases both in the farm worker setting and even in the non-farm worker setting?

CR: Very much so. Among the more dramatic ones was an action that we brought to terminate the Bracero program. The Bracero program was a program with Mexico that brought thousands of workers to the fields of California in a law that would have been generally impossible to implement. The law said that workers could be brought to his country only if local workers could not be found to do that work. Well you could always find workers, it depends on working conditions and how much you pay them. It's just that the growers were unwilling to pay the type of money that it took sometimes and provide the working conditions. Even then there were many farm workers who wanted to work in the fields who weren't working because the growers had Braceros who were more malleable, who didn't protest and so on so they really preferred the Bracero programs. In fact one of the things that led Cesar Chavez organizing farm workers later was that during the time of little bit before CRLA was established he functioned he was an employee actually of a group that I was active with called the Community Service Organization and he used to organize farm workers and they would go to farms and they would knock on the door and say here we are all 30 of us, we're ready to work and the growers would say sorry we've got the Braceros working so it was not a good program. And the law suit fortunately was successful, the growers of course in California protested mightily, the governor who was very close to the growers was unhappy but his unhappiness was surpassed when we brought an action that involved several hundred of

million of dollars if I remember correctly whereby the state had accepted federal funds for medical services and we had a client out of Stockton who was literally practically on the bed to be operated on when the doctor learned that they wouldn't be reimbursed it was a complicated back operation that would have cost thousands of dollars and they stopped so the he came to see us and in fact he later became part of our advisory committee and we looked at the law and we concluded that the state had not followed the federal requirements of the law so we brought an action against the state

AH: Morris v. Williams as I recall

CR: Yes we won and I recall that the governor said that this was a terrible thing because we were interfering with democracy, the legislature had acted, the governor had signed the bill, that's democracy, how dare we interfere with democracy. Of course we kept pointing out that we couldn't win if the law weren't on our side but those were two of the more dramatic initial cases. But I should mention one other case to you that wasn't as dramatic but somewhat characteristic. There was a welfare supervisor in Marysville that was trying very hard to save money and so and had been appointed by the board of supervisors with that view in mind so when folk would apply for welfare they would not take the application in writing which was required by the state regulations. So after several clients came to see us they didn't get what they were entitled to, we said well show us a copy of your application and they said what application, we started filing appeals just straight administrative appeals. I forget now we filed 20 or 30 appeals we won all of them and the governor attacked us for interfering with the governance of a local community. And to us it seemed manifest that something was not right when we

were winning all of those appeals but that didn't influence his opposition to it. So in terms of a relationship with the governor it went from bad to worse.

AH: The CRLA has had, we're going to turn to the fights in a minute, but let's finish up a little bit here. CRLA had in the early days and since then won a number of awards and CRLA staff have gone on to many different adventures in life, do you recall winning the award by the National Advisory Council for, you may not have been there at the time, I think you were though, the National Advisory Council to OEO Legal Services gave an award each year and the first award they gave for the best program in the country was to CLRA.

CR: Yes that's correct. Very quickly we were mentioned not infrequently as being the leading legal services program in the country. We were innovating different ways of representing the poor, the advisory committees, the class actions, a lot of actions against government. Government had gotten used to not paying attention to those who didn't have a lot of power, mainly poor people. So to them it was sort of a shock to now have poor people have the resources to challenge what they were doing and based on years of experiences they were really ignoring many laws that were to the benefit of poor people, were not enforcing other laws so it was a new way of thinking for them.

SH: Many of the CRLA staff early days staff have gone to many other things and what Gary Bellow I think actually that same year won the attorney of the year award.

CR: Yes that's correct.

AH: Talk a little bit about Gary and Marty and some of the other early folks that you worked with.

CR: Gary came very early on and he knew that he wasn't going to stay too long but he came to in the traditional way to give a shot in the arm to the other lawyers because he had a lot of ideas about how lawyers could serve poor people. Sometimes there was some misconceptions and that involved some of our own lawyers that somehow the lawyers could be buddies of poor people and in that capacity help poor people. I kept reminding them that poor people came to see us because we were lawyers because we have knowledge and resources that they didn't have and Gary understood that very well, so he really was the early trainer of many of the lawyers that came to CRLA. Then we had other folk who came from very different walks of life.

AH: Let me just say one thing about Gary. Gary was involved with one of the first programs funded by the Ford Foundation in Washington, D.C. that led to the beginnings of OEO Legal Services.

CR: So he had that background.

AH: And then he went on to be at Harvard Law School and director of the clinical programs there and then later a full professor at Harvard.

CR: Yes for many years and indeed continued that tradition of training lawyers and I would talk to his former students and they spoke so highly of what they had learned from Gary. I was going to mention then folk coming from different walks of life, Bob Gnaizda had been working for the IRS if I remember correctly before he joined CRLA but he wanted to do something worthwhile in his life so he joined CRLA and immediately started doing what later became one of our standards. I came out of a very traditional practice, I never spoke to the press about a case that was pending, I thought a case was before the court they should decide it but then there was a case in which a

fellow by the name of Fred Heston and I were involved in when I joined CRLA, the first case, it had to do with some youngsters in Livingston picketing their own high school because they were objecting to history books that didn't properly represent the history of the people of color, they were joined by a few Anglos, a few African Americans, a few Asian Americans but it was mostly Latino kids and the D.A. was just killing them in the press saying they are breaking the law we are going to arrest their parents if they don't make sure they go back school and all that and I said you know I've got to speak publicly, so I started then reminding the newspapers there was something called the first amendment, they had a right to picket, etc. etc. so I got very interested in the use of the press and Bob Gnaizda was a master at it, he learned how to structure law suits in such a way not just a lawyer but a lay person including a newspaper person would understand it so he would have an introduction where he would explain what was happening. And he was a very innovative guy, started out at Salinas then went to San Francisco which was then our headquarters. We started with a headquarters in Los Angeles we moved then to San Francisco later on. And then he's gone on to do public work with a public interest law firm and now as a lawyer with an outfit called Green Lining Institute, in fact they just asked me to go do some work with them which I will I think next week or the following week. They had a session with gubernatorial candidate in California, a Republican by the name of Simon, where they took him to all the poor areas of Los Angeles and so on and he's continued to do very good work. Martin Glick is another lawyer who came out of the Salinas office and went to the central office and he was actually the person in charge of litigation when I was the director and a masterful litigator. He's gone on to private practice, he defended CRLA several times, and he's continued very close to CRLA. So

invariably the lawyers who have been with CRLA those that haven't stayed with CRLA have gone on and done wonderful things. I can't help mention a lawyer who didn't go any other place, Ralph Aposcal

AH: Who is one of my closest personal friends.

CR: Yes who came to work with us while he was still in law school and loved that work and so he stayed with CRLA, he used to refer to himself as a poverty lawyer and he stayed with CRLA all of his professional life. So we've had both folk who come and gone on to other things and folk who stayed. Jose Padilla who is the director has been a director now for 15-16 years I forget it's been a long time. So it's been great as a training ground for folk and great as a long term profession.

AH: Well let's turn to some of the background leading up to the CRLA veto, the second of the CRLA vetoes. In I think it was 1968 CRLA was the governor had threatened to veto CRLA and was proposing a set of 15 or so new grant conditions. Do you recall any of that activity? What do you recall of that time?

CR: Well first I should mention that there was a new senator by the name of Murphy who had been elected and he was particularly close to the agricultural industry and was very opposed to CRLA. Then we had the governor who himself was opposed to CRLA and at that time the regulations permitted the governor to veto any poverty program that went into the state but permitted the director of OEO to override that veto. So the governor at least from the time I became director every year threatened to veto the funding and finally did in what 1970 I guess. And so we had that threat practically every year that we were there. The governor proposed a series of conditions. Initially, if I remember correctly, the Democrats were in charge and so they didn't agree to those

conditions but then later the Nixon administration came into existence and things started changing for us and the veto actually came when Nixon was president.

AH: That's right. Let's go back a little bit. Senator Murphy in 1967 introduced an amendment that was in fact responding to the case you described a few minutes ago, *Morris v. Williams*, the Medicaid suit an amendment to ban all legal services programs from suing government.

CR: Yes completely. He suggested that legal services simply should not sue government. He thought that was improper. We pointed out that even government agencies sue other government agencies and citizens certainly always sue government agencies with mandamus and other actions when government isn't doing the right thing. But he was convinced that there should not be that sort of activity on our part.

AH: And that amendment was actually defeated in the Congress but do you remember what you did and the role you played and the role the ABA played around that first amendment?

CR: No I'm sorry to say I do not. I don't think I was with CRLA during that first amendment.

AH: Okay. In 1969 then you were here, Senator Murphy introduced another amendment and this was after Reagan had tried to veto as you pointed out and Shriver had threatened and told him he would override it. But it's 1969 we have a new president, Nixon and Senator Murphy introduced an amendment in the Senate which passed the Senate allowing the governor to veto without an override by the director of OEO. And do you remember that situation, what you guys did?

CR: Yes. It was actually an interesting time because we spent quite a bit of time in Washington particularly Mickey and I

AH: You're talking about Mickey Bennett.

CR: Mickey Bennett yes and it was in some ways surprising that at least as compared to today how many friends we had who were Republican and so we campaigned extensively with all the religious and other groups that were supportive of us. I remember we had some Republican prominent Republicans in the House that supported us so we were very active in that organization and ended up successfully actually.

AH: And do you remember the role the ABA played in this?

CR: You know I do not I'm sorry to say.

AH: Fine. Then in 1969 there began to be a focus on CRLA out of the governor's office itself and it started with a guy named Louis Uhler, 1969-1970. Why don't you describe, this is sort of the beginnings of the veto, describe the Uhler report and sort of leading up to the December 26 veto.

CR: We started hearing rumors that the governor had investigators some were retired police officers that were going to the communities where we had offices interview local officials and interview everybody about CRLA and the rumors that we heard out of Sacramento that the governor was planning to veto CRLA became more prominent. Lou Uhler as you may know is a classmate of mine at from Boalt Hall as was Ed Meese. So as they got more serious Dan Ravineau who was then the chair of the board and I went to Sacramento. I called Ed Meese and made an appointment, went to see him, said we hear that they are investigators out there and if you find anything wrong with CRLA we want to know about it because we wanted to correct it. Interestingly about that same time we

had the annual evaluation of CRLA and that group was led by Justice Clark of the U.S. Supreme Court and a very distinguished group and they filed a report saying we were a wonderful law firm that we were doing exactly what was right and so on. So it seemed to us hard then that they would really go through with the veto when that had just been reported by such distinguished folk. But we kept hearing those rumors. Ed said gee I don't know anything about that said he, you've got to talk to Lou so we called Lou Uhler and went to see him and he says oh I don't know of anything that is going on but I'll give you a call if anything serious happened. So we went back, we weren't quite convinced, well maybe they are right that nothing is going on but we still heard the rumors of all those folk out there.

AH: Lou was then the director of the state office of economic opportunity.

CR: That's correct it was in that capacity that he was doing all this investigating though it became clear that Lou being a lawyer had really been appointed with a main aim of trying to get rid of CRLA. He was quoted in the press one time as saying that the problem with the poverty program was that there were too many poor people involved and incidentally he had been a member of the John Birch Society, this was even at that time right of right wing Republicanism. And very convinced philosophically that poverty programs were wrong for the country, legal services was wrong for the country. So then just a little bit before Christmas we hear that the governor has vetoed the program and has issued a report, we didn't get the report initially but we heard about some of the charges and so we worked through that Christmas season initially responding to phone calls from the press and placing our own arguments before the press. We were quite successful. I remember some meeting with the Sacramento Bee editorial board and they said we were

the longest lasting front page story they had ever run. They said they ran front pages stories about it for two years. Then we did get a copy of the report. The report was an astounding report. It charged that we fomented riots in prison, it charged that we were basically responsible for murders, it charged that we were not following the regulations and the statutes. If we were guilty of the things that were included there most of us should have been in prison. It was really an amazing report, several hundred pages long. So then we went about the task of responding to every single charge and Marty Glick was basically the organizer of that effort. And so we went through our records and we identified what the charges were and we responded to each charge and it was basically no substance to any of them. For example they argued that we were fomenting riots in prison because we had represented a prisoner who at that time could not receive mail from his lawyers, our Salinas office without it being opened and it was permitted by the regulation so we brought an action, the courts obviously agreed there was a right to communication between client and lawyer and they really object to that. We were interfering with the prison authorities. So we went through and responded in writing to every single charge. Interestingly we still had at that time a lot of not only Democratic but Republican support in Congress. Now we had a president who was Republican and folk had forgotten that Ronald Reagan actually had made noises about maybe running against Nixon in the primary and that didn't last very long

AH: That was '72.

CR: But for about a year there were a lot of those rumors so I'm sure Nixon wanted to prevent that so he was in quandary as to what to do with that veto. And he by that time had appointed a fellow by the name of Carlucci as the head of OEO so we went

back and met with Congress people, with Senators, met with Carlucci, eventually tried to negotiate something with Carlucci and I remember that he mentioned to us in one of our long sessions that we should agree to the conditions because we were the leading legal services program and if weren't refunded what would that do to all the other legal services programs. And I responded that we agreed with him that we were the leading legal services program and if agreed to his conditions then if we who were the leading legal services program would agree to his conditions surely they would impose those on all the others and they had conditions where they didn't want us to do class actions, they didn't want us to sue the government, they had just a whole series of conditions that they felt would then please Governor Reagan. So we were unprepared actually to accede to any of the conditions in fact we in CRLA I should tell you I don't think this has been publicized had plans for a private law firm if we weren't refunded we had plans about how we were going to organize, percentage that we would spend doing public interest work, the percentage of time that we would do private work to have money to proceed. We said we would rather be private attorneys spending a portion of our time doing that type of work than be poverty lawyers who couldn't do the work that we needed to do. I should tell you, I remember so clearly, calling a press conference because Carlucci to please Reagan kept issuing all these press releases pressing him, praising him and saying things about us that simply were not true. And we had all in black and white so we called a press conference and we had all the facts blown up and so we wanted to tell the press how these were the facts and this is what Carlucci was saying and all these reporters came and then I started talking. I hadn't talked for more than about five minutes when a reporter raised his hand and said Reynoso have you called this press conference to tell us

high officials in government lie. And I said absolutely and they all walked out on me. This was back in the early 70s then officials lying lacked such newsworthiness, I felt so badly because every time we called a press conference we had a really good response because the reporters knew they were going to get a story out of it, I felt like a country bumpkin and . . . having before them the statements made by Carlucci the truth and they weren't interested. But nonetheless we heard that people in the White House including Halderman and those folk were very much in favor of CRLA. I guess they had seen the report and they knew it simply wasn't true. So I can't know the ins and outs of the White House and what happened with Carlucci but eventually there was a compromise, a very clever compromise where Carlucci refunded CRLA not only for a year but for 18 months which carried us to the primary so they were sure that Reagan wasn't going to run against him I guess. Then they gave Reagan some money to experiment with other forms of legal services for the poor that they believed in a program where you hire private attorneys, then called Judicare and they gave him some money and they sent out a press release praising him for what a wonderful person he was, how fortunate the government was that he brought those matters to the attention and how they could down firmly on CRLA. But I don't recall any conditions they imposed on us to tell you the truth so that campaign ended up successfully for us.

AH: I want to go back in time just to paint this picture a little more detail. The veto came in late 1970 in December, then on June 30 of 1971 Carlucci made a decision to give you a six-month funding I think it was and then set up a high level commission, this probably where you were going, to complete what was called the full and impartial review of the Uhler report which you talked about earlier. So that was sort of the

CR: That was a precursor to our victory. What happened was you are absolutely correct we got funded temporarily so to speak a commission of three state supreme court justices all conservative were appointed by Carlucci to do a review of the charges leveled by the governor. And they decided to have hearings. The governor

AH: Do you remember who they were?

CR: I don't remember.

AH: They were three initially, Justices Williams, Tong and Lee and then Tong who was from the Oregon Supreme Court left and then a guy named Cleary from the Wisconsin Supreme Court was added and Williams I think was the chief justice on the main Supreme Court. And Lee was from Colorado. So this was three state supreme court justices very prominent state supreme court justices who were on this commission.

CR: Right. They came to California and they announced the way they were going to operate was to have hearings that is what judges are used to. The governor objected to that. They said no it should be an investigation. They said no we report to the director of OEO and we're going to have hearings. And so they started with a hearing in San Francisco, turned out to be very dramatic. One of the charges was that we were harassing the law school of Madera County because we had brought a law suit there because they had closed down the schools so that children could work in the fields picking grapes when the growers had said they needed more workers. We brought an action saying that violated the state law. It was appealed to the California Supreme Court. On the day of the hearing the Supreme Court came down with a ruling in favor of our clients so that was rather dramatic. Then Sargent Shriver testified that day too I remember. So things went very well but the governor's office including Lou Uhler declined to participate. So they

just heard what was going on and they wouldn't present witnesses and so on. But they had designated the charges they were going to hear in each area so in San Francisco it was charges basically against the administration of the CRLA and so on and then they went to the outlying areas. Then by about the third hearing they had they started doing something rather extraordinary for judges. They started issuing press releases after their hearings indicating that there was no basis for the charges they heard that day. This for judges is rather extraordinary. I think that by about the third hearing they had they were pretty aghast at the absolute lack of veracity to the charges that had been leveled by Lou Uhler, so that is the way the hearings continued. Again they filed a report with OEO and that eventually became the subject of another law suit. The report was so favorable, we learned later, to CRLA in fact it began with a paragraph saying these are among the finest young lawyers we've come across, they are absolutely performing their duty in the highest ethical manner, etc. etc. When we finally got it was sort of embarrassing. They filed this report, OEO would not let us see it and would not release it to the public I'm sure it would have been an embarrassment to the governor and they were still trying to work things out. Eventually we brought a law suit against thee OEO and I remember telling the board and others that it felt so good to have a law suit entitled CRLA v. OEO. And then fortuitously the . . . papers what as that called, remember the New York Times got,

AH: The Pentagon Papers.

CR: The New York Times had gotten hold of the Pentagon Papers and that was all over and OEO had heard that the New York Times had gotten hold of that report of the judges' report. It turned out to be not true but that is what they heard and that was the

same day we had filed a law suit, no the same day that we had a hearing and the judge ruled against us and we had already prepared the appellate papers so we were filing the appeal that afternoon, they called us as soon as the hearing was over and said we've decided to let you see the report. But not because we were appealing it but because they had heard that the next day the whole report was going to be in the New York Times. That turned out not to be true but we got to see the report and it was an absolutely favorable practicably embarrassing report so I could see why they were having a hard time deciding. Reagan had said all these things, these distinguished judges that they themselves had appointed said not true, not true, these are great lawyers doing great work and they were in a quandary and thus the final compromise that I mentioned.

AH: Well the compromise that you mentioned was preceded by not only this commission's report but a lot of work that you had to do in Washington and why don't you talk just for a few seconds about that a little bit about what you had, you described some of it, but you had to wage a major campaign in all this.

CR: A time came when Mickey Bennett and I spent two solid weeks in Washington. In California in particular we met with newspaper people, editorial boards, the L.A. Times, Sacramento Bee and so on. We were very active in getting our side of the story out to the public. We met with legislators in California but particularly we spent time in Washington, D.C. We met I mentioned to you that we had friends who were Republicans, we met with Republicans, they agreed to be in touch with the White House, we met with Democrats and if I remember correctly they were in charge of Congress at that time and they were supportive of us. So it was I think the term that you used campaign was the proper term. We strategized a lot. I could tell you that we felt initially

that if the governor ever vetoed us the chances were that we wouldn't be able to overcome that because he was so popular and so powerful within the Republican party but once we got the veto we took it on really as a campaign and sat down and figured out the things that we had to do so the first thing of course was to look at the facts and get all that in black and white to get it out to our friends, get it out to the newspapers and so on. Then to work particularly with Congress and we spent a lot of time with Alan Cranston who was then in the Senate, he was very close to us. Let's see at that time Mondale was still in the Senate. We had worked very closely with him. We had worked closely with many Senators and Congress people and we went about garnering all that support. And eventually it proved successful.

AH: Well if you were to sort of stand back about this fight and say why do you think you won this fight, what comes to mind and you described a lot of activities and a lot of things that happened but why do you think you actually ultimately prevailed here.

CR: I think we ultimately prevailed because at that time the leadership of this country still believed that there was a role an important role for legal services in helping the poor, one. Two because on a political plain the charges that were made were so unsubstantiated that it was difficult for anybody to say it's on that basis that we're cutting CRLA off. And thirdly it happened because we worked hard at it. I never take anything for granted and Jim Lorenz and Bob Gnaizda and Marty Glick and Mickey Bennett they were all master strategists and we sat back and figured out how to do things. We got a lot of calls from other legal services programs and others who in many battles like ours did not succeed, not as big as ours but very often they had battles with county supervisors and so on. Victories don't come by accident and don't come just because history happens

to be with you at that time and history has cross currents as you know so the third ingredient I think was the hard work that all of us did in strategizing how to best frame the issues because the issues to us were always the issue of simple access to the courts for justice. When we would be attacked we would point that that we couldn't win without the judges agreeing with us many Reagan-appointee judges and then we were able to garner the support of many lawyers who had been opposed to us initially. The ABA had been coming around, lawyers who had opposed us in some of our cases eventually saw that our clients were right, even politicians who had opposed us initially even in a matter of a couple of years started seeing the correctness of our position. I remember an Assemblyman in California saying to me later that he couldn't understand in retrospect how he could have opposed the campaign we had to enforce the health laws that called on growers to have clean water, chemical toilets and so on for farm workers. He said in retrospect that clearly should have been done. So it was that combination of ingredients that I think helped us be successful at that time.

AH: One of the things that we began this interview with which was the early days of CRLA and some of the opposition of bar associations including even the state bar of California, which today is a very strong supporter of legal services. What are your recollections and thoughts about some of those early days?

CR: I can recall so clearly. I was on the board actually at that time instead of being a staff person with CRLA and I still recall a law suit being filed against us by the bar association in Stanislaus County in Modesto arguing that by opening the office we would be practicing law unethically. Obviously no basis for it we hadn't even opened the office but apparently some sort of sense that simply to represent poor people on a non-fee

basis would itself be unethical. We retained private counsel, we went into court and of course we won that suit. I was as I indicated practicing law in Imperial County so I particularly remembered the opposition in Imperial County when CRLA announced that it was going to open an office it had sort of a community meeting and I recall a lawyer saying that in Imperial County no poor person ever went without legal representation. It was to me an amazing negation of what seemed obvious. In fact even before CRLA opened an office I went to a discussion where the board of supervisors of Imperial County were discussing whether or not to accept money from the Office of Economic Opportunity but the office required them to do a survey of Imperial County to see whether there were poor people, the number of poor people and so on. I remember one supervisor saying well he was going to vote to do the survey because he knew that they would show that there were no poor people in Imperial County. How folk who presumably are knowledgeable and so on can come to those conclusions is something hard for me to understand. When I joined the bar in Imperial County I was immediately elected secretary of the bar and I thought gee that's pretty good for a young lawyer. Later I learned it was a tradition to appoint the newest lawyer to be secretary because the secretary was the only office that ever did any work. And one of the pieces of work that the secretary did was to be the referral person for anybody who needed to see a lawyer. Now in fact the only calls I got were from a military establishment in Imperial County when a sailor needed to see a lawyer they would call me and then I would refer them to a lawyer. We had a program where we would only charge \$10.00 for a half hour interview, something of that sort. But I had a terrible time getting the lawyers even to interview those sailors and I recall that about the only people who would take those interviews was

the immediate past secretary because he understood the problems I was going through, a very socially conscious lawyer in town and I. I don't think I ever got any other lawyer to interview those folk on a reduced fee scale. So then to have some of them say no poor person had ever gone unrepresented seemed to me like blind to the reality. So there was general opposition to the establishment of the office. Several lawyers were supportive. The office was then established in El Centro, eventually it reached the point of having four lawyers in the CRLA office and even then they had to have priorities because there were so many clients and yet some lawyers had argued no poor person goes unrepresented so that sort of ignorance to our broader responsibility as members of the bar and as lawyers has always stuck with me. So generally we had individuals supporting us but the organized bar local and statewide for one reason or another opposed the establishment of CRLA. And yet we were able to get through that and as I mentioned earlier that eventually many of the same lawyers and organized that had opposed us and of course the state bar and the ABA and later when we had the fights to establish the Legal Services Corporation they were among the strongest. Incidentally I did mention that there was opposition I mentioned by the state bar. One of the compromises we had with the state bar that OEO entered into was that the state bar would appoint two members to our board and they did. The idea was that they would keep an eye on us so we would do the right thing. As it happened the board members became our strongest advocates, and they were very distinguished members of the bar so I think that helped start turning the state bar around but that was really a nice change in the activities of the bar. To me the war on poverty the legal services were simply part of the war on poverty and to me it was energizing to see [END OF SIDE ONE OF TAPE] how OEO after

the survey saying okay you have poor people we're going to give you money but you've got to establish a CAP program, a community action program and you've got to have poor people in it and suddenly poor people actually had power. To me that was just a wonderful democratization with a small "d" of governance in Imperial County. And I think despite all the battles that the war on poverty CAP program had and all that I still remember that as an empowering portion of our history where folk who very often had not had power started having a little bit of power. The same thing happened in legal services, I mentioned to you that government agencies just weren't used to having poor people have lawyers to insist that the rules be followed whether they be prisoners or farm workers. I mentioned to you a campaign, it was like a two year campaign in the fields, where we had done a survey and discovered that 95 percent our survey indicated of agricultural employers were violating one or more of four basic laws that protected the health of farm workers, including clean drinking water and chemical toilets and so on. So then we had a campaign of trying to enforce those laws with the local health agencies, with the local D.A. because they were criminal violations and we never got the local officials to ever bring charges and so on but I think we filed enough complaints and the violations were so egregious that after a couple of years we ran another survey and found that at that time only 35 percent of the employers were violating one or more laws. Those were established laws all we were doing was trying to get the laws enforced and yet we got a lot of resentment from growers who felt we were imposing our will or our clients' will on them. To me legal services was simply about giving the poor another source of power. We in CRLA had the philosophy that as a legal services program for the poor we were there to represent individual poor including farm workers but we were also like a

law firm on retainer for the poor, so it was our job to see what issues affected the poor and which could be changed legally. That's one of the reasons why we set up advisory committees and paid attention to them because we understood that lawyers work through the law to try to make changes on behalf of clients so we looked at legislation eventually. Incidentally we set up an office in Sacramento to do legislative work because like any lawyer on retainer and I had been on retainer as a private attorney, I didn't look out for my client just when the law suit was brought, I kept up with legislation that might help or hurt, it was my job to look after that client's welfare. As a legal services program we felt that was our duty. Very different than the philosophy that bar associations had before the war on poverty where we had legal aid offices who viewed their role as helping individual clients with their individual cases very often just small cases that could be taken care of easily and without too much expense. We felt that we had the duty of being a law firm that not only looked after the interest of the poor but that lawyers could do their job only if they had resources to do it and that lawyers needed other lawyers to talk to, that is why we wanted to have three or four lawyers in each office they formed like a little community there to consult with one another and we wanted to have the resources. If the choice was have 80 lawyers and few resources or 40 lawyers and enough resources to file cases we wanted the 40 lawyers and the resources to be able to do the depositions, to be able to file the writs, to be able to do the appeals, to be able to meet the lawyers on the other side on their own terms in terms of resources. I think that was part of the secret of our success. Many legal services programs were established at that time that were shoestring operations. They barely had enough money to pay the lawyers, didn't have the money to do the investigation, to have the community workers and so on. Our campaign

to enforce those safety rules that I mentioned to you wouldn't have gone any place without the investigators and the resources to do that work. So we really modeled our selves after a corporate law firm, believing that the legal issues of the poor were just as serious and very often just as complicated as issues that corporate law firms had in representing their corporate clients. And I thought that model ended up working very well. So we were able to get over the early opposition sometimes simply because we had a person like Shriver at the helm who even when there was opposition he would say no I think this is the right thing but by the time the administration changed we had become so established that many of the folks saw that we in fact were doing good work and were doing good work on behalf of our clients. Not all of our law suits were obviously popular. I used to tell our lawyers that if we weren't making somebody unhappy we weren't doing our job. In Imperial County and I just come back to that because I spent so many years there for example we brought a class action suit against the biggest employer in Imperial County, the Imperial Irrigation District, a public agency because they had been around for a long time but they had very few employees who were minorities, particularly Latinos. Even in the lowest jobs, janitors and so on, because they paid pretty good money for a rural area so we brought an action against them discrimination in employment action in federal court in San Diego and I'm sorry that I wasn't with the judge and with our lawyer at that time they came back to tell me about it. After several days of hearings a judge who was reputedly conservative called the lawyers back and he looked directly at the defense lawyers who were from Imperial County and said well he was discussing settlement and the lawyer said well your honor many of the people during the Depression who came to California particularly the southern part came from places

like Oklahoma and Texas and many Texans came and settled in Imperial County and he says you know some of them just haven't forgotten the Alamo, i.e. they are still discriminating against Mexicans and Mexican Americans but then during the session he said the judge after hearing them out said look I may be conservative he says but I'm not blind. I think you folks better get together and settle this case and in fact they entered into a stipulated judgment that was one of the first class actions settled that was really very sophisticated calling on the idea to hire the lower unskilled workers very quickly to integrate them the engineers and all that they had a longer period I think up to five years to bring in minority engineers and all that. It was just a wonderful settlement of that case where in the years that I had been in Imperial County the minorities had always complained about these good jobs that they could never get. Suddenly these folks had somebody to represent them and to do so successfully. So to me those were inspiring years I must say.

AH: Well it's clear that one of the great accomplishments of CRLA was all the litigation you brought, all the work you did within communities and you just sort of changed the whole equation in a number of communities between poor people and others and between farm workers and others. And that made the fact that you were successful the fact that you had made a difference probably helped build the reputation and probably helped save the program.

CR: I think that's true. It was hard for folk to argue that we were filing frivolous law suits as they often said when we kept winning the cases. Obviously the law was on the side of our clients. I remember one case one would say it was a new issue of law in Salinas, there was a farm worker strike, the employer had provided housing for the

workers. They weren't used to workers being on strike and they weren't used to workers quarreling with the employer. Here the workers went on strike, the growers then said all right if you've gone on strike we're not going to pay you anything and part of the pay is free housing so get out of the housing. We went into court and said wait a minute, this is housing and the same laws that apply any time that somebody is in a house and you're the owner of the house and you want them to leave you've got to give them 30-day notice you've got to do all those things. They said this is outrageous. They are our employees, they quit being our employees when they went on strike they should leave. And I recall that during the hearings that we were talking about before the judges a lawyer mentioned that he believed we were unethical to tell our clients that we thought they could stay in their housing until they were properly served and so on. That case went on appeal and as you might guess we won the case. Well after we win it it's rather hard for them to argue that we were unethical and that our clients had no basis for their argument so you can imagine how a law suit like that indeed changed the equation of the relationship of farm workers to employers where the employers simply couldn't snap their fingers and it would have a serious affect on the farm workers. Now I don't want to romanticize our accomplishments sad to say as I see California farm workers even today that have many legal protections I'm not sure lives have gotten that much better so legally life they have many protections, they have Social Security now that they didn't have before, they have unemployment insurance, they have medical help, many things that they didn't have before all this legislatively but in society the issues of poverty continue sad to say the legal services programs now have restrictions where they can't help the poor the way we

did. So we were a very important part of changing the equation but there are still a lot of problems around.

AH: Right. Before we end, I wanted to make sure we got on the record here your life after you left CRLA. We brought your life up to CRLA and we've certain discussed much of the time when you were CRLA, you may want to add more to that but I also want you to tell us a little bit about your life since you left CRLA. You were on the court, you've taught, you've been vice chairman of the Civil Rights Commission, U.S. Civil Rights Commission so I think it would be helpful for the viewers to see what's happened to you after this.

CR: I tell my friends that my idea was to be a small town lawyer and apparently I failed it at since I went on to do other things, but as I mentioned, I did some work with the state, I did some work with the government before joining CRLA and then when I was at CRLA I started getting phone calls from law schools. My own law school, Boalt, called and asked if I would teach a seminar, UCLA called so I agreed to teach a seminar at Boalt and a seminar at UCLA. At Berkeley the Chicano studies called and asked if I could teach a class there and I enjoyed it. And then I started getting phone calls from schools inquiring whether I was interested in teaching on a full-time basis. I had never thought about teaching when I went to law school. I went there to become a lawyer not be a law teacher but I kept getting these phone calls so then I got a phone call from New Mexico and they said a fellow from New Mexico, a professor had visited with me and shortly thereafter I got call from the dean saying we would like to have you come and visit, it's not a recruitment trip, we heard good things about you we just wanted to meet you and maybe something will open up in the future. So I went and I really liked the

people, liked the law school and so a few weeks thereafter I got a letter offering me a job, just a wonderful letter and so I chatted with our chair and by that time we had gotten over the fight with Reagan, things were going very smoothly, we were doing good work and there was no crisis so I figured if I'm ever going to leave this is probably the right time to leave. I had never contemplated staying with legal services for an extended period of time. I wasn't thinking of it as a professional commitment for life as Ralph Aposcal and others did so well. So I thought gee if I'm ever going to leave this is the right time to leave when there are no pending issues. So I accepted the position in New Mexico to teach and my wife and I my family and I went to New Mexico, I really loved teaching, I fell in love with New Mexico. One of our children was born there, I refer to myself as being part is a native New Mexican, we really liked it. And there I was there minding my own business, I had actually been asked by a new attorney general in New Mexico, Tony Anaya, who later become governor to be his assistant at the A.G.'s office. I declined because I was teaching but he asked me to accept on a part-time basis and I did that. I quickly fell in all kinds of activity in New Mexico. In fact the very first case that I was involved in another professor and represented students who had taken the bar and they thought the bar had miscounted their exam and made some mistakes and we sued the bar, that was the first law suit I was involved with in New Mexico. It went up to the New Mexico Supreme Court. And so I got very involved in the community. After being there about three years I get a phone call and Jerry Brown had been elected.

AH: Governor of California.

CR: Yes, one of the fellows who was in his transition team was Mario Obletto who had been head of the Mexican American Legal Defense Fund headquartered in San

Francisco so MALDF and CRLA often worked together and he just asked whether I would willing to accept a high position in the state government and I said well I'll consider it and then I heard nothing for about three years then I get a call from Anthony Kline who had been a lawyer with Public Advocate, the public interest law firm, also in San Francisco, with whom we had done a lot of work, and he said the governor wants to appoint you a high executive position, will you accept. I said what's the position. He said I can't yell you now. I said when would I have to report. He said yesterday. I said I just can't I'm in the middle of a semester and he didn't give up and he called several times I said Tony I can't leave in the middle of a semester. I don't why people think you can just get up and leave and so I said no. So I thought well if I ever wanted to go back in a high position that pretty well does it because governors are pretty self-important. But to my surprise he called back in about a month and says Cruz the governor says if you can't accept an executive position can you accept a judicial position. And I said what did you have in mind. He says court of appeals. I said when would I have to report. He says it doesn't matter. I said could I report next summer. He says absolutely. So after much discussion I accepted and I was appointed to the court of appeals. I didn't know at that time that I was actually the first Latino, first Chicano ever appointed to the court of appeals in California and the court had been around since 1904 or something of that sort. So we went back to California there to join the court of appeals and I really liked the work of the court of appeals and then five and half years thereafter the same governor Jerry Brown appointed me to the supreme court and again I was the first Chicano Latino ever appointed to the supreme court. And I served there for another five years. In California we have a system for the appellate judges, the judge is appointed by the

governor, confirmed by a special committee composed of the chief justice, the senior presiding justice of the court of appeals and the attorney general. So I have stood for confirmation on the court of appeals, I was confirmed, I have stood for confirmation on the supreme court, I was confirmed but then I had to stand for confirmation again and we had a change in politics in California, the new attorney general was a Republican who had announced his opposition to the chief justice Rose Bird and a grand campaign against the chief justice was organized we hear they raised between \$10 and \$12 million charging her that she was not enforcing the law, that she was against the death penalty and so on in fact she was a great chief justice.

AH: Wasn't Rose Bird a public defender at one point?

CR: She had been actually the first female public defender in Santa Clara County in San Jose and then had been appointed by Jerry Brown to be a secretary in his cabinet and she was the first female to be a secretary in the cabinet so she was a trailblazer then she was of course the first woman to be appointed to the supreme court and obviously the first woman chief justice, and there was a lot of resentment even by Democrats because they felt here is a young woman, you have all these great men who are ready to take that position and Jerry Brown brings somebody from outside the court system. And so the opposition succeeded. She was being attacked by Republicans and Democrats I guess they couldn't take on the battle or they didn't want to, they really didn't come much to her defense so the campaign was going so well against her that they said hey if we can get rid of a couple of other judges we'll be able to take over the court so they added Justice Groden and me to their campaign and they had a very successful particularly television campaign where they basically the message was if you don't like Rose Bird

you can't like Groden and Reynoso. And I used to tell people if believed what they were saying about me I would vote against me because judges are supposed to enforce the law and in light of their successful attacks and a few high voices coming to the defense of Rose Bird and the Supreme Court three of us were not returned. So I returned to private life. I wanted it understood that it was a political defeat only, because I understood it to be political in fact when I was appointed to the supreme court that attorney general, George Dumajian was already attorney general and he had to vote on me. Well he made it clear ahead of time that he was going to vote against me. He sent me a series of questions which at that time were considered unethical . . . so I tell people that in my public life we always took our children every place we went but we didn't take them to that hearing because we always wanted to protect them from blood-letting and it was a tough confirmation hearing but I was confirmed two to one so I got on the supreme court. When the confirmation vote came up four years thereafter the governor, well there had been a sort of mini campaign against the chief justice by some senators and assembly people in California, it was very different but then the attorney general then became the governor headed up that campaign against her. Why would the citizens disbelieve a governor it seemed to me unless they were folk of equal standing in the political world who would say no that's not true. So sad to say for the first time since back in the 1930s some supreme court justices were not returned to their bench and that included a chief justice, Justice Groden and me. So near the end of the campaign we hired a political consultant who really didn't do much and couldn't do much but he did a run a survey somehow how the campaign was going so I knew a week or so before the vote that I was not going to be returned. So when my friends called and wanted to have a big party in a

big hotel I said no, no I'll skip that. Unfortunately Justice Groden couldn't believe it that we wouldn't be returned so all his friends had this big victory party for him in a downtown San Francisco hotel and of course it turned out to be a sad party. So I stayed at home and watched the returns. So I forewarned my family and all that. I wasn't surprised by it nor was I traumatized. I did what I thought needed to be done and that was a political defeat but I wanted to land on my feet and so in fact I did. I had a job at law firm which paid me more money than the court did with a really nice law firm I had met during the campaign, a Los Angeles firm, they agreed to set up an office for me in Sacramento where I lived. Shortly after I left court the speaker of the house appointed me to a public position to be on the California Post Secondary Education Commission so I was still active publicly. Bob Genasda and I got together and we formed a group called the Latino Issues Forum and we described as an activist think tank so we immediately did studies and started attacking the INS Immigration and Nationalization Service for terrible programs they had at that time and I just started doing all the things that I couldn't do as a judge. So to me it's been a great life. Then UCLA called and made a traditional offer that's hard to say no to, to teach there so I started teaching at UCLA by that time some of the senior partners had gone with the new office of a large law firm called Kay Sholer that opened up in Los Angeles, they asked me to join them. I did and so then they asked me stay on as special counsel when I started teaching so I did that. Then I got a call from a former extern of mine in the supreme court, a Stanford graduate asking me if I was interested in U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. Actually I had done some consulting work for them just before I went with at the time I went with CRLA. They were having some first ever hearings on Mexican American issues in San Antonio, '68

and so I had always been interested in the commission so I said sure so I went back and met with the senator that would make the recommendations. Things went well and I was appointed to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

AH: When was that?

CR: '93. And then shortly thereafter I was appointed by the senate. Shortly thereafter we had a change of administration. We had a new president and the leadership of the commission appointed by the president so I was appointed by President Clinton as vice chair of the commission. I've continued in that position. So I taught for ten and a half years at UCLA. I visited in Miami one semester. I visited at Davis one semester. Then Davis called and they had a new chair there, believe it not it's a chair for the teaching and study of freedom and equality and they offered me the chair. Now I couldn't say no, couldn't say no to that. I have liked Davis and also my wife had declined to move to Los Angeles so I just had a small apartment, still do in Los Angeles and I would fly down on Mondays and fly back up Thursdays or Fridays. So the associate dean says Cruz the reason we offered you a job is that like the INS we have a policy of family reunification so I accepted that position about a year ago, I've been at Davis just a year. I have been able to do some nice things with that chair and it's really gone very well. Some people talk to me about obvious disappointments in life and things like not being returned to the court and all that but you know I can't say that I really have any regrets about the things that I've done and I consider myself blessed indeed when I started practicing law I thought it would be nice to sort of cap my career at age 55-60 with an appointment to the superior court but after a few years just two or three years I noticed that everybody who got appointed to be a superior court judge had been a

prosecutor had done things, I became a lawyer to help people who needed help, so I filed civil rights actions, I represented farm workers, I did all those things and I saw that people like me never got appointed to the bench so I just gave up on that idea very early on and I figured that a person in my situation who basically in society is a bit of troublemaker, folk and power don't like troublemakers, that folk like me were more often than not were not rewarded by society and I figured you know that's the life I've chosen I'm happy with it. So I was surprised frankly when years later society actually rewards me with an appointment to the court of appeals and then the positions I've had with law schools and public appointment like the one California Post Secondary Education Commission and to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights so unlike many folk who have been troublemakers I had the pleasure of being both a troublemaker and actually being rewarded by society so I've been very fortunate.

AH: I mentioned at the beginning one of the awards you received was the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Clinton.

CR: I must say that was a very special award. I was so pleased to go and my family fortunately was able to come. And to see that among the folk who were being honored and this is supposed to be the highest civilian honor that a president can bestow were several people like me who had spent most of their lives working for people who really needed representation and so I thought that Clinton had done very well. A staff person took me aside and said you know the president and his wife spent a lot of time on deciding who to give these awards to. We staff people were asked to look at the backgrounds of folk and make recommendations. They went through them, they selected them so this is very personal decision on their part. So it was particularly pleasing and so

here I mentioned at that time that to me the important part of that award was that the president for the country was saying that sort of things that Reynoso has done are things worthwhile for society and that meant being a little bit of a troublemaker, it meant being a poverty lawyer as well as being a professor and judge and all that, so I found that particular award a very moving one. I must say that I reached a part in my life where I'm getting all these lifetime achievements awards you know from legal services, from the ACLU, from the legislature and so on but that one I must say was very special.

AH: Well I would like to ask at least one more question, which is you've now seen sort of the growth and development of one of the great legal services programs in the country, CRLA and you've left that for years, you've always stayed a little bit in touch, you've spoken to myself and others over the years, what is your thoughts for the future of legal services in this country, what lessons do you think we learned from the CRLA experience, if you want to put it that way, or what would you say to the people who are watching this in the future about where legal services is going and ought to go.

CR: First I think we need to acknowledge the influence that legal services has had on the legal profession and the bar. The efforts by the American Bar Association and many local bars to have law firms and lawyers do pro bono work didn't come out of the blue. I think it came out of a recognition that has always been there philosophically but hasn't had a structure to it. I think legal services I think placed a great deal of emphasis on that because we call on many private lawyers to help us on a pro bono basis. So I think the movement of legal services has quite an impact on the legal profession itself, making it better as a servant of the people of this country. Legal services itself has never had enough resources to serve more than about 20 percent at the maximum of poor people. So

we can't say, you often hear the argument that the poor have lawyers, the rich have lawyers the middle class don't. Well most poor even now don't have lawyers. Meanwhile the legal services programs have succeeded in people unhappy making those with a lot of political power unhappy, so we've had an evolution of the Congress imposing restrictions on legal services including restrictions on class actions representing non-citizens and so on, all of which I think have been very negative in terms of the administration of justice. We are going still in our country at a time when we're less generous toward our fellow citizens than we were say in the 1960s. Nonetheless I've been pleased to see that legal services have continued, they've continued to have a hard time economically but they are still there and I see legal services lawyers all the time indeed just a few days ago I attended a fund-raiser for California Rural Legal Assistance in Los Angeles where I was introducing a judge of the supreme court who was being honored among others that day. And so legal services have had to adjust to that so for example CRLA has set up a foundation, CRLA has spun off groups that hopefully through non-federal funds can continue to do the work that they can't do now. So the more imaginative programs like CRLA have tried to continue doing the work that needs to be done even if they can't do it themselves. They've been the instrument for forming other organizations so I find that hopeful. Nonetheless my own feelings are that the legal services lawyers need to continue to view themselves as law firms for the poor in general as well as for individual poor and they are having a hard time doing that with all those restrictions. We've had a lot of change, political change so that now the California Bar Association, the American Bar Association are firm supporters of legal services. I hope that the national administration and Congress will change in a few years in such a way that they recognize

the great work that legal services do to bring reality to the notion that we have in our country of seeking justice for all and that we will get more resources with greater freedom on the part of legal services to do the work that they need to do. Meanwhile however legal services has had enough support and the resilience to do the sort of things that I mentioned with CRLA even raising money independently they are doing things that legal services never did before but I want to add one thing, and this may sound strange to you, even though legal services provides services on a no fee basis, I'm not sure I've ever believed in rendering services on a no-fee basis. When I was in private practice I accepted many pro bono cases but I also accepted cases where I would charge very little and in my own experience I found that if the client paid just a little bit the client would continue with a greater interest in that case particularly when you are representing a group on a social or political issue. And on one occasion I was representing such a group and after a couple of years some of the folk wouldn't even come to meetings and I was their lawyer and I felt I hardly had any clients so that experience in my private practice has led me to believe that we should have experimentation within legal services and particularly by private firms of accepting cases on a very low fee basis for those cases that merit representation and so I would hope in the future legal services and particularly private firms I've been talking to a lot of lawyers and so on about the fact that they do pro bono work, but they ought to consider another program where they take on low fee cases where the client can pay a little bit, figure out how much the client can pay and just charge that even though you will be subsidizing most of the case. I hope that in the future we can develop programs like that so there is much I think that legal services can do, that the bar can do, that lawyers can do to still reach those great ideals we have in our country

about justice for all. I still remember during the Second World War our president Roosevelt said that we were fighting for four freedoms. One of the freedoms he said we were fighting for was freedom from want, well you have people in great want of food and shelter but want of education, want of legal services and I think in this country we ought to continue to seek that ideal to protect our folk to have that freedom from want and one of those is the administration of justice and we could have everybody in our society who needs a lawyer be able to afford a lawyer and that should be through legal services, it should be done through private firms having pro bono work and low fee work and a combination of factors I'm sure we'll think of other programs in the future so long as the aim is to have all of the people of this state and this country, by this state I mean California and the U.S. have that opportunity to have lawyers when they need them.

AH: Cruz, this has been an inspirational interview and it's been an honor for me to interview you. Thank you.

CR: Thank you so much for the opportunity.