Carlos Montes Papers

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Carlos Montes Papers

Dates: 1948-2014

Collection Number: 2014.001

Creator/Collector: Carlos Montes

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Abstract: The East Los Angeles Archives (ELAA) is comprised of collections which document the lives and events of a historical community central to the social, political, and cultural history of the Chicano/Latino community in the United States. The ELAA is a program that advances scholarship in Chicano/Latino studies and Los Angeles history through its varied collection of primary research materials. This archives has a special interest in materials documenting the Chicano and Civil Rights movements in East Los Angeles during the 1960s and 1970s.

Language of Material: English

Access

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Preferred Citation

Carlos Montes Papers, California State University, Los Angeles

Acquisition Information

Donated By Carlos Montes, 2014

Biography/Administrative History

Carlos Montes (1947- ) is a nationally respected leader in the Chicano, immigrant rights, and anti-war movements. Montes was born December 28, 1947 in El Paso, Texas while his family lived in Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico. He lived his early childhood in the border town of Juarez, in 1956 his family moved to South Los Angeles the Florencia area, and later to Boyle Heights and East L.A. Montes’ father worked in a factory assembly line manufacturing coffee tables as a member of the Carpenters Union industrial section, while his grandfather, Alejandro Alvarado, was a member of Pancho Villa’s revolutionary army. His family was raised with stories told by his mother of the Mexican revolution. Montes graduated from Miramonte Elementary School, Hollenbeck Junior High School and Garfield High School. At East Los Angeles College (ELAC), Montes joined the Mexican American Student Association in 1967, after participating in student government. He founded the La Vida Nueva Chicano student group at ELAC, organizing and fighting for the first Chicano Studies department at ELAC. He also took part in founding the Movimento Estudiantil de Aztlan (MECHA). While attending ELAC, Montes worked as a teen post director in Lincoln Heights on Broadway, where he met Father John Luce of the Church of the Epiphany and Eliazar Risco, editor of La Raza newspaper. There, he was introduced to the Young Chicanos for Community Action and La Pyrana Coffee House in East L.A., where the Brown Berets, a Chicano revolutionary group fighting for self-determination, were started. He was a leader and one of the founders of the original Brown Berets and became the minister of information, the spokesperson for the group. As a leader in the Brown Berets, he organized the first protest at the East L.A. Sheriff’s station against police brutality in the winter of 1967. He helped to lead the Brown Berets into a national organization with chapters in the Southwest. Additionally, he was a leader and organizer in the historic East L.A. Walkouts in March of 1968, which led to major reforms and changes in the Los Angeles Unified School District. He was indicted by a secret L.A. County Grand Jury and arrested for conspiracy to disrupt the school system with many other charges in what became known as the East L.A. 13 case; charges later dropped. In 1968, Montes participated in the first National Chicano Youth Liberation Conference in Denver Colorado, where the Plan Espiritual de Aztlan was formulated and the demand for self-determination for the Chicano Nation was popularized. He worked to forge alliances with the Black Panther Party and supported the Free Huey Newton political prisoner’s campaign. He participated in organizing the first Chicano Moratorium in December 1969 against the war in Vietnam. This led to the historic August 29, 1970, National Chicano Moratorium when more than 20,000 Chicanos protested the high casualty of Chicanos in the Vietnam War, and the killing of Mexican American journalist, Ruben Salazar. Montes was married to Olivia Velasquez in January 1970. Due to the heavy repression and threats, they went underground and lived in Mexico in 1970. Later they settled in the Juarez El Paso area. Montes worked in El Paso as a carpenter with the International Brotherhood of Carpenters, building public housing. He also worked as a maintenance mechanic at Farah.
textile plant, as a steel worker at Phelps Dodge copper refinery, and Thomson General Hospital as a maintenance mechanic. Montes and Olivia raised two children—Felicia, who is a cultural activist with Mujeres de Maiz in Lak Ech, a teacher and union organizer, and Reies, who is a local fire fighter and active in his union. Montes later became a member of the L.A. Chapter of the Community Service Organization (CSO) and also on the Board of the CSO Credit Union. As part of the CSO in the early 1990s, Montes was involved with several campaigns against police killings by the L.A. County Sheriff’s office. He was also part of the reform campaign of the L.A. Sheriff’s during the Koltz Commission. He was a leader in the reorganizing as well as the 20th commemoration of the National Chicano Moratorium in 1990, where more than 5,000 people marched and rallied the historic route to Salazar Park and opposed the first war on Iraq. Under the leadership of Montes in the late 1990s, the Centro CSO along with local parents formed the city of Boyle Heights, and led a Clean Schools Campaign. He helped to initiate the Schools Not War campaign, demanding a new high school in Boyle Heights to relieve the overcrowding at Roosevelt H.S., and an end to military recruitment on the campus. He was instrumental in winning a new school, Mendez Learning Complex, now built in Boyle Heights. He helped to found the Latinos Against War group in 2003, which led marches and teach-ins in East Los Angeles and supported the citywide opposition to the war in Iraq. In May 2004, he joined Service Employees International Union (SEIU) 660 as a field representative organizer and was assigned to the L.A. County Health Department, where he fought for workers’ rights and helped found the SEIU International Latino Caucus. He was later assigned to the LAC+USC Medical Center, where he organized Black, Latino and Asian members to unite and work together to improve working conditions. Montes also helped organize and initiate a large march and rally demanding legalization and end to the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids at the 10-year anniversary of the mass protest against the racist 187 State initiative. He pushed SEIU 660 and other locals to support the March 25 and May 1 mega marches for immigrant rights and against the Sensenbrenner bill that attacked immigrants. In 2007, he was arrested for civil disobedience protesting the ICE raids and supporting Elvira Arellano, an immigrant rights leader, who was deported August 18, 2007. Montes also worked on the campaign to defeat McCain and the fight for immigration reform and the end the racist ICE raids. He participated in the major protest march against the Republican National Committee on September 1, 2008. The FBI began to infiltrate the March on the RNC Committee and the local Anti-War Committee, which Carlos endorsed and helped mobilize. Currently, he is on the steering committee of the Southern California Immigration Coalition and a volunteer organizer with Centro CSO, organizing parents to promote public education and to resist the privatization attack by charter schools in East L.A. In October 2012, he was elected to the Boyle Heights Neighborhood Council and chairs the Transportation Environment Committee. This committee has initiated several pro-immigrants’ rights resolutions in support of driver’s licenses for the undocumented and end to the police car impounds of unlicensed drivers.

**Scope and Content of Collection**

The materials in this collection were created from 1948-2014. The bulk of the collection includes subject/topical files and legal documents most of which were maintained with the original title given by Carlos Montes upon donation. The subject/topical files contain information on various groups and activities which, Montes played an active role in such as PODER (Proactive Organization Dedicated to Empowerment of Raza) and the 1968 Blowouts. The legal documents pertain to the State of California vs Carlos Montes, Biltmore Case and the East LA 13 court case. Smaller series include publications, newsletters, newspaper clippings, newspapers, political announcements & flyers, correspondence, posters, scrapbook, and ephemera.

**Indexing Terms**

Chicano Movement
Anti Bakke
East LA Blowouts
Montes, Carlos
Brown Berets
PODER
Proactive Organization Dedicated to Empowerment of Raza
East Los Angeles

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