Title
“Reflections of a Student Activist”

Date
February 13, 2015

Location
Valley Library, Oregon State University.

Summary
In the interview, Verdugo discusses her upbringing in California, Puerto Rico and Arizona, her family background, and her high school experiences. She then notes her decision to attend OSU, her academic progression, and coursework that has made an impact on her world view.

The session then turns its attention to its primary topic - Verdugo's work as a student activist. She describes her association with Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA), the work that the OSU chapter has done, and the cultural importance of the term "Chicano." She likewise recalls her efforts as part of the Mesoamerican Student Association, her co-founding of United Students Against Sweatshops, and the Alta Gracia campaign that the organization spearheaded.

From there she reflects on the role played by the Centro Cultural César Chávez at OSU, shares her thoughts on issues of concern to the university's Latino and Chicano students, details an internship that she held in the Dominican Republic that focused on fair labor practices, and notes her involvement with the Summer Leadership Camp for Creative Democracy at OSU.

The interview next shifts focus to Verdugo's work at the OSU Women's Center. In discussing her time there, Verdugo recounts her earliest involvement with the center, the activities that she has been a part of since then, the development of her identity as a Chicana feminist, and the impact of the center on the broader campus community. She also shares her perspective on the contemporary climate for women at OSU and the larger culture of student activism at Oregon State.

The session concludes with Verdugo's thoughts on the current direction of OSU and her ideas on a career path that she would like to pursue.

Interviewee
Nicthé Verdugo

Interviewer
Chris Petersen

Website
http://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu/oh150/verdugo/
Transcript

Chris Petersen: Alright, Nicthé if you would please introduce yourself with your name and today's date and our location.

Nicthé Verdugo: Sure, my name is Nicthé Verdugo. Today is Friday, February 13th 2015 and we are at the Valley Library.

CP: Great. And you are an undergraduate at OSU right now and we're going to talk about your experiences as a student and as a student activist for the most part, but I'd like to start from the beginning. Where were you born?

NV: I was born in Hollywood, California. Most of my life - I lived about nine years there - and then I had the opportunity of moving to Puerto Rico for two years, and then the rest of my life in Arizona. So I've been moving around a lot.

CP: Tell me a little about these different communities that you lived in and the impact they made on you.

NV: Sure. So in California, as long as I can remember, my family, or my parents, were really involved in the community, really helping the community that was from indigenous descent. They didn't know Spanish so they were really involved in teaching them how to learn how to write and speak Spanish. And so the community I was really involved in was very diverse but also very community oriented. Once I moved to Puerto Rico, I feel like I was mostly with my family; I didn't really get to explore much. I was pretty young. And the rest of my life was about ten plus years in Arizona where a lot of Latino community, that's where I basically grew up. But my high school experience was mostly with the high school that was mostly all Caucasian. So a large percentage was Caucasian and less diversity, and so growing up in that kind of community has really tied me even closer to the Latino community because that's where I felt most comfortable with. It was definitely a different experience for my sisters, but for me that's what I held very close to me.

CP: Tell me a bit more about your parents' backgrounds. You mentioned indigenous descent. What do you mean by that?

NV: My mom is from Veracruz and my dad is from Baja California Sur, so south Baja California. They have always worked really closely with small indigenous communities and they travel with them and really got to see how their style of living is, but also how a lot of them, when they come to the United States, those resources are not necessarily there for them. And so they wanted to offer some kind of help to them and continue that work. So I think that's kind of where my activism also started, because I saw how involved they were with the community and a lot of rallies I went to as young as I can remember. That was something that really created a sense of community for me and passion for helping others and really being in solidarity with them.

CP: So your parents were born and raised in Mexico?

NV: Correct.

CP: And they came to the U.S. What drew them to the U.S.?

NV: I believe it was just the opportunities to offer us. And I know I was on the way, so they wanted to really create that life for us with the opportunities, just like any other family that comes here. I feel like that's one of their main goals.

CP: And you have two sisters you mentioned?

NV: I have two younger sisters, yes.

CP: And you said their experience has been different than yours?

NV: Yes. One of my sisters, she's a year younger than me, and she was really close to, she had a more diverse group of friends and she felt more comfortable with different ethnic minorities, I guess. And for me, it was just Latinas. I think that really created a sense of really learning from our experiences and seeing how I could branch out to different communities and she could have a more closer tie to the community that she's part of.

CP: What were you interested in as a child?
NV: I would have to say music. I really liked music. I played the cello for a couple years. And I think for me, the key thing was always family. And so that was anything that I did with them, I think that brought me closer to them, but also realizing that's what you need to motivate yourself and keep moving forward. Spending different times with them and the experience, I think those were some of my biggest rewards as a child.

CP: Were there any standout experiences that linger?

NV: A lot! I would have to say just going, I think going to nature. I think that my dad is very, the kind of person that really is very spiritual and to have those opportunities to go to the forest or go to the lake I think really brought us together in a sense of that unity and community that I keep speaking about, because it's really important to me.

[0:05:09]

CP: What was school like for you growing up?

NV: It was just school. I wasn't really, I wouldn't call myself an activist at the time. I was just focused on my grades and just graduating at that time. So to be involved in any organizations, none whatsoever until I came to college.

CP: So you graduated from high school in Arizona and then you came to Oregon State. What was the decision process there for you?

NV: So, at the time I wanted to be an occupational therapist and then a physical therapist. So, my dad had the chance to give us the opportunity to go visit different universities, so I went to Colorado, I went to California, and then I came to Oregon, and specifically Oregon State University and Pacific University. And I still don't know what it was, but when I just stepped onto this campus, I felt like I was home. I felt comfortable in the space. And I felt like something was here. And to this day I don't know what it was, but I think it was the best decision for me.

CP: What was it like going from a desert climate to the Pacific Northwest?

NV: It was tough at the beginning. I was like, I don't like the rain. But as the years have gone by, I love it. And I think for me it's a sense of purifying and really just, it calms me down. It's really peaceful for me. I think I was really tired of the heat. Those temperatures, I couldn't stand it any longer so I came here. And I love it.

CP: And you get to go back to the heat during breaks I'm guessing?

NV: Well, I used to, I used to. But my parents recently moved to Oregon so now I'll be here.

CP: Tell me a little about school. You were interested in being an occupational therapist, a physical therapist. But that changed at some point, did it not?

NV: Yes. I think it was mostly my involvement, and I would speak specifically about MEChA. I think that's - I hold that organization very close to my heart. And so before I worked with disabled children. And I really wanted to be part of just their development, so that's why I chose physical therapy. But then I started taking the classes; there was something missing. I wasn't really connecting with them, with seeing myself in the future doing that kind of work. So getting involved with these organizations such as MEChA, and really sparking what I had lived as a child in terms of working with the community, that just sparked it again. And I'm like "That's where I want to go." And that's when I decided to change my major to Ethnic Studies and so focus on Chicano and Latino studies. And so I think that was the moment I realized that's the route I want to take into community organizing work.

CP: Tell me a little about the coursework that's been impactful for you and maybe some professors as well.

NV: For Ethnic Studies, my number one would be Norma Cárdenas. She used to be a professor here and just the material she provided us with really connected with me because there were writers such as Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa. I connected with them because they were Chicana feminists and so that term blew my mind because I didn't know. I felt and I knew what I stood for but I didn't have a name for it. And it wasn't until I took her courses and read the materials that it really just clicked with me and I'm like, "That's where I'm at, that's how I identify myself as." And then
not in Ethnic Studies department, but in the Philosophy department, Professor Joseph Orosco. He is an amazing man and just the courses. I take his courses because... I don't need them for my major, but they're courses that really get me thinking the root cause of human rights or could be organizing and even the roots of the Mexican and Mexican/American communities. And so I think those are the two biggest influences that I have had here at OSU.

**CP:** And you are minoring in Women's Studies too, is that correct?

**NV:** I'm minoring in Women's Studies and so I'm still working on that. And I think it's definitely given me a different perspective of different communities that identify with different histories and having to learn those histories and how they connect to today, it's very eye-opening to me.

[0:09:59]

**CP:** Well, you mentioned MEChA, this was early on for you at OSU. Had you known of the organization when you were in high school or was it, came to OSU and that was it? Tell me about the background there.

**NV:** We did have a MEChA in my high school but they were not very active and if they were active it wasn't really what MEChA stood for so it wasn't until college I'm like, "I'm going to give it a try." MeCHA really is an organization that really stands for higher education and really promoting that, but also being proud of our culture, our history as Chicanos in the United States. And so that was really something that I really connected with because when I was younger, I really identified myself as Hispanic, something that I no longer identify with. And just learning the background of what Chicano means or even Latino, just differentiating those terms really had me really identify closer to what I really feel like I am or who I am.

**CP:** And these terms are important, so tell me a little bit more for those who might not know the difference and what does it mean to be Chicano versus Latino or Hispanic. What do all these terms mean to you?

**NV:** Sure. So, Hispanic, from what I've been learning, is basically that you have roots back in Spain. So it's very European. In Arizona, I feel like we use it a lot – Hispanic – and I don't think we really understood what it meant. And so that's what Hispanic means. For Latino/Latina, it would be you have roots in Latin America. And for Chicanos, some say that it roots back to Mexico and Mexican American individuals, but Chicano is more than that. It's not just an ethnic identity, it's more a way of living, a way of thinking because you think very critically about your surroundings and having to - really to colonize, if you use that term, the institutions and systems that are around us and how that has really impacted our community. And so I think Chicano, it's more than just an identity, an ethnic identity specifically.

**CP:** Have there been authors or people who've kind of developed this notion of Chicano identity that's made an impact on you?

**NV:** Definitely, hands down, Gloria Anzaldúa. She's one of my favorite authors, as I have said before. She was a Chicana, she identified as a Chicana as a feminist but also a lesbian. And so having her write a book such as *Borderlands/La Frontera* really bridged the perspective of the New Mestiza Consciousness Theory. So how Chicana feminism is, is really important in the work we do today and so I think she's one of my biggest inspirations.

**CP:** Tell me about the group itself, MEChA, and the kinds of things you've been involved with through MEChA.

**NV:** So, I didn't expect this, but MEChA stands for Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán or, translated, the Chicano Student Movement of Aztlan. The kind of work that we do is, we really try to outreach to high school students. This is a national organization and so there's chapters in a lot of states and our region, Oregon, is called Aztlan de Noroeste and we have monthly meetings where we get together as chapters of Oregon and really speak about issues that are happening in our community and how we can act upon, how to raise awareness about those issues. I know there's things that have been related to immigrants' rights, workers' rights, and so just creating those kinds of campaigns have really kind of expanded the horizon of the work that we do. At Oregon State University, I think our main goal is really to bring more students to Oregon State University and let them know that they have a home and feel like they can do it and they can succeed and that we have individuals that have gone through a lot obstacles but they've gotten really far. And so to have them see those kind of mentors, I think it's very important to us.
CP: So you're engaging with high school students in Corvallis and the area around Corvallis?

NV: We're trying to and we do conferences where we really reach out to as many high schools as we can and offer them workshops of what does it mean to be Chicano/Chicana? Or what is feminism? Or even the resources like financial aid, how to apply. Just those resources that they don't really have available to them.

[0:15:01]

CP: What are some of the, I guess we've already touched on this, but what are some of the issues that this community is encountering in high schools that you're finding through your engagement with them.

NV: A lot of them are not as motivated or if the motivation is there, in terms of financially being unstable, I think that's something that really discourages them. And for them not to know where those resources are, I think that's something that we want to provide and let them know that they can get through it with the help, if they know where to go to. So I think that's one of the biggest things.

CP: Another group that you're involved with is the Mesoamerican Student Association.

NV: Yes. I was involved with them very briefly and from what I remember, we did a tour of Latin America. And so what we did is, be in the quad and have posters from different Latin American countries and explain different facts about them and stuff like that. So, I think they really reach out to the Latin American community, really informing us of their good qualities and their perspectives of how their society works.

CP: Was this the Alta Gracia campaign? Is that a piece of that group or is that something different?

NV: That was from a different organization, the United Students Against Sweatshops. We started that group two to three years ago. Me and one of my best friends, we got in contact with organizers and they reached out to us to start this advocacy campaign and basically this campaign was to bring non-sweatshop-made apparel to Oregon State University, specifically t-shirts and hoodies. That's how, this campaign ran for a while and it's still going on, but I think we're making small progress and I think there needs to be more student involvement in terms of that, because it really ties to workers' rights and even women's rights, for that matter, that are really affected internationally by companies and corporations that exploit them for profit of institutions such as these.

CP: It's pretty clear that workers' rights is an issue of keen importance to you.

NV: Yes, definitely.

CP: And we'll talk about that here in a second. I'm interested in hearing your perspective on the cultural center, the Centro Cultural César Chávez. I can try to pronounce it properly. There's a new building and I'm sure you've been in both the old building and the new building. Want to talk about your experiences with the cultural center and the impact of the new facility?

NV: So my first cultural center that I went to was the four C's. I think that it's a community that I really wanted to connect with and feel at home with and I think I got that. The welcoming environment at the time was incredible and we also held our MEChA meetings there, so I think that created an even stronger bond. Later on, with the new building; I haven't worked at the four C's, but getting involved with the mural committee, we call each other the Determined Art Movement, or DAM, and so we wanted to really place the importance of legacy and history and identity into the center. And so we created this committee to create a mural, I don't know if you've seen it. It's called, I think, "We See, I See" and the background behind that is all the images create a big picture and those little images really create - have images that really pinpoint specific people that were really influential to our communities, and it could be family members but also activist leaders. But also different images that represent our community and the importance of our identity and kind of placing that as leaving a legacy at Oregon State University.

CP: Now, the cultural center is run by students, is that correct?

NV: Yes, most of it.
CP: Is there some sort of faculty advisor or...?

NV: Yes. So we have... I know each center is different. I know the Women's Center, we have a director and a graduate teaching assistant.

CP: In terms of the cultural centers though, I guess I'm just interested in what goes on there day to day, and I'm also interested if there is a connection between the different cultural centers?

[0:20:02]

NV: We're part of Diversity and Development and in the past we haven't been working really close with each other, but I think it's something that we were pushing for this year and really creating those connections with each of the centers, cultural and resource centers. And having that professional staff, I think they lead us, but we as students are able to create our own programming to see how we can connect with other centers, that kind of programming being more meaningful and less in terms of numbers and more in terms of quality of the programming that we do.

CP: From your connection with all these different groups, I'm wondering if you can lend your perspective on some of the issues that are important to Latino and Chicano students at OSU these days.

NV: I would have to say, really the importance of having, I think there's a lack of individuals that we look up to at the university because we don't see our being represented in this community in terms of classes. Yes, there are departments such as Ethnic Studies or the Philosophy department, where we see people we identify with. But in the sciences, for example, or engineering, we don't see that. And so having the opportunity to, in the future, see that and pushing ourselves to, "Okay I can see myself in that position," it's really something that we strive for. That more representation and having that connection as mentorship.

CP: You've been involved in a couple of interesting internships from what I gather. One of them was in the Dominican Republic. Do you want to talk about that?

NV: Correct. Yes and that was through the United Students Against Sweatshops. The Alta Gracia factory is actually in the Dominican Republic and we had the chance of really speaking with a lot of workers and speaking about how their conditions were before when they were working in sweatshops and the exploitation, and what they had to face versus now in this new factory of Alta Gracia, where they're treated correctly. They're giving them a living wage and how that has changed their living situation of having to create their own home, getting food for their children and education.

And so that was really eye-opening to me because we also had the chance of traveling around the Dominican Republic and see and basically speak with other workers that are trying to unionize or the trials and errors that they faced as trying to organize as workers together. And we also went to the border of Haiti and the Dominican Republic and we got to see kind of how they live and the circumstances they had to face and it was something that was really eye-opening. And I really, I think that kind of sparked even more of my passion to really work towards workers' rights. And a lot of women who were in these communities and all the experiences that they had to go through was really impactful for because I always put myself in other people's shoes and I couldn't imagine going through that. They're strong individuals. So that's basically what we did.

CP: Now was this a group of students that were travelling through, I assume?

NV: Yes, that's correct.

CP: Were they OSU students or were they from around elsewhere?

NV: They were from everywhere. It was two people from Oregon State University, and a couple people from Texas, Ohio, Florida, Arizona.

CP: So it must have been a competitive process to be part of the internship.

NV: It was a long process definitely and it was the fundraising I think that was the tough part.
CP: You were also involved with the Summer Leadership Camp for Creative Democracy?

NV: Correct. That was through the Promise internship that is led through the Oregon State University system and I had the pleasure of working with Sharyn Clough and Stephanie Jenkins from the School of History, Philosophy, and Religion. And, it's a long title, and basically, the project that we did was creating a week-long leadership program for high school students that were in the alternative high school. And so we wanted the main point to be, or the foundation to be, social justice and really get them to think about the issues that are happening in their own school and their own community and have them create their own campaigns or their own organizing system to see how they could start making these changes for something better that they think about or they dream about.

CP: And do you feel good about how it all came together?

NV: The workshops definitely came together in terms of the ideas that we had. I, unfortunately, didn't have a chance to be working with the students. They will be continuing this programming hopefully for next summer and have to implement all the programming we were able to do during the internship and apply it this summer.

CP: Well it sounds like a couple years into your OSU days you became involved at the Women's Center. You want to tell me how that happened?

NV: Sure. That was two years ago. And I was looking to get more involved. So basically my whole involvement at the beginning of starting at Oregon State University was through my ethnic background. I think that's something that I hold very close to my heart and I wanted to experience something different and be able to really focus more on a different identity that I hadn't really thought about. And so I'm like, "Let me try the Women's Center." And so I had the first contact there with Mira and even a student worker, her name's Shivangi and they were really encouraging. It's like, "You should really just try out for this and you will learn a lot."

And so I applied and I had the opportunity of being a program coordinator last year and so that was more hands-on of what I was passionate about and translating that into a workshop that could reach the whole Oregon State University community. And so, I think my theme at the time was empowerment, and it was through storytelling, through poetry, through music and that was basically where it sparked of what feminism was to me and what it meant to me and how that ties to the work that I want to do and keep doing. And so that I decided to reapply and I'm a leadership liaison and we overlook basically the other program coordinators of this year. We have an even closer tie to the other centers and their liaisons and be able to communicate on what we think the needs are in our community and how we can work together.

CP: What sorts of activities have you been involved with over the last couple of years? You mentioned a workshop, but you're overseeing other activities now it sounds like.

NV: It's basically any programming that's done in the center, really be that person that communicates with the external communities outside the Women's Center. And since we already have more connections, we are kind of the liaisons and if there's any support we can give our staff in terms of programming ideas. And I know a lot of us are really passionate about violence against women and what that entails and other issues such as homelessness, other issues such as the queer community and how that's really closely tied to our center and how we can support each other. So there's just different issues that we really want to reach out to students.

CP: Well it sounds like a lot of your journey at OSU has been one of finding your identity on some level and I think you mentioned your identity as a feminist. How do you characterize that?

NV: Being a feminist?

CP: Yes.

NV: I strongly, again, Chicana feminism. Really thinking of the social, political, economic influences in our communities and how, I mean we talk about equality but I’m talking more about equity and talking about equity is giving the resources necessary to the individual to really succeed. And so not everybody starts at the same and I think that's a misconception of
so many people when they talk about equality. And for me I think it's giving them the necessary resources and have just everybody in a level where they can succeed without having to go through all these barriers.

**CP:** Do you feel like there's a consensus on the term "feminist" for women of your generation? Or is it an ongoing discussion?

[0:29:49]

**NV:** It's definitely an ongoing discussion and generationally it's different definitions. Even talking to different students they have a different definition. Maybe the same idea, but just a different way of explaining it. But I think we have a consensus on really having everyone able to succeed in their own way without having to go through these barriers. And I think that's something that I find in common with a lot of students that I speak with when we do discuss what a feminist is or what feminism is.

**CP:** Well the Women's Center has been on campus for a while, forty-plus years I think. Is there still an ongoing connection with some of the people from before who worked in the Women's Center - the faculty or maybe some of the students? Do you know of any?

**NV:** I only know the cohort I worked with last year and we still keep in touch and some of them still come to the center. It's their home, kind of like their second home. And we still, you know, are in contact with our director from last year. She was there for a while, Mirabella, she's incredible and she's a very strong woman and very - she likes to achieve many great things for the community. And she has very strong and good intentions and we still have a strong connection with her.

**CP:** How would you define the importance of the center to the OSU campus at large?

**NV:** So we basically, we try to reach out to, it's like half our population at Oregon State University and there's definitely misconceptions of what we do at the center. And I think that comes with the history and at the beginning of history was basically led by white women. And so we want to change that and the image of the center and we talk about diversity but it's basically different backgrounds and different experiences but that we're going towards a common goal. And I think it's something that has been so different from the past and that we want to keep having it grow throughout the years.

**CP:** And do you feel like you've been able to build bridges within the Chicana community at OSU with your work in the Women's Center and elsewhere?

**NV:** Definitely. I feel like I have more stronger connection and I feel like they're even more comfortable if they see someone they identify with at the center. They're more comfortable being in that space and I've seen that more and more.

**CP:** How do you characterize the climate on campus for women these days?

**NV:** That's a tough question. That's a tough question because I think everybody has their own experiences. But for me, just, I've had the blessing of really seeing individuals that I identify with within my class settings and stuff like that, but I know speaking with other students that representation is not there. And so I think that it's something we have to work towards changing, but also just misconceptions. I think that's the hardest thing for us where just the term "feminism" scares a lot of people away or they have just very negative connotations about it. And that's something we're still trying to figure out of how we can expand the idea of the importance of it and how much it encompasses and how that can really apply to our whole community and how we advance and move forward.

**CP:** I'm sure there's an extra level of complication being a woman of color.

**NV:** Yes. Yes, definitely. Definitely.

**CP:** Well we keep coming back to this idea of representation being a main point of emphasis. Are there other issues specific to women's issues that you feel are discussed a lot at the Women's Center? Things that people are really focusing on in terms of the campus, the OSU campus?
**NV**: I would have to really say, in terms of safety, you've also got conversations around violence against women because it's always been geared towards what we call the victim and how we can help them and support them but we don't really talk to the community that's really - they don't feel that there's a connection with them and they just don't want to think about it. And so I think another issue would be really this idea of the men's development and masculinity, what it means, what the term means. And so it's something that we really want to, it's a big issue that we really want to tackle, to speak with the wider community of how we can change that culture that we already have in place.

[0:35:01]

**CP**: I'm interested in your perspective on the larger culture of student activism at OSU as you see it these days.

**NV**: I think for me, last year was one of the years where I saw a lot of students really speaking up about different issues. And it was because of instances that did occur on our campus and just the biggest thing was I Too Am OSU. I believe that was one of the big walks that we did around campus and it was focusing on different issues of racism and sexism and I think we have strong leaders. We've always had strong leaders since I can remember. There's specific people that we always hear about and we're like "Oh, I want to meet this student." And you eventually get to speak to these students and learn what the cause is that they're fighting for; it's empowering to me. And so to be able to be part of that community of activism is really strong. And I know this year the incidents about Ferguson, I think really sparked having these conversations that are necessary, difficult to have, but I think they're necessary to have and I think that's part of the activism. How do we start these discussions and how we can move forward?

**CP**: Is there any formal connection to student government for you or for the groups you are a part of?

**NV**: Personally, I am not involved with student government and I feel this year I've been in more connection with a lot of individuals that are part of ASOSU, one of them being our liaison for the Women's Center, Roseanne, she's been really trying to work with us and I think that's something that we needed. And also Antonio, he's part of the multicultural affairs department and he's reached out to really MEChA and other Latino organizations and also cultural centers. So I feel like it's getting stronger by the year, these connections.

**CP**: I wonder if that's a bridge that will continue to be built.

**NV**: I hope so.

**CP**: As we sort of wind up a little bit, you are a very busy person it seems. Do you have time for fun? What do you do for fun?

**NV**: I do, I try to! No definitely, really, again connecting with the communities that I work with, just having those fun nights out like we do a lot of movie nights and the older I get the more it seems it's less partying and just chill relaxing with friends. But I think it's more meaningful to me because I think those interpersonal connections are for me most important and valuable as we do grow up. It's basically those little things that I really enjoy, just hanging out with them. It's definitely nice.

**CP**: I wonder about students these days, sort of their sense of the university and where it's heading. I mean, it's changed so dramatically on many levels in the last few years. What are your thoughts on where OSU is heading and its direction now?

**NV**: I think they really want to focus on diversity and social justice and I would have to say that I think student representation is not as strong as other years and I feel that's something that we need to fight for. As a student, I really feel that we need to have more of a voice because I feel that there's more professional staff that are making some of the decisions and I feel that students need to have more of a voice. And it's maybe more critical of how the institution is run and what I'm really, I guess, I'm really proud of that social justice is a big focus and a big foundation for different classes but I hope that's implemented in other programs such as STEM programs. They don't really talk about social justice issues; or they do but it's very light. And having to have that implementation within the courses I think would be, would get students thinking about how they can really contribute to that sense of justice and the sense of really helping the community.
CP: And the representation piece I'm sure is important there as well.

NV: Definitely, definitely. Really having the opportunity of seeing kind of yourself and really being that mentor for students that otherwise would not feel comfortable with different individuals. So I think it's definitely one of the things that we want to see more of ourselves in a greater community.

CP: Well, you're going to graduate soon, is that correct?

NV: Correct, yes.

CP: What happens next?

NV: I will be taking a year off because I'm so passionate about so many things and I think I want to have a sense of where I want to go with it. I for sure want to be a community organizer, that's what I want to do. And right now my top school is Berkeley, so I'm hoping that in a year I can apply to their master's program and be able to see how I can combine all these different passions that I have and grow from there.

CP: Well that will be fertile ground for you, I'm sure.

NV: Yes, yes definitely.

CP: Well, Nicthé, I want to really thank you for telling us your story and your progression through OSU and the development of your identity and giving us a sense of what it's like to be a student activist on campus these days. Thank you very much.

NV: Yeah, thank you.

[0:41:07]