Transcript:
The Civil Rights Legacy of Justice Cruz Reynoso

OPENING REMARKS: KEVIN JOHNSON *
MODERATOR: RAQUEL ALDANA†
PANELISTS: JOSÉ PADILLA‡, AMAGDA PÉREZ¶, THOMAS SAENZ§

* Dean and Mabie-Apallas Professor of Public Interest Law and Chicana/o Studies
† Martin Luther King, Jr. Professor of Law
‡ Executive Director, California Rural Legal Assistance
¶ Executive Director, California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation
§ President and General Counsel, Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund
The family of Justice Cruz Reynoso released the following announcement upon his death in May 2021:

On May 7, 2021, former California Supreme Court Associate Justice, law professor, and civil rights activist Cruz Reynoso passed away at age 90, surrounded by his family. Reynoso was born on May 2, 1931, in Brea, California, to Francisca Ramirez Reynoso and Juan Reynoso. Cruz was one of eleven children. Cruz along with his father and brothers worked as migrant farm workers. After high school, Cruz decided to go to college and attended Fullerton Community College, and then Pomona College. After graduation, Cruz was drafted into the U.S. Army where he served on the Counterintelligence Corp. While serving in the Army, Cruz was stationed in Washington D.C., where he met his first wife, Jeannene Harness. They married in 1956 and raised four children together. Jeannene passed in 2007, and in 2008 Cruz married Elaine Rowan. Elaine passed in 2017.

Cruz earned his law degree from Boalt Hall at UC Berkeley in 1958. After which he practiced law in El Centro, California. In 1968 Cruz became the director of California Rural Legal Assistance, the first state-wide legal services program. In 1972 Cruz became a law professor at University of New Mexico. In 1976, Governor Brown appointed him to be a Justice of the 3rd District Court of Appeals. In 1982, Brown appointed Cruz to be the first Mexican American to serve on the State Supreme Court. After leaving the Court in 1987, Cruz practiced law once again. In 1991 Cruz began teaching law at UCLA. In 2001 UC Davis offered Cruz the Boochever and Bird Chair designed to promote freedom and equality. Cruz accepted and taught at UC Davis until 2017.

Cruz worked for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission under the Johnson administration, and was appointed by President Carter to serve on the Congressional Select Commission on Immigrant and Refugee Policy. President Clinton appointed Cruz to be the vice-chair of the U.S. Commission of Civil Rights and in 2000 gave Cruz the Presidential Medal of Freedom for his work in Social Justice. Cruz also served on Barack Obama’s transition team.

Cruz’s life passion was creating a more just society. He fought for equal rights for under-represented populations, legal access for the poor, workers’ rights, immigration reform, and voting rights. When not fighting legal battles, Cruz loved working on his ranch in Sacramento County. Cruz also loved reading about history and loved to draw. Abby Ginzberg
produced an award-winning film about Cruz’s life titled “Sowing the Seeds of Justice.”

Born into a farmworker family, Cruz Reynoso spent a lifetime fighting the prejudices he first encountered during his childhood in Southern California. He spent five decades working in public service, advocating for workers, immigrants, and the indigent before becoming the first Latino Justice on the California Supreme Court in 1982. In 2000, President Bill Clinton presented Reynoso with the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Then-Dean Rex Perschbacher helped persuade Cruz Reynoso to come to UC Davis in 2001 after a stint at UCLA School of Law. Besides teaching and writing (including a partially completed autobiography), Cruz was active in the UC Davis and greater community. He, for example, chaired a task force reviewing the police use of pepper spray against protesters in 2011. Reynoso also investigated the killing of a farmworker by Yolo County law enforcement. Upon Reynoso’s retirement, he was interviewed on video for the UC Davis archives.

On October 21, 2021, the UC Davis School of Law held an in-person and virtual event commemorating the civil rights legacy of Justice Cruz Reynoso. Leading civil rights lawyers who worked alongside Justice Reynoso remembered and honored his legacy as a civil rights icon and discussed the continuation of the important racial justice work that Cruz Reynoso deeply cared about. The program included a welcome and

2 For further background on Justice Reynoso, see Kevin R. Johnson, Justice Cruz Reynoso: The People’s Justice, 10 CAL. LEG. HIST. 238 (2015). Upon Reynoso’s retirement, he was interviewed on video for the UC Davis archives, available at https://video.ucdavis.edu/media/Cruz+Reynoso/1_voqxxrgh.
5 The video can be found at https://video.ucdavis.edu/media/Cruz+Reynoso/1_voqxxrgh.
introduction by UC Davis Law Dean Kevin R. Johnson. UC Davis Law Professor Raquel Aldana moderated the discussion of three Latinx civil rights leaders.

Panelists
- José Padilla, Executive Director, California Rural Legal Assistance
- Amagda Pérez, Executive Director, California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation
- Thomas Saenz, President and General Counsel, Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund

A lightly edited transcription of the discussion follows.
REMARKS OF KEVIN R. JOHNSON

Good evening. I'm Kevin Johnson, Dean of the UC Davis School of Law, and I want to thank you all for being here tonight for this special evening honoring Justice Cruz Reynoso.

Born to a farm worker family, Cruz Reynoso spent his life fighting racism and for the poor. He spent decades working in public service, advocating for workers, immigrants, and the indigent before becoming the first Latino justice on the California Supreme Court.

Tonight we're going to have the opportunity, the wonderful opportunity, to hear from civil rights lawyers who will honor Cruz's civil rights legacy and discuss the continuation of his important social justice work. Sadly, one of the reasons we're all here is that in May, Cruz Reynoso passed away at age ninety.

I want to recognize his son, Len Reid Reynoso, who's here tonight with us.

Cruz Reynoso was a UC Davis Law School professor from 2001 to 2006, and he remained devoted to the law school as an emeritus professor. He taught students. He mentored students. He spoke at events. He attended faculty meetings, which basically no retired professor does. But he wanted the opportunity to provide me with, as he put it, constructive input, and he always did. He would talk to students as if they were friends, talk to faculty like they were friends, talk to them about the law, about public service. He talked to people about how their families were doing. He won too many awards to mention, but I will mention that, in 2000, President Clinton bestowed upon Cruz Reynoso the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Justice Reynoso attended community college and then Pomona College. He spent two years in the Army Counter Intelligence Corps. He then enrolled at UC Berkeley School of Law where he once told me that he was the best Latino in the entire class; he then went on to reveal that he was the only Latino in the entire Class of 1958.

He often said that he became a lawyer because he saw so many injustices. As I've mentioned many times, Cruz Reynoso one of the nicest

* Dean and Mabie-Apallas Professor of Public Interest Law and Chicana/o Studies, University of California, Davis, School of Law.
people you could ever want to meet. He had a gentle demeanor, had a good word to say for all, even those who didn't always say good things about him. But he would become much more forceful and much more adamant and much tougher, when he felt what he called his “justice bone” twinge.

Cruz Reynoso began his legal career in El Centro in the Imperial Valley. He started his own law practice to help ordinary people. In 1968 became the director of the California Rural Legal Assistance. He oversaw the efforts to ban the short-handled hoe, which literally broke the backs, of farm workers. He fought to end the use of DDT, the deadly pesticide that killed farm workers.

Then Governor Ronald Reagan did his very best over a number of years to put CRLA out of business, and Cruz Reynoso fought and he won against a very popular governor. And if you haven't seen the movie yet, "Cruz Reynoso: Sowing the Seeds of Justice," I encourage you to see it to see how forceful, how tough, how resilient Cruz Reynoso was.

Cruz Reynoso later became a law professor at the University of New Mexico. He later was appointed by Governor Jerry Brown to the local court of appeals, the Third Appellate District in Sacramento. Then he was appointed to the California Supreme Court. He served there until 1986, when in a recall vote the voters of California decided that he should be recalled, along with two other justices, two other so-called liberal justices, who conservatives did not want on the Supreme Court.

Cruz Reynoso then returned to legal academia and joined the UCLA law faculty. He also began serving on the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and was involved in investigating the Rodney King violence in Los Angeles and the election irregularities in Florida in the 2000 presidential election.

We were very fortunate in 2001 to have Cruz Reynoso become the inaugural holder of the Boochever and Bird Chair for the Study and Teaching of Freedom and Equality.

But Cruz Reynoso’s quest for justice never ended. Throughout his time here and throughout his retirement years, he would investigate many things, including a local killing of a farm worker in Woodland.

He also chaired the task force that looked at the use by police of pepper spray against student protesters on this campus not that far from here. And his critical report in that case helped the campus move past that
horrible, unforgivable incident. And he was able to suggest and help the campus make reforms to ensure that something like it would never happen again.

I could say a lot more about my friend, Cruz Reynoso, but I want to thank you all for being here. Now I want to turn things over to Professor Raquel Aldana, a dedicated civil rights activist in her own right, who will introduce our speakers and moderate the program.

Thank you.

Remarks by Professor and Moderator Raquel Aldana*

[Aldana]: Thank you so much, Dean Johnson, and thank you for being here, either in person or virtually joining us to celebrate the life and legacy of Justice Cruz Reynoso. We are honored today by the presence, in person and virtually, of three civil rights giants who lead three of the most prominent civil rights organizations defending the rights of Latinos and Latinas in the United States. Each of the honored guests knew Justice Reynoso, and each of them would probably tribute their own incredible contributions to civil rights and the legal academy as being deeply influenced by Justice Reynoso's civil rights legacy.

José Padilla is the Executive Director of the California Rural Legal Assistance, and you heard Dean Johnson mentioned the role the CRLA had in Justice Reynoso's life. José, your life has many parallels to Justice Reynoso. You both came from humble beginnings. You both are from – Well, you are in the Imperial Valley, the son of farm workers, Justice Reynoso from Southern California, and also the son of farm workers. You both graduated from Berkeley Law, and you both made careers at CRLA fighting on behalf of migrant workers. I was trying to figure out when I was looking at your bio whether you and Justice Reynoso coincided at CRLA. As best as I can tell, you joined CRLA either right around the time that he left and a few years prior to his appointment to the California Supreme Court in 1982. So I look forward very much to letting you tell us a lot more about that period and your experiences at CRLA.

* Raquel E. Aldana joined UC Davis in 2017 to serve as the inaugural Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Diversity with a law faculty appointment. She returned to full time law teaching in 2020. Aldana is a graduate of Arizona State University and Harvard Law School.
Amagda Pérez is my colleague and faculty here at King Hall, who directs the Immigration Clinic, but is also the Executive Director of the California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation, which is the sister org of CRLA that was created specifically to be able to address the needs of undocumented farm workers and families, in part in response to the federal restrictions on the funding of legal services providing services for undocumented individuals.

You and I have had a chance to share stories about Justice Reynoso, who was also a member of our faculty, and I was actually amazed to learn from you that you met him when you were a law student, and Justice Reynoso, I had no idea, had actually applied to be dean here at King Hall. I also learned you guys organized a protest when he didn't get the job, so good for you, but we're so lucky that he came back later to join our community as a faculty member, and we owe a great deal of gratitude to Dean Johnson for convincing him to come back. And as you heard, although he retired in 2006, he remained devoted to King Hall and our students until almost the very end. In fact, I joined UC Davis in 2017, so that was more than a decade after his retirement, and I still got to enjoy seeing him at faculty meetings and engaging with him informally in the halls. Among the faculty, Amagda, you were probably his closest friend, or one of his closest friends. And it's amazing that you have had parallel projections, promoting the rights of migrant workers and also propelling and inspiring a future generation of King lawyers who are following in your footsteps.

And then we're going to hear from Thomas Saenz. It's always great to see you. I met you, of course, through a mutual friend and colleague Professor Leticia Saucedo, with whom you worked and continue to work in the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, MALDEF, also known as the Latino legal voice of civil rights in America. You're also from Southern California, and I'm sure that Justice Reynoso must have been so damn proud of you, whom he undoubtedly saw as the newest version of the power tool, and, of the strategic civil rights movement that has done so much by MALDEF, with your leadership, has creatively and brilliantly pushed back against the oppression of Latinos and Latinas in the US, and you have solidified Justice Reynoso's early understanding that the struggle for immigrant rights is also a struggle for civil rights and also a struggle for racial justice in this country.

So I want to begin by asking each of you to please spend five minutes or so sharing how you knew Justice Reynoso and to reflect on how
his presence in your life influenced, and will continue to influence, your works and the work of your respective institutions that you lead or have led.

We'll start with José and then move to Amagda and finally to Tom.

**Remarks of Jose Padilla**

First of all, I wanted to apologize for that for personal medical reasons I cannot be there in person. So, I wanted to thank Dean Johnson for giving me this honor to participate today on this panel remembering the legacy of our friend, mentor, hero, champion of the poor, Justice Cruz Reynoso. Justice Reynoso was all those things, but in these next few minutes I'll focus on three sides of Cruz – Cruz the rural attorney, Cruz the political role model and Cruz the common person.

Cruz the rural attorney... Like my fellow panel members, I was blessed to have personally known Justice Reynoso. A few years ago, when I spoke at another event here at UC Davis honoring the justice, I noted that long before I met Cruz, I knew of him as the rural lawyer. My own roots are rural, border, having been born and raised in Imperial County in the 1950s and ’60s, where Justice Reynoso had a private practice.

When Justice Reynoso practiced in the Reynoso Duddy Law Firm, he represented rural workers in worker's compensation and disability claims. My own background was a farm worker.

My grandparents and parents picked in the agricultural fields of that valley. And Justice Reynoso practiced there as the first Spanish surname attorney in the valley. So within that Latino community, Cruz became known to practice on weekends from his home, where he lived with Jeannene, and where the workers would go to seek his legal counsel.

I once said that Justice Reynoso was legal aid before legal aid even existed in Imperial Valley. And for me personally, Cruz was the first Latino attorney I had heard of in that valley, and in that sense he was a role model for the attorney I would later become, and also practice after UC Berkeley in that same valley when I practiced there with CRLA from 1978 to 1984.

* Jose R. Padilla received his B.A. from Stanford in 1974 and J.D. from U.C. Berkeley School of Law. After graduation in 1978, he started his legal career with California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA) Inc., advocating for the rights of California’s farm worker and rural poverty communities.
Let me talk about Cruz as a political role model. So it was during this period in the '60s when Cruz's life crossed with CRLA. His employment and relationship with CRLA would prove to be a political challenge of national consequence. In 1966 Cruz became a founding member of CRLA. He joined – On that founding board he joined labor leaders Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, and Larry Itliong. Larry Itliong was the Filipino organizer who led the first grape strike in California's picking fields. In that context Cruz was selected to be on the CRLA board as its first chairperson, and three years after CRLA's founding by its founder, Jim Lorenz, Cruz would then become CRLA's second Executive Director in 1969.

And so, in that early history CRLA was unique in two ways.

CRLA was the first state-wide legal aid program in the country, and CRLA was the first legal aid to provide services to farm workers. So that was the CRLA Cruz lead in 1969. So in that role as director from 1969 to 1972, Cruz engaged in a national political struggle that challenged Governor Ronald Reagan's veto of CRLA funding, federal funding. The Reagan political interference came in the name of California agriculture, and CRLA would survive that, but it would have profound national consequences. Because of that interference by the state governor, legal aid then became nationalized.

It led to the creation of the current federal legal aid framework. It led to the passage of the Legal Services Corporation Act back there in the early '70s, and it was that law that established that that Congress, without any state involvement, would provide annual legal aid funds to programs. And there today are 130 of them, of which CRLA is one. And these are the ones that currently provide civil legal aid to the poor all over the country. But the concept was that the funding flowed through a federal agency, the Legal Services Corporation, and so by doing that it excluded any state political interest, like agriculture, from interfering as it had done in Reynoso's time when Governor Reagan came after him.

And so just as agriculture had done in Cruz's time, the dairy industry politically interfered with us. And so just as CRLA fought with agriculture during Cruz's time, the dairy industry came after us in the early 2000s when Congressman Bill Thomas, in 2003 to 2007, during that period he decided to have us investigated by the Legal Services Corporation.
Why? Because of our own very, very successful litigation against the dairy industry.

During that time CRLA was very successful through its litigation. We were winning settlements against the dairy of $100,000, $200,000, and we had a half a million dollars, $500,000 settlement. During that period we settled cases worth more than $1.3 million. But just like the ag industry, dairy had decided to have us investigated. They had us investigated from 2000 to 2003... It was in 2004, and they asked us that I go before the subcommittee in Congress that funded legal aid. It was the sub-committee on commerce and administrative law headed by a Congressman out of Utah, Congressman Chris Cannon. And so I testified before that committee because the dairy industry wanted our litigation, our labor litigation, to stop.

And so for me, during that period of time, it was Justice Reynoso's leadership example during the Reagan times that guided me through that similar political effort to defund us some 40 years later. And I would always tell myself during that time – I literally would say, "What would Cruz do in a situation like this?"

But anyway, we successfully defended ourselves before Congress when I gave that testimony. So let me end my comments this way talking about Cruz as the really – the person Cruz that I knew, the common person, the common man.

I wanted to say that Cruz, as I knew him, was a very religious and moral person who acted from all of those religious values, and he used those values to act in an uncommon way. Humility was part of his essence. He had the ability to treat the person in front of him, whether that was a farm worker, a law student, a politician, with utmost respect, treating you as if you were the most important person, as important as any person of high political position. A worker in his presence would feel equally as important as a Supreme Court Justice in his presence. That was a very special personality trait.

So rare, so uncommon, but very special in Cruz the man. Cruz, at the same time, was a very religious person. He lived by those morals. As a matter of fact, my wife was reminding me – my wife, Deborah Escobedo, who is a lawyer with the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights, was reminding me about that moral man that Cruz was. Justice Reynoso did not drink. Justice Reynoso did not smoke. Justice Reynoso did not dance. And Justice Reynoso did not swear. If he was angry, it was said that Justice
Reynoso might be heard to swear, saying something like, “Oh darn.” That was Justice Reynoso.

So on that light note, I am thinking of our CRLA legal aid work. It now has extended more than fifty years after Cruz led us. We continue doing major education advocacy, major labor cases. Even during that period, we were the ones to legislate the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, where millions of immigrants were able to secure legal status. All of those efforts may never have come to pass but for Justice Reynoso's leadership when Governor Reagan sought to defund us. And so he saved CRLA for all of those hundreds of CRLA attorneys who have come after him to serve the same farm workers and to serve the same rural communities that he served, and CRLA served, during his time.

And so I say, Cruz Reynoso, presente. And with that, I thank Dean Johnson again for letting me speak. Thank you.

Remarks of Amagda Pérez*

I learned about Justice Reynoso in my first year at law school when I attended a public interest law day in San Francisco and heard José Padilla talk about the CRLA. Following his presentation, I approached José and told him I was the daughter of farm workers and that in the hope that he would consider me for a position with CRLA after law school because my community needed a CRLA lawyer.

That weekend, I went home and I researched all about CRLA and I learned about its history, its accomplishments and about a trailblazing director who fought the governor and prevented the elimination of legal services for the poor.

That director was Justice Cruz Reynoso.

Like Justice Reynoso, I wanted to become a lawyer because there was no Spanish-speaking lawyers in the agriculture community where I grew up. As a child, during the summers I remember border patrol agents coming out to the ranch where we lived and my parents worked as farm workers.

* Amagda Perez is co-director of the UC Davis School of Law Immigration Law Clinic and executive director of the California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation. A graduate of UC Davis and UC Davis School of Law, she has extensive experience working with immigrants of varied nationalities and other disenfranchised communities.
workers, and the border patrol agents would at the end of the day come on to the ranch and be chasing the workers. The first time that I saw the border patrol agents on the ranch I asked my parents why the police were chasing the workers, and my parents told me that they wanted to deport them because they were undocumented. Growing up with a lot of these families, yeah, I got to be very close with them, and I would look at the workers and I would look at my parents and I would ask them like, "Well do we need to hide? Do we need to run, too?"

And my parents said, "No, I mean, you were born in the United States, so we can never be deported." And I asked them, "Well were you born in the United States?" And they're like, "No, but we have papers." And so at that moment, you know, I asked myself, "Well what can I do to make sure that everyone can have these important papers so that they do not have to live in fear of being deported?" While working as a member of the Congressional Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy appointed by President Jimmy Carter, Justice Reynoso helped write a report that presented recommendations that later became part of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, which allowed close to three million undocumented individuals to obtain lawful permanent residence status. One point two million of them were farm workers. A couple years after the passage of IRCA, I was fortunate to be admitted to King Hall and accepted in Immigration Clinic where, as a law student, I have opportunity to help farm worker families to legalize and protect immigrant families from separation that Justice Reynoso considered to be a violation of human rights. In my third year of law school I had the privilege of meeting Justice Reynoso in person when he attended an interview for the law school dean position.

As chair of the La Raza Law Student Association and the Law Student Association, I had opportunity to meet with Justice Reynoso and hear about his vision to recruit and retain students of color and create a learning experience and environment to support student success. Students were in awe of Justice Reynoso and thought he was a perfect candidate for dean of King Hall.

Unfortunately agribusiness was more powerful than the students, and he was not offered the position, which led me to organize my first-ever teach-in in protest of what I considered the university's failure to do the right thing. Luckily for me, José Padilla did hire me to work at CRLA after graduation, and Justice Reynoso was a keynote speaker at every CRLA staff conference, inspiring us through his social justice trajectory.
In 1996, Congress passed restrictions preventing federally funded legal aid organizations, like CRLA, from representing undocumented immigrants engaging in class-action litigation and providing legislative advocacy. CRLA’s legislative advocates, Director of Community Advocacy and I left CRLA and went to work for CRLA Foundation to continue our joint mission of providing comprehensive legal representation and advocacy on behalf of the rural poor. I subsequently became CRLA Foundation's Executive Director and relied heavily on José and Justice Reynoso to teach me how to be a Legal Services Director.

CRLA Foundation was created in 1981 when CRLA was threatened once again with defunding in an effort to prevent CRLA from continuing its war on poverty. Since its founding, CRLA Foundation has not only shared Justice Reynoso commitment to safeguarding of the civil rights and the interests of California's farm workers and the rural poor, but it has adopted this commitment as its core mission. CRLA Foundation's history is deeply intertwined with Justice Reynoso's legacy of service to those most in need, for champion in the rights of the rural poor through an application of law to ensure true justice for all, as he called it, and following his example of excellence in the provision of legal services.

As Dean Johnson and Professor Aldana mentioned, thanks to Dean Perschacher and Dean Johnson, King Hall was able to bring Justice Reynoso as a full-time professor and inaugural holder of the Boochever and Bird chair for the study of teaching and freedom in 2001.

For the next nineteen years I had the distinct honor of working with Justice Reynoso as co-faculty advisor of the La Raza Law Students Association, co-counseling with him on civil rights cases and following his footsteps to learn as much as I could. He invited me to speak during intro week about my work as a public interest lawyer and join him on [speaking indistinctly] in the court. And I invited him to serve as advisor to CRLA Foundation, speak at our immigration forums and CRLA Foundations through [speaking indistinctly] which he did so gracefully and passionately. His impact on me personally is immeasurable.

He was my hero, my mentor, my friend. Whether it was at the intercourt meetings, at faculty meetings, political meetings, law school graduations [speaking indistinctly] or community events, we always managed to arrive at about the same time, and at times I had a person ask me if I was Justice Reynoso's driver, which I would have been honored to
do. In ten years, everything, and whether it was divine intervention or just pure luck, we always arrived at the same time, and he always reserved a space for me next to him, letting me know that I belong and I had a right to be here.

One of the greatest challenges for me as a Chicana social justice leader is having that opportunity to interact with, be inspired by him, and sit at the table with Justice Cruz Reynoso.

And, of course, having some hot chocolate and pan dulce every Wednesday and Thursday morning.

Thank you.

**Remarks of Thomas Saenz**

So I just want to start by thanking Dean Johnson for including me, and I want to think all of you who are here in person or with us virtually who are joining us in celebrating all the many contributions of Justice Reynoso.

The sheer length of time that he contributed to justice and law requires me to begin long before who I knew who he was, long before I even had much of a sense of what civil rights was or what the law was.

And that is to note that Cruz served on MALDEF's board in the mid-1970s. And so despite my gray hair, this was while I was still in grade school. But I want to point out what an important era it was for my organization, MALDEF, at the time that Cruz served on the board. So this was less than a decade after MALDEF was founded, and it was during the tenure of our first long-term president and general counsel, Vilma Martinez.

The mid '70s, she's a woman leading a civil rights organization. You can imagine how unusual that was in the mid-1970s, and I think having Cruz on the board at the time was a great assistance to her in helping to navigate what was, by its very nature, difficult for a woman in the 1970s to be leading a national civil rights organization.

* Thomas A. Saenz is President and General Counsel of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF). He leads MALDEF’s national efforts to promote the civil rights of all Latinos living in the United States. Saenz graduated summa cum laude from Yale University, and he received his law degree from Yale Law School.
Vilma is a good friend. I asked her about Cruz's service, and she assured me that he was important and helpful. And she said to me that what she recalls most is that though they came to the law and civil rights from different perspectives, because his career had been in CRLA, therefore very knowledgeable of the challenges faced by rural Latinos, and Vilma came to civil rights from a very urbanized perspective, having begun her civil rights career as an LDF lawyer in New York City.

But she said to me that despite those different backgrounds they spoke a common language of caring for people and for the progress of the Latino community. So that's long before I had any idea of who Cruz Reynoso was. But I will say that before I met him Cruz was a role model because, like many of you, I'm the first lawyer in my family, and I certainly did not know Latino lawyers growing up.

I didn't know many lawyers period. If I think about it there may have been one school board member, a white lawyer in my community, as I was growing up. So to have someone, Cruz, appointed the first Latino of the California Supreme Court when I was in high school certainly influenced my path, solidified my path, my interest in becoming a lawyer. And in particular, becoming a civil rights lawyer.

Then, of course – and I think this is critically important – I was a twenty-year-old voter in 1986. This would be one of the first elections I had had a chance to vote in, and we faced the retention election that resulted, unfortunately, in Cruz and two other justices being removed from the California Supreme Court.

But that was so long ago I want to emphasize what it meant. It was a tremendous injustice. These justices were targeting by right-wing forces in California seeking to change the fact that so many of the justices had been appointed by Democratic governors.

I, as I look back, think we can't separate that injustice, and in particular, that Cruz was targeted together with the Chief Justice, who became, at least superficially, the main target of the campaign. I don't think it's an accident that the one Latino justice and the first Latino justice was also targeted by the right wing in 1986. And in this sense looking back, I can't separate that occurrence from what we faced just a few years later in the '90s in California with the right-wing championing so many anti-Latino
measures on the ballot to take political advantage, beginning with the notorious Proposition 187.

But, as a voter, I was disappointed that Cruz was not retained because I, of course, voted to retain him, and I had a deep sense of how unjust it was to have this first Latino justice, who was a role model for so many of us, be removed in such an unjust manner.

And this gets to where I had the first opportunity to meet Cruz in person. Because of their working together in the 1970s, on occasion when Cruz was visiting Los Angeles he would stay with Vilma Martinez and her family at their home in the center of Los Angeles. And one day I – Vilma had become, at that point, a professional mentor of mine, and she has remained to this day. She and I had gone to dinner. We were returning to her home and to my great surprise – I didn't expect this – we walk into her home and who's there? Cruz Reynoso. A person I had never met, but, of course, I knew as an icon, first Latino Supreme Court Justice. And if I had been asked – I didn't know I would meet him. If I had been asked, "What do you expect?"

Based on what I had saw as a voter in 1986, I would've expected to see someone who would, understandably, be a little bitter. This was only five, six, seven years from that terrible election. I would have expected someone to be a little beaten. But, of course, that's not Cruz. He took that tremendous personal injustice and turned it into a career in academia, of inspiration and instruction for generations and generations of students, Latino students and non-Latino students. So the Cruz that I met that night was the one that you've all heard about and probably many of you knew. The calm, sweet-demeanored, gentle, very personable icon.

Not what I expected from an icon.

One of the first Latino lawyers, justices I have had any conception of as I was solidifying my path of going to law school. So that first experience was of course paid out every time I ever ran into Cruz. He was always calm, sweet demeanored and very interested, as José said, in whomever he was talking to.

And I will say, my experience with Cruz was we would recurringly run into each other by happenstance at events. He would be speaking. I would be speaking. We would both be speaking. We would both be attending an event, generally for Latino students because he so valued
Latino law students and Latino students. Every time I ran into him I thought to myself, "I'm so fortunate every time I run into Cruz I have something I need to ask him about."

Then I realized it's just that whenever you run into Cruz, you would find something that you would want to get his input about because you would want his wisdom in framing your ultimate decision.

And he was, without exception, unfailingly generous with his thoughts, unfailingly respectful with his thoughts and unfailingly wise in what he would tell me, no matter what the issue was. And what I would say was most, in my view, impactful about that experience over and over again was that he had to recognize, as an icon in Latino civil rights, that he could tell someone like me what to do, and I would likely do it.

But he always gave you his advice with extreme respect for your own agency and your own decision-making. So you left those conversations never feeling pushed or pressured in any way. You would know you had gotten wise advice, but without feeling coerced in any way to go the way that Cruz would want you to go.

He left you with your complete agency and decision-making in every one of those conversations.

So to me he started out as a role model of a Latino civil rights lawyer and jurist, and he developed into a role model of how we should all deal with each other as human beings, despite his clearly having an understanding that he was an icon.

He dealt with everyone, as José said, in a way that was respectful of their dignity, of their agency and of their humanity. And that, I think, is what I will miss the most about Cruz: those opportunities to run into him and have the opportunity to have ask him for whatever burning issue was on my mind at the time.

Questions and Answers

Aldana: Thank you. Thank you so much. I really enjoyed listening to each of you. I'm going to ask a question to each of you, but I do want the audience to also get an opportunity to ask questions.
José, Justice Reynoso's career in CRLA both propelled his stature as a leading Latino jurist, but also represented for him significant political challenges, both in his appointment to the California Supreme Court and perhaps also leading to his eventual recall.

Could you reflect a bit more on this, and perhaps draw lessons for young lawyers today who both aspire to do civil rights work, but who can also perhaps imagine themselves on the bench?

What advice do you think Justice Reynoso would want to give those young lawyers?

**Padilla:** Again, appreciate the comments that Tom was making about asking Justice Reynoso for advice because he's totally correct in the fact that Justice Reynoso was also willing to speak to you and give you his wisdom and his insights given the things that he had gone through.

I remember also when he was – I'm guessing he was on the subcommittee – he asked me to testify in front of the civil rights commission that he was on, but I remember when he always approached me, he always personalized it. It's almost like he was a relative or something. And even after all that time that I spent with CRLA and going through all of my own political issues with the dairy, et cetera, and testifying in front of the Congressional Committee, in all of that I would talk to Cruz and the first thing out of his mouth was, "Hi," and he would say, "Josécito!"

Always Josécito, and to me it was like that personalizing, that kind of father figure in some sense, was the way he first began talking, and then you engaged him at the level that you needed. But this question about law students who want to go into civil rights practice, I want to say that to me, whether you are a law student wanting to go into civil rights practice, going into immigration practice, going into labor rights practice, Cruz would tell you to always do that work with your utmost passion.

Most of you, like Tom had said and Professor Pérez had said, we came and became lawyers as the first lawyers in our families, and I'm sure many of you there find yourselves in that same position.

And we didn't know who to go to until we would run into that, and as Tom said, that role model. But I think Cruz would say whatever passion it was that got you into law school, whether you, maybe one of your family members was represented because they were immigrants, whatever reason,
he would say that passion that led you to UC Davis Law, never lose that passion when you are representing our communities.

The workers, the low wage workers, if that's the labor practice you get into as part of what you're going to do, if you do civil rights work with a legal aid, you should always work from the heart.

Work hard and work harder. Prepare, always be ready. Always be the best lawyer you can because that is what our communities need. You put in all time because that farm worker client wants you to be the best lawyer there when you are representing him or her in that labor hearing.

The immigration attorney that you're going to be, when you're representing that immigrant worker who's being deported...During that time I was in El Centro, those five, six years that I was there, I practiced in immigration court in the El Centro Immigration Detention Center and did maybe about ten, eleven deportation cases.

That is work that you know you must be successful in because your client is going to be sent out of the country. Their children are going to go with them out of the country. That's why you become that best immigration lawyer.

And so I think what Cruz would say is whether in any of that, always follow that passion and do the best work. With respect to the bench, if you've been doing that work and have that reputation in your resume, you are going to find supporters, and you are going to find detractors.

You are always going – they are always going to be there because of that practice, but we all have to feel proud that that's what we chose. Our courts need to be diverse. Our courts need to have on those courts jurists who have come from those practices representing the poor, the urban poor, the rural poor, Latinos being discriminated against by schools and some of that major litigation that MALDEF has done nationally, changing those school systems.

In California, we have done that. But because of that you will be focused – that history will come back and be a focus of somebody as a detraction, but that's when you say, "No, I did this work because I was following my heart and because I was following my own role models who taught me to do this work with that passion because the poor client, the low-income client deserves it." I'm out. That's my advice.
Aldana: Thank you. I think you probably are echoing Justice Reynoso accurately for sure. So many have focused on Justice Reynoso's qualities as a human being.

Amagda, you used the word caballero to describe him. I really like this for him because it translates in English to gentleman, and he certainly was gentle.

And I think Tom also [speaking indistinctly] That's not quite what you expect when you meet someone who's such an icon and has accomplished so much.

But I wonder, Amagda, if you can reflect a little bit about how these qualities served Justice Reynoso advance his otherwise fierce civil rights role?

What lessons should other civil rights lawyers learn from this part of Justice Reynoso's legacy?

Pérez: As we've heard this afternoon, Justice Reynoso was a man of outstanding intellect, superior judicial performance, high integrity, and his rare personal qualities, namely his humility, kindness and gentle nature.

Many years ago, when I started as director, someone gave me a card with the saying, "Don't mistake kindness for weakness." When I look at this card that's on my office door, I think of Justice Cruz Reynoso, who to me was the embodiment of human kindness, humility, grace, and power.

And despite so many awards, Justice Reynoso just remained so gracious and humble. His commitment to protecting the rights of farm workers and the rural poor earned him the trust, and his staff, of farm workers who saw his as the personification of hope as a justice warrior, the promise of justice and a champion who believed that everyone should be treated with dignity and respect.

I remember hearing him speak one afternoon when he said, "You know, in schools they talk about teaching tolerance, but we shouldn't be teaching tolerance. We should be teaching respect, because with tolerance it's that we have to tolerate someone, but to respect someone is to really value that person as a human being." And that just stayed with me, and it
just really kind of shaped the way that I wanted to teach as a social justice lawyer and professor.

To his adversaries, Justice Reynoso was a gentleman rabble-rouser who never raised his voice, who relentlessly pursued justice for his clients, overcoming economic and political power of growers and local officials with the power of the law and his humanity.

When Justice Reynoso spoke, everyone listened. Justice Reynoso was respected for his unwavering moral purpose, integrity, and adherence to the truth. In this he was called upon by, as we've heard, presidents of the United States, state governors, presidents of University of California to investigate civil rights violations, such as racial profiling of Black and Brown people by the Los Angeles Police, voting improprieties in Florida, the killing of a farm worker by [speaking indistinctly] police and the pepper spraying of students by the UC Davis Police by the Occupy movement. However, there are many other less known cause that he undertook that changed the lives of the people he touched, strongly believing that immigration rights were human and civil rights, he advocated for comprehensive immigration reform, helped undocumented students draft business plans that would allow them to practice law as independent contractors years before San Antonio Garcia's case was litigated.

He tutored elementary students and taught them how to read because he so believed in quality education. He taught freshman seminars of civil rights, affirmative action, and the representation of Latinos in the legal profession. He volunteered at naturalization and DACA workshops, took cases no one else would, swore in countless [speaking indistinctly] law graduates and congratulated every parent for their daughter's and son's achievements.

To Justice Reynoso, his work of national importance was as meaningful as his meetings with community members. As José mentioned and others have mentioned as well, he treated officials and dignitaries and farm workers with the same dignity and respect. His love of teaching and working with students allowed him to incorporate students into his civil rights investigations and advocacy. Through his example, he has inspired generations of lawyers, community advocates and policy makers to fight valiantly and boldly against injustices.

Observing Justice Reynoso in different forums and seeing how he effectively advocated for disenfranchised communities with his quiet yet
commanding demeanor showed us that you do not have to be loud to be effective. This is a lesson that I share with law students who come to King Hall in desire to do social justice work, but wondered, like I did, if they have the right personality of strength of character to be effective.

Justice Reynoso showed us that to be the lawyers that our communities need, all we need is to pay attention to our justice bone, to be willing to step up on behalf of the voiceless and use the application of the law to ensure justice for all.

And despite the concerns that we might have in being forceful enough, when you're advocating for people who need representation, if it's something you strongly believe in, that power comes from within. It comes from the heart, right? And it was key to [speaking indistinctly] so many of us have seen through assisting our own self-advocacy.

Justice Reynoso was a zealous defender of human and civil rights. His faith in humanity, respect for others and dedication to the true fairness, equality and moral excellence stand out as qualities we all aspire to have as defenders and advocates of justice.

However, it was his humility and kindness that made him the most impactful and wonderful human being those of us who've had the pleasure of working with him have ever known.

Como un caballero de justicia, a gentleman defender of justice who leaves generations of social justice advocates committed to carrying his legacy forward and to be good mentors, like he was, to generations to come.

Aldana: Thank you. One final question, this one for Tom. When I teach immigration law and we spend quite a bit of time on constitutional law cases, it can get quite depressing actually because there's not many victories or any, so I try very much to feature the movements behind the cases and the organizations, the strategies, and one of the organizations that I feature is MALDEF because MALDEF has been taking up the torch in strategic litigation to further provide Latinos and Latinas, and to frame it within a framework of racial justice and civil rights in the US.

And I wanted to hear a little bit more about the gains and challenges that you see, both within the judiciary and the political sphere, and even involve public opinion to [speaking indistinctly] immigrant rights as separate from civil rights or from racial justice in this country?
Saenz: So I think that I want to say first, as you noted, that Cruz Reynoso was one of those who recognized early the connection between Latino civil rights and immigrants' rights. And I want to say that to me that says two things about Cruz.

So first, it really demonstrates that no matter how far away from frontline representation of Latino workers his formal role may have been, he always understood what the experience is of the everyday Latino's work. I say that because MALDEF has had an immigrants' rights program since the 1970s under president and general counsel, Vilma Martinez.

And she has told me that that program emanated from the frontline staff attorneys because their experience was that's how Latinos every day experience discrimination, whether it was citizenship requirements that were not necessary on employment or what eventually became *Plyler v. Doe*, kids being told, "You can't go to school because you're undocumented." So that recognition is a recognition of the real lived experience of Latinos in this country going back decades. So it reflects Cruz's ongoing understanding of that experience. But on the other hand, I think that it reflects that Cruz was also a professor, an academic, someone who analyzes the law because I think from that perspective it's hard not to note, as I do as often as I can to folks, that one major theme, a through line of the Latino civil rights struggle in this country, going back through *Hernandez versus Texas* in 1954, is the struggle to adapt civil rights doctrines that were primarily developed in a slightly different context of discrimination under Jim Crow against African Americans.

But our struggle has been to take those doctrines where the judiciary recreated, as in *Hernandez versus Texas*, or created by civil rights statute, and struggling to take those laws developed for that other context and making them fit the experience of the Latino community where, unlike the African American experience, so much discrimination is couched formally in terms that are not race, right? “Oh, I'm not discriminating against you because you're Latino, but because you're undocumented or because you're not a citizen or because you don't speak English or because you have an accent or because fill in the blank.”

You've all had this experience. That's how the Latino community historically and throughout the civil rights era has experienced discrimination. It is not, "We don't like you because you're Latino." Yes, that happens, still does. We still challenge it, but so much of it is couched
in other terms, other characteristics that we know in our hearts is racial discrimination.

It's just through proxies in different language, different terminology. And our struggle continues to be how do we make the judicial system, the justice system, recognize what our hearts tell us – this is racial discrimination – are right, are correct and that the law should recognize that these discriminations by proxy are as offensive to constitutional principles, to civil rights principles as blatant racial discrimination.

And, also its broader implications on the disparate impact doctrine, and how it is being limited and attempts to eliminate it for all people of color. But I think that Cruz having taken the stance early that he did reflects both his analytical professor side and his connection to the people and everyday experience side as well.

And I think, to further expand on your question, that's what we have to do. Our struggle is really about taking everyday experience and translating it into legal doctrine. In a way, that's what all lawyers do.

Our struggle is through the attempt to make civil rights laws that often are interpreted to be limited solely to intentional racial discrimination and using them and getting them adapted to address the everyday experience of discrimination by proxy.

And it is an ongoing struggle. It is a reality that the right wing wants to eliminate disparate impact doctrine. Best example that I'll give you – I've been doing a lot of thinking about voting rights these days, not just because of what we see following the Big Lie, not just because we're in the middle of redistricting, not just because we have the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act hopefully being acted upon by the US Senate next week, but it is interesting to see the right-wing attempts to characterize section two of the Voting Rights Act, the most important provision still operative of that foundational civil rights law; they attempt to characterize section two as a disparate impact standard.

When they do that you know that that's their beginning attempt to eliminate section two. And in fact we have to push back and point out that section two, which includes a “totality of the circumstances” test, that is as close to an Arlington Heights standard for proving intentional racial discrimination as you can get.
The totality of circumstances test is basically *Arlington Heights* adapted for the voting context. But the right wing wants to call it disparate impact, and I think it demonstrates what we have to do in response consistent with the struggle I just described, but what we have to do in response to the pushback that we will continue to see from the right wing that wants to eliminate any successes we’ve had in adapting civil rights laws to the everyday experience of Latinos in the country.

_Aldana_: Okay. Anyone in the audience want to raise a question for our speakers?

_Woman #1_: I will.

_Aldana_: Okay.

_Woman #1_: Thank you all so much being here. I don't know if I need to speak into the mic, but I'm not going to. So... Oh, good. I had the pleasure of meeting Cruz about, I don't know -- let's see, wow, eleven years ago. Unfortunately, I spoke after him at an event, and it was an event to allow underrepresented minority students to get into the pipeline to law school. And it was related to a community college, and then also a four-year institution, and then to go to law school in sort of this pipeline. And I just wanted to know if any of you can speak to kind of his dedication to ensuring -- I mean, some of you touched on it a little bit -- but ensuring that there is a strong pipeline of underrepresented students that are getting into law schools and sort of keeping that fight going?

_Pérez_: So I think that Justice Reynoso had a strong commitment and in speaking at the various law schools and in speaking publicly, he wanted to create a space saying you belong, right, and there's a place for you. And there's so many first-generation students, whether at high school level, the college level or law school, that are kind of struggling to find that balance in doing the work that they came to law school for, and yet sometimes finding yourself kind of, like, alienated or being in a place that just doesn't seem responsive to -- Sorry. [Laughter]

[Indistinct conversation] So in conclusion, his dedication to teaching the freshman seminars was his way of creating that interest and ensuring that that, you know, there were good mentors along the way to keep students in school and to create that place like MALDEF, like CRLA, like CRLA Foundation where they can be [speaking indistinctly] justice lawyers or [speaking indistinctly].
Fuentes-Michel: Hi. My name is Diana Fuentes-Michel, and I worked with Cruz Reynoso when he was the chair of the California Post-Secondary Education Commission. Under Gray Davis, I was Undersecretary for Education, and I was also the Assistant Secretary for Higher Education. As I've told my husband many times, I would not have been appointed Undersecretary of Education under Gray Davis unless Cruz Reynoso had mentored me when I was at the Post-Secondary Education Commission. I'm standing because in response to the question, "What did Cruz do to increase the number of students who would be prepared to go to law school?"

During his tenure at the commission, he was chair of the Post-Secondary Education Commission in California after Bakke. After his unfortunate recall, he took leadership in the California legislature by not only mentoring the Chicano legislators on the importance of K-12 education and doing outreach and doing preparation. I had the privilege as Director of Governmental Affairs for the California Post-Secondary Education to accompany Cruz to many of the meetings that we had with members. And you have to recall that this was before DACA.

I became the Director of the Student Aid Commission and our commission was responsible for implementing DACA, and Cruz was very much a part of all of those discussions in the legislature. And so I think it would be important to note in his legacy that he took great interest in advancing from a systematic way the advancement of Latino students in higher education.

He recognized very clearly what are the bills that we worked on during the night. He said I recall very clearly talking to members about was this notion of having individual representation within districts for school boards and for community college boards. And legislation was actually attempted that Cruz and I worked on during the early 1990s. So I think part of his legacy is this not only education of folks to go into law school, but it was great to see that during a time in his life where the voters had rejected him and then he came back through the educational system, and he did it in different ways.

During the post of the twenty-five, thirty years that I knew him, in every event we'd always talk about particular issues that were in front of the legislation and education. And so I would think that I would be absent if I did not acknowledge not only his great contribution, particularly with
DACA because you have to recall then, and then also unfortunately the late Marco Firebaugh, who was in the assembly at the time, and he worked alongside Richard Polanco. And unfortunately, I think this particular story hasn't been told about how that actually came about because during the years of the Davis Administration many folks focus on the drivers of legislation. They don't focus necessarily on the efforts that were occurring to do non-resident-based tuition for DACA students. That's how the whole process started in education.

So there are many stories that Cruz would probably not put himself and give him credit for, but for those of us who worked with him, we knew that he was that driving force.

I know for myself I would have never thought to interview for the Assistant Secretary for Higher Education when we had the first governor in 16 years when Gray Davis was elected.

And he was one of the persons that I talked to because he had been my boss at the commission, and I said, "You know, I'm a woman. I just had a baby." Our daughter was like a year and a few months old. I was still breastfeeding her, and I have two other girls and working full-time and being a woman and taking that responsibility. And he was very encouraging, saying, "You can do it. I'm sure many of us will help you do it." And so there are people I know that I've worked with that had the same experience with him because he was so supportive of individuals having their own voice. And for students, I just have to say I just couldn't think a lot of the things that have happened in higher education, particularly after Bakke, with the representation issues, I know great advice and was a great voice and force in higher education in California, and I think that has to be said.

Reid Reynoso: My name is Len Reid Reynoso. I'm Cruz's son. To feed off what has been said about the education, Dad had a shotgun approach to education and everything about education.

Not only did he help the state level to try to get the system in place, and part of that system of course in the '80s and '90s was the ability to go through the community college system and the state college, or the UC system, with the thought that people who didn't have the resources could make that path easier.

He also went ahead and spoke...We talked about earlier about speaking at law schools. But he also spoke at four-year universities. He
would speak at colleges. He'd speak at high schools. I told Dean Johnson I think earlier tonight that there was times growing up that Dad would leave the house some weekend in April and then probably didn't see him until the end of June because he was going to do commencement speeches everywhere. Anyone that asked him, he would go, whether it was a high school, a junior high. He didn't care. He was going to explain people his vision of how we can be empowered through education.

And there's one – several time actually, but one in particular – but I think he had four commencement speeches in one day. That's just what he did. And by the way, they weren't all in the same state. So it was very interesting to see what he'd do sometimes. But he would also come to the high school. I went to Galt High School in south Sacramento County. I was actually talking to an old retired teacher now, Mr. Millay, who did our government classes.

Dad would come in every semester for him to teach a lecture about government to his government class. Mom and Dad supported the – When we used to have a constitution test in eighth grade, which we no longer apparently do, they would give scholarship to local kids for the people that did best on that test.

Dad and Mom were very tied to education at all levels, and his feeling was that if you could encourage young people... We talked about him teaching second graders how to read. That was one of this last things he was doing. If he could encourage young people to stay in school, to keep on going to school all the way through law school, the broader our representation, the better we are all as a people. And he did that his entire life. And all of us in our – I have the least education, I guess in terms of education involvement. In our family we have professors. We have schoolteachers, we have college recruiters. I only help on school boards and commissions and those type of things. So everyone in our family is involved in education in one way or the other and has been over the years.

My mom was actually a trustee at [speaking indistinctly] college, and Dad's second wife was a trustee at a couple different community colleges. It's very important that not just at the top, not just at the state level, but at every level we push everyone up and we tell them that they can do, they can make a difference and that we can all be part of the system, and therefore be part of the solution. And I looked up to him.
Acero: Just a quick comment. So we're the first and second presidents of the Cruz Reynoso Bar Association, and, Len, we are eternally grateful to your father for lending his name to our organization. And both Brian and I, when we became president, we obviously wanted to follow his legacy and make the organization something that he would be proud of, and I met with your father when we first started, and he was great. I unfortunately only got to meet him for the last few years of his life, but it was an honor to meet him. I agree with education. I'm a community college graduate. I was on the board of a community college. It's a really important institution for our community, you know. In terms for all the law students and everyone else and the lawyers, you know, Brian is the current president and contact Brian if you want to link with the Cruz Reynoso Bar Association if you want to put any projects together, if you want to maybe between the law schools, and we also have a mentorship program. Good. All right.

Lopez: But yeah, so as George Acero was saying, I'm the current president of the Cruz Reynoso Bar Association. We do have a mentorship program, so anybody who's interested, I would definitely welcome you to check out our website, crbasacramento.com. I'm proud to say that we have some members here of the Cruz Reynoso Bar Association on the panel, Amagda Pérez, Professor Aldana, and we also have the former recipient of the Defensor de Justicia Award, which we started in honor of Justice Reynoso, Dean Kevin Johnson.

And we have a lifetime member here with Reid Reynoso as well, so thank you very much for putting this panel together. It was very enlightening and very inspiring to see so many people who knew Justice Reynoso best to talk about his legacy and the impact that he had.

Like George, I unfortunately only had the opportunity to meet Justice Reynoso later on in his life, but everything that everybody said today about him is spot-on. He was so humble, so personable, so friendly. Everybody sought out his advice. I remember one time we went to Univision to talk about a naturalization event that we were having, and Justice Reynoso and George were interviewed by the presenter, and I remember they pulled him aside because they wanted to get Justice Reynoso's opinion on a current political matter, and just with the calm demeanor that he was able – and authority that he was able to speak with was very highly inspiring.
The only thing that I would have to say that's left, for those who didn't have the opportunity to know him so well personally, what resources would you encourage people to reach out?

I know there's a video that were able to see at an event earlier this month that was held here also at King Hall. But is there anything else that people who are wanting more information about Justice Reynoso's life that they could look into?

Aldana: I know that Dean Johnson would. I know there's a video of an interview, a pretty good interview that Dean Johnson with Cruz Reynoso that's actually really beautiful. It's very personable, and I believe it's linked to the invitation that we sent out.

There was also a symposium with several contributions of people who wrote his story. And I learned today that the [speaking indistinctly] Center was starting to work on an oral history project that is still to be finished, but it's perhaps a series of interviews.

There was a question on chat or maybe a comment about, "What can we do to document his story beyond the legal community, right, because I think it's a really important story to tell?" And the person who raised that question is a local historian and professor here at Davis, so I'm going to...Is she still...? I kind of want to turn it back to her. She's written quite a few wonderful about other civil rights activists, so you should write a book. Wouldn't that be a good idea as your next project? But that's what I know. I don't know, Dean Johnson, if there are any other resources that you were aware of.

Johnson: Well I know that Cruz was about halfway through with his autobiography. It may never get finished unfortunately, and when I asked him about it on many occasions, and I read the first half, which goes through CRLA, but I asked him, "Why don’t you finish it?" And he said, "Well, there's a lot more interesting things for me to think about," which tells you a little bit about him.

Reid Reynoso: There are a couple of oral histories that have been done. UC Berkeley and UC Davis both have some done different times. Berkeley's was done about 20 years ago. Davis’s was done, or is in the process of being done now. There are on YouTube several lengthy videos that are either interviews from a college they did. There's some events from the Civil Rights Commission, those type of things. You can get a flavor for
what that was. We do have the first six chapters of the book. At some point we'll be able to let that be more public knowledge, and yeah, those hopefully will. And that book is kind of nice because those chapters are nice.

It takes Dad's early history and brings it up to where he became a known political figure and professional figure. And most of the documentations that we have done professionally start really in the late '70s, early '60s.

He just wanted to hopefully balance that out, even though he didn't finish it. I think one of the reasons he didn't finish it he was so concerned to make sure he was precise. He was double-checking all the facts, but he was doing that in his late 70s and 80s, and a lot of the people he had to check his facts with were no longer with us, so it made it very difficult. So he was very precise in what he was trying to do, as he was in all of his work. But at some point we'll be able to have that out, too. But there are – If you look on YouTube there are quite a few things available there.

Family has donated, it's got to be close to 200 file boxes of historical documents from Dad to Shields Library. So there is a plethora of resources there as well.

Aldana: Great. This also is being transcribed and will be published by the (UC Davis Journal of Social Justice).

With that, I think we want to end tonight's program, and thank our fabulous speakers tonight for sharing their stories about Justice Reynoso.

Thank you so much for coming.