

Transcript of Victor Nelson-Cisneros

Interviewed on July 25, 2018 by Eviva Kahne '18

- Eviva Kahne '18: So we can get started. So first question, can you describe the schools that you attended and worked at before coming to CC?
- Victor Nelson-Cisneros: Okay. Well I graduated from a junior college with an AA degree in Brownsville, Texas, called Texas Southmost College. I then went 120 miles north, which by the way, is the distance that National Education Association's associate with minority students attending universities. They basically go within 120 miles of the school. So I went 120 miles north to a school called Texas A&I University. It is now called Texas A&M Kingsville. But when I was there, it was Texas A&I, and A&I stood for Arts and Industries.
- VN-C: So it was a cowboy school and engineering school. And, they were very well known for their petroleum engineering, as well as ranch management. The King Ranch is located in the same town. In Kingsville, Texas.
- VN-C: There I went to school, I finished my bachelor's degree and enrolled in a master's program. I had been a member of the student movement at Texas A&I, at the university. We had in fact marched with junior high students in Kingsville. They were protesting treatment in the junior high system. We marched around the county courthouse daily.
- VN-C: So we did a lot of activism there in the local town. And it paid off because later the town actually was governed by non-whites.
- VN-C: There I had been on all kinds of committees as you well know. The committees I had served on, one of them recommended the creation of an ethnic studies program. And, the president of the university, a University of Chicago graduate by the name of James Jernigan, called me up and offered me a job as director of ethnic studies, founding director of ethnic studies at Texas A&I University.

- VN-C: The campus was about, oh I would say 34, 35% Mexican American. There were about 500 African American students, and the rest were all white. So I became the director of the ethnic studies program. We founded it, we got a set of courses established and offered, but the president had told me very clearly that I could only do the job for two years, and then I had to get on and do other things, like go to graduate school and things like that.
- VN-C: So from there I went to the University of Texas. I was there for a year. And then I went to UCLA, and at UCLA I was a history student. I studied with Juan Gomez Quinones, who is a very well-known Chicano historian from Los Angeles. He's actually from Chihuahua originally. So I was there for five years. I made the mistake of leaving the university before finishing my Ph.D., because that's where my support system was. But I was in such a hurry to get back to Texas, to my family and to Mexican students in Texas that I left, I went to the University of Texas, and I got a part-time job there.
- VN-C: Needless to say, I didn't finish my Ph.D. I passed all my exams, but I did not finish my dissertation. So I was a Ph.D. candidate. And, in Austin, took a job with a place called the National Rural Center, R-U-R-A-L. We were working on a government-funded research grant on job growth and equal employment in the non-metropolitan sunbelt. It was when I was working on that project that I was invited to go to lunch with a group of friends and faculty at the University of Texas. And one of them approached me, one of the friends was a former assistant dean at Colorado College, by the name of the local Rudy ... Ah man, why can't I remember his name. But he's been living in New York. Rudy De la Garza is his name, political scientist.
- VN-C: So, I went to lunch, there was about six or seven of us, and Rudy approached me and said, look, do you have a job next year? I said, no, come September I don't have a job. He said, well, I'd like you to take a friend of mine to lunch. He's the academic dean of Colorado College, his name is Glenn Brooks. I said, sure, I'd be happy to take him to lunch. He said, he's gonna talk to you about the college and about a job that's open there. I said, hey, I got nothing to lose. I'd be happy to take him and hear what he has to say.
- VN-C: So I went to lunch with Glenn Brooks, and he told me about the college. He told me what they were planning to do, what their interests were, and all I agreed to was to submit an application, and see where it went. Well needless to say, I made the short list. I was interviewed on the phone by the full committee. At that time there was a

political scientist at CC by the name of Christine Sierra, who I knew from student movement days, as well as from the National Association for Chicano and Chicana Studies. So, they interviewed me over the phone. They told me what they were looking for, and I told them what I wasn't. I told them I wasn't super Mexican, that I wasn't gonna go identify, recruit, retain, and so on with Mexican students, or Chicano students, and other students as well.

VN-C: So I said, look, I'll be happy to be interviewed, but I'm just letting you know, that's not me. If you want an associate dean or an assistant dean who can in fact work in the Dean's Office, knows academic policy, and can work with students and advise students, then I'm your man. So I went, I gave an all-campus talk at what used to be a house for minority student organizations. In the back area, behind in what is now the new residence hall, there was a house there called, I forget the name of it.

VN-C: But anyway, I gave my talk. It was well attended. There was quite a number of faculty who were interested as well. I went home, I was the first one to be interviewed. The second person to be interviewed was also a professor of English at the University of Houston, and he left after the first day because he couldn't handle the questions being asked by students. He just would get flustered and would get very frustrated. So, he left and then two other people came and spoke. And one of them, I knew as well, was a psychologist who was at UC Santa [inaudible], And, I ended up getting the job.

EK: Thank you! Oh, go ahead.

VN-C: I showed up in August in 1981.

EK: Okay, so thank you.

VN-C: My position was assistant dean of the college.

EK: Thank you so much for your response. That was so illuminating to listen to, and I should have said at the beginning, that we were advised not to make, we, Chaline and I were advised not to make sounds like to indicate that we were listening. Such as yeah or uh-huh.

VN-C: Oh, that's fine, you did very well.

EK: But we are-

VN-C: I appreciate your letting me just say all that.

EK: Yeah, absolutely.

EK: So, the next question is tied to the first one, and it was way CC? What of all the factors of what people told you at your lunch with Glenn Brooks, and your visit to campus, what drew you here?

VN-C: Well, the students at Colorado College were the draw for me. They were very articulate. They were very smart. They asked very good questions, and they didn't get freaked out when you responded very directly and told them they were full of crap. So, that appealed to me greatly, because I knew it was a group of students that I could work with, and that I could in fact interact with very well. The students really were the main draw. In addition to that, several minority faculty Donald Udeste who was in romance languages, Christine Sierra who was in political science, were two of the people that I knew there, and who played a major role in my coming.

EK: Can you describe your first year working at CC.

VN-C: I have described it before as being in the diplomatic corps. Having to watch what I said. Having to watch how I said it. I won't name names, but one faculty member went to the dean and said that every department hire had to have a minority candidate, which I never said. I did say that if you had minority candidates in the pool, then you should look at them very closely and compare them to your top candidates, and see whether they shouldn't be included as well. That's what I said. Well, that person, who was chair of a department at the time, had written the dean.

VN-C: So the chair of another department asked me to come in and speak with him for me to share my thoughts with him in terms of what had been said. So I went, I met with him. I told him exactly what I had said to the other faculty member. He said, that makes all the sense in the world, is what he told me. And then we parted company. He was very gracious to write the dean of the college a letter indicating that he had met with me, that we had had a very good meeting, and that what I had said was accurate, and what I had said was right. And that's all departments should in fact, if they had minority candidates, need to look at them very closely.

VN-C: Then a second chair of a department also called the dean and asked to meet with me. And at that point, I told the dean of the college, I said, look, I could go and meet with him, with no problem. Tell him exactly what I told the other chair, and that would be fine. I said, but to me, this is an insidious form of social control. People wanting

to stifle me in terms of how I think and how I articulate. So I won't do it unless you tell me to do it. And he said, no I understand exactly what you're saying. You don't have to meet with him. I will in fact talk to that chair. And that was the end of it. Now that occurred probably in the first two months. So that was part of my baptism by fire.

VN-C: The other one that happened, was every year back then, I don't know if they still do it, I hope that they do. They had a fall faculty conference. And, the faculty would go off campus, we went to Sanborn Camps and had a day-long meeting there. Now it coincided with Gresham Riley being hired at the college. So since he was the brand new president, a lot of faculty showed up, about 120 faculty showed up. But, I was asked to give a keynote, along with a black professor of English, from the University of Colorado at Boulder. And, I agreed to do it. This was my opening view of the college, my opening reception at the college and so on.

VN-C: But prior to that, I had arrived in July, I think, or early August, so I had had time to go into the presidential archives and look at the minority concerns committee reports on an annual basis. I was able to glean from those reports, the recommendations made by the committees. So when I gave them my talk, I basically told them, look I don't think the college needs to change a lot of what it's doing. It should in fact try to continue to recruit the very best students that they can in fact find, which included African American, Native American, and Mexican American students, I said.

VN-C: So, in that regard, I'm not asking for you know, that you have to do this, do that. However, I do think that we have to move on that front of student recruitment, and I also think that we have to move on the front of faculty recruitment. So, that was my opening experience at Colorado College. It went very well. I had a professor of English, who asked me ... when you're selecting literature for a course, you need to make sure that the literature is outstanding and good. I said, professor, I don't accept ... I answered very direct. I said, I don't accept the underlying premise of your statement that minority scholars do not apply the same rigors of scholarship in the selection of their text. Oh, no, no, I didn't mean that. I said, I'm sorry, you and I have a difference of opinion, and I left it at that.

VN-C: So, it was my opportunity and it worked out that way. One, people understood that I was serious about what I was talking about, and two, you really didn't wanna mess with me, because I was very, very direct.

EK: Yeah, thank you so much. So I can really feel that you're in the room describing these stories. Thank you for sharing that.

VN-C: You're welcome. That's the first three months. The rest of the year actually went fairly well.

EK: Okay. So for the next question, were there any political events-

VN-C: Hold on, can I add one thing?

EK: Of course, yeah.

VN-C: During that time, Dick Woods was the director of admissions for many, many years, I looked at the records, and every entering class that Dick Wood and Terry Swenson brought to the campus, there were at least 75, what I would call American ethnic minority students, plus or minus five. Every class. It wasn't until much later that we went over 100 in the entering class. So I just wanted to add that so it'd give you some context.

EK: Yeah, that's extremely helpful to know. Yeah, so and in this project, I graduated CC this year with a degree in history, and one of the things that we were taught sort of over and over is to think about change over time. So those numbers are really helpful.

VN-C: Yeah, I can't find the numbers today.

EK: Yeah.

VN-C: On the website, Butler Center, there are no numbers. All it is is percentages. Percentages don't help you, because it doesn't tell you the number of bodies.

EK: That's a really excellent point. I certainly heard critiques that talk around that, but I've never heard the distinction between percentages and numbers, and the differences that they make. So thank you!

VN-C: And the numbers should in fact not say we have 100 students. It should say we have so many African American, so many Mexican American, so many Native American and so, and Asians. That way you can track the success of the admissions office. Does that make sense?

EK: It does. It makes a lot of sense. As a phrase that you used that someone said to you, makes all the sense in the world. I hear you, yeah. So thank you for sharing that. So the next question is one about sort of context and influence. So, were there any political events in your community as well as national or international events that affected your time at CC?

VN-C: That's a good question. CC is a very insular community. It has a very good relationship with the local city. It's part of the history of the city and the region. So, I can't think of ... I mean, there probably were events both nationally and internationally that happened during that time that affected us. But basically we focused on what was going on at the college. The other thing that we did is that we joined the ACM, Associated Colleges of the Midwest, and we started participating in their programs. I chaired the minority concerns committee at the ACM for many years. And we were able to get things done there as well. I don't know if I answered your question.

EK: You did.

VN-C: Now look, we also had an anti-war movement that I came out of, as well as a Chicano student movement that I came out of. So all those things affected my development and my stay at Colorado College.

EK: Can you say a little bit about that. How did your involvement in the anti-war movement and the Chicano movement, how did that affect your time at Colorado College.

VN-C: Well, when I was an undergraduate and graduate student at Texas A&I, our local student organization, we were the only student chapter of a group called PASSO, P-A-S-S-O, Political Association of Spanish Speaking Organizations is what it stands for. And we were the only student chapter in the State of Texas. And we had ROTC members that were members of our organization. So, in terms of the anti-war movement, we had a very difficult line to parse, to cross.

VN-C: Basically, I mean, we had [inaudible] from the local anti-war movement, and they said, look, are you guys against the war? Well, yes we are, but we have members who are members of ROTC, and if they come out against the war, they lose their position in ROTC. So we basically insisted that we were open to those students as well. Well, not one of them went to war. All of them finished their ROTC assignments. Did not go to the service, and went on to do other things. So in that

sense, the anti-war movement was not, central to our work, but the Chicano student movement was.

VN-C: And we had, on our campus, we had something called, it was a free speech area of the campus, in front of the student union building, in which anyone could get up and say whatever they wanted with no retribution.

EK: And, I'm sorry, so Victor, is this at your undergraduate institution, which institution are you-

VN-C: Undergraduate institution, Texas A&I University.

EK: Okay, thank you.

VN-C: It was called speaker's corner, and anyone could speak. So every Wednesday, we would have these, and people would show up. I mean there'd be 500 people there. I normally talked, they would talk in terms of a standard student spiel, a Mexican with a college education, had the same earning potential as a white man in an 8th grade education in the State of Texas. I mean these are the things that we were protesting. We were also protesting the lack of minority faculty. The lack of more students. The lack of an ethnic study program. All those things. So all that was the stew in which I grew up and learned my politics. And then moved to CC. Did I answer your question?

EK: Thank you. It does, yeah. It does. To get a sense of what you brought with you. What was inside of you in coming to work at CC in terms of a political consciousness and political events. So thank you, yes it does.

VN-C: Absolutely.

EK: And I really apprec ... Oh, go ahead.

VN-C: I did have a political consciousness. And I didn't hide it from anybody, but I knew where I was, and I also knew there was a particular process at the college that you had to follow. And I learned that early on.

EK: Yeah, that makes so much sense, and I think coupled with what you said, also in response to the question about CC being a very insular state, makes a lot of sense as an answer to that question. How to hold those things at the same time. So yes, so thank you.

VN-C: Don't get me wrong, CC students did protest the war in Colorado Springs. They did. They marched in downtown Colorado Springs. So, our student body was in fact politically active and conscious.

EK: Yeah, I believe that and I see that in my time at CC that there is a degree of political consciousness and action with CC students and the CC community. So, for the next question, where did you find a sense of belonging or support at CC. You mentioned a couple of people who were influential in bringing you here, did you stay in contact with them over your time? What sorts of communities of support did you belong to?

VN-C: Well, faculty at CC, what I would call the liberal faculty, I was able to interact with them. Some of them had come out of the student movement themselves. Enlightened faculty, who later then became just, I don't know, in some cases very bitter. But, needless to say, there was a group of faculty, white faculty, men and women, who I interacted with, and I did not have any problems with at all, and they were supportive. I also started trying to bring more faculty to the campus, and we did that through the ACM, Minority Students and Academic Careers program, in which students that were interested in going into academia, had the opportunity to do a research project in the summer with a faculty member, and then present their results.

VN-C: We had as many as five students going to these programs every summer. And some of them went on to get academic degrees. It was an important program that ACM had gotten funding for, and we made the most ... I mean, we made a lot of use of it. In addition, the consortium for faculty development or faculty diversity, I was one of the founding members of that committee. Jerome Woods, who was the vice [inaudible] at Smith College, Latin American historian, African American, myself, and a woman from Vassar, met at Smith College on a Friday afternoon to discuss the idea of a program to bring minority scholars, Ph.D. students to our campuses to finish their degrees.

VN-C: I very proudly tell you that over the time that I was involved in that program, which was over 20 years, the college brought over 65 minority scholars to campus in positions, in departments. And it had a tremendous effect on the teaching and the academics of the college. And of course, their number one priority was to finish their degrees. So not having finished myself, I knew exactly what people had to do, which was to write, write, write, and write some more, in order to finish the dissertation. And we had quite a number of them that didn't finish.

VN-C: So, that was our contribution both to the pipeline, that is nationally, and we started out with two scholars, and then Dr. Norman asked, well, can't we increase it? Would you mind if we increased it to five? I said, no, I don't mind at all. Do you think the departments would be interested. Well we'll see. So what I made sure was that the list we received from the consortium, was all the names, the degrees, where they were studying, what their dissertations were, we made that list available to all chairs on campus, for them to peruse, and then tell me, I'd like to bring this Ph.D. candidate to campus. So that is how we basically worked that program. And I think they're still going.

EK: Hello, yes, yes, I'm still here. I was trying to think about the ... I was thinking about the Riley Scholars Program.

VN-C: That is what that is called.

EK: Yes, so that definitely is still going on. There have been more than a couple of really excellent professors who came as Riley Scholars during my time at CC 2014 to 2018 to the History Department? [crosstalk].

VN-C: There's an African American woman in education who came in under that program from Vanderbilt. Whitaker?

EK: Oh Manya Whitaker?

VN-C: Yes.

EK: Yes.

VN-C: Excellent.

EK: Yes. She gave the Baccalaureate address in one of these recent years. It was brilliant.

VN-C: Wonderful. I'm glad to hear that.

EK: Yeah. So, one other sort of component of this question, did you find that there were sort of systems that were intentionally ... That there were parts of campus that were intentionally creating spaces for belonging for you in your position at the college, places to create community. We talk about that a lot as students, and I'm wondering from your end, sort of where was community developed [crosstalk].

VN-C: As we recruited faculty, then community started to develop. I was able to recruit Devon Pena to the Sociology Department. He's now a full professor of anthropology at the University of Washington. I was able to recruit Mario Montano, who I guess is the outgoing chair of Southwest Studies or anthropology, one of them.

EK: Yeah, he's been actively involved. Yeah, I [crosstalk]

VN-C: He's one of my best friends.

EK: Okay.

VN-C: So as we recruited these faculty to come to the campus, Clara Lomas in romance languages and others, we created a small community among ourselves and we interacted with the regular faculty as well.

EK: Yeah, that makes total sense. Thank you for connecting basically the work that you did in founding and really building up what is the Riley Scholars Program, and the way it built your community at CC or helped constitute part of it.

VN-C: Oh, absolutely.

EK: Yeah.

VN-C: And there were other minority faculty who were just there to finish and to leave. And we tried to recruit them as well. When we hired minority faculty, Mario, and I, and others would in fact take them to lunch, take them to breakfast, kind of lay out the land for them in terms of the steps they needed to be sure that they completed and what to watch for. So we were counseling faculty, young faculty, coming up the ranks. Sometimes they'd take the advice, sometimes they wouldn't.

EK: I wanted to let you know that Chaline and I, one of our assignments for the summer was to do research on faculty and staff of color who have served the CC community for over 25 years, who are still working here, and so we on paper and in the archives got to know Mario and Clara really well. Which was very exciting, and there'll be, as we understand, some honoring of their experiences here in a very intentional way. So when you said those names, I got a kind of excitement.

VN-C: Well they've been there a long time. I think Mario's just, he's well liked everywhere by everybody.

EK: Yeah.

VN-C: And he's very, very knowledgeable about the college. He's a very good friend of mine.

EK: Thank you. Yeah, thank you for sharing.

VN-C: May I ask a question?

EK: Yeah.

VN-C: What is your background, and what is Chaline's background? How would you describe yourselves?

EK: Yeah, thank you for asking. So, I identify as white. Both of my parents and sort of all the way up into my ancestry as far as I know, are Jewish. But I identify as white.

VN-C: And Chaline?

Chaline: Well I identify as black. I was born and raised for about 10 years in Cameroon, which is a small country in West Africa.

VN-C: Sure. Well I'm glad. I wanted to ask.

EK: Oh no, thank you for asking.

Chaline: Yeah thank you.

VN-C: You're welcome.

EK: And feel free to ask any questions like throughout the remainder of the interview. So the next question, what were some of your struggles at CC?

EK: Hello?

VN-C: I'm here.

EK: Oh, okay.

VN-C: I'm thinking about how to respond.

- EK: Take your time.
- VN-C: By and large, I would say I had a very positive experience at Colorado College, with the students, with other administrators, and with faculty, by and large. But, you know, 30-year career at the college, there's bound to be some ups and downs. And there were some downs where I wasn't feeling particularly welcomed and so on, but it didn't last long, and I was able to overcome it very easily.
- VN-C: If you look at a picture of me, you would never know that I was Mexican. I'm blond and green eyes, so you can't judge a book by its cover, is what I always tell people. And I'm fully bilingual, so Spanish is my first language. I have no problems speaking English or Spanish, and I'm fully bi-cultural as well. My father was Swedish and my mother was Mexican.
- VN-C: So I had some rough times, but I can't say it was ... I wasn't in danger of losing my job, I don't think. Although, who knows? The deans may have thought otherwise, but. Look, I was at Colorado College, I want you to make a note of this. I was at Colorado College for 30 years, on a year-to-year contract.
- EK: Wow!
- VN-C: I got a contract every year, so they could get rid of me anytime they wanted, but I knew, look, I knew I was doing ... I was where I wanted to be. It was a beautiful city, a beautiful college, damn great student body and good faculty. I was in hog heaven as far as I was concerned. And, I got to see Colorado Springs grow from 100,000 to 500,000 over the 30 years that I was there. So it was a great experience. I don't know if I answered your question.
- EK: Yeah, absolutely. So I do wanna ask a follow-up question to that, which is, if you ever, in the 30 years of one-year contracts, but 30 years of service to the CC community, if there were ever times that you wanted to quit.
- VN-C: No. I honestly can say I never considered quitting.
- EK: Thank you.
- VN-C: Never considered that.

- EK: And you mentioned also in your answer about watching Colorado Springs grow, and the next question was actually how involved were you in the Colorado Springs area, both in your professional role at the college, but also in any other capacity.
- VN-C: My interaction in the community as well as locally was limited. I did have contact with Chicanos in the community and I worked with them on some projects, but basically, like I told you, it's a very insular place. And, you spend all of your time, thinking and working about the college. And every year, I was given more and more responsibility. Keep in mind that the academic office, the academic side of the house, for probably the first 20 years, if not longer, was the dean of the college, dean of the faculty, which was the same person, and myself, and our staff members. We ran the academic affairs of the college, including monthly faculty meetings, faculty minutes, everything. So now, I don't know, a whole bunch of people, now there's a [inaudible], so there's been a lot of change at the college.
- VN-C: But I was involved with the deans. The deans basically had me do, not all of it, but a lot of the dirty work. Having to tell a department no, having to tell faculty no. But I also made an effort, for instance I renewed all the departmental budgets for the college, all of them. And I always tried to make sure the departments would get something that they had requested. So I'd ask them to prioritize, and they'd give me their first four priorities, five priorities, whatever, and I'd try to meet those on a yearly basis. So, it wasn't everything they wanted, but they got some of what they wanted. So it was that kind of work that I was always trying to do.
- VN-C: And Geology Department, Chemistry Department, I mean, I worked with all of them.
- EK: How have your perceptions of CC changed and stayed the same over time? And I'm thinking particularly in the time since leaving CC in 2012, but it can also be over the 30-year period that you were here. So that's a huge range, and so-
- VN-C: Ask me the question again.
- EK: Yeah. How have your perceptions of CC changed and stayed the same over time?
- VN-C: Well, I think it's still a great college, one of the best in the country. I think the leadership currently at the college in terms of this move to a [inaudible], we'll see how it works out. But typically the deans came out of the faculty. They were appointed from the faculty to the Dean's Office. So the deans that I served with were Glenn Brooks, in political science, he's also the father of the [inaudible], David

Fuller, no, David Finley, also political science, Tim Fuller, political science, Richard Story, biology, and Susan Ashley, history. Those were the deans that I worked with. And they were all very good deans.

EK: So, the next question, how have you been involved with CC since graduating? I'm sorry, not since graduating, since leaving in 2012?

VN-C: Well, I was asked to come back to receive an award at the Staff Awards luncheon. They also named an award in my honor. So I've been back in those capacities.

EK: In what role do you think your experiences at CC have played in your life?

VN-C: Well, I understand the notion that change takes time, and one has to keep at it and persevere, and keep the issues, and the numbers, and the desire for more in front of everybody. You can't get tired of raising the issues. There'd be an all-campus ... Not an all-campus, but a report by the Admissions Office, this was when Terry Swenson was there, after Dick Wood, and they'd give reports on the numbers and so on. And I'd get up and I'd ask, can you tell me how many of each group have been admitted for admission this year? They couldn't do it. And I had admissions officers come up to me afterwards and say, well don't you know. I said, I know, but do you? They didn't know. So, those are kind of the micro-aggressions that occurred at Colorado College over 30 years.

VN-C: I'd have faculty come up to me and say, that Riley scholar that we hired in our department really wasn't worth a damn. So then why did you hire her or him? That kind of stuff would happen. Not often, but it did happen. On the other hand, I had faculty who were very, very supportive. One who passed away, Edward Langer, in physics, was very, very supportive of what we were doing at the college. Many others were as well. Many, many others were as well.

VN-C: Did I answer?

EK: Yeah, yeah, yeah. You always answer the question. So, for the next question, what is your most vivid memory at CC? Or can you describe one of your most vivid memories.

VN-C: Sure. Watching a football game from the stadium, and looking out and seeing the Rockies in front of me. That's gotta be one of the most beautiful sights anywhere in the United States. I know most people, this is when we had football. And typically our teams weren't very good. Well, I mean. The truth is the truth.

EK: Yeah, I hear you.

VN-C: But, that sight was absolutely spectacular. And that's one of my fondest memories of the college. The new buildings that came up. Those were also very memorable. I have yet to tour the new library, but I'm sure it's wonderful. What I've seen, the pictures I've seen, the thermo heating and cooling, all of that makes us leaders in higher education. It's not a very glamorous answer is it?

VN-C: Have you sat in the stands?

EK: So I have never seen a game, ever. But, I did go, my freshman year, we went up to the stands at night, and I remember seeing the outlines of the mountains. And I'm from Houston, so I mean, I had never really seen and never really been around mountains before. So, seeing that and being up there was also powerful for me. But yeah, it was not alongside sports, it was a late night outing.

VN-C: I got it.

EK: No, thank you for sharing. I don't quite know what you mean by glamorous, but I do think that the experience of being in and surrounded by the mountains is quite striking.

VN-C: It is, and I got to know Southeastern and Southwestern Colorado very, very well. I took up fly fishing while I was in Colorado Springs. And became an avid fly fisherman, and would fly fish on the South Platte in the Deckers area, often. And I had a very moving experience there as well. I was fly fishing in front of a gentleman. And I was focused on my fishing. Typically you're [inaudible] fish, and you wanna catch them. I was fishing very intently, and the gentleman behind me, he was probably 30 feet behind me, said, oh my God, look at that. I said, what the hell are you talking about? He said, look up there. And in front of me, there was a pine tree with a great horned owl, sitting, staring at me.

EK: Wow!

VN-C: Absolutely gorgeous animal. And I figured it was my mother who had come back to see me fish. I'm serious.

EK: Thank you.

VN-C: I'm very serious.

EK: Thank you so much for sharing that. That's very-

VN-C: So that's another very memorable experience in Colorado Springs.

EK: So it seems that you are keeping up with what is happening up at CC in terms of the Butler Center and the continuation of the Riley Scholars program. What does CC's continued success mean for you?

VN-C: Well, I consider myself part of that legacy and established these programs, and followed them, and cajoled and moved them forward for a long time, and the college has continued that work, and I'm very, very happy and grateful about that.