

Interviewee: Maritza Cruz
Interviewer: Selina Gallo-Cruz
Date of Interview: July 13, 2018
Location: Worcester, Massachusetts
Transcriber: Milagros Montenegro



Abstract: Maritza Cruz, Director of Racial and Gender Equality of YWCA of Central Massachusetts and co-founder of the Latino History Project of Worcester, is a trail blazing organizer working within her hometown of Worcester, Massachusetts. She was also the first female and the first Latina person to be a Director with the Worcester Housing Authority. Ms. Cruz discusses her decades long fight for racial and gender equity in the City of Worcester. Cruz details the racial tension and marginalization people of color, particularly Latinos, faced during the late seventies, eighties, and nineties within Worcester. This interview also describes Cruz's own ventures into the political sphere, featuring discussions on her two City Council campaigns. At the core of Cruz's story lies the importance of consciousness raising through community involvement.

G: I am thinking something different and if we get the right energies involved, Worcester is such a rich destination of immigrants from all over the world, so that shouldn't be lost, I don't think. But okay let's back up because now you have sparked up many questions about the kind of work you have done, so I think I'll do this at the end, the biography sheet and let me just start at the beginning, you started to tell me a little bit before we turned the recording on, but tell me a little bit just about your parents and you know, briefly your growing up, your family, where you lived.

M: Alright, my parents are from Borinken which is otherwise known as Puerto Rico. They are from the same town, but my father came over to the United States when he was seventeen years old for work, landed up in Perth Amboy, New Jersey. We did have a big colony of people that are from the town of San Sebastian, which is in the Central Mountain region, they are from the mountains on the island, my father was here. My mother was in Puerto Rico, they met when he went back on a trip and, you know, got married and so on. They immediately went to live in Perth Amboy, New Jersey. They are working class folks, always working. My father is a musician, he writes and composes music, he can play any string instrument! But of course that dream was not to be pursued because he had to live and be able to support our family so he worked in factories here and there. On weekends, he would—he had his own music band and they would play perform in clubs and dances all over New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, and they would be the opening act for big bands, such as “El Gran Combo” de Puerto Rico, Tito Puente back in that era. I was born in Puerto Rico, my sister was born in New Jersey, there are only two of us. My mother actually couldn't have any more children, I guess you could call us, we were miracle babies, she had very difficult pregnancies. So, when she was told she couldn't have any more children, she wanted one of her children to be born back home on the island, I come from a very Puerto Rican patriotic family, especially on her side and so when she was eight months pregnant with me, she went back to the island and I was born there. I was born in San Sebastian, Puerto Rico, so by birth and my heritage that is what I am, Boricua. I lived in, grew up in a household that was, culturally Boricua/Puerto Rican. As I was saying earlier, I can't

remember a time that I was not bilingual, we spoke both. Both my parents speak English, but in the house we spoke Spanish because we weren't to forget our Spanish and culture so by the time my sister and I went to kindergarten, we were fluent in English and Spanish. We knew how to read and write in both languages. Which I think a lot of the time, back in those times it was not even acknowledged by the teachers and schools as being smart, we were seen with bias as those little Puerto Rican kids. We moved to Worcester when my parents got divorced, so that's how we landed up here in Worcester, came here when I was eight-years-old, my mother knew one person here, so the three of us, my Mom, sister and I have been here ever since.

G: Where did you first move to in Worcester?

M: When we first moved to Worcester, we actually ended up in Main South, it was on Gardener Street. That's where you had an enclave of where at that time the Latinos were and their families. Mainly Puerto Ricans, the Cubans were up on Belmont Hill, maybe one or two Dominican families and that was it. That's what you had and maybe a couple of Colombian families. The Cortes family is one of the families everyone knew everybody, we mostly knew each other.

G: And what year was that?

M: That was in 1968.

G: So, tell me a little about what it was like growing up in your home life, your neighborhood, your school.

M: Well, we stayed there for a while, basically stayed in the area. I grew up—my mother is an activist, she's an organizer. I come from a family of organizers and on her father's side, my grandfather, who lived to be a 106-year-old, he was a farmer, 'un machetero' in the 1920s, he was one of the first people to organize the 'macheteros' sugar cane cutters in the island. You know, that sense of service and justice. He became what you would call, the peoples advocate/el abogado del pueblo. He was not a lawyer by training or education but that's what he became for the people of his town. He would advocate for them and of course you know, trying to organize, unionize the Cane Cutters and so on. When he passed, before he passed the El Centro Cultural de Puerto Rico, came to interview him as part of the history of the island. When anybody was running for governor they would come to town, San Sebastian, seeking his support. He had the power to mobilize and rally the people. My grandfather era Nacionalista, he was an Independentista, that's what he wanted for Borinken to be a sovereign nation, self governing! I learned a great deal from him.

G: Would you go back in the summers or how did you spend time with him?

M: Yes, every summer my sister and I, we would go to San Sebastian and we would spend a month with my grandparents there, so it was wonderful. It was wonderful to go back, so my sense of who I am, my identity, yo soy Boricua Americana. I am a result of my environments in

which I grew in, my pride of who I am as a Boricua, as a Puerto Rican is very strong. I know my history, I know the contributions that my people have made, which often times people don't know.

We are often looked at as not contributing nothing of value to our society. They look at us as here [they go] "ehh." But I know who we are, and I know that history and how when Columbus landed and also when we were invaded by the United States, we have been a colony and we still are, with that colonized mentality. So yes, we would go and spend the summers over there, a month, which is wonderful. My grandparents, on both sides are from there. I have that heritage and I was saying earlier that we have this [the USA]—I always view as Puerto Rico, Borinken, being the beginning of what the United States has become, this mixture of people and races and ethnicities and everything that you can find, we've had that there. When you look at our DNA, we are mixture of everything, but we are Boricua, Puerto Rican. I'm Indian, I'm Española, I'm Scottish, I'm Italian, and some Northern African. In Puerto Rico they talk about that the Native people don't exist, genocide is not just physically killing people off it's also on paper, when you cease to be written about you cease to exist, but the people don't. So, my grandmother, especially Juanita Ortiz, my mother's mother, ella era india and I grew up with all the oral stories about our people, she was a Curandera and a midwife also. She was a medicine women, that was something that has been passed down to each generation. It was passed down to my mother and it was passed down to me, and I have passed on to my children. So I grew I up in this dual world of being Catholic but also following and honoring the old ways. Mi familia would plant by the moon, eran 'Jibaros-agricultores' and they would plant according to the moon and we would celebrate and honor the moon phases, and acknowledge these old ways. It's not something you told people, but we did that, so I think that's for the better of me and my family that oral history is very strong in us and the roots that we have are very strong. I think it just made us stronger.

My mother came here—my mother is part of the landmark case in Worcester that brought bilingual education to Worcester and Massachusetts. Her name is Concepción Acevedo Cruz, she kept her married name Cruz, she's is known as Conchita Concepcion Cruz. She and several other women and a couple of men were the ones who basically took on the city of Worcester. My sister and I were never in bilingual education, and they took on the city and said, "no we need to provide the education that these children are in need of," because at that time kids would come from wherever. Maybe si era de Puerto Rico or Cuba, wherever it was even Greece and because no hablan el ingles, they were being put back into a lower grade, and low level classes and being treated like they were mentally disabled. It was not only that but it was not, but it was the treatment the children were getting, in particular Latino children. My mother has an eighth-grade education, she has worked in factories her whole life and most of the other women—this marked me to see how they would go to the state house and they would go to city hall [Worcester] and they would stand up and say, "this is what we need, this is what we want and you are going to give it to us because we are fighting for our children, it's about equality." And they won. These women with their broken English, these women who had limited education, these women that were looked down upon because some of them were single parents, these women who worked in factories and were not professionals, they won, they won!! To this day the Consent Decree has not been fulfilled in 2018, it's forty-two, it's forty-three years later? That still has to be complied with yet. My mother also was the first president for the PAC,

Latino Parents Advisory Council. She did that for five years. My sister and I would be dragged to all these meetings. We would be in a corner doing our homework. Even to this day people say to me, "I remember you and your sister doing your homework," but we would be watching and taking all this in, I grew up going, "Okay so if something needs to be done, it's like you organize and you get it done." That's the lesson, that invaluable lesson that I learned.

G: Now you said when you came it didn't feel like there were many Latino families in Worcester, you just named a few that you remember, when did the feelings of the demographics of the city seem to change for you?

M: It actually started, I want to say probably in the early seventies we started to get an influx of a lot of people, aqui Puerto Ricans had been here for a while, not a lot, many had come to work on the farms so they ended up in Worcester, many came to work in the factories, at the time there were muchas fabricas, lots of factories to work at like where my mom worked at, Killeen Machine, the Brown Shoe Company, there were jobs available. I mean all these different manufacturing jobs that were available and that's what we came seeking, we came seeking that. So back in the early seventies that's where you started to see the rise of activism within the Latino population, primarily the Puerto Rican community, Hector Reyes, Domingo Medina, Lidia Reyes, for example. And my mom, these folks, founded and established A.L.P.A Asociacion Latina Para Progreso y Accion, which was known as the Casa de la Comunidad. It came out because these were people that were assisting and helping our people, Puerto Ricans who were arriving from the island, but a lot more were arriving from the other cities. We were migrating, migrating from other cities New York, Philly, large cities because people would say, like it happens anywhere, "Oh come over, come to Worcester, there's great jobs here, it's affordable, its safe." Because we all seek the same thing, we seek to have quality of life, for our children to have good educations, to have good homes, to be safe, and have your children grow up and progress. I grew up in household where I had no option but to graduate from high school and the university—education is a great equalizer, I had no option but, "You are going to graduate from high school and you are going to go to college." That was the mantra, each generation has to do better than the previous one, so we had no choice. That's what we had to do, so that was a given. But a lot of people would look at us and say, "But we don't think like that, " but we did. A lot of the families that I grew up with, that's how it was, they were working people, they get up every day, went to their jobs, raise their families and some took on additional things like my family, where my mother would sometimes work two jobs and still have time to work for the benefit of the community.

G: And what about your dad?

M: My dad, my parents were divorced, he stayed in New Jersey, he now lives in Puerto Rico, he went when he retired, he went back to the island. He is in his eighties, going to be eighty-three years old or eighty-four in September. He worked the same things. He was a factory worker, manufacturing/musician, composer, writer and so on. When he retired, he landed back in the island.

G: And did you maintain visits with him?

M: No, no, no, no at all.

G: His family in Puerto Rico

M: Well, we would visit his family in Puerto Rico but we had no ties to him. My family, when my parents separated, there was domestic violence, so my mother had to flee, she had to flee, so that relationship was severed and we came here and he didn't know, we were here.

G: Oh, I see.

M: I developed a relationship with my father when I became a grown woman in my forties.

G: Did you ever talk to him about that time?

M: Absolutely

G: You confronted him?

M: Absolutely and he was very remorseful and very regretful. He and my mother have made peace. My mother is a very—she is a forgiving person. I told my father what my sister and I are is because of my mother, not you, because of her and the struggles that she went through. But I've forgiven him.

G: And did she ever re-partner?

M: My mother? No, she didn't.

G: And so, who did you all become close to in the community as you were growing up?

M: My family is has always been my mother, my sister, and I. The family that we created here, established here was not a blood family, it was a family that you create with people in the journey of life, and that's the family members we have here. Now we have my aunt, my mother's younger sister who came 34 years ago, she is here. She has two daughters, but our family is very small and it grew and when my sister got married. My brother-in-law he is an attorney here in the city, Hector Pineiro, he is a civil rights attorney. They have two children. He has become my brother and then when I got married—I've been married and divorced now twice, that's okay [laughs]. I have two children. My aunt and her family, that's it, we are still this small nucleus, it's the grandchildren, but as well as far as family, we also have other family members, who are not blood related, but family is not always blood.

G: So, your ties were through some of these social justices organizations. Were you guys involved in a church?

M: Through my or my mom?

G: Growing up.

M: Growing up, no it was community. The activism that took place—my mother was—I remember, yeah, we were member of Saint Paul's Church, we were in the basement, which I found demeaning.

G: For the Spanish service?

M: Yes of course. Yes, even at that young age, I was like, "Why are we in the basement?"

G: Laughs] Yeah.

M: I remember that again, my mother and some other people from the church, the Spanish speaking congregation, they approached the diocese here in Worcester about establishing a church that would be ours, because we didn't want to be in the basement anymore and they were like, "No." We had at the time a priest who was very good, Father Smith and Father Muniz. There was the Father Power Center which belonged to the church. They would let us use it to host a lot of activities for our communities, dances, and parties, so on. I wouldn't say that the activism was through the church, the activism rose out of the community of people and established ALPA, Casa de la Comunidad, youth centers. We had Centro de La Juventud for the young people and El Barrio, we had Centro las Americas was established as a cultural center and that was its own. It's interesting what happened there, that I call sometimes public lynchings of our institutions of color.

G: I don't know what happened.

M: That's a story in itself. It was with people in our own communities seeing the need, mobilizing, organizing, and getting things done. And that's something that we have always done in this country. I think that's something that we saw recently with the devastation of this catastrophic tragedy, is the only word I can use that happened in Puerto Rico in Borinken, before [Hurricane] Maria and after Maria. Before Maria we have an economic crisis that was happening, a humanitarian crisis, and then when the hurricane hit and then we saw the response! I was very proud of the Puerto Ricans here in the mainland, we mobilized and organized and advocated and brought attention to the fact that this is what is happening. And of course, other people became part of that, but it is something we have always done. I would like to say here in Worcester, we just started—back in the seventies it used to be a week here called La Semana Puertorriquena [Puerto Rican week] through ALPA.

G: Oh really?

M: Yes, and this was in the early seventies.

G: And how long did that last?

M: That lasted for a few years and we were the first ones to actually raise the flag of a Latino Country, now you have all the other countries also raising the flag, but we were the first ones to actually raise the Puerto Rican flag at City Hall. And then last year, myself and a couple of other people, I'm watching going, "Okay, lanzamiento for the Dominicans, Ecuadorians, and Colombians and everybody," and I go, "Where is ours?" It stops, so last year we organized and raised the flag at city hall, we resurrected that tradition. A lot of people think it has to do with the group Amor Para Puerto Rico, but no. We were already working on organizing the event, it just happened to coincide, unfortunately, with what happened with the disaster. We have established, one of the things that was established is Casa Borinken of Worcester, which will be looking at doing four events, just cultural events, here specifically geared towards, the Boricua Puerto Rican culture, so we have been meeting at my house [laughs]. We don't have a brick and mortar place but that's okay, that's resurrecting that. Because I think what has happened is that when you talk about Latinos or Latinx or Hispanos, we are 21 different countries. We have a shared language but even in those countries, as we were talking earlier, Mexico, how many native languages are spoken still?

G: I don't know.

M: So, Latinos are put into this box into this monolithic group that's unrealistic. When people talk—I don't even use the term Latino community, there is no such thing. We are a Latino population with many communities within that population and we have our differences. We have our different histories, we are immigrants, we are migrants, we are first generation here and we are multi-generation. From people that are son Mexicanos that the border crossed them in God knows when. You are talking nine, ten generations that they've been here. They were actually here before the Europeans arrived. All of this is put into this box, this is being done also here in Worcester, having these different groups is wonderful, but also what happens to that with this process, you get diluted and your culture and your history gets erased. So, we are trying to say no, we are not going to let that happen, we are going to have this cultural house where we are going to focus, como hace Casa Cultural Dominicana, that's fine, because we celebrate that and support it, we can do that. We can still celebrate our own things, our own traditions, our own cultures and support each other as Latinos. So, anyways going back, that's one of the ways that with the resurrection of the Puerto Rican flag and at that time, I gave a speech on the history of the contributions that we as a Puerto Rican community have contributed here in Worcester.

G: Do you have a document of that?

M: I do.

G: If you'd like to submit it with the interview that would be great because I'm interviewing activists, some are giving me memoirs, some are giving me activist's newsletters because what their life is. Okay, so if I could interject for a minute, you have mentioned several organizations and I want to make sure we get them documented. So tell me the organizations you remember being active when you were younger first.

M: When I was younger I would say ALPA (asociación Latina para Progreso y Acción)/ Casa De La Comunidad.

G: Okay and what else?

M: Centro de la Juventud

G: And that is one that your....

M: Youth Center

G: Okay.

M: I wasn't part of founding that I would go there. What I was part of founding, when I was 13 years old, we wanted to have our own space, so we came here to the YWCA and created the Puerto Rican Power Club.

G: That's adorable [laughs]

M: [Laughs] And that was back in 1972 or '73.

G: What would you do?

M: Well we would come out here and play basketball, swimming, and it was basically all Puerto Rican kids that were here, we had some Cubans also, Ecuatorianos. It was a place where we would just come and not be harassed, and we weren't going to be not wanted. And that's what we established here, I was 13 along with some other kids and unfortunately, some have passed at this point but that's the group we created here at the YWCA. It's interesting my history with this place. I am now employed here. I'm the Director of Racial and Gender Equity here. I was on the board also, but started there so it's like this full circle thing all around equity—racial equity. [Laughs] so yeah, the Puerto Rican Power club at the YWCA, that was one of our youth centers. El Barrio was another—was again a place for us to go to. You had Centro Las Americas which was established in 1977. They are still in existence, they changed their name to Centros. I had issues with that. What people don't realize, what a lot of people don't know is that Centro Las Americas was established as a cultural center and then it became a neighborhood social services center.

G: Okay, so now back to you, walk me through your high school years, what was school like, personal life?

M: I went to Canterbury Street School, I went to Worcester East Middle, we used to get bused in. Again it was mostly just white. I graduated from North High.

G: You got bused in? How long was your bus drive?

M: It wasn't that bad, it was like 15 minutes or more

G: But it was clear that it was not your neighborhood and you were taken in?

M: Yes and no, no exactly. At that time, a lot of the neighborhood schools were being eliminated in Worcester, so they were becoming—like Worcester East Middle, used to be a neighborhood school but was made into a citywide middle school, along with like Burncoat, Doherty and so on. I went there [East Middle] and then I went to North High. When I went to North High it was interesting, we had some issues, and this is something we are documenting through the Latino History Project [of Worcester] which I am a co-founder of and still active in it. We are documenting the activism of our community here in Worcester. The Latino, specifically the Puerto Rican community—population, and we had walkouts. We had riots, the North High riots and the walkouts and people have absolutely no clue of!

G: What year?

M: This was probably from 1976 through 1977 or maybe 1975 and it was racial. That's what it was and we organized. I was one of the people who helped organize the walkouts and we walked out. This was when North High was located across the street from the Worcester Art Museum, which are now apartments. That was the old North High and we were having some racial issues. A lot of the kids, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and Ecuadorian, we felt it, we felt the discrimination and the racism. The kids also got into fights, fights breaking out because your being called a spic and so we organized and we walked out. I remember we walked out and we marched from Salisbury Street to downtown and we were marching and yelling out, "Jibaro Si! Yankee no!" We were young and, "no more hate!" This was the mid-seventies the people looking at us and yelling things at us, so when we got to city hall there were grown adults, waiting for us and we were attacked, physically attacked. Word got out and it turned into this mayhem where young adults, Puerto Ricans, came to our rescue! There were chains, weapons that were pulled out.

G: Is there news documentation?

M: There may be, if there is that's what we are looking for in the Latino History Project. We are searching for that, which again the same thing, a little bit later, we had the Race Riots that happened in Great Brook Valley.

G: Where?

M: At Great Brook Valley

G: Okay

M: Which is the Worcester Housing Authority over by the Kennedy Health Center. That made national news, we had the National Guard, to patrol because of the riot that broke out. There was a murder by the police of a Puerto Rican resident. I went to school with this young man, Hiram Estemera, who was an officer with the Worcester Housing Authority. It had its own police force, the man who was murdered was handcuffed and they shot him point blank right in the head, in the back of a police squad car, and all hell broke loose.

G: Oh wow.

M: The fire department wouldn't go in to put out the fires that were set, the city police wouldn't go in, they had to call the National Guard, it was really crazy. Again, the tension was around racism with Latinos. Because a majority that lived [there] were Puerto Rican. Some whites, some blacks, Worcester has always had a higher—even in our country right now, when you are talking about racism inequities, we are talking about 60 million Latinos in the United States and that's probably undercounted, that's a whole another issue with undercounting people. We have been severely affected when it comes to racism and institutional racism and structural racism and cultural racism. It's not just about black and white, it's against people of color and in Worcester we have always been the larger percentage. Latinos, suffering as a result of racist practices within our city and then the African American population. The Black American has always been small and has stayed small, however now the black population has gotten bigger overall because of the influx of people immigrating from the different African countries.

G: New Africans.

M: Exactly, so we had these walk outs and it was crazy. We had issues with the police even back then, historically I think you find in any community, so it was interesting, it was. I graduated from North High.

G: In what year?

M: 1977, and I went away to school, the following year in Boston. I went to Newbury College, but then I came back home and I graduated from Worcester State College, in Sociology [laughs].

G: Oh, great.

M: Not surprising, right?

G: No

M: I love sociology, seeing what's happening and I mean sociology I find, it's the living history of our environment of our society versus Anthropology, this is where we are still in right now. But being involved in a lot of different things while I was in Worcester State, the Third World Alliance, always trying to bring in, informing the rest of the population about, who we are as people of color seeking what's fair.

G: What's the Third World Alliance?

M: It's a student organization at Worcester State, but made up primarily of students of color, so I got involved with that. I remember going to—when I was in school my brother-in-law was going to school in Hartford, UConn Law School. He knew I was always involved in causes, I'd always been involved in these activities.... and he said, "Mari, there is this big conference happening in Connecticut, it's something for Puerto Ricans." So, me 'cogi y me tire para alla. It was the National Congress for Puerto Ricans, which is an organization which came out of the Young Lords, in New York and became a national organization. They were having a huge conference, so for me this was a biggie because it was a conference where you were getting Puerto Ricans from different parts of the country, so cogi me monte en mi caro, I drove over there, and I showed up and that became a very important part of my life and my activism. The National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights was an organization that basically came out of the Young Lords, I don't know if you are familiar with the young lords, out of New York?

G: Yeah

M: This one of the branches that came out of them, this is one of the things that came out of this. So, a lot of the founding members of the Young Lords transitioned in the National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights and this was 1980, I want to say. So, I got very involved and I got to know a lot of those people and so we started to organize and form chapters all over the country, not just New York but Florida, Massachusetts, D.C., everywhere. We formed a chapter here which I became Vice President, state wide VP for that. We created lots of presences here in Massachusetts, I don't know if you are familiar with Boston and "El Jolgorio" it's a big event we were the ones who established that, we had chapters here in Massachusetts. I then became national Secretary for the National congress for Puerto Rican Rights National Board. We did a lot of work here, we would hold biannual conferences every two years and we had one here in Worcester. Puerto Ricans descending from everywhere in the United States for a conference here in Worcester. We got a lot of press out of that and that would give us the opportunity to show and highlight the plights, still of our communities here in this country, which a lot of people here don't realize. It was pretty cool. We did a lot of good work and a lot of those folks, who contributed and still are contributing to this country with the work that we are doing which benefited all Latinos not just Puerto Ricans because the work that we did would benefit all Latinos.

G: And how long were you involved with them for?

M: Oh, my goodness, I want to say probably until the group basically dissipated, I want to say for ten years a least.

G: Oh wow.

M: Oh yeah, We established that and a lot of the activists that you'll find, a lot of older activists for example Gulmensindo Gomez of Springfield, MA who was part of this, his son is now an 'activist' City Councilor in Springfield.

G: That's my grandfather's name Gomez

M: Really.

G: Isn't that funny?

M: Very old Spanish name. His son is now on the City Council of Springfield, so you see the result of the work that had been done, politically because we were really trying to make our presence known politically. Which we have done and I don't think a lot of people realize is that when you look at our—especially around the Latino politics, in this country it's New York for Puerto Ricans, Florida for Cubans and for Mexicanos, Chicanos, Mexican Americans it's California and the South West. Luis Gutiérrez of Chicago, who is a Puerto Rican Congress man, Nydia Velazquez of New York, who is a Congresswoman, first Puerto Rican Congresswoman and then of course, you know that political Puerto Rican politics history there and the National Congress we were very involved with that.

G: Tell me what you did personally or professionally maybe also after college, you stay in Worcester?

M: Oh, after college, I'm still in Worcester, I stayed here, this is my home. This is where I raised my family. After college, even when I was in college being involved in the community. I stayed here. I started working for a lot of different organizations, I ran for example a program in the United Way. I was the Director for a program called Latino Leaders of the Future which was a program, which was a pilot program to prepare and support Latinos getting on to boards, commissions. We were very good at what we did, it was a model program and we were copied by other organizations from around the country [who] wanted to do the same thing we were doing because it was very successful. That was through the United Way, at that time when I left the United Way I was very angry at them because we had this great program but they refused to fund it. So, to me if you don't practice what you preach it's like I have issues with that so that's how that ended. Then I landed up at the Worcester Housing Authority. I started out as a housing manager, I was the first female housing manager at Great Brook Valley and Curtis Housing Apartments. I managed all the public housing units in the city all over, but I was the first one to land it at Great Brook Valley and Curtis Apartments, the first female Latina. I was the first

female and the first Latina person to be a Director with the Worcester Housing Authority. I became director for the public housing for the entire public housing of the city and when I did that it was great because I started to implement policy change. I started to staff—I had five satellite offices which I was responsible for and I started to staff with the people who had the skills who reflected the people we were serving. For me it's really important to bring that racial equity lens in any work that I do and so I was able to do that.

G: How long were you in that position?

M: I was there for seven years. I hired Alex Corrales who is now the executive director of the Worcester Housing, I hired him as a management aide, again with that whole thing of hiring qualified individuals that reflected the population we served. Again, because if you are going to go to a place and you have a population which you are servicing which is predominately of color and you walk into an office and everyone is white, and they don't speak the language that's a problem. So, it's like no, we have to address this, so we have to find folks that are going to be able—but not only that but it makes everything more effective more fair. So, I did that, I came off of there when I decided to run for public office for the first time. I ran in 1997 for the District 4 City Council seat which is the one Sari Rivera holds now. I was the first Latina to run for elected office in the city of Worcester. To think of it, I was the first for a lot of different things [laughs] but I was very active in the district, that was where I lived, and I had also started to establish businesses there. My ex-husband and I were the ones that created what is now called Compare Foods. Prior to that it was Santiago's Plaza, we had a small chain independent. We were the largest independently small chain the entire east coast of retail supermarket. So, in 1997 I decided to run for office, it was really interesting, I was very active in the district, very active in the neighborhoods, very active in the city. I ran against an incumbent Janice Nadeau, who had been there when the city was split up to include five districts with their own district councilor from all at large councilors. You have five distinct districts with their own representation in order to make it more fair and then six at large and then five district councilors. So, she had been there since this was implemented. So at the beginning I supported her, but then I'm watching as the demographics are continually changing in our district. District Four has always been most diverse, not only racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, geographic, district in the entire city. We are also the most populated one because this is where you have downtown, this is where you have Main Street, and it would bother me because people would always talk about, "Oh you know we have to revive downtown." Well you have Main Street when you cross Chandler over, which is a very vibrant business community. but it was not acknowledged because it was a community of business owners that were immigrants they are multi-ethnic, that were multiracial, but we didn't have any empty storefronts. We are providing services to the city. I was active with the neighborhood groups also because at the time we had the PIP Shelter [Public Inebriate Program] there and it was so detrimental to the neighborhood what it was creating. So, I decided to throw my hat in the ring, I lost by a hundred and ten votes.

G: Oh my gosh.

M: Yes, and we had all kinds of stuff going on that happened during my campaign. My

campaign was the first campaign to ever promote literature that was bilingual. My campaign was the first one, we did a Bien Latino, I had a truck with music playing, and announcing through speakers, "Vote por Maritza Cruz!" The people were coming out! It was so exciting, it was not just a campaign for Latinos, it was a campaign for the District Four seat, it was a campaign that brought together all kinds of people, Latinos, African Americans, Vietnamese, white people, working class folks, very well to do because what we ran created hope. It really created a lot of hope for people and I remember I got a visit from the Democratic City Committee member, they sent someone to meet with me, when I first started my campaign. This is how deals were done here, and still are. Where you have a bunch of white men who go into a room and said, "Okay we got to run"—at the time it wasn't called a person of color—"we got to run a minority person for public office" and what seat to run for. So they decide it has to be a School Committee and so they decided among themselves to the exclusion of any person of color, who would be the best. So I have been very active as an activist an organizer, my name rolls out. So they came to pay me a visit and said, "Oh you know we will support you but you have to run for the School Committee and not run against Janice Nadeau." And I was like, "I'm not going to do that, no." And they were like, "Well then we are not going to be able support you." I informed the person I was talking to, I said, "Well you can go back the Worcester City Democratic Committee, I'm a Democrat and if you can't support me simply because you are supporting someone who is no longer competent to their job, who no longer is being effective in addressing all the people of this district, that's their choice! I am not going—I am going to run for this seat and who the hell are you to think you can come here and tell me and tell us what to run for and when to do it? That doesn't work, I am running for the seat and without your support we are going to win." Actually, that person went back, gave them my response, and then joined my campaign [laughs]. Which is really wonderful so.

It was real crazy, we actually had an investigation by the feds because there was voter fraud. We had registered a crazy amount of people, we had registered several thousand people in the district. One evening we got this call—this also came out in the paper a lot of media attention—we got this call, kind of in the middle of the night, they call my campaign chair who was an Irish man by the name Bob McCauley. People were shocked when he became my campaign chair because he was a political personality, a bomb-thrower always stirring up politics and well respected by the local politicians who had his own radio show, known very politically savvy and connected. When I went to see him and asked him—I didn't know who the hell he was, and I went to see him and said, "This is what I'm running and I need your support, I want to represent the people here. They have no voice, we are neighborhoods that are basically being ignored because they are poor or because you have people, Latinos, Blacks, working folks, living here and it's not fair and this is what I want." He just looked at me and when I finished he said, "I will support you and who is running your [campaign]?" [I said "no one"] and he said, "I'll be your campaign chair, I'll run your campaign." So of course, that hit the news, what the hell was this white Irish man doing supporting this Puerto Rican girl from Main South!? But anyways things were happening, so we got a call and someone told us that there were all these ballots of people we had registered to vote in District 4 thrown into a trash can at the City Hall in the women's bathroom.

G: What?

M: There were over two hundred.

G: Oh my God.

M: We had registered like 2,000 people, I'm not exaggerating and so we got this call. Whoever called us, also called the T&G [*Telegram & Gazette*], so when we went the next morning to city hall, a reporter from the T&G was there also, it turned into this bizarre scenario. That's actually how the T&G wrote the headlines, "Bizarre tale at city hall." It turned into this circus, because the deadline had passed for these folks to be registered vote, however, we kept copies of all the people we had registered to vote every single one, the majority were Spanish surnames. We went before the election commission and challenged the decision they had made that all these voters due to no fault of their own could not vote in the upcoming election specifically for District 4! We asked they be allowed to vote and be given their constitutional right to vote. They were trying to insinuate say that we did this. How the fuck are we going to get into City Hall, get access to the voter registration cards from the election office, into the women's employee locked bathroom and throw them in a trash can in there!!! So it turned into this whole thing with the Election Commission and they had a hearing and of course everyone and their mother went and anyone who was running for office when I ran in 1997—that was when Tim Murray first ran, he eventually became lieutenant governor, when Joe Petty ran for the first time, Stacy Luster who was an African American and she won, she got to the seat. She was the first African American woman to be in the city council. Prior to her Betty Price had gone on to the school committee.... anyways all these folks showed up and I went and said, "The only thing I am asking for is, these folks, whom you are violating their constitutional right by not allowing them to vote, to exercise their right to vote! We have no control [over] what happened, we submitted this, it was time stamped, whatever." It was obviously something to sabotage us, so they were finally allowed to be registered to vote. All these bizarre things. It was very exciting though. I was having dinner the other day with someone, and they said, "I remember your campaign, you had people out there dancing and with signs." Even at that time I used to tell people we used to have people yelling really racial slurs, "You fucking spic, go back to where you came from." We would just wave, at them, it was the first time that I ran, and we lost. I remember, the biggest loss for me was not winning, it was that people had put all their hopes on me and I felt that I had let them down. That for me was what was hard because I remember going into neighborhoods where people said, "You are the first person running for office that we have seen in this neighborhood." I remember going into neighborhood que eran Hispanos y la gente would be, "Mira Mariza Cruz, oh my God, come in, come to my house!" Dandome de comer and getting all excited and I remember people, the contributions that they made, that ran \$10 and \$5 and to me those were more valuable than someone—I appreciate someone that could give me \$100, but I know those people that were giving me five and ten dollars because they were giving me all they had. I remember people coming out to vote for me that had never gone out to vote. I remember, this African American, they were two sisters, y estaban viejitas, they were like in their nineties and they knew me from when I was growing up, when we moved out of Main South we moved to Newbury Street and that was where you had a lot of older African American families had been established, they saw me grow up and they came out. "It's little Mari, we are going to vote for her." I had this one women—very sick—she was brought over to my campaign headquarters

which I had right on the corner of Chandler and Main Street which used to be White Tower, it's an African hair shop now. This woman gets off a van, she has an oxygen tank and she's much older and, she comes out and I'm watching her and she said, "I had to come and meet this..." – I'm sorry. [crying]

G: No take a moment.

M: She said, "I had to come out and meet a woman who has raised who we are as Puerto Ricans, who has made us very proud and has shown the world this is who we are. That we are people that work hard, and we rise up, you have given me that." Those things like that are the memories that why I [said] there was such a letdown, but then I remember Dan who wrote a piece—he is a professor out of [College of the] Holy Cross who used to be a professor there and he wrote a piece for *Worcester Mag[azine]* when he was retiring. He said, "I will never forget the campaign of Maritza Cruz. She didn't win the seat, but she won the respect of the people of Worcester, she made the presence of people who have been marginalized and forgotten, to be known and change the perception. The presence of the people in District 4 was felt." My campaign had the highest voter turnout in the history of the city in that District and it has not been matched to this day, it hasn't been matched. So, if you have a good candidate people will come out.

G: Did you run again ten years later?

M: It seems that seven is not a good number for me. I ran at large in 2007 and that year, God, I remember there were like 18 candidates running for one seat that was going to be available and I came in a number 13, so kind of that cusp. I haven't run since then, I have been very active in campaigns, very particular in what I do to get involved into. I consider myself a social justice entrepreneur being a founding member of different organizations. I am one of the founders of the Latino Festival of Worcester which is now at Centro las Americas. Centro has been running for the last several years, but we actually funded that through an organization which was called Union Latina.

G: In what year?

M: I want to say this was back in the eighties, mid-eighties and out that came La Festiva Latino out of that also came the Worcester Voter Education Registration Project, The Worcester Latino Voter Education Registration Project, it was founded by myself, Juan Gomez, and my ex-husband Eddy Santiago. We saw that there was a need to register and educate people, not just register but educate, so we founded that. And it did very well for a few years and we were able to get funding for that through the United Way, no mentria, it was through the Worcester Community Foundation and Marilyn Reyes, may she rest in peace, was hired as a coordinator to get that going and she did a phenomenal job with that. Also, I am one of the founding members of Adelante Worcester, which is still active, it has transitioned into something else. When we first founded that Adelante Worcester, it was to promote and educate on the Latino population here in Worcester but also geared towards focusing on politics. There was a few of us—that was very successful, out of that we actually formed a Political Action Committee which was

formed—I want to say the first time that Sarai [Rivera] ran? But then it got some people nervous some people that were involved with us—some people like to rock the boat, others don't. [Laughs] I've always been one of the folks that said, "You know power is never given, it's got to be taken." So, Adelante Worcester, which I think is fine, there is a niche for everything. They do a lot of events for young professionals, Latinos networking and that type of thing, which is not what we were doing. We were doing more activism, more political awareness, more activist work than networking professionals but that's okay, like I said that has, there is a niche for that here. Que mas? We had "El Parrandon Navideno" the biggest social event in the city of Worcester, for the first three years, I was the president of that organization for a while.

G: When did you start the Latino History Project?

M: The Latino History Project? This is going on our sixth year. We used to do—I always—I think it's important for us, as a community as a group to...

[Break in interview]

G: Okay keep going.

M: One of the things that I like to do, but we would have these gatherings and we would gather at my house or someone else's and we would take turns, Latino dinners. There would be a group of us and we would gather and have wines from Spanish/Latino countries, wines and food and we would just talk about basically what is happening in our communities. And out of those dinners, one of the things that I have been collecting for years is anything that has to do with our communities here, newspaper clippings, because one the things I have always wanted to do was to document our history. We need to define who we are and not have others define us and that's unfortunately what has happened to us not only here in Worcester but all over the country, when it comes to our histories and who we are as people. So, that came out of there, estaban en mi case y and I brought out a sign that said "Puerto Ricans in Worcester" a series that had been published by the T & G on Puerto Ricans in Worcester. This whole series that was done about us in Worcester, it was in the eighties, and I was like, "Look at this. We need to form a place, something to document our history," and so the Latino History Project came out of there. We decided right from the beginning that we were going to be at the Worcester Historical Museum. We are part of this community, we have contributed to this community and we continue to contribute. [We] are a part of the fabric that makes up this community and so we went there, and we were very fortunate that we have Bill Wallace, [Executive Director] who is absolutely wonderful. I love him. From day one we 'plantamos bandera, we planted our flag there. We have a great group of people, Hilda Ramiriez, Leo Negrón Cruz, George Cotes, Rosa Carrasquillo, Cynthia Stone, myself, we have other people come and go but we were the original, this is the core group that founded this and we still here. And it's what you are doing here. Interviewing folks, capturing a lot of that history—we try to do especially the older folks because when they pass that whole world goes with them, that whole knowledge and history. So, that's one of things we have here. There is a whole bunch of other things.

G: How did you move into the position you have now?

M: Now? Like I said I've been doing a lot of work. I'm a professional volunteer, professional agitator, probably not unlike yourself. If there is something wrong, don't complain about it get off the curb and do something about it, what can we do to address this and that's what you do. I'm an organizer, my core is I'm an organizer and organizer for justice and equity. So from the Worcester Housing Authority I ran for office, I concentrated on my business at that time which was wonderful when we opened, we were the largest international supermarket here in Worcester, we used to have Shaw's and all this other stores coming to check us out, acting like they were shopping saying, "What the hell are these people doing?" Because we took away so much clientele, we became a destination too go to, we were a distribution company for smaller bodegas and grocery stores not only in Worcester but outside of Worcester, we had a warehouse, we were also a community place where people would come and gather. Because one of the things that was important to me was to always keep the community informed of what was going on, so we would [say], "Absolutely come on in and do whatever you need to do," to informative groups. We were one-stop shopping, una cafeteria with our foods. We became a destination for the old Italians, and other immigrant peoples because we would have special cuts of meat that no nobody used to do anymore. Did that for quite a while and unfortunately ended up getting divorced and that was all dissolved. Prior to coming here and doing what I am I [have] also done consulting work, independent consulting work. For example, with the YMCA USA, I was traveling around the country doing assessments on cultural competency for the organizations to continue to be a viable and community organize to the town they are in. Which was really good and this position here at the YWCA was created two years ago because the mission here is the elimination of racism and the empowerment of women so it opened up, I saw it, Director of Racial and Gender Equity and I was like, "It sounds like something tailor fit" and a had a few of folks that approached me about it, so I was like "okay." So, I applied for it, one of the things that was really good about it, is that was a brand new position so I was creating the department from the ground up, it's a position that is super important to this organization because I ensure that we as an organization are mission focused and mission driven. The elimination of racism and the empowerment of women so that it is embedded in the fabric and structure of our organization. I do a lot of racial justice equity, anti-racism workshops here internally for staff and also externally. I run programs, work on policy, systemic changes I am proud to say we are the first not-for-profit agency, organization not only in Worcester, Central Mass that has abolished Columbus Day, we now celebrate and commemorate Indigenous People's Day. We informed—educated—the staff as to why, first of all Christopher Columbus never set foot on North America but this is why for me as a person, a descendant of the people who survived genocide, how can you celebrate this man. To some people he is a hero, but to us he created mass murder, genocide. I am very proud to say that is one of the things we did here. Which needs to be done for the city of Worcester. What I do here dovetails perfectly with my life work. I am going to be one of those people, ninety years old volunteering somewhere, fighting for what is just, for what is equity. I will continue to do that. And I look at it this way, whatever knowledge I have acquired in this life—and I have been very blessed—I have a torch and I refuse to pass that torch on, I really do. Because I want you to light from it and then someone lights from you and they keep lighting and

lighting. Eventually what is going to happen, you are going to see all this light, all this light that is going to be fighting against oppression and inequities and injustice. So, I love what I do here, I love what I do in my life.

G: I lost the personal story. I don't know when you met your husband, when you had children.

M: Well, okay. Going back, I had my daughter Victoria, her name is Victoria, she is twenty-eight years old. I was not married when I had her. I was in a relationship with her father for eight years and then eventually that relationship ended, I became a single parent and then I met my first husband, with Victoria's father it was common law union. I married him his name was Eddy Santiago or is, because he is not dead [laughs] and we got married in 1994. I then had my son Domingo Alejandro Santiago, being married to him. We had family two kids, my daughter, my son and we accomplished a lot. Like I said we opened this business that became, we were the first Latino owned business that was that large. We actually revitalized that whole area of Main South, we kicked off the revitalization because I used to look at what the "Mart" use to be that's what it used to be years ago and I always looked at as a great location to have a supermarket, and then looking at, being that we were in the business of food and I'm going, "You know, you have all these little stores," and I am looking again with that eye that lens, looking at the district and thinking, "A lot of inter cities have suffered the flight of business service." Call it white flight but also when they do that they leave and take everything with them. So, supermarkets were always at the out skirts of the city, so you needed a car, transportation. So here you have this huge concentration of people who there is nothing there to service them except these little stores that can be very expensive and so on. We already had had two stores we had the one on Main Street and another on we had opened on the corner of Pleasant and Piedmont Street right across from the Pickle Barrel, so I would look at that place and started talking with my then husband about consolidating the two stores into one large one stop shopping supermarket. So, we decide to buy it, so we went in, we had the demographics, business wise it was smart but also community wise it was smart also. So, we decided to and we did, we opened that up. I remember when we first opened one of the things I did is I put the 21 different flags, of the different Spanish speaking countries on, our building. Showing I'm Latino and with the American flag, we did it with this huge fanfare and it was a huge celebration not for us but for our entire community in our city. Did that, we did a lot. Ended up getting divorced, unfortunately. [redacted] So I was alone with my kids again, a single parent, nothing new, again I mean I grew up in a household [where] my parents were divorced and watching these powerful women going, "I can do this, it's nothing." And then I remarried later on, a man by the name of Manuel Gines, Manny Gines as he's known, who is an organizer for The Carpenter Union, the New England Regional Council of Carpenters. He's the same, activist, volunteer but anyways same thing Puerto Rican, my first husband he was Dominican, he does a lot of organizing. He is the one that has actually changed what the Carpenter Union does and made it more viable because when it comes to wage theft, especially with undocumented workers, que muchos, the majority son Latinos.

G: Yeah

M: So, he does a lot of good work around that. So, we were married for seven years and unfortunately that broke up. Tambien me traicionó. I've never really needed anyone to do anything with me, so you get the people around you who are willing to work and have the same commitment that you do. That is that commitment of what its fair and what is good to do and what is the right thing to do.

G: Did your children go through the public schools in Worcester?

M: My children, actually no, my children—I went through the public school system. My children went through private schools, St Peter's Central Catholic.

G: Oh, okay, that's where my kids go.

M: Yeah, I wanted them to go to a private school and Saint Peter Central is the most diverse private school in the city.

G: It is.

M: Very diverse. So, that's the important and then they both graduated from Saint Peter Marian and they are still with me. My daughter, she went to Clark [University] and is finishing up at Worcester State now, her degree. My son is in the process of—he went to Quinsigamond [Community College] for a year and a half but not sure what he wants to do. But they work and so on. I think they look out and I used to bring them with me also to a lot of different meetings, organizing, and planning meetings and they have a good sense of fairness and equity.

G: Is there something I didn't cover?

M: I don't know, I mean.

G: We could talk for hours, I think.

M: Yes, because it keeps triggering different things, I probably have forgotten some stuff but you know what? I think we all have an obligation and a responsibility, I always say, "The Creator gives us different things and if I can advocate for those who can't, I feel that's my responsibility to do so." It really is, I think we have that obligation for those who can't, and to stand up even if you are the only one standing up at times and saying, "No." I remember one of the things several years ago, we had a terrible situation happen. We had a young man who is mentally disabled Cristobal Hernandez se llamaba el, that was his name. And he was murdered by the police.

G: Oh god.

M: It was awful and my brother in law gets the case and I remember we were at my niece's birthday party at my sister's house and he tells me, "Mari, I got to show you this video tape." I remember looking at this video tape and looking at this man. Obviously you can look at him and

see he was disabled, mentally disabled and challenged and how he was thrown down stairs. He was very small, little man and this police officer who weighs over 200 hundred pounds literally has him hog tied, he killed him. He had him, he is kneeling on his back, like this, [demonstrates] he has got him like this. On his neck, it was awful. So, I'm watching this going, "Oh my god, oh my god!" You can hear the family scream, "Stop! lo estas matando, lo estas matando!" They were Salvadorian. We have had situations like this happen before, but there is no internal review with the police department, so I'm watching this, and I remember I started crying and going, "My god, he killed him that was unnecessary." So, I started calling up folks because this can't just be a case de Latinos, this is a human rights violation so I started to call up people. Barry Boyer, David Coyne, Lynn Simonds...and I said I got to get white people involved in this and not only Latinos and Blacks but the whole community so then we can have some traction and that's what we did we organized to force the police department to—you killed him that was unnecessary, unnecessary force that was used. Pero este, may he rest in peace. Out of that we were able to force the way that, it wasn't business as usual and we mobilized, and we had people going up to City Hall. I remember at the time [Jeff] Mulford was the City Manager, la gente, we were in a meeting and people—it's kind of a long story here, but I remember started to get involved after the fact when they saw that we had this traction going and other folks started to join in. We were at City Hall and Jeff Mulford and estaba the [police] chief was there, and you know all the big politicians and so on and they were like, "Let's go into this room and we are going to talk about this so we can change, and we are going to do this and this, yeah, yeah whatever." And I'm listening to this saying, "Are you kidding me?" They were kind of trying to appease us but not really giving us anything and I'm thinking to myself we can't allow the death of this person not to be acknowledged. I remember that and the reason I am saying this is because they thought they had a done deal with the folks that were sitting around the table and I am sitting back and looking at this and I am NO! I remember I stood up and said, "NO!" And this just came out and everyone just kind of look at me and he looked at me and they are like, "What?" And I said "No, it's not done!" It forced them to, it's almost like wake up and not just take these crumbs to appease you but force them literally to force them to, no we are going to do changes, we are going to address this, so needless to say which is really good. We left out of there and they were pissed off! I'm like, "No, who are you to come in and agree to something, you don't speak for this community." That's why and I remember, it got worse and they were like [...??] Well I want to go with her on the radio and no I am not doing that. But a lot of times, it takes valor to say, even if you are the only one, to stand up and say no and you'll be surprise to see how many join you then and if I can do that, hopefully the creator will give me that will and that valor to continue to do so.

G: So, I loved that. It's really amazing, I'm so glad that you said yes.

M: Oh, no you're welcome, I think it's important because it's the history of us. I look at when we do the Latino History Project, yes, they're people, like my mother was one of the people that was interviewed and a lot of people when she is quoted as to why did you do this, and she said, "I did it para nuestro niños, mi ninos." It's not about me, it's about us, that's what it's about, everything that I try to do is about us. Because you know what if one segment of our community is not doing well it's going to catch us with us and I think one of the most important examples that I

use—I do this with my workshops, I always tell people I say, "We look at the whole opioid crisis in this nation and it's something that has been a plague in poor communities and communities of color for a very long time. The War on Drugs was created to really attack inner cities, it has created the mass incarceration rate that we have of men of color, black and brown men. It didn't matter until drugs started to affect white suburban communities, when it started to affect their children and I think it's a horrendous thing. When I do this work it's about humanity, that's what it comes down to its about humanity. Humanity and compassion and love and that may sound hokey but that's what it's about. And not until drugs started to hit middle class white families that it became an epidemic, then it became a disease to be treated not to be incarcerated and we see that difference, now don't we? How compared to our communities, no it was a war, incarceration that was what was happening. How it's like we have to treat it, it's a disease, we have to do this, yeah, you'll get arrested not only that marijuana being legalized who is the one's going after having the dispensaries? When you look at inner cities for arrest for people for a freakin' joint? But then again it depends on who it's affecting. That's a perfect example. If one segment of the community does not do well it's going to catch us to you evidentially. It is as simple as that and when I ran for office twice, I used to always say that. We have a vibrant Main Street maybe it's not what you want but its vibrant and we are part of this community and this is happening here it's going to affect you and your family. People don't care until it affects them personally, racism what we have here in our country, now we have an administration that is blatantly racist! I mean it's blatant they go, "Oh I can't believe this is happening!" It's always been there. Now it's caught on video. It's like here we have the proof, see here we have the brutality! See the murders! When, in this time and age, you still have to have organizations that raise up and say Black Lives Matter, come on! We have a lot of work to do, as human beings, as a country, as a nation, we have a lot of work to do. And we need to speak up about it. If it makes you uncomfortable, I mean, when I used to work, oh white people "it makes me un... umm Caucasian is incorrect." No, I didn't create these labels, you all did. You created the boxes, what we are supposed to fit nice and neat and if we get out of these boxes, it's like you get punished. So, I will be a professional agitator, troublemaker, whatever you want to call it for humanity.

G: I appreciate it, I appreciate you service.