

SOFIA MENDOZA

March 2, 1988

Sofia: My name is Sofia Magdaleno Mendoza and I live at [REDACTED] and my zip code is [REDACTED]

Me: If you don't mind my asking, but when were you born?

Sofia: I was born on Dec. 22, 1934 in a little town called Fillmore in California. It was really interesting why I was born in Fillmore, because my father was a labor organizer. He made many attempts to organize farm workers in the thirties and he had gone to Fillmore to organize citrus fruit pickers in a ranch called "Sespe", Sespe Ranch which at the time was the largest ranch in California, and they grew oranges and avocados in that ranch. They had never had a union and during the thirties there was a lot of activity to organize so he went down there to try and to organize the citrus fruit pickers. My mother was pregnant and I was born there. They had a strike that only lasted six months because they didn't get enough financial support. But, that's where I was born, a native Californian.

Me: Being active, it seems to be in your blood, you were brought up in that atmosphere.

Sofia: Yeah, like I said, my father was a labor organizer and my mother was also very active in working with the families of the strikers. After he organized, or attempted to organize a union in Fillmore then he went to Arizona, which was in 1939 and was organizing the copper miners in town, well there were two towns, called Rey and Sonora, Arizona, around near Phoenix and that was successful they did organize into the Miners Smelting Workers and my father became an officer.

Me: ..and your father's name?

Sofia: My father's name is Tiburcio, you know like Tiburcio Vasquez, Tiburcio Magdaleno and my mother's name is Margaret, Margarita. So you know I grew up around a lot of activity, a lot of political activity.

Me: And your brothers and sisters?

Sofia: Yes, I have two brothers and two sisters.

Me: Were they also as active?

Sofia: Umm, they're active in their own way, in other things, but they're not as politically active as I am. I am the oldest in the family and you know I grew up with a lot of responsibility of taking care of my brothers and sisters while my mother and dad were being active and so I think I'm a little more assertive than they are, than my brothers and sisters. I have a brother and a sister who were born in Arizona and then a brother and a sister that was born in Fillmore, so three of us were born in Fillmore and two were born in Arizona as a result of my dad moving around with his activities. I think I am the most politically active in my whole family, even more than my mother and father.

Me: Well, during that time who was the biggest influence, did you, when seeing your mother and father being politically active did you think, yes I would like to do that too?

Sofia: I think, my father has been the greatest influence in my life . Really, he has, my father....I think I got my wisdom from my father. He's a very caring wise person, you know and I learned a lot of good lessons from my father. I still remember them as if he had just said them to me, you know last month, my mother and father are still both living. But my father had a lot of great great influence on my life umm, he was an excellent role model for me. I always wanted to be like my dad, always wanting to help people, always wanting to stop injustices instantly, you know because my dad was that way and my father told me when I was very very young that we're all born into this life with a purpose and our purpose is to help one another and so I have always felt a responsibility to help other people, especially those less fortunate than ourselves.

Me: What about going to school?

Sofia: We lived in Campbell and....

Me: ..so you were from Fillmore, but how long did you live in Fillmore. Or did you travel back and forth from Fillmore to Arizona.

Sofia: Yeah, we traveled from Fillmore, we were there while my dad was organizing that one strike. I think I was there until I was, oh god, I think just a few months. Then from there we came to San Jose then went to Arizona and then came back to San Jose. Most of my family especially on my mother's side had lived here in San Jose and we lived in Campbell. I remember Campbell when it was just a township, it wasn't even a town yet, then I remember when it became a town and I remember when it became a city. It was just a little, little town way out in the middle of a lot of orchards because this was an agricultural valley at the time. We were just one of very few Mexican families that were living in Campbell.

Me: Why was that?

Sofia: I don't know, like I said it was such a small little town there weren't that many Mexican families here. I think, altogether there were about four and there were a lot of Japanese families, in the area because they grew a lot of strawberries here at the time. I went to Campbell Grammar School and I went to Campbell High School. Again, like I said there were very, very few Mexican classmates and that had a great impact on me. At the time when you're young you don't notice why certain things happened to you but as you get older you and you look back you wonder why certain things happened.

Me: Certain things?

Sofia: Well, in what I was going to mention I wondered why I mostly socialized and associated with Japanese students and not so much the Anglo students. I never realized there was a lot of racism in that school and during those years, San Jose was really strange because there was so much agriculture there were a lot of canneries here. Of course where the canneries were there were mostly Mexican people worked in those canneries and the fruits here were mostly picked by Mexican people, migrant workers who came here in the spring time to pick cherries, and then they picked the

apricots and then they stayed on to pick the prunes, walnuts. So, remembering about a lot of comments I'd hear about "wetbacks" and stuff like that, I heard it a lot.

Me: Would you say it was more familiar then than it is now to hear comments like that?

Sofia: Oh yeah, ..

Me: Then it was more accepted to say that then?

Sofia: I don't know, people are beginning to deal a lot more know with racism and discrimination then they were in those years. You know, you just heard it, I know I didn't feel good when I heard comments like "wetbacks", "pepperbellies" and stuff like that I felt very bad. And then people were always telling me "yeah, but you're different, you're not like the rest of them." You know, and I think back...

Me: You were one of "them"

Sofia: Yeah, because you see in those years the migrant workers lived in tents or they built little shacks out of these trays that they used to dry the apricots on. They used to build these little shacks out of that and you know, we lived in a house. We used to get told, "oh you live in a house, you know, you're not like them." I remember feeling very bad about that and I'd go home and discuss it with my parents. But you know I look back now and I wonder why did I hang around with the Japanese kids and you know, they hung around with the few Mexican kids that were there. It was because of the discrimination and I remember there was only one black family, that's one black family in all the years that I lived in Campbell, one black family moved in there and they only stayed for about three or four months. They couldn't tolerate it and then they moved out.

Me: Were they being harassed?

Sofia: Oh yeah, at school, in the neighborhood, and it's funny that the one black girl that went to school became my very close friend, you know, yeah it was just awful. Well you gotta figure in Campbell, these were the sons and daughters of a lot of the ranchers and you know...., and it was terrible. I remembered when they integrated part of the Almaden school district into Campbell. That's where all the Mexican kids were, in the Almaden area and that's where they were going to school. When they took in part of the Almaden school district into Campbell, here came a lot of Mexican kids and boy you want to see trouble. I mean fights, I mean it was really, really obvious that there had been a lot of discrimination in school. So I grew up with that during the time, that time you just didn't feel it, you didn't feel it because you had been treated all right. And you're young and you don't understand it. So I noticed that when I got into high school there was Spanish, no, there was a German club, a Latin club, a math club, I mean you had all kinds of clubs O.K.?, no Spanish club. I remember being so upset, so upset because I was taking French and Spanish at the time and I was going to the French club and I wanted to go to the Spanish club. By this time there had been more Mexican kids coming into the school district. Anyway, I remember telling my father and my dad said "oh you're upset?, you're really upset?" I said, "Yeah, I'm real upset" and he said "oh, and why don't you do something about it." I said "I can't, what can I do about it?"

And my dad said, "you organize a Spanish club, you want one you organize one. You get what you want."

Me: So it was your first...

Sofia: My father says you know, rights are never given if you're going to wait for someone to give you rights you can just sit and wait forever. You have to take your rights, I remember my dad telling me that. I swear it's one of the wisest things he told me. Rights are not given, they're taken you know, so I said well, I'm going to take my rights. I want a Spanish club and I'm going to do what I have to do. So I went to my Spanish teacher, Kenneth Brown was his name. He was a wonderful person and uh, I told him about that and he said, "If you are upset, go ahead and do what you have to do." So I did, I remember I circulated petitions and I lobbied the administration and I did all I had to do and it took me a few months but we had our Spanish club and I thought God it's really easy it wasn't that hard you know. I liked it, you know, that was my first major organizing attempt.

Me: How old were you then? Fifteen, sixteen?

Sofia: Oh, about fifteen, fourteen or fifteen years old.

Me: That was your first taste of organization?

Sofia: Yeah, I was in the ninth grade and I really liked it. My father guided me a lot through it, you know, but anyway it turned out to be a successful kind of thing and after that, you know, I just, I became involved in school, very, very involved and of course I've always been involved in any community activity. But, I don't know why schools always seems to be my priority. I think education is such an important thing to every human being. Whether they work in a field or whether they work in an office or an executive, whoever they are, I think everybody should have an education. I really believe that, and so education has really been my primary, my major goal, my focus. I've always worked around a lot of variations but it's always education.

Me: You always go back to education.

Sofia: Always, I never, I mean that's priority with me. I'll continue fighting to make sure, you know, that every child can have an education as long as I'm able. I work on other issues but that's my major.

Me: From there you went to... did you go to college from high school?

Sofia: Yeah, I went to San Jose State and at that time it was easy to get in because if you had an A or B you automatically got in. I remember being, I remember going for days, days of not seeing another brown face on the campus.

Me: Was it familiar, or... I'm not saying this right. Was it, for example, Mexicans in higher education weren't there?

Sofia: They weren't there, they weren't there, I'm telling you I went days, I would travel around that university for days without seeing another brown face. I was the only one in most of my classes, I really was. I went, I almost completed my third year. I didn't finish, I didn't finish, I got married and I had a child. I always said I would always to finish my last

year but I didn't do it. But, no there were hardly any brown faces in the university. I don't know now how many there were, but I know there were very few.

Me: Did your parents encourage you to go to school and to get as much education as you can?

Sofia: Right, my mother's side of the family, they're, they had money. They were people with money and it was just expected that you go to college. It was just expected, I mean when I got into high school I knew that I had to have certain courses to take to get into college. I had all the counseling I ever needed, I already knew that and it was just expected. So, you know it was different but that wasn't the case with a lot of the students that were coming in. You know, with a lot of the Hispanic students, Chicano students that were coming in from the Almaden area. It was just different, and you know I went to school with all the Japanese kids and it was just expected for them to go too. But, you see in Campbell school, in your freshman year you had to take an orientation class. I mean that was mandatory, every freshman took an orientation class. In that orientation class it's all they did is they made sure that you were prepared to go to college. They made sure that you took all the courses that you had to take. That you took some years of language, some math and all of that. They made sure during that class, they also took you to the University to go visit. By the time you graduate you had already been to the colleges and the universities.

Me: That was for all the students, right?

Sofia: All the students, yeah, all the students.

Me: Then, not that many Mexicans went into the university.

Sofia: No, because there weren't going to the schools, there weren't that many Mexicans at the school to begin with. But I'm saying they don't do that in... I think they did it at that school because it was an all Anglo school and these were kids whose people were more affluent. But I'll bet you they didn't do that at San Jose High or Lincoln High where you had more Mexican kids. I don't think they ever had classes like that to prepare the students for college. Cause I know what happens to students that, you know aren't interested and then somewhere in their senior year something sparks and maybe they want to go to college and they haven't taken all the "course work" and you know if they had something like that then more students would be more interested if they had... You see I knew about financial aid, I knew about all that stuff from that one class.

Me: So you were more better prepared then most of them?

Sofia: Yeah, I sure was, I sure was. It wasn't anything foreign to me. Nothing, I mean it just wasn't foreign.

Me: Do you think that they do that now with all the schools?

Sofia: No.....

Me: Or prepare them in any way?

Sofia: No, I know they don't do it. I know they don't do it because I know they don't have the counselors in schools now that they need, you know to inform the students. They don't do it, I know that students, umm, well it's got to start even before you get to high school, you know. I think, you gotta start talking to the student when he's very young. That it's not impossible to go to the University because his parents don't have the money or because the parents haven't been educated, you know, that they can go. Since Prop. 13, they did away with a lot of the counselors and I don't think that the information is getting down to the students. They just don't know and I don't think the students are really encouraged to take the classes that they need. Someone has to direct them to do that and like I said, by the time they're in their senior year and they want to go to college, this is what I'm finding, I know it's too late. And they don't have the patience to go to City college, you know for two years....

Me: Yeah, to get their units.

Sofia: Yeah, and it's really a sad situation because more than fifty percent of Latino students are dropping out before they finish high school. It's a tragedy!

Me: I think that's the last figure I heard it to be.

Sofia: Yeah, it's probably about fifty-two percent. I sit on Bill Hoenig, the state superintendent of public education %, has appointed a Hispanic Advisory council, and I'm on that council and that's one of the things we're looking at is the dropout rate. We estimate that it's about fifty-two percent of Hispanic, Latino students who are dropping out. It's really sad, especially when they tell us that our children are our future. I think, God, my future looks bleak, you know.

Me: Why do you think it's that? Why do you think the dropout rate is so high?

Sofia: It's not, it's not just with Latino students, it's the same with Black students and I think it's a lot of Anglo students too now are beginning to be discouraged. I don't think the schools are challenging enough for students. I think, you know, when I went to school you got the basics, you know, and the basics seem to work. They seem to work, now they come up with so many new programs and they haven't worked. Each year, Oh this one's going to work. I know I have one daughter that went through six different reading programs and she had a heck of a time. Six different programs, oh that one didn't work and this one is gonna work and none of them worked. They just didn't work. I don't know, I think that before you can teach a child anything, you have to teach him to read. I think there should be a lot of focus just on reading and writing. Just focus on that alone and then to go on to other things. I think education is just too scattered. I think that children are taking a lot of classes that just don't interest them. They don't interest them and then I remember taking classes and I wondered now what good did they really do me. Most of the people that graduate or that get out of high school are going to join the work force and I think they need to be prepared for that. Not just for college, because most of them aren't going to college. There's so much that can be taught to a student. They're gonna get out and join Unions, you know, and they should learn about their responsibilities of being a union member or the responsibilities of being just a citizen, I mean, there 's just a lot a person can learn. They don't connect things, I don't know, just...., I don't know. My youngest son, he

had math in high school. He just hated it, hated it, hated it and I tried to tell him look you gotta learn it and this and that and he just hated it. I wanted to be a Surveyor but, I wasn't allowed to be one because it wasn't a woman's job. I remember hearing that even from my own father. Women didn't go into that, but I always wanted, I was fascinated with surveying. Just fascinated, whenever I saw a surveyor somewhere I used to go over there and I used to look through their equipment and I would just, I was just really fascinated with it. If I would live my life over again that's what I'd be, a surveyor. But, anyway I think I impressed my son so much with it that he decided he wanted to be a surveyor, you know. I told him look if you want to be a surveyor you have to take a lot of math. Well, when he graduated from high school, he just barely, barely made it with math you know. But he did enroll himself into a school to become a surveyor and I said I don't know how he's gonna handle it. But anyway, he was taking Algebra and Geometry and Calculus, trigonometry, all this stuff. And it was connected with the job and he just loved it. He understood it because it really connected with something and you know, that's was different than just seeing it on the blackboard, I mean, what does it mean? But, when you're actually doing work with it and you can see math at work.

Me: Those meaningless symbols had meaning.

Sofia: See? and some students can't make those kinds of connections, you know. I know I was able to make a lot of connections, that's the way my head kind of works. When I was taking math, I loved sewing. I mean I really loved to sew and cooking. Those are probably two of my favorite things to do and when I was in math class I was able to connect it with my cooking and my sewing and all of that so it meant something to me. I really focused on it. I think you can teach math and sewing together, you could teach math and cooking together. You can combine these things and you can see how math really works. I think, I don't know, I think that the whole educational system has to change. It has to be more meaningful to the student. You don't have to sit in a classroom all day long in order to learn. You can go out and do something and learn.

Me: Sounds like you are also very interested, with your kids. How many kids do you have?

Sofia: I have four children, two sons and two daughters.

Me: Sounds like you were very involved in what they did. I think I saw two of your daughters, they were being interviewed. I saw a tape and they say they remembered, yes mom would go to these meetings. She would take us with her, she would bring the coloring books and crayons and we'd sit there and color and hear mom. Even from an early age they were involved.

Sofia: Yeah, I sure did.

Me: What are their professions? Did they say thank you mom and this and this and this?

Sofia: Oh, constantly, constantly, I made sure my children had a trade and a profession. Because I believe that people should have both. My oldest son is a teacher but he's never taught. He works at the San Jose Water Works and he graduated from Santa Clara University, so you see he went to Santa Clara. He went to work in construction and a lot of the people say what a

waste, what a waste. This person, he is such an intelligent person, he should be doing something else. And he finds his job very fulfilling because my son is a leader with the people that he works with because he's able to...., he's involved with his union. During contract time he's able to involve the workers, interpret the contracts for them and get them to participate.

Me: So he is also very active in his union?

Sofia: He's active in his union, yes, very, very active with his union. The workers really follow him, he fills a lot of forms for them, shows them how to fill forms and how to just do different things. So he is teaching on the job, he's teaching a lot. My oldest daughter, the one you saw with the long black hair, the dark one...

Me: Yeah, her name is...

Sofia: Linda. Linda is a traffic control operator for the railroads. But, she's not working at that because she was the only woman on the job and she's a very attractive young woman. She was facing a lot of harassment, you know, the men were always trying to date her and all this so she decided she didn't want to do that. She was going to wait until there were more women involved in that kind of work. But, what she's doing, she works in the personnel office of a telephone company. She went to Santa Clara, too, and my other daughter is a hairdresser. She works for San Jose Unified School District right now in their transportation department. Then my youngest son is a Surveyor but he's driving a truck for United Parcel Service and he's active too. So you can see they can go from one to the other, should they get tired of one or not you know.

Me: So you're not pigeon-holing one..

Sofia: Yeah, I, my children grew up on picket lines and demonstrations and all that. I used to put them in the stroller and take them with me. Take them, take the whole bunch. My, I remember my children when they were really young, I mean they were just three years old.

They knew who was on the city council, they know who was on the board of supervisors, they know who was running for office. They know all that stuff and now my children are grown and we sit there, we have these really, I love these political discussions. They just know everything that's going on, you know. But, I got involved in a lot of, some pretty dangerous stuff too, you know. In the early years, I wanted my children to be involved so what I did is that, I know that our culture is something very, very important. I remember when I first went to Mexico I saw that our culture here was very improvised and so what I did, I decided to involve my children in preserving and promoting Mexican culture. What I did is I got them involved in Mexican folkloric dance and music. My..., when they turned fifteen I started sending them to Mexico every summer to study music, folkloric dance and music. My oldest son is involved in music, he plays a lot of the indigenous music of Mexico and he plays different instruments. He started a dance group here. He used to dance with the Lupenos when he started his own dance group Xochipille and so all my children danced. I had them dancing, they used to dance for the senior citizens. I made sure that they just really, really promoted the Mexican culture and I felt that they were making a contribution but it was a safer place for them. Because, you know during the Vietnam war it got really bad. I mean..

Me: This was what? During '67, Right?

Sofia: This is during the late sixties, early seventies. I attended a lot of rallies where I was tear gassed, I was arrested, and all of that stuff, you know. I didn't want my children there, involved in that. But yet, you know I wanted them involved, so...

Me: Was it. Was it, this might sound dumb but was it more dangerous then to demonstrate than it is now?

Sofia: After I attended a rally on Sunday in San Francisco, you know around what's going around with Reagan sending troops to Honduras.

Me: Yeah, Honduras.

Sofia: Right, because you see I went to Nicaragua in November and I am very, very committed to what's going on over there right now and I went to a demonstration. There were about ten thousand people and I saw the police, I mean they were just as bad as they were in the sixties. It was a dangerous situation, yeah. But in the sixties and the seventies there was the war in Vietnam and so they were a lot of demonstrations.

The reason I say it was dangerous at the time is because we had a chief of police here, that had been here in office for about forty years, I don't know how long. Blackmore was his name and the cops here were just really brutal, I mean really brutal. When I used to walk door to door, organizing people, I saw cops kicking doors down. I saw it with my own eyes, you know. I saw policemen stopping people for traffic infractions at gunpoint! I saw this with my own eyes and nobody can say that I didn't see it. I saw it because I was out in the streets a lot, you know. Anyway. during the demonstrations and everything, they were just really brutal and during, I remember during a five year period there were sixteen people that were killed by policemen. One was an Anglo and most of them were Chicanos and there were some Blacks. That really happened. I mean it really, really happened and after Chief Blackmore left and another one came in, it was Murphy I think was his name and then he left. Then, I think, I don't know if there was another one but by that time? He wasn't there very long.

Me: I think his name was White?

Sofia: There was another one I think.

Me: He didn't stay very long and then I think there is McNamara.

Sofia: Yeah, McNamara. But by the time McNamara came in, I mean it was just like a lot of stuff going on. The mayor who was Norman Mineta at the time, this was after John Henry Smith was killed. There was a black man named John Henry Smith who was killed by the cops. One on duty policeman and two off duty police that were killed and there were a lot of questions about what had happened there. There was a lot of community activity, we started having marches down to City Hall with about two thousand people that was a lot of people coming out. Anyway, we were asking for a civilian review board, we were asking for all kinds of things at the time and then that's when they finally brought in McNamara. The mayor, Norman Mineta had appointed a committee of police policies and procedures committee? I can't remember the name of it, but, anyway one of the things that we did do is that we reviewed the police policies and procedures manual. To see, you know what kinds of

rules they had about using firearms and we really focused a lot of attention on that. So yeah, McNamara changed some of that. He didn't do it, he did it because he was pressured by the community to do it. I like to give credit to the community. But anyway, it was called the Ad Hoc Police Department Administrative Policies and Procedures Committee, it was in 1972 and it was because sixteen people had been killed already and in most instances they said that the person was armed and it turned out that the person wasn't armed. He had a roll of coins in his hand or his hand was pointed like a gun. They said Danny Trevino had, had pointed his hand like a gun. My goodness, like he had a gun and they wonder why they didn't find a gun in this man's hand. So, that's why I say it was dangerous, it was dangerous, believe me.

Me: Have you yourself ever been threatened? Saying that if you continue that something will happen?

Sofia: Oh yes, yes. During the sixties when there was a poor peoples march in Washington, I organized a contingent from San Jose to go to represent San Jose at the march. I raised money to send them and to arrange for transportation and all that. I got letters from the American Nazi party, before then when I was involved, I mean I was always involved in the peace movement there was a mailing list that was stolen from the peace center. It was everything from G to...I forgot what other letter and almost all the people that were on it were getting letters from the Minutemen. I was threatened, letters that were saying look out, the next time you go to start your car it might blow up. Or be careful when you bring your milk in from your doorstep because it might have arsenic in it or be careful when you're walking down the street because the crosshairs might be aimed at you neck. You know the crosshairs from the sight from the gun.

Me: From the scope?

Sofia: Yeah, I mean I used to get a lot of these letter and stuff that I was getting from the American Nazi Party, I mean I used to get a lot of these letters and the stuff that I was getting for the American Nazi Party, you know I just used to get letters that used to say all welfare bums like you ought to be in concentration camps. I've never been on a cent of welfare myself, you know. I mean I've always worked all my life, my husband has always worked, my mother and father worked, you know, and I, when I got involved in these police matters that I'm telling you about, I was getting anonymous phone calls. Now that was very scary, I was told... my father, my, I'm sorry. My husband always worked graveyard. I'm sorry, swing shift. I used to get a phone call from a man that used to tell me I know what time your husband goes to work. He'd call next time and say O.K. I'm gonna get you. If I don't get you I'm gonna get your children and then finally the calls got worse and at one time he said what do you prefer? A knife or a gun? But, I didn't let that stop me. I knew that what they wanted to do was stop me from organizing but I wasn't going to stop. I kept it on. I was very afraid you know, but I had to do what I did.

Me: Where was your husband during all this time?

Sofia: My husband worked graveyard, but my husband was very active, my whole family active, my whole family. My husband has been very active with me in the farmworkers, in the peace movement, and in everything, my whole family. I believe, this is one thing my father told me too, some more of his words of wisdom, my father told me if you're to organize you start your organizing at

home. If you're going to do social work, you do your social work at home, first. If you can't get your whole family together you have no business getting anybody else together. He's been absolutely right about that, you know, my husband and my children...I've been married now, I'll be married thirty-four years in September.

Me: Oh good!

Sofia: Yeah, and of all the families that we started working with he and I are the only two whose marriage has really lasted. Everyone else we started working with has been divorced, you know.

Me: Was it because of the pressures of being active or...?

Sofia: Well, it goes back to what I'm talking about right now. Yeah, they were active, but not the whole family has been active. I have, there's been a few instances I think, where both husband and wife had been active but you know, not the whole family. It creates a lot of problems if you don't involve the whole family. Then the children start having their problems and they blame each other, well why weren't you there and you shouldn't of been here and you know. And I don't know, it works out really well if you involve the whole family. We've been so involved that we haven't had time to go home and fight. We haven't because it's just been so trivial, you know. At home we have, you know, discussions about around stuff that we've been involved in. But it's, I don't know, it's just something I think everyone should do, to be active. It's tough, it's really hard because when you think back, it's a sad life, it really is.

Because you sacrifice so much, you know. I've sacrificed so much, I've sacrificed a lot of time that really, I think should of gone to my family even though they haven't been lacking for anything, you know. But you know, you get angry at yourself sometime because people don't thank you, you know. It's a very thankless job to do something. I know, be an organizer, very, very thankless job. People don't thank you, you get blamed for a lot of things if it doesn't go right, if it went right you don't get thanked and sometimes you're under so much pressure that you think, why am I doing this? Why am I doing that? Nobody thanks me, but in retrospect, you know when you look back and you see all the accomplishments that one makes, it's really rewarding, it's really really rewarding. I, you know like for years and years and years and years I mean I have done so much, I mean I have stuck my neck out for people and no thank you's, no thank you's. You know, nothing! It's really funny because last year I was picked by KNTV as one of the people for portraits of success and I thought 'wow, that's really something. Then two months later I was picked by Volunteers of America and I was honored in San Francisco. Then I just got a letter last week from the "Seroptimus" Club, here I'm going to be honored by them and I thought wow after all these years, you know.

Me: After all these years you're going to get your...

Sofia: And it feels good but, you know what I feel good about is when I drive down, when I drive down McKee Road and I see the East Valley Health Center there, I feel good because we organized to get that there. And when I see Las Casitas, the housing on Jackson Avenue, I feel good because we got that there. You know, I can see results of the organizing efforts of people, that's really rewarding, that's very, very rewarding.

Me: When you look back was there anything that you wish you could of changed or say no, that's all right.

Sofia: There's only one thing that I wish I had limited myself to on one or two things instead of scattering and working on so considering what was happening during the sixties, you know. I had to be involved in issues involving Education because it was important, it was a time when a lot of Latinos were starting to go into the University and I did a lot of recruiting for San Jose State, for Santa Clara, for Stanford and you know, City College and I felt that was the time you know it seems it was the time when more and more Latinos were going into the University.

I had to do that OK?, the war in Vietnam was going on I had to do that, cops were killing Chicanos here, I had to put a stop to that. I don't know if I could have changed it, I was just involved I mean, I would leave my house at seven in the morning and I wouldn't come home til four o'clock in the morning you know, I was gone all day long. It was just so tough, I was a big whirlwind, I was just everywhere. That I wish I could...but I don't know, it's just the times that I think prevented it. Anything else in my life, no I wouldn't change it, anything in my life. I would do the same thing over again. I've had a very rewarding life, I've been touched by a lot of people, I've had a very rewarding life, I wouldn't change anything, nothing. I go around the University, a lot and they don't give us any parking permits and we're always getting tickets, you know.

Me: In the staff parking I think they upped the price to...

Sofia: Each thing that I have been involved in has a history, I mean really interesting stuff.

Me: Yeah, that's why this first tape is sort of like an introductory, because at five o'clock we have a class and we go and say hey like what I got! Then click, click, click, click. We're going to be covering this, this, this, so the first tape my boss said get an introductory and then go over. So what I'd like to do is to get a whole over "review". First get all the activities that you were involved in and then go back.

Sofia: Yeah, get some real specifics because I've been involved in so much stuff, I mean so much stuff. I also have a lot of documented stuff. I don't know if you're interested in.

Me: Yeah, that was one of the questions I was going to ask you, if you have any news clips, scrapbooks or letters...

Sofia: I have a lot, a lot of stuff. I have a garage full of stuff. I was wondering what was I going to do with all these things. I have a lot of things believe me. Like in the Danny Trevino thing, I kept all, I have this big thick scrap book where I kept everything. Some of the things that I've done might be interesting to you, I think I'll tell you now because maybe we can get into some of that. Umm, I organized parents in order to get rid of thirty-six teachers, a principal and a vice principal and Roosevelt Junior High School. It was a long...

Me: That was the Roosevelt Walkout?

Sofia: O.K. It was...no, no, we got rid of the teachers and everything but then we had the walkout too. So I was involved in organizing the walkout too. Then we organized the community to get a clinic in East San Jose that everybody said that was impossible to do, to forget it. We organized to get affordable housing built in East San Jose, we organized to stop police brutality and harassment in East San Jose. I did organizing around the peace movement, with the farmworkers... I don't know. More recently I've organized people to get benefits from the city, you know, people who have been displaced by the redevelopment. I've just done a lot, a lot of organizing, we were involved in a lot of organizing efforts. We've sued the City and we've won. But, umm I, like I said I've done a lot of organizing around the schools in order for Latinos to be included in the whole educational system. I've been in a lot of different things so we can get into some more specifics later on.

Me: Yeah, especially with, I'm still having some difficulty with the "Fiesta de las Rosas".

Sofia: Oh, la Fiesta de las Flores, I can connect you with some people. Oh yeah, see I have a lot, a lot of stuff, newspaper articles I have. But the Fiesta de las Flores, I have friends that I can call that I can get you that information. Umm, Jim McIntee was involved in it, do you know Jim McIntee. He was a priest of the time and he's the Director of Human Relations Commission for the Santa Clara County now, he might be able to have some stuff. There's Jackie Barra who might have some stuff, there's a lot of people. You know, I might have some slides at home.

Me: Really?

Sofia: Maybe, yeah. I have people who have some photographs I can get.

Me: What we'll do is put it like in an "archival", just put it all in and if someone wants to see it then they can pull them out and just see the slides and stuff like that.

Sofia: If I don't have it I can get it. The stuff is around. I'm glad, I'm happy to see it put together because you know, I think that period between, you know that period that you're covering...

Me: 65'

Sofia: Yeah, it was a very important period for Chicanos you know, there was so much activity.

Me: Would you say there was more activity then than there is now?

Sofia: Oh yes, Oh yeah. It seems like once the war in Vietnam ended and once they opened the University to Latinos, or it looked like they were opening the University to Latinos. It seemed like things just kind of slowed down and there wasn't the active type or organizing that was like in the sixties and then there was a period where nothing was happening. And now it's starting to happen again, like at San Jose State where what six percent of the population is Chicano or Latino and eighteen percent is Asian. I mean something is happening there and then again fifty percent of Latinos is dropping out of school before they even complete high school. I mean yeah, yes something's gonna happen and I think we're worse off then we were back then.

Me: In what way? But education-wise, we're not taking advantage of quote...?

Sofia: Every way you can think of, because our percent of population of our people is growing. We don't have, forgot Affirmative Action they just haven't really enforced an Affirmative Action anywhere. We don't have representation in the political arena that we should have, greater number of students, Chicano students are dropping out of school. I mean I think we're worse off, we really are. I was hoping by now we would have more Chicano legislators and representatives and more Chicano teachers, more Chicano Administrators and we just don't have them. We don't have them, it's like we've have to battle for every little thing that we've gotten, every little thing. You know on Thursday night at ten o'clock there's going to be a program on KNTV, Channel 11 on the Chief of Police and I was interviewed. I don't know if they're going to have me on there, but, you know. It's going to be called McNamara, Top Cop.

Me: Do you like that?

Sofia: No, I don't like it! I mean, sure the cops don't pull out their guns they used to and yes they're not killing Chicanos like they used to. But the only reason that stopped was because we forced them, the community forced them, we put a stop to that not because he did it. That's one of the things I've found that nobody gives us anything, we've had to fight for every little bit that we got and we're still fighting. But I'm happy to see that more people are starting to become more active, more aware of the problems that we're having. Because I found that nobody gives you anything, like my dad said nobody you your rights, you have to take them.

Me: Your dad's name is...

Sofia: Tiburcio.

Me: Tiburcio, I kept thinking it was Tiburone (Shark)

Sofia: Tiburcio, like Tiburcio Vazquez. Umm yeah, you don't sit around waiting for someone to give you your rights, you've going to wait forever because nobody wants to give you your rights. You're going to have to fight for them I mean just like now that they have to pass a law that English has to be the official language. A law! Now to me that's racist. I mean nobody has to pass a law and the whole thing. I mean when you're talking about Bilingual Education you're not talking about not

[New Tape, Labeled Interview II cont., Side I]

Sofia: But he doesn't forget it because he never forgets it you know. He is doing a lot but every once in a while we sit down and we talk about it. It's affected him, really has affected him. He is really aware watches his son real close and he makes sure that he is going to have a good education you know. Um, his mother wasn't able to do it with him, a lot of parents . . . one of the things that I guess that doesn't surprise me, you know it's just a cultural thing with us that I found in most of the parents when I would go and talk with them. I don't want to say that they took the teacher's side but I don't know if they had faith in the teachers ok that's what it was ok because it was the teachers job to teach their kids. They had these teachers on a pedestal.

Me: That was the way with most of them.

Sofia: Yeah, I think it is the respect that one has for when someone has a education and because the way Mexican people feel about their children. They respect anyone else that has something to do with children and here when you entrust your child's life to a teacher. Um, they did put these teachers on pedestals and I used to walk into their home and they said tell my kids to respect their teachers. I would tell them some of these teachers should not be respected you know.

Me: Because they're teachers does not automatically mean...

Sofia: Exactly,

Me: What they say is law.

Sofia: Exactly, I could not believe, I mean, you don't know what it took for me to talk to these parents and get them to listen to their children you know. A lot of these kids were scared to go home and say anything. They were just scared to death and would not talk and um I convince some of the parents that what was going on in the school and a lot of the parents you know had not gone to the school. I said come on and lets go you know lets go see what is going on. I'll go up there, I'll go with you, you know. They had their reasons for not going over to the school and, they were good reasons, ok. A lot of the parents didn't know how to talk to administrators or the teachers, they didn't. A lot of the parents were Spanish speaking and there was no one in the schools to translate for them. A lot of the families had been so used to dealing with social workers and probation officers, those types of institutions that they had been really scared because they were so, I guess they were harassed, you know, a lot, by agency types. They were just afraid to go.

Me: Parents.

Sofia: The parents, yeah, by ages and types, but they were just afraid to go.

Me: That reminds me. When we first came here, we lived on the streets a couple of days in a car and then my parents got a room.

[INTERRUPTION]

Sofia: So, you know people become very frightened you know. Of the people who work in those institutions. They become very very frightened, so I used to tell the people don't be afraid I'll go with you, or, you just be there and I'll speak for you, let me do the talking you know, so they would come along. They started going and boy, after awhile they really liked going and the kids felt so good that for once, finally, the parents were taking their side you know. I think back to how many kids must have gone through that even before we went there you know. Because that had been going on for many many years, being discriminated against in the school.

Me: After Roosevelt, did many other schools that had quote "reputations," did they start cleaning up their act or...

Sofia: Oh yes, yes because parents started organizing, sure. Because see if you go to a school say in Los Altos, or Saratoga, or Los Gatos or one of those areas, all you have to do is get an attorney. You pay an attorney and the attorney goes out there and takes care of business for you. You don't have to do it yourself; if you have money, and you talk and they listen, and that's it. They just you know oh yeah Mr. So and So is going to get an attorney and sue us so therefore we're going to treat his kid right, right and people who live in low income areas you know don't have that money. So I used to tell the parents well there is another kind of power that you have. You don't have power or money but you have power in numbers you know. If a whole lot of you get together and go scream and holler at the same time they are going to listen to you and that's what they have found is that they had power in numbers. They organized and we confronted the school district and confronted the school, we were confronting everybody you know and there were a lot of other people. One of the wonderful things happened during that time because there was so much organization and there was so much need is that we begin to identify and develop leadership. I don't know if you heard of Jack Brito who is very active now; he is the director of CASA LIBRE. He is very involved and Jack had children that went to Roosevelt Jr. High School. Nobody knew who Jack Brito was before then you know. As I was going to door to door - maybe you would want to speak with Jack Brito too, he would be a good one. Jose knows him very well. But as I began going door to door to door to door you couldn't believe how many doors I knocked on. I walked in his house, and I told him I wanted to talk to him about you know about his children and the school and everything. And I will never forget he sat there with his hands like this, and I talk to him for about two hours, and he was not saying anything you know. And I wondered, is this man listening? And once in awhile he would turn and look up at me, but he would keep looking down, and was listening. He wasn't saying anything, I mean he wasn't saying anything and I kept talking and talking over the problems that existed, and I couldn't read this mess. And you know after a long time he turned and looked at me and said, who sent you here? He said, God must have sent you. He said I can't believe finally, somebody. He was so fed up. I never saw so much frustration in anybody as I saw in Jack Brito, you know. He just kept talking about how grateful he was that I was there and this and that. So after awhile I got him to start talking, and he was so articulate. He's a very articulate, brilliant man you know, and I had been doing all the work by myself you know, I had organized the parents, and it was all on my shoulders and I was looking for a, somebody to share, to be a co-chair with me you know. I went home that night, and I was so excited, and I told my husband. I finally found somebody, I found somebody. I found my co-chair person. In those days you almost had to hand pick people to do, you know, if you wanted to get an organization going and as rapidly as we were moving, so I was so excited. And sure enough he got involved. To this day Jack Brito is still

involved. And he is pretty influential, a very influential person, but he had children going through that system and Jack could tell you what his children went through in that school. He is a very good person to talk to, he is at CASA LIBRE. If you look in your phone book under CASA LIBRE you will find Jack. And then we began identifying leadership and training them in leadership among the children, among the young people in the school.

Me: Are they still active now or was it for that time, then as they grew older . . . ?

Sofia: Well, out of that we started spinning off into other areas, see because as we were leading, I could not believe this everything was together and then it spun off into other areas.

Me: That was the nucleus, that's what started it.

Sofia: That's what started it. As we were leading some of the people were complaining. Oh I'm having problems with the cops blah blah blah and the cops do this and that. We were hearing about police problems like crazy, I mean a lot about the cops, very serious problems you know. Then somebody kept saying housing, housing is a problem and this and that. Then another bunch of people, oh we're having medical problems, this and that. Because when you get together you begin complaining because you want to do something about all these things. And so it wasn't just school problems I mean problems with transportation, problems with health services, people living on the East Side of town and health services being on the West Side of town. I mean major problems you know, and we thought whoa, this little organization that we have going here is only to take of schools, and we are not taking care of anything else. So out of that came United People Arriba. What we did was we decided to organize United People Arriba and that became a multi-issue organization. It broke up into committees and I'll go into that another time because that will take up a lot of time. That became the major organization and then the school issues came under that you know. We had to have an organization that would address all the problems. What we did is that we had this big umbrella organization, United People Arriba, then we had a group that worked with health problems, housing, schools, police, transportation all of that, under this.

Me: Under the umbrella organization.

Sofia: Yeah, I was the chairperson of the first organization too and then I became the chairperson of United People Arriba.

Me: From there you went on to . . .

Sofia: That organization took on a lot of major issues, and out of that spun off the Community Alert Patrol.

Me: Community Alert Patrol?

Sofia: Yeah, you don't know about the Community Alert Patrol?

Me: I'm not familiar with that one, no.

Sofia: Oh, because we were having police problems and I'm going to have to lead on to that one. That became a very important organization in San Jose because we were monitoring the police when they responded to certain areas in

the East Side. And we had a base station, and we had our cars equipped with two-way radios, cameras, tape recorders and we were following the police around.

Me: They weren't too happy with that.

Sofia: No, they weren't. We followed them around and we were documenting their brutality. Jack Brito would be a good one to talk to. Well, Jose Carrasco was involved. You know what? Jose Carrasco went on the first patrol. The very first patrol that went out, Jose Carrasco, my husband and myself, the three of us.

Me: The three musketeers.

Sofia: Yeah, yeah we went in his Volkswagen.

Me: In his Volkswagen.

Sofia: In his little Volkswagen. I still remember that.

Me: I can't imagine that person with a Volkswagen. We saw a picture of him because Professor Mauro brought this pamphlet on the Roosevelt walkout, and it showed a picture of Jose Carrasco standing there, and kids, organizing them with short, short hair. That was in the 60's.

Sofia: Right, right, yeah. He was so good with the kids. I got so mad when he left Roosevelt and went to San Jose State. I felt oh my God; you've got a good person and then they move on. You know, he was so wonderful in the class.

Sofia: They would read Shakespeare, "Well, there was this dude that blah blah blah." You know, using their own language, but they could discuss Shakespeare. I could not believe what he was doing. These kids were really into English, you know? And that's what's important, you know. He could really relate to those kids. But anyway these things kept spinning off one from another. But yet they all came under the United People Arriba.

Me: Jack's last name is spelled B-R-I-T-O?

Sofia: Yeah, he is under CASA LIBRE, he is in the book. Did you watch top cop on TV last night?

Me: No I didn't.

Sofia: Jack was on there, and I was on there, Jose Villa was also on there.

Me: Yeah?

Sofia: We talked a little bit about the Community Alert Patrol. But they interviewed Jack. There is a lot of stuff on the police, I mean a lot. That became a very big issue in San Jose because the police had killed 15 minority people that they said were armed and then turned out to be unarmed. They used to use firearms like crazy.

Me: They were a little freer with the guns then, especially against minorities?

Sofia: Yeah, when we were organizing, I was sitting - oh, oh when the school issues came out, ok, I should have gone back a little further. We organized a center out in East San Jose called the Community Improvement Center, that was about 1964-1965. It was a Community Improvement Center, and it was a self-help program we organized here. It might have even been earlier than that. A self-help program. We used to raise the money to pay the rent on a duplex on Lavonne Street right near King and San Antonio.

Me: Yeah, way down there.

Sofia: Yeah, we had a duplex there, so anyway what we did is that we brought . . . At that time they used to call it Little Egypt ok because there were a lot of black people living there.

Me: Little Egypt?

Sofia: Little Egypt.

Me: I never heard that.

Sofia: Yeah, Little Egypt, on Lavonne and San Antonio, right around San Antonio school, that is where a lot of black people were living. Further down, as you went down San Antonio, where San Antonio and Jackson Street are now?

Me: Yeah.

Sofia: Where the freeway is now? There is another area where Chicanos lived, and they call it Sal Si Puedes.

Me: Sal Si Puedes?

Sofia: Yeah.

Me: I don't believe that.

Sofia: This is going back to the 50's and when I got involved in the early 60s, I'm talking about 62-63. OK. They haven't called it Sal Si Puedes for a long time. But that's what they called it, Sal Si Puedes and you could read in the newspapers about Sal Si Puedes this and Sal Si Puedes that, Little Egypt - really that is what they called it. Racist or not? You tell me.

Me: For me, that's staggering. I guess that shows how sheltered I've been. Because I was born 60, and I remember hearing mumblings, but my parents, "No, no, you just have to study, study, study." I didn't really know any of this. I remember reading it, and seeing it somewhere. It was in the news and stuff, and oh, "over on the East Side, there was racial violence," it was called. I never knew.

Sofia: Yep, Sal Si Puedes and Little Egypt. So anyway our little house was set up in Little Egypt. Now they call it the Mayfair area, right? But anyway this Little Egypt, so we had the duplex there, and they were talking about these run down homes and this and that. So what we did we bought a lawn mower, we bought paint brushes, and we brought all kinds of tools like gardening tools, fix-up tools and it became a self-help program for the

people. You know if they didn't have a lawn mower, they could come and borrow the lawn mower to cut their lawns or if they needed brushes or they needed whatever to fix it, they could get it and begin fixing up their homes. We did a lot of that. Another thing we had there was a preschool program. We had 60 children. This is long before the anti-poverty program or Head Start ever came into effect, long before. We had a preschool program and what we did there, is that we were teaching the mothers how to teach the children. We taught the mothers how to teach children, and it worked out real real well.

Me: By "teaching the children," do you mean encouraging them to be more curious?

Sofia: No, teaching them. These are preschoolers. Teaching them their colors, teaching them numbers, teaching them to how to tie their shoes and teaching them about behaviors that they could understand you know, the development of children, all of that. It was a development center, that's what it really was. Another thing is that a lot of the children were Spanish speaking and we were teaching them English and it was really something because the English speaking children were learning Spanish. We had gotten feedback from the school and we always got real good feedback about how prepared these kids really were when they went in kindergarten, real good feedback. Anyway, when the anti-poverty program finally came here, we applied for some money and they told us no we could not get money because we had to have qualified directors, you know. We had to have people with credentials. After we had been doing this for so many years, and we decided we were not going to change what we were doing because we were being effective you know. And they never gave us any money. And then we tried year after year to get money from them and finally they said we were going to duplicate something that they were thinking about doing which was Head Start. So it got to the point where we said forget about them, you know. So this it how, you know, I came in contact with a lot of people and working around the community improvement center, that's when I began to hear about more complaints about what was going on in the schools from some of the parents, and especially from some of the kids. That program lasted for 10 years, we kept it kept going for ten years, the Community Improvement Center. We kept that going for 10 years.

Me: And what happened to it?

Sofia: Then we started working on the school issues. See one became another. After that we started focusing...

Me: Is the Improvement Center still there?

Sofia: No, it was just a duplex. And then someone else, Bob Straughter, this black guy, took it over and he kind of let it go, because by then I moved on and I was organizing parents around the Roosevelt school issue. The Community Improvement Center became a little to limited for what I had to do, and I moved on to organize the parents at Roosevelt. Because that program had to continue, and I don't know he just kind of let it go. He could not keep it for very long because you had to raise money to pay that monthly rent. You had to raise money to buy supplies, and it was hard work; but we used to meet that rent every single month. For 10 years we did that. And then from there like I said you know we went on to organize Roosevelt Jr. High School. But it was like one thing led to another. As need arose you know we had to make the changes.

San Jose has had a real good history. And another wonderful thing about all of this is that the students from San Jose State, when we got involved in Roosevelt - lets see, no, they weren't quite organized at the time. They were just starting to get themselves organized. But later on when we took an issue of the clinic, getting a clinic in San Jose, then the students really were well organized at San'Jose State University, then they got involved, the Latinos, Chicano students. I'd give anything to go back to those days. We had this town turned on its head, I mean something was jumping all the time. All the time, there was just something always going on. And yes there was a lot of leadership that came out of all of this you know.

We were encouraging young people at the time to become teachers because we needed more Latino teachers, and we encouraged a second bunch to be attorneys and they've become attorneys. You had Tony Esteneda and Jaime Galago and some of those young men, you know, Morales, were all involved and they are attorneys now. Its wonderful to see all that, and look back and see that they were able to fill a need that we had. But anyway, I think that the movement here in San Jose gave leadership to Chicano Movements in other parts of the Southwest; I really believe that; I helped organized the L.A. walkouts by telephone. I was getting calls on how to do this and how did you resolve that problem and what did you do here, you know, give me some ideas and I felt good that I was able to do that but you know during that time that's what it took in order for us to get some attention to the problem. I feel very bad that you know here we were struggling to get a better education for our children back in the sixties , and when I see now the we're worse off now than we were then I wonder what in the world is going on because over 50% of Latino students are dropping out from school before they graduate.

Me: But you said in the past things were jumping, that there was something new every day. What about now, how do you see the situation? Is discrimination the same or is it hidden?

Sofia: Oh yeah, it's hidden, it's there.

Me: And it will never go away?

Sofia: I don't think so, until we are in full control. Until we control the economy, and we control the resources, and we control the politics and everything. Then I think it's going to change for us, but right now I think it is a power struggle to see who is going to take control of it. I really see that. I remember when we were having all these problems at Roosevelt Jr. High School, they kept saying oh well there are not enough teachers among you. Your people are not interested in education and we don't have a teacher, so that's why we don't hire them, and I got so sick of hearing it, so sick of hearing it. So what happened in the sixties you know, that's where all the Chicanos went, into education. So then we had all these Chicano teachers that came out, graduated you know, and I said oh good. So what happens then we have Proposition 13 and then they start cutting positions. So who gets fired first? Who gets laid off? All the Chicano teachers. I know - I have a lot of Chicano friends now, a lot of them. And my son is one of those, that they are teachers they are working in at other professions, you know. They are not working, they are not teaching. I feel very bad about that because we need more Chicano teachers working with the students because I think they understand them better than anybody else. Another thing that I think has hurt us a lot in education is that Chicano students don't just need . . . I don't see a division, to me everything is interrelated, right? I

really see things that way. And if a child is gonna really go to school and receive an education, he needs a lot of other things besides just books and a blackboard. I think a child needs a lot of social services and those are not being provided. They are not being provided. And it is not just Chicano kids, I think it is all children. I think what children are going through now, and like I said, again, not just Chicanos, white kids are facing a lot of problems, too, a lot of problems. Look at the world we are creating for them, we are full of problems you know. I don't think these children are receiving the kind of help that they need. Emotional support, and other services to help them through school. Children don't have the opportunity to grow up as children any more the way I know that I did. I really had time to be a child. When I was growing up I was only interested in things that evolved around me, that had to do with me. I was the tail end of that. I was able to take time to grow up and enjoy being a child, but I see the pressure that's being put on my children because of the change that occurred. My kids grew up concerned about the war in Vietnam, and they're concerned about what's going on in other parts of the world. They are concerned about toxics, they are concerned about violence, you know domestic violence. They are concerned about a lot of things that they see here, because they hear it all the time. And I have grandchildren now, and I can't believe, when my grandkids are going through the same kind of thing, and I look at them, and I say you know they've really been deprived of being completely ignorant of what's going around other than just growing up. And that has to affect them in school. It's causing more behavior problems in children. It causes a lot of distraction. It causes a lot of kids to become more preoccupied with other things rather than just school. They are growing up a lot faster. It's not fair, it's really not fair. And I think that schools are going to have to take a look at cutting the class size in order to deal with these kinds of problems, if the children are not going to be receiving the kinds of services that they need. I remember when I was young, I went to school with small class sizes and if you had anything that bothered you, your teacher was your friend, and they had time to talk to you. But when you have a teacher that has 28, 32 kids in a classroom they don't have time talk to any kid about their problems. They don't have time to help with anything. They just get 'em, get 'em out, that kind of thing, you know.

Me: Conveyor belt.

Sofia: Yeah.

Me: That was the school you went to, you had small classes and all that.

Sofia: Yeah.

Me: But what about like the minority students that were here like at Roosevelt?

Sofia: I really don't know, I really don't. During the time I went to school I don't know about the class size. But I think the whole teaching profession was a lot different. I'm talking about what it was like you know like in the forties and the early fifties. But it was easier for a child to grow up.

Me: A whole lot less pressure.

Sofia: Yeah, especially here in San José. You got out of school and you went home and you took your clothes off, took your shoes off, and running

through orchards, it was beautiful. I mean you could go out and just play. You didn't have to worry about "stay in the house and make sure you lock the door cause So and So might come get you, and don't take rides from nobody" you know and you start scaring kids when they are real little. We used to sleep with our doors open during that time you know. If it was warm at night, you would open all your windows.

Me: Open all your doors.

Sofia: Yeah, and there were times when I would go home and my mother - we lived way out in the country. My mother had to come into town or something. We went home and the door was always open, it was unlocked. We went and changed our clothes and we stuck around, and she would come right away you know, or the neighbor would keep an eye on us or something. You can't do that anymore. I mean you can't. I see so many parents walking their children to school because I lived near Empire Gardens you know. I see all these parents walking their little children to school, and you can't let them go by themselves.

Me: No, especially, what is it, a while ago, the guy they called the kitty cat?

Sofia: Yeah, so can you imagine what that does to children, and yet they have to worry about all that, they have to worry about everything else instead of just worrying about themselves and school. I don't know. Yeah, not for the better, and I feel really bad that the burden is on all children. I attended a meeting at San Jose State University yesterday. I am on Ed. Equity advisory board to the President at San Jose State University. We were talking about how the university is complaining because they are not getting enough minorities in the universities, ok. Only 6% of the student population is Chicano at San Jose State.

Me: I know. Prices are one of the reasons.

Sofia: And then you go to the high school and you hear them complaining because the kids are dropping out and they come ill prepared from the junior high school. So then you go to the junior high school and then they say it is happening in the grammar schools you know. Their kids aren't getting the basics you know down there, the beginnings of reading and all this and that. I hear this over and over, no matter what part of the state you go to. Because Bill Honing appointed me to a Hispanic Advisory Council. There's 25 people from throughout the state that sit on this council that advise him on problems and all, and I don't care what part of the state you go to you hear the same thing over and over again. Everywhere that I have gone. And I know that if I have a problem with you, I'm going to tell you to come on, let's sit down and talk about it and let's figure what the problem is, and we will see how we can resolve it right.

Me: Right.

Sofia: You do that. If it is three parties involved, you get three parties involved and you do the same thing. I have asked them everywhere. Now they are all pointing their finger at each other. They are all talking, but they don't talk to each other. I asked them yesterday here at San Jose State, I said look, have you ever convened a meeting with the superintendents or principals from the high schools and junior highs and grammar schools and universities and sat down and talked together to see what the problem is and

see what programs that we can develop? No, we have never done it. I can't believe it. I can not believe it, and I said my god why hasn't it happened, and I think now they might do it because they thought it was such a wonderful idea that I gave them. The school, the universities have a lot of resources. Every student is a resource and the schools are perfect training grounds for these students. What a better way for a student to learn than to teach a child while they're learning, you know? You have the education department that could be doing teaching out there, using these children and helping them. You have the school of nursing, the school of engineering, you just name them, there is a role that all of them could play. Something has to happen, something has to happen I don't know what but whatever is going on right now it is not right. It's just these children are failing, and I feel so bad because once you lose them they are gone. And then when I go downtown, and I see the big jails that they are building, I know who is going to wind up in there. I know who winds up in the mental hospitals. I know who gets full of thorozone and all these medications that they give them, and it all has to do with them learning when they are young.

Me: So the object would be to get them before.

Sofia: You've got to start with them when they are real young.

Me: Isn't there a program for the minority mothers? Like you said you had here at the Community Improvement Center, you were helping mothers help their children.

Sofia: And it worked out very well. Very very well.

Me: Do you have a program, or is that what you are trying to do, start a program?

Sofia: I don't know, the whole educational system has to change you know. There have been countries that have been more underdeveloped, I mean underdeveloped countries, you know. I mean take the Soviet Union for instance. We're very good at criticizing other countries, but we never look to see what they have that's good, that we can use. The Soviet Union was a very poor country that went through war, and their country was devastated by the war. They lost millions of people, twenty million people they lost, and they were a very backward country. How is it that they were able to teach their people to become bilingual, to read, to be highly educated, ok? Then you take look at Cuba as another country that was a playground of the rich in the United States, and those people were illiterate you know. And why is it now that the majority of the people in that country read now? All the young people read, a lot of them are bilingual. Why is it that they could do it? OK, you can go to Mexico; Mexico is a very poor country and not everybody can go to school in Mexico, but the children that go to school learn how to read. They are better educated when they graduate than a kid that graduates from high school here. I mean, I'm very impressed with the children that able to school. Why is it that we cannot, that a kid goes through high school here and he gets out and he's not even prepared. Why? Why? Somebody's got to know why. I think it is because we do have a quota system. Our country needs so many doctors, our country can only use so many teachers, our country can use so many of everything because if you get too many what are you going to do with them? So you can only produce so many. I think that's what it really boils down to. We really operate on a quota system. This country could not operate on full employment and that's wrong.

Me: There's something strange in there.

Sofia: Yeah, so we do have quotas that we have to fill.

Me: Are the people now more alert to problems than, say, in the 60's?

Sofia: Yeah, that's exactly why we had to have walkouts in the 60's, to get attention. That's why many of us had to get arrested, to gain attention.

Me: During the walkouts at Roosevelt, did it all get very _____?

Sofia: Oh yeah, there was a lot of that; it was bad. I have been involved in some real life threatening kind of stuff, to get attention. Well, you know all during the time I was involved then too I was involved in the peace movement, the war in Vietnam. And I mean there were some of those real bloody demonstrations just to get attention to what was going on in the War of Vietnam. Well, just look at what happen in Honduras last week. I mean look at the people turned out just from one day to the next. On a Sunday there were 10,000 to 12,000 people out you know just to say stop the bloodshed. Oh, yeah, people are more aware now, they are more fed up now than ever before. But during the sixties there was a Civil Rights Movement and a lot of that stuff was just really coming out into the open. Blacks were demonstrating mostly in the South, and the Chicanos were demonstrating in the Southwest. Except our movement was very different.

Me: How was it different?

Sofia: We were not fighting to integrate into anything. We did not want what the White man had. We were not fighting for the jobs of the White man, or to go to the same schools as the White man or to live in the same neighborhood as the White man. We were fighting to keep our own neighborhoods. We were fighting to keep our culture and our language because we are very different. And I think that's one of the reasons that we face the problems that we face is because they haven't wanted to accept our differences and give us what is rightfully ours, and yes it is separate you might call it something else.

Me: They'd say, you like the way it is?

Sofia: That's right, because heir whole idea of the melting pot did not work see. So our movement has been very different and it is more difficult for us. I think we're probably the one minority in this country that is going to have the hardest time getting what is rightfully ours because we can't melt, we can't. We want to keep our own neighborhoods, we want to keep and maintain our culture and our language and those things that are ours. We say we don't care if a school is 100 percent Mexican, let it be, but our children should be in our own neighborhoods you know. Instead they integrated and are sending them off to the other side of town you know. If it is good, they ought start building affordable housing over there and moving the Mexican families over there but they don't want that. Stay in your own neighborhood but come to our school. It's not gonna work, it's gonna be more of a burden. But we are a problem. They consider us to be a problem because of what we are and what we want. It is very very different than what the black movement was all about. Very different. I don't know, I don't think they are ever going to deal with that until we begin putting more people in positions with power.

Me: During the sixties, with all the people getting together, were more Mexican or Chicanos put into power then than now?

Sofia: No.

Me: Or is it just now starting to snowball?

Sofia: We really don't have that many people in powerful positions. Not enough to make a difference. We don't have one single Chicano on the school board in San Jose Unified School District. We have never have a Chicano in there.

[Reverse Side Tape 2, Labeled Interviews II & III, Side II]

We don't have any Chicanos on the San Jose Unified school board and there's mostly Mexican kids there; we don't have a Chicano on the board of supervisors. There is only one Chicano now on the San Jose City Council and that's because we struggled to break the city up into ten districts because at one time there were only five districts. No there were no districts I'm sorry. There were five council people that were elected at large; and the people that voted in Willow Glen and the other parts of town, the more affluent parts of town, were the ones who put them in power. But we never had anybody there. Al Garza was appointed, but not because he was voted in. Blanca Alvarado is the first Chicano we have had on there. But that is just one person, what is one person going to do? But no, we do not have enough people in positions of power. The San Jose Police Department, they have one Chicano. It true that now they have more Chicanos on the police force, but that's because there was a lawsuit filed by Chicano Employment committee and now about 25% now are Chicano. But they are not moving them up. They don't become sergeants, they don't become lieutenants, and they certainly don't become captains. They are still little rookies down in the bottom. No, power is never given, it is taken; that is something I've learned. No, rights are never given, they are taken; and they are not going to give us our rights. We have to go in there and we have to take our rights you know. I think that's going to have to happen everywhere, and that's why it is so important now for people to register to vote, and begin putting our own people in. We have to build that power base. We really do, and that is the only way we are going to be able to make a difference and start having an impact in developing policies and making changes that are really going to affect our people.

Me: For that, the United People Arriba, that's still around?

Sofia: No, it is not around.

Me: It's not.

Sofia: No. You know what happens with organizations like this is they evolve from one thing to another and then, I don't know why we do this, we win the war and then we kind of move on to something else you know. I have never seen a grass-roots organization like United People Arriba, never. That's been one of a kind.

Me: When did it sort of disintegrate?

Sofia: Like I said. We organized it around 1967, I think, 1968. Then it evolved into Community Alert Patrol, and I would say that lasted probably to about 1973.

Me: You said you had that umbrella and then it went into other parts.

Sofia: I will explain it another time because it gets really involved, but United People Arriba had these many organizations like housing. That one organization did get some housing, another one got the clinic. Another committee got different things. I want to talk about the clinic. That was one of the things that became very important. All throughout the time we were working on this, what kept coming up over and over again, and it was a crisis, were the police problems. I mean it was bad; I mean the cops were killing everybody. They had no kind of policy about how they would use their arms; they used to pull guns. I used to see them stopping people for a traffic infraction and pull their guns out. I saw it many times. I saw cops kicking doors down. I saw a lot of stuff. And so it became very crucial you know, that we do something about the police problems. So what United People Arriba had to do was deal with the police problems. We had called that part of the organization the Community Alert Patrol.

Me: You ride out with the police. I mean when they would go out you would follow them.

Sofia: Yeah.

Me: You took turns doing that.

Sofia: Every weekend.

Me: Did you notice a certain drop in the force who would they care less?

Sofia: They would care less.

Me: Some of the things that I have noticed about Danny Trevino. He was more drunk than they say he was. And at the level he would not been able to do anything.

Sofia: He couldn't move. The real story is that he and his girlfriend were having an argument you know by the time the police arrived there the argument was all over you know, he just stuck around. But they had no right on killing him. You what there excused was that he had put his hand out like this in form of a gun and they thought he hand was a gun. And that is why they killed him.

Me: March 30th interview

Sofia: Look I have the coroner's report.

Me: I was reading some of it

Sofia: It shows where the bullets went in. There was two bullets a cop shot him in the back and the other cop shot him in the front. Two cops shot him. And other thing about this that for many many hours ok nobody knew only the police department knew that he was killed. They kept them several hours. Look at this Danny El Trevino also known as Danny Trevino.

Me: Lets put this into perspective.

Sofia: First was the Community Improvement Center ok. Which started in 1963. And then from there came the Roosevelt Junior High School because a lot of the we were working with had problems in the schools. And then when we got into the Roosevelt thing of course the walkouts. Then because we were hearing so many other problems and we decided to form a grass-root multi-issued organization.

Me: Which is the United People Arriba.

Sofia: Right.

Me: And then from there you started the Community Alert Patrol.

Sofia: The Community Alert Patrol. See one thing evolved another this is what I'm trying to tell you. This is the way it happens according to the needs. Community Improvement Center evolved into or spun off was the Community Progress League. Out of that came United People Arriba out of that came the Community Alert Patrol. The way that this happened at the Community Improvement Center. It was a self-help program we were teaching mothers how to teach children for our pre-school program and because we were working with a lot of parents and young people they were telling us problems that they were having in schools. So then we said we got to get into the schools even though the Community Improvement Center was still going; we went out and organized the Community Progress League and the Community Improvement Center was still going at the same time. And when we had the Community Improvement Center um we were based right in the neighborhood on Lynette Way in the East Side of San Jose, Little Egypt. Anyway we would talk to people and they were telling things like oh children had not been immunized, men that worked in you know a lot of work run a lot of dirt and stuff and never received tetanus shoots. They were having a lot of problems receiving health services you know and we were doing a lot of research and would say wait a minute what is going on here.

And we started taking a look at health services in East San Jose. There were only nineteen doctors located on the East Side of 101 and I have been I told you that I lived in Campbell most my life and my doctor was in Cupertino but when I moved to East San Jose I continued to go to my doctor, so I really didn't realize what the problem was but when I began to hear from parents that they were having problems in finding a doctor. I started going to doctors in called every doctor in East San Jose told me that their quota was filled.

Me: What do you mean by the quota of seeing so many people?

Sofia: You could only take in a so many patients. Then we realized that all the health services were on the other side of town and most of the people that were on welfare lived on the East Side who had to go to Valley Medical Center. No transportation, no buses going out there you know. So people were saying you know were having problems finding health services over here. Someone was saying I had problems with the cops and they busted into my house, lots of police problems. So then we got the school thing going. We had the Community Progress League that dealt with the discrimination at Roosevelt Junior High School. Though out the time we were working we still had the Community Improvement Center and we had that still going. People

were still saying the Community Improvement Center and this I had police problems, and I have problems with transportation, housing you name it we had it. We had all kinds of problems. We had this organization that is a preschool program that is all it can do. Then there is another organization basically working with the schools problems. We need to have a multi-issue organization so that is when we organized United People Arriba.

Me: Because you were getting so many complaints from everything. These two weren't able to.

Sofia: Those were single issues organizations. Um then United People Arriba was a multi-issued grass-roots organization and then that is where we said ok we are going to organize self and take on multi-issues you know. We will organize ourselves in such a way so that if somebody working on health problems somebody could work on police problems, and someone can work on transportation problems you know whatever comes up. We organized United People Arriba so one of the things that were happening all alone, and the Community Improvement Center was still going on.

Me: Were you in all three of these committees at the same time?

Sofia: Yes. I was with the Community Improvement Center yeah that was going basically I was the director of it for awhile. Basically the parents were running the center by this time. We taught parents to teach children you know a lot of community parents involved. Then I became president of this Community Progress League ok. I ran into Jack Brito and made him my vice-chairperson but that and so out of that then came United People Arriba by this time things were really red hot with Roosevelt. These two basically became one organization. This evolved into this and the school issue continued out of United People Arriba. And then what happened out of here United People Arriba then turned into Community Alert Patrol because it was a big job.

Me: Out of all the complaints the biggest ones you had was with the police and still on going.

Sofia: It started with the Community Improvement Center and continued with that and each time it got bigger and bigger.

Me: The more you unearth the bigger the problem.

Sofia: The police kept getting worse acting like animals.

Me: I saw your interview and the police would take off their badge number you couldn't identify him they would cover mud on their license plate.

Sofia: Because they said that they took off their badges off because it could be used as weapons against them. We went to the City Council we take them off because they could be used as weapons. And then really they were little sissies. They had dogs, guns and clubs or whatever else. They would smear mud on their license plates so we couldn't identify them.

Me: It reminds me of a mother was once stopped by a sheriff and the next she knew four other sheriffs starting pulling in a got out with their shotguns. My mother is 4'11" and she was mad, she was yelling you want to shoot me. Honey, how do you want me to stand. Go ahead and shoot me, shoot me. What is the problem she said. The guy daughter aren't you man enough to take on

by yourself or do you need six other men to help you. She went and complained to McNamara and complained to how don't know who. We got letters saying we are sorry that this happened and these people will be suspended and my mother said they won' do anything and this was in '70.

Sofia: So anyway that is how our organization evolved.

Me: From United People Arriba one of the mini Community Alert Patrol.

Sofia: That wasn't a mini it was a big one.

Me: So it was like the United People Arriba were kind of split into two.

Sofia: It was not spilt it turned in two after a long time though. And that like it became our issue and then it continued our major issue but that was after we done a lot of other stuff.

Me: Under Community Alert Patrol the thing of the Danny Trevino happened..

Sofia: It happened during that time. And so it happened there was a whole other people involved. It was a committee and we called it COPS Committee um I forgot what COPS stood out for. The Committee on Public Safety so one thing evolves the Committee on Public Safety just dealt with the Danny Trevino thing.

Me: The Danny Trevino thing. Tell me how did it happen.

Sofia: When we were working for the Community Improvement Center. See before you organize something you have to prove that there is a need for that organization or otherwise people are not going to join. All these organizations that I am telling you about there was hundreds of people involved I mean hundreds ok. Um health problems were something else you know it kind of pop out way back in the Community Improvement Center days, and we were surprised that a lot of the little children that we were serving were not immunized and hadn't been treatment for you know simple things like infections, flus and stuff like that for one who normally goes to the doctor for so right at the beginning the United People Arriba days one of the things we did is we said we are going to do a survey in the area you know. In the Community Improvement Center you had people Arriba that were going on at the same time. At the Community Improvement building we decided well we are going out to survey this area so we went out and did our own survey. We involved the health department at that time so what is happening at that time is that the city was providing part of the health services that the county was providing part of them.

One of them was preventive health medicine and the other one was more intensive care medicine. I think the county had the preventative or was it the other way around, I can't remember which was what. But they were always battling each other. They were always fighting each other you know you know. We don't service the people because the city does and then no because the county does and the one who got caught in the middle was the people so anyway I can't remember exactly which one did what, so we decided ok we are going to survey the people we'll find out you know. So we went out and found out we were shocked to find out that a lot of the children were not immunized I mean we were really shocked you know. So we asked the health department if they would come out and immunize people and they said sure you get them for us and we will go out and immunize them, so we decided to have a day where we would

immunize people at the Community Improvement Center. They accepted about maybe 100 - 150 people and there was over 600 people who showed up to receive their immunization so see it wasn't that the people didn't care it was just that the services were not there. So they had a why didn't you tell us that you were going to have so many so they had to use the guns you know the guns that they use, and they couldn't believe how many turned out for immunization. I mean it was so successful and time of the community was a lot better having all these health workers come out. It was just very successful so we began hearing a lot of problems that people had you know around the health services not being available to them in their area. And so during that time let me tell you that the transportation was just really really awful. I mean there was no transportation and if you lived in East San Jose the only buses that were available were the ones who ran up and down Santa Clara Street and that was it one an hour and that was it. There was nothing out on Story Road, nothing out on Tully Road there was nothing out there. And there was a lady who was always complaining, so I said ok next time you go to Valley Medical I will go with you know. So I wondered how she looked out on Havann I think it was yeah right near Ocala on King Road. So she was going to take her kids it was just a simple thing ok I can't remember exactly what the kid had it was a minor flu or cold something like that, so I went to her house left my car there. She and her children and I walked down on King Road all the way to Santa Clara Street it was raining and there was no sidewalks down the street. We were soaked by the time we got to King Road.

I mean we walked down King Road to Santa Clara Street. We had been splashed by mud from the cars I mean we were just soaked. We sat and waited and waited for the bus to come for an hour. We jumped on the bus we went all the way to First Street; we had to get off that bus and transfer, and we waited and waited finally we went out to Valley Medical Center then we went into the waiting room where we sat and waited and waited no cafeteria to feed the kids. I mean there was nothing they these couple of these machines you think they would have a cafeteria where they would serve food or had something they had nothing. There was only two machines s coke machine there was nothing. You would sit there for hours to be seen at Valley Medical. You would think they would have some place where they could eat something. They had a whole bunch of machines know, but they did not have anything else. So we had to sit there and wait and anyway then they called her name, and she went up and they asked her if she had a referral from the welfare department and she said no. In four weeks your kids need it. We had to jump on the bus. We had to go out to the welfare department. We had to transfer buses. We got a referral and we had to sit out there and wait again and no place to feed these kids either. Jump back on the bus transfer again got to Valley Medical again and sit there and wait and wait again. We finally saw her, and we got home and it was night time. It was night I mean it was an all day trip. I could not believe it and that was only one person. You know one of these things that we believed in is that the services have to be where the people are. And since most of the people that went to Valley Medical lived in the East San Jose. We felt that this is where the services should be in the East Side where the people are located. Right.

Me: Right.

Sofia: They do not have transportation they do not have anything. So we kept telling the people that the services should be where you. What do you want to do about it? you know. Take it and complain. You are going to shut up about it. Should we try to get a clinic in East San Jose. They loved

that idea. So we said ok we will get a clinic in East San Jose. You are going to organize and then we are going to ask for the clinic. So United People Arriba started organizing for the clinic in East San Jose. And anyway we started going to the board of supervisors and asking for a clinic. Sam Del Majore who is dead now thank goodness. He died a few months ago.

Me: Are you holding back Sofia?

Sofia: I'm sorry I'm not holding back. He was a dog. A big rancher here in San Jose that had money. What he was doing to people was awful you know. A lot of people in the East Side were dying because not having the services or not making it to Valley Medical. You know in time ambulances were not getting to people this man was just awful. Anyway, we went before and he is the one who said no, no, no, no.

Me: Was he the supervisor?

Sofia: Yeah, he was supervisor for 16 years ok. the East Side was terrible you would not believe what was going on there. There was holes in the streets at that time you had all the East Side there was a pocket that was City another pocket was County there was trash all over. The City said that that belonged to the County. County said it belonged to the City and they were always blaming each other and the people in that area were caught in the middle of this. They wouldn't pick up the trash. They would not go out and clean. They would not do anything, holes in the street, no street lights it was just awful. And that's why I say he was a dog.

Me: What was it when you asked for the clinic? What was his reasons.

Sofia: See what happen was is that when he decided first of all it that San Jose started to expand and a lot of it use to be county and a lot of the small areas started to incorporate into the city and the people started to received better services and they had left the East Side I don't know why ever there was one pocket city one pocket county so they neglected the whole side completely neglect. And we kept saying why don't you incorporated the holding we said you know and then so that everybody could receive services and finally it did happen after a big big struggle. Well, at that time um there was five people on the city council that were elected at large ok and these people were mostly put into office were people who lived in the affluent areas such as Willow Glen and all those areas you know and so people in the East Side were completely pares when it came to try to get anything from them that is not how the bucks were coming from so they weren't putting them into to power so they were not listening to the East Side. Basically it was the same thing with the supervisor you know they just always arises to being to continue to ignore that area you know some down the drain and wouldn't listen to anybody.

But anyway I couldn't believe one day I went to the board of supervisors I went to the meeting and there was a group of people from the Los Gatos area they were sitting there fighting because they didn't want another clinic in their area they already had one clinic and they didn't want a second clinic they said they already had one. Well, I don't believe this and here we are fighting to get something in East San Jose. Well, maybe those in private clinics but in East San Jose we had to have was that something that would serve, and they kept saying oh we can't decentralize Valley Medical why that has never happened before we can't do it and we know we can't do it. Anyway, and the more they kept saying no the more momentum it got because we had

proven through this thing called the immunization that people would use the service and they kept saying that they were not going to use it they don't need it. So we decided we were get a grant to have a Valley Medical in East San Jose. I mean we were just determined cause all the documentation had showed that there was a need for it. First of all, there was no transportation and the services that existed. There were not enough doctors located in East San Jose, there were only 19 doctors. The people who needed the services were in the East Side. I mean it was all there so we decided to take it on. It became a three year battle very intense and our biggest opponent was Sam del Majore the supervisor of that area.

Me: He said no, flat out. He did not give you any reason.

Sofia: He said no they do not need it. They won't use it. But all during the time we were organizing it. I mean we would fill the supervisor's chambers with 100's and 100's of people. We had marches from the East Side down to the board of supervisors. Lots of marches, we picketed because he had a business it is a lumber company I forgot the name of it in Willow Glen. He had an hardware store anyway right next to Lima Ericson the funeral home there is a hardware store there he was one of the partners there, and we picket that business for months during Christmas time I remember we picketed.

Me: He was pissed.

Sofia: Yeah. and you know what?

Me: What?

Sofia: The next time he ran for office he lost that's how Don Cortiz got in there. Yep, he lost. But anyway when we went down to the board of supervisors meetings I will never forget one time I was speaking and he told me he tried to shut me up, and I kept speaking, and he tell me to shut up, and he pulled the microphone on me. He unplugged to microphone so that I couldn't speak, and I kept talking louder and louder and boy I could not believe all the commotion that was going in there and somebody went up and pick up his name plate and threw it at him. They were going to let him have it you know, it stuck on the wall. But anyway the cops were really in there you know. We had I mean one time he got up and he walked out on us just got up and walked out. You see why so many people hated him. Got up and he walked out and he walked into the bathroom and we took a picket line out there and followed him and we just stood out there and made him walk back out. I have paper clippings that say Sam Del Majore was mobbed. We never touched that little sissy; we never touch him. I mean walked behind him we screamed and hollered everything we could at him, but we never touched him.

Me: What was Del Majore an Italian?

Sofia: Italian.

Me: There were paper clippings that you mobbed him?

Sofia: Yeah, yeah, that we mobbed him but we never touched him. Anyway it got to a point where other people were starting to get involved in the agencies and taking a look at whether we needed health services in East San Jose and everything pointed and researchers got in and did research everything. They couldn't believe that the research company from San Francisco, and they couldn't believe you know that there really was only 19

doctors situated in the East Side of town and sure enough that there were and it was all true. And so all the recommendations came in the Health and Welfare Commission everybody. Health and Welfare Commission from the county so they said yeah, yeah they are right. You know they do need the health services over there and yes it is true then they are not receiving all of this. We had proven that there was a need so finally they said ok, ok, this was after years. They said that they can have a clinic. We will put a little office of the welfare department I mean I'm sorry of the Valley Medical at Alexian Brothers Hospital. So they gave us this little room downstairs this room is bigger than what we had over there.

Ok, doctors were going to volunteer their services and so we had something you know. And I will never forget when this doctor Reger; he was heading the Health and Welfare Commission. He was the chairperson. He came to my house one day and he said to me and said that this could not go on like this. You got to do something about it or we will have to discontinue these health services. I want you to guarantee me 50 patients a day. He said one day we get a 150, the next day we get 20, then we get 100 then the next day we get 10 and it can't be. We want at least 50 patients a day. Oh god, I could not believe so in other words you have to go out and tell 50 people to get sick on that day. When you are started something up you have to expect that to happen.

Me: Giving things like this to follow.

Sofia: Yeah, I told him I dare you close it down. Oh I dare you to close the clinic down I dare you to close the clinic down. Before that I forgot to tell you something very important. Before they said we could have that clinic. What they did the board of supervisors did they set up bus services to Valley Medical ok. We'll take the people over there you know. And then we were determined to get our clinic and so they set up all this different stops and different places on the East Side to take people. And we told people don't ride the bus. You got to boycott it you know. So they boycotted the bus services and they knew we had them. We knew we had that clinic ok. So they tried all these different things in order not to set up the clinic and it was great. We had newspaper articles showing the empty buses and people stood at the stops and we were taking them to Valley Medical. We did not let them ride the bus because that was a band aid and we did not want that. So, going back to the clinic, and I told doctor Reger I dare you to close that clinic down you are going to find out yeah and know who we really are and that we do need a clinic over here. So they put up with it a little bit longer and the word got out and more people started using the clinic and um then more research was done. Um all researchers were saying yeah not only do they need medical services. They need preventive health services and they also need mental health services. And um so then they put these little portables out on McKee Road near Jackson Street.

Me: Yeah.

Sofia: Now we had all of those services in that clinic. They provided out patient services to the people and if you go out there are people day in I mean just a lot of people and seeing a new light and we weren't going to give up. And um makes it sound right now you know I'm talking like it was done over night but it wasn't it took years I say four years of intense organizing and meetings.

[New Tape, Labeled Tape 4]

Me: In the beginning you said that the police, they were your main objective but along the way, you got the people organized through the Roosevelt Walkout, the Health Clinic, stop lights, but it was the police that were the major concern.

Sofia: That was our main issue, but see, one of the things when you organize, there are some things that you have to, I mean you have to be aware of a lot of things. Even though people gripe about the police you know very well that if they haven't had any kind of community organization involvement they are not going to go out and just attack the police. They are not going to do that um . . . oh I know what I wanted to talk to you about - districting. You have to know some things about how you organize people. I'm a community organizer, and I'm really sensitive about those kinds of things, ok?

I know very well if people are upset because the police are harassing them or the community, because they are knocking doors down and busting their way in, because they are killing unarmed people, because they're doing any of those kinds of things, ok. They do care but they are not going to do anything about it right away. They haven't had a lot of experience in community organization. They don't know that they have the power to change you know things downtown. It is not easy to do, it is very very difficult; so what you do is that you organize them around other issues that are not really controversial, like getting a stop light.

Me: Or filling a pothole.

Sofia: Yeah. They care about that; they care much about that. But most of the people in the community don't even know who is responsible for that; they don't know that the board of supervisors and city council are responsible for that; that they have people up there that are supposed to represent them. One of the things that was a big problem out in East San Jose is that. . .

It was on the radio, on KCBS with Stanley Diamond about whether - English Only you know.

Me: Oh yeah.

Sofia: Whether English should be the official language or not. As I was hearing them talk you know these white racists are concentrating on the language and not really concentrating on education. They cannot understand that you can develop other skills in your primary language and then when you learn English you can just you know you can translate it. I mean you can learn Science, you can learn History, you can learn all this other stuff, and I was just listening to them, and I objected to them calling us immigrants you know. I kept saying, buddy where did you come from?

Me: Who's an immigrant? My ancestors were here when theirs were getting off a boat from Ellis Island.

Sofia: And this guy is saying "I really believe in immersion" you know well dog gone it he was immersed here you know, and I don't hear him speaking Native American.

Me: Little tepees.

Sofia: Yeah, I know. Ok, so what was happening in East San Jose is that, ok, this is the San Jose area, ok?

Me: Yeah.

Sofia: Now, there were a lot of unincorporated areas in San Jose ok. One area was city, another block county, another block city. Like all of these squares are county, and over here like maybe all of this over here was county, and all of this was city. Ok, so the city was responsible for picking up the garbage here and putting in stoplights, streetlights and everything and the city was responsible for it. The city here and the county here; and what was happening, cause you know they are not going to bother to go in a half a block here, and one block here, and three blocks down, so people weren't getting their garbage picked up, there were no street lights, there were pot holes out there, and the city was doing the same thing so the area was completely neglected.

Me: Unh hunh.

Sofia: And what we had to do is tell people look you know lets go down and get a stop light here and then we would say look, these are the people that are responsible for this, this, and this, and they begin to know who's who up there. Now one of the things that really upset me well is that um when they started complaining about police problems. Um they found that at that time there was five people on the city council, only five. These people were elected at large, the whole city voted for each person and we all know that campaign money doesn't exist in East San Jose. It existed out in Willow Glen and other parts of the town.

Me: Influential parts.

Sofia: Yeah. And so you know that's who these people really represented on the council. They weren't concerned about the problems that existed out in the East side with the police or anything else, so we knew that if we wanted to change that, we had to change the structure of the city council. And so this was a major task let me tell you. Our organizing efforts in San Jose have really, I mean we have really made some major accomplishments as I think back; and one of them was districting. What we had to do is that we had to get out and I forget what, we had to get signatures of a certain percentage of the voters that had voted in the previous election and then we had to have an initiative on the ballot. And we failed twice but we succeeded the third time, we did get in those signatures. And so what we wanted was to break the city up into different districts so that you know someone would be accountable to the problem areas. And we wanted 14 districts. We ourselves, you know, cut the city up into districts.

Me: There were five districts but you wanted 14?

Sofia: There were five; we wanted 14.

Me: Just five.

Sofia: Just five, the whole city was divided into five districts. And everybody, the whole city voted for every councilperson so you know who they were really representing. But anyway we wanted 14 districts because what we

did is we broke the city up into 14 different areas that we thought that one person could really represent, but the city did not want that. The Charter Review Committee got together, so they proposed 10 districts, it was kind of like a compromise. Instead of 14 we had the five. So actually the East side, I mean the way it was broken up, not all of the East side is really represented by one person they kind of broke it up so some of it is with affluent area you know. But anyway we wound up with 10 districts but that was enough, that came out of United People Arriba in the community and it ended up you know with the Community Alert Patrol and I feel that is something, that's a big big thing that we did. So there's 10 council people now that, again, don't represent anybody. They really don't you know we need to get some real aggressive people in there, some people that are real accountable to the community you know, not to the business people and the ones that put money into their campaigns. We haven't had a strong person on there yet, I'm pretty upset. We have Iola Williams who is black and really brown noses the mayor like crazy, it's disgusting, it's really disgusting, you know, I'm not kidding you. She really supports the mayor with everything he says, and she forgets about all the black people who are out there she should be representing.

Me: Representing.

Sofia: Yeah. And Blanca is a little bit better. She does not brown nose the major. She doesn't really fight him either you know she's just kind of there and we need somebody up there who really take some risks.

Me: You thought about running yourself?

Sofia: I'm asked every time it comes up. But I feel that I have to stay where I'm at because there is no one else doing the grassroots type of organizing that I am. Like I was telling you before, I started working with other organizers and they all moved on to do something else. I'm the only one that still that's remained where I'm at I haven't budged an inch still organizing people around school issues, around issues on redevelopment, I'm still lecturing in student classes, doing the same thing that I was doing in the 60's, and I feel that what good is it going to do for me seating up there in one of those council seats if nobody organizes the people to come and confront City Hall, so I feel that...

Me: You feel more effective here than you would be on a seat.

Sofia: Yeah, yeah. Because I feel that you know that more changes can come about that way so that's what kept me from running for City Council. I really believe deep down in my heart that I could have beat Susan Hammer. I think I have the contacts in the community; I have a lot of backing; I know a lot of people...

Me: You'd have the full community's support.

Sofia: I really think so.

Me: With that power.

Sofia: Maybe I wouldn't have the Rose Garden area that she's got but I would have the down town area, the part that matters.

Me: If that could be the case then can't you pick a person and say if you do run I will back you up and everyone will see that Sofia is backing this person up and get your contacts behind that person?

Sofia: That is the problem is that we had Tony Esteneda that was running in Susan Hammer's district but then he moved over to Blanca's district to run against her, and that was a bad move because I think he could have beaten Susan Hammer the second time around. I've been asked to run for the school board because there are some elections coming up. I think there's going to be two or three vacant seats I don't know. But they are not going to be vacant, there are up for re-election. I don't feel that I want to do that.

Me: How much more.

Sofia: You know because what happens, I have seen this happen over and over again. Whenever there is activity in the community like that and somebody comes out as a spokesperson, right away they say come on and run for this office and after they run and win and they are in there, then the community goes away and the person is making decisions by themselves. And people don't always make the right decisions, and in the end they wind up an enemy. I don't want to risk that. Another thing is that I would want to pick up exactly where I left off with the organizing work that I do and I know if I sat on the council for a few years, I couldn't come back and pick it up again, and I feel that I would lose a lot of my effectiveness; I would lose my contacts that took some me so many years to build. I just couldn't do it; if somebody would guarantee me that I could come in and plug in right where I pulled out then I would do it, and I know that is not the case. That is something that those things Dr. Galarza gave me to think about you know so I think a lot about it. It doesn't make sense. I know if I got there I could do a good job but it takes more than just one person it takes a group of people moving together to be able to make some changes so anyway um I don't know. I think if there were two Chicanos on the City Council, two or three, then it would excite me then I would run, I really would. I think that two or three Chicanos on the City Council could turn this town on its head, and I would want to be a part of something like that. Shoot if you make a motion at least there is somebody to second it you know and um at least draw attention to what is happening here. I feel that I am more effective in organizing people, one of the things that really concerns me right now is how children are dropping out of school. They are really victims of this educational system and there is nobody to rescue them you know so I feel that I have to stay right where I am at I feel good about it. I am successful at what I am doing and I know that I'm able to touch the lives of many people and make them feel that they are powerful you know. That they have power in numbers but it's just somebody has to bring them together and that's what I do you know and that is what happened with this districting you know one person alone could say I don't like City Council and don't like it, I don't like it. We brought a lot of people together you know to make a major change, and now we have 10 representatives. That is a big big political thing that we did you know.

Me: A major accomplishment.

Sofia: It sure is yeah that is a big one. I think how in the world did we ever do it you know. Like I say we attempted twice before and we succeeded but it was well worth it because all during this time people were begin educated you know about how our system runs and how the City Council operates and all of that and our major concern was the police and we at that point we

were talking about setting up a Civilian Review Board and we knew that five council people wouldn't do it maybe we had a better chance with 10 people and that's what we were thinking Civilian Review Board somebody that could keep their eye on these cops. So what we did then is that we um set up the Community Alert Patrol and we thought ok we didn't go after the Civilian Review Board then we'll watch the cops ourselves you know. We will go out there and we will watch them; we will keep an eye on them.

Me: You proposed a Civilian Review Board and they turned it down.

Sofia: Well, they didn't want it.

Me: They said..

Sofia: No, do you think - the cops didn't want anybody to keep an eye on them. They didn't want anybody watching them. They didn't want to be accountable to anybody. They weren't even accountable to the chief of police, they were accountable to themselves through their Police Officers Association. That association was powerful. There wasn't one council meeting that I attended that they weren't there. They were always there, always always there, and it was disgusting you know and um you know there was another incident I think I talked about Danny Trevino and I gave you all the information on him. Now there was other incident. There was a black man by the name of John Henry Smith who worked at IBM or Lockheed, one of those places, and he used to live in Saratoga. This man made a lot of money, he lived in a.

Me: In an affluent neighborhood.

Sofia: Very affluent. There were cops living in the same apartment complex where he lived and in fact I think there were two off duty cops who lived there and they use to socialize together. And um what happened is that John Henry Smith was coming home from I don't know where, they say he made an illegal left hand turn. I don't know, these were all lies, this is what they say. A cop followed him um I don't know what happened but John Henry Smith was killed. I went to the hearing and I saw pictures and everything and they said the cop was about five to six feet away when he killed him.

They say he was running up into his apartment. Somehow two off duty cops that lived in the same apartment complex were there. There was a tire iron that was involved somewhere I don't know how it got there but during the hearing I heard this tire iron, that they found this tire iron. These off duty cops for some reason went home, changed their clothes and then they came back on the scene. I say that John Henry Smith was murdered by these cops. They all knew each other. What were these off duty cops doing there? I mean there were just a lot of unanswered questions ok. And it got to be a big thing because we really made a big thing of it. By this time Norman Mineta was the mayor. Norman Mineta was the mayor and he was very concerned about what was going on and um what Norman did because again we were really confronting him with all this. What Norman did is that he was also like I said concerned about what was going on and Norman has been probably the only mayor that I know that has really listened to the community had to say, and he was involved a lot of meetings. He put together the Ad Hoc Police Department Administrative Policies and Procedures Committee. That was March first what?

Me: 1972.

Sofia: In 1972.

Me: Yeah.

Sofia: And so the committee became very active, he had a broad cross section of people on that committee, and I was one of the people that he appointed. So our task was to comb through the Police Policies and Procedures Manual to take a look at the use of firearms and everything else, but that was what was really concerning us was what was their policy on how firearms were used, when they were to be used and all that, and we started going through that manual with a fine tooth comb and making recommendations you know for changes and all of that. Anyway, during the time I was sitting on that committee um now Norton LeVine who was the owner of the Milpitas Post or the East Side Sun was the chairperson of that committee. And there was some weird things happening to me during that time. I mean really strange things because one of the thing that happened is that they used to deliver that paper free to all the homes and it was really writing up what was happening with John Henry Smith in that newspaper and um I found a copy of the newspaper with a rubber band in it. I opened it up and there was a tape in there, an audiotape. I brought it in the house and I listened to it and it had some information that was very pertinent to the case ok. Somebody was giving me information and um it had what the tape said and somebody didn't want to come forth and tell ok. But what the tape said there was some members of the police department traveling back and forth to Acapulco in a boat that was owned by Dr. Bush that was docked at the Sausalito yacht harbor and this boat was bring marijuana into San Jose and the police were involved in it. It mentioned the names of the police that were involved in killing John Henry Smith. Evidently John Henry Smith knew that all this was going on. They had some kind of disagreement and I think that they were afraid that John Henry Smith was going to blow the whistle on them and then there was a list of 16 witnesses. Some of us went out and contacted all these witnesses. We asked all these people exactly what went on they knew what was going on. John Henry Smith knew those cops very very well. They used to exercise at the same gym together, they socialized together and they lived together and they knew each other. So this man was murdered. After we went out and we checked out all the information that they gave us and we found it to be true. What I did is that it had a lot of information and it blew a whistle and there was a list of 16 witnesses. What I did um I guess that whistle indicated that these people who were going to blow the whistle on the cops. What I did was played the tape at the meeting and I stopped when the whistle blew. I didn't bring in any of the names of the people that were going to die, and I um gave the tape to the chairperson and I told the chairperson I want you to turn this tape over to the District Attorney so that they can check you know.

Me: Did you make a copy of it?

Sofia: No I didn't. I'm so sorry I didn't. So anyway I gave it the tape to the chairperson and the press was at all these meetings you know. I gave it to him the chairperson I thought he was going to give it to the DA to check on it and they are going to find out the John Henry Smith was murdered and the police who were involved in some other things. We went to check that boat in Sausalito yacht harbor and the numbers on that boat had been changed. When we got there the numbers were changed the day after John Henry Smith was killed. Why did that happen?

Me: So that no one would know.

Sofia: Exactly.

Me: It would connect them.

Sofia: That's why, so what happened is that I played the tape that night and I handed to the chairperson. When I was going home, I was being followed and I was so scared I was really really scared let me tell you really scared. After that I started getting anonymous phone calls people threatening my life. A white person a man's voice telling me oh we know when your husband goes to work. We know what time your children come home, and my husband was working swing shift and I was very afraid. And it got to the point where the last call said what do you prefer a knife or a gun. They were threatening to kill me I don't know who it was. But it was happening but what happened that night not only was I followed. The following morning at 6:00 o'clock in the morning a sheriff came and knocked on my door and handed me a gag order that I was not to discuss the John Henry case to absolutely anybody. I was gagged in other words just shut up. If I were to discuss this case with anyone I would be held in contempt and I would have been arrested. Yeah they came and gave me a gag order. So see I'm just trying to give you some ideas in what we were dealing with.

Me: You received the gag order after you gave the tape to ..

Sofia: I gave the tape to the chairperson to give to the DA at the evening meeting, and somebody went to a judge.

Me: That same meeting.

Sofia: That same meeting. Yeah, if you contact a judge you can get a gag order at anytime it was probably the District Attorney who got it I don't know but somebody. But anyway I was served with a gag order at 6:00 o'clock the following morning knocked on my door and gave it to me and not to discuss the case with nobody. If they would find out about it I would be arrested so in other words shut up. So um they just didn't want to see what was going on in the police department. I mean that's the way the police department was run they could do it the way they wanted to, and I mean we were just really really fed up. Then this other police chief a guy by the name of Murphy and he was a cream puff, he was just a little cream puff not a big one a tiny little one a softie, cops ran all over him. First we had a senile buzzard you know big oh Mafioso that was there for 40 some years and then they bring in this little cream puff and didn't do anything. When McNamara came in things started changing. I don't want to give the cops credit for any changes that took place, little changes in the community. All the people who worked so hard to put stop to what happened because um in 1975 I think '75 or '77 um I can't remember we found the Chicano Employment Committee had to finally sue them so that they could start to hire more minorities. See because they weren't any minorities on the force hardly at all. I mean they are really racist.

Me: Yeah.

Sofia: And there are more minorities now but they're not promoting them you know they are not promoting them. I think it is going to take another lawsuit to make sure they get promoted. You know we get a lot of the Latino Police Officer Association um studies right here in this room right here where you are sitting. They come here every Thursday to study because they are taking exams to become sergeants and lieutenants and all that you know, and they

past their written test you know they are like anything else they never get past the orals. But they study right here in this room, and I support them I really do. Um anything that they need we'll give it to them because it makes a difference you know if you get some descent people.

Me: Back to John Henry, they gagged you. What ever happened, did the people find out that it was a murder or was it just swept under the rug so to speak?

Sofia: Yeah.

Me: Nobody found out.

Sofia: Justifiable homicide.

Me: Justifiable homicide?

Sofia: Yeah, yeah.

Me: And the tape that you gave to the District Attorney disappeared or...

Sofia: I never knew anything about it never knew what happened. I don't know if any of those people were ever called to be witnesses to what happened. You know that is the way they did things.

Me: How long did you have the gag order?

Sofia: Forever until the whole thing was cleared out until after the Civil Service Commission had a hearing went through trial we through oh wait a minute. What happened I can't, I think they put the cops on administrative leave for a while and then they went before the Civil Service Commission there was a hearing I attended that I don't remember all the details but I mean it was just awful here is this poor unarmed man he was black. John Henry Smith was black.

Me: Just to shut him down.

Sofia: Yeah. Just like Danny Trevino just like the rest of them. They just killed them oh sorry we thought they were armed you know. And um..

Me: Whatever happened to those cops that did it?

Sofia: One of them was called Rocklin Wooly I remember Rocklin Wooly who sticks in my head he is the one shot him with a big caliber pistol I mean the hole that he blew in his body was just it was so incredible and um I can't remember what they did. He did not go to prison for it.

Me: It's a wonder they didn't give him a medal.

Sofia: They were real animals real real animals that was I used to see it on the streets all the time. I used to see what they did I could see it I use to be out there all the time and I saw how they behaved you know. I would walk down the street they would go he ll o Sofie you know making fun of me really poking fun of me. These little young punks they just came back from Vietnam like I told you. Some of them were young enough to be my own children and here they are treating me with such a lack of respect. Because I cared if people were being killed you know just really disgusting really really disgusting. But anyway you know those kinds of things don't have to

exist. They didn't exist in Campbell where I grew up you know it was different and it is not right that it happened on the East Side of town just because you have poor people, minority people. You just can't treat them that way. It was a long effort long many many years that was our ultimate goal but we did it. It took a lot of work and um CAP was not really popular but when I see the changes that were made in the police department and we changed their policies and procedures manual you know to change the way they used firearms. If they are gonna protect their lives I can see anybody wanting a gun you know if a life is threatened.

Me: Not an unarmed person.

Sofia: No. Well I tell you that is unusual to see um a cop to stop someone for a traffic infraction and pull a gun out that wasn't unusual at all.

Me: It's true it happened to my mother someone she was driving her car she had an old impala the license plate was loose and um she said that when a sheriff stop her pulled up he had a partner and they both pulled out their riot guns shot guns and then she said six other cops stop and they all pulled their guns on her. My mother is only four foot eleven and is she a threat. She right away wrote I remember she wrote to our lawyer, to the mayor McNamara I remember receiving a letter, reading a letter for McNamara saying that..

Sofia: Did it happen here in San Jose?

Me: Yeah. You know on McKee and Jackson right there across from where Independence is, right there. The guy wrote a letter apologizing that those two people reacted um unnecessarily and were placed under three days, a week where they couldn't receive any pay or something like that and one was sent on disciplinary leave but that was it, but he apologized cause they didn't want the lawsuit. My mother was going to press charges.

Sofia: Well, I have a friend that just two weeks ago. My friend, his brother and his sister and his mother were all in the house and his nephew had gone to the liquor store. Well, what happened when he got in the car he was driving away I don't know what happened? The cops put the lights on him, the kid panicked and drove home it was just right close by going home he panicked he was so scared. He was terrified of cops and he didn't have a license. He never been put on probation, parole, trouble, anything like that and by the he got home four cops in hot pursuit you know he went in the house and the cops came in they beat up my friend, his brother, his sister and shoved the mother around and anyway they beat up my friends brother real bad so my friend went to the telephone to call the paramedics. When the paramedics got there the cops told the paramedics to go on, not to come in the house. They denied him medical attention and um.

Me: I guess that answered my next question, was going to be has the situation changed.

Sofia: A lot has changed but the attitudes are still there and I think the racism is still there because they have an attitude that you know if you are a brown person look out you know. That is the attitude the cops have that brown people are violent, drunk, they are on KJ, the poor people you know. It is just their whole attitude instead of following him to the house wait the guy was in the house where was he going to go. Take your time, check him out you know do it slower I mean you know. If this guy was a bank robber, or

he had committed a crime or done something then I could see it you know. But I mean he drove to a place stopped and went in the house take it slow knock on the door, ask, why not. No, they all busted in there.

Me: Whatever happened to them?

Sofia: I don't know we're in the process of getting a copy of the police report. I would like to see what the cops have to say about it and I talked to the Latino cops and they are kind of concerned about what happened cause it was a Mexican family. But before I couldn't get a cop to be sympathetic with what happen and you know these Latinos, Chicanos that are there they know where they came from.

Me: They know where everything is at.

Sofia: Yeah. The two that I talked to they said you know they don't go out there beating people like that. But they are racist you know that is ok if you get these young little punks with these guns.

Me: It goes to their heads.

Sofia: It does, and that uniform they got these you know in San Jose, they never have cops walk a beat, it was years ago cops would walk beats and you with this one cop on the corner of First street and Santa Clara I used to talk to him when I was a kid. He would stand there and direct traffic and he use to stand there and I used to talk to him. There were cops that I talked to that little by little they all put them in cars and motorcycles and started to get all kinds of equipment for them you know. The police were getting further and further away from the people and they become scared and that's the way they are trained. I lectured in a lot of their classes and in fact I'm going next Thursday to lecture another class.

Me: Police?

Sofia: Yeah. And um I will never forget one time I walked in San Jose State these were young young people. They were really young people and I'm an older person and I had just come back from the optometrist and the ophthalmologist he had, I had my pupils dilated you know.

Me: Put a ----- in your eye.

Sofia: Yeah, so I had to wear dark glasses you know the ones he gave me. And so I lectured and I was very nice I said what I had to say they don't have to agree with me but I told them you know what was what and one of them says take your glasses off so we can see if you are telling the truth or not. Young little punk you know why cause that is what they teach them and every time I talked to a cop on the street and he is wearing glasses I tell myself this guy must be a big liar cause that's what they tell him the people who wear glasses are lying and wearing glasses and I'll teach them all to wear glasses. You know I saw their attitude so real.

Me: They start them young their attitudes.

Sofia: Yeah. And then another thing that happened during that time all of this was happening around the time a little before this police problem and everything. I forget what year they had the People's March in Washington D.C. I can't remember Martin Luther King March remember.

Me: Ok, I think that was in '60 cause I know he was killed in '68 so that was a year before '66, '67, '66 I think it was or '65.

Sofia: Maybe, I can't remember. But anyway um what we did, I did, I raised a lot of money to send people from San Jose to Washington D.C. I had other people raising money we sent a busload of people and I felt very proud of that. You wouldn't believe all the racist stuff that was coming to my house. You know I'm married, I've always been married to the same man. My husband had always worked; he has always supported the family you know and we have four children. No one has given us any assistance or anything like that you know I thought we did it all on his salary. Yeah, and um I started giving a lot of letters saying people like you belong in concentration camps. You ought to get out of welfare and do this do that because during that time my picture was in the paper a lot you know I guess they assumed as I lived in the East Side and because I was brown that I was on welfare you know I got a lot of these anonymous threatening kinds of letters and they were very angry because I had sent people from San Jose to the People's March in Washington D.C. And then I started getting a lot of um printed stuff from the American Nazi Party you know. I'll never forget they sent me this ticket, it was a printed ticket, it said it was a one way ticket to Africa on Cunard Lines real racist real real racist stuff and then in the back it had an introductory offer to a little jar what is called instant nigger for those of you who can't stay away from niggers for long periods of time real racist stuff. Get a teaspoon of this stuff throw it on the sidewalk and pee on it that is what it said. It said you can get them from light yellow to midnight black you know I mean real racist stuff that was from the American Nazi Party you know. And then I also use to get some stuff from the Minute Men because during the '60's the Peace Center was broken into and um the Farm workers offices were broken into, my house was broken into, Fred Hersh's house was broken into and there was a black woman by the name of Charlie Harris used to organize with me too, her house was broken into and what was stolen from every place was mostly names, mailing lists and um this when we were organizing around the clinic and it was really funny because my materials were missing but my locks weren't broken, my windows weren't broken. I mean knew somebody when in there and took stuff but I thought it was strange you know. And Charlie told me that stuff was missing from my house too. Fred Hersh: my stuff is missing and the Peace Center list. What happened here you know. It was shortly after that I was getting a lot of stuff from Minute Men, the American Nazi Party and it was people whose names were stolen on that card it was between G and T or something like that and we started checking everybody was getting all this stuff. My youngest son at that time was I can't remember if it was first or second grade and um I can't think of the name I'll think of the cops name. Anyway there was a cop that was married to my son's teacher and I found out later I can't think of the cops name I'll think about it.

[Side 2 of Tape 4]

Anyway they found out later that this cop had broken into the Hersh's house, he broke into my house, broke into Charlie's house and who knows who else's house.

Me: How did they find out?

Sofia: He took boxes of information from us . . . because our stuff

was found in his garage. They found all the stuff from the Farm workers office in his garage. They found it. And that stupid fool just died a few months ago, may he rest in heaven, in hell some place I should say, cause that's where he's at. You know that is where he deserves to be. You know what was he trying to do he was trying to stop the movement that's what. That's what he was trying to do and we were so determined to get what we wanted that he was not going to stop us. I can't think of his name, I'll think about it in a minute. But they found the Farm workers stuff; they found the Hersh's stuff, they found my stuff and Charlie's stuff in his garage.

Me: When did they find this?

Sofia: When he was still his wife. She got smart and finally left him. Oh god this was in the late 60's. Well in the 60's you had the Farm workers were very very active here in San Jose, and we were involved with the Farm workers movement, too, we were too you know. We were involved in everything that was going on there was a lot of activity with the Farm workers Movement. A lot of picketing, we picketed a lot of stores and that's another thing when we started picketing for the Farm workers there were some liquor stores called Regal at the time, there was one over there on Santa Clara near King Road. And um we were all new to this ok. I remember the Hershes, a man by the name of Babarron and his wife, my husband and I. I think we were the three couples that I remember that started picketing and working and we would be picketing and the cops would say OK get in the car. They would put us in a car and drag us around and we would be scared to death because I never knew what they would do to me. I remember that what I was doing was right. They would ride us around and harass us and threaten us and then they would take us and leave us way off on the other side of town somewhere you know. And um it seemed that everything that was going they stuck their noses into it. It was none of their business I don't know why cops think they have to get involved in everything. There are rules and laws that one has to follow. You can't picket on private property. You can't walk on private property. You know you have to stay on the sidewalk. We know this. You can't block the driveways. You can't do this can't do that. I mean Cesar Chavez really did a lot of research and trained people before they went out on these.

Me: They did not want to blow it.

Sofia: No of course not, and we weren't doing anything to provoke the cops but they just wanted us to stop. There was a lot of confrontation here in San Jose at that time, a lot of confrontation with the police. They stuck their nose into everything. If we had a picket line going somewhere and somebody called the cops they'd come in right way with their clubs in their hands instead of saying ok lets hear both sides let's hear what's going on. No they'd come with attitude and their minds are made up about who's right and who's wrong you know. And see we weren't going to allow it to stop and um so we were involved with the Farm workers and that's one thing that they were trying to stop. Because the Farm workers got real big in San Jose, I mean real big. And um I think this cop, now how did he get into my house. He never broke a window.

Me: How did he do it, and you knew stuff was missing but there was nothing to suggest you'd been broken into?

Sofia: And that was the case everywhere else, nothing was broken into. So he knew how to get into the locks you know. This means that they had to be watching my house to see when I left, when I came back and all that. He did

it to the Hershes. And they found the stuff in the cop's garage he had it had all. Did they do anything to him? No. I'm glad that his wife divorced him. Threw him right out, right out on his ear. And oh, God, I read the article in the newspaper when he died oh man they had him built up like he was some super citizen. They should have written down what a big crook he was, what a thief he was. Because I tell you if a Chicano had busted somebody house like that . . .

Me: They would have him reamed him royal.

Sofia: That's right, they would not have written him up that he was some big hero.

Me: You're probably saying oh well you left off the police force, he broke into somebody's house.

Sofia: I remember his first name was Jerry and I can't remember his last name. I'm glad he's gone. I hope that he suffered when he died too. These people you know they don't deserve to live. How can anybody get away with doing stuff like that.

Me: It was their attitude.

Sofia: He came into my house and stole stuff, and he stole stuff from the Peace Center. How it is that the Minute Men and the American Nazi Party. . . Let me tell you something why I hate them so much because. . .

Me: Because you were just another group of people.

Sofia: Let me tell you what happen to me, not only did I get the phone calls about you know that they were going to kill me, to choose a knife or a gun. Not only was I getting all this racist stuff in the mail. I also got, I'll never forget I got several letters from the Minute Men they said that I should look out the next time that I brought my bottle in. My bottle of milk in from my front step because it could be arsenic in it. To look out the next time I was walking down the street alone because the cross hairs could be aimed at my neck. Um to look out the next time I started my car because it could explode you know. You think that didn't put fear into me you know. Here I had, how did I know maybe someday I was going to start my car and it was going to blow up. I didn't know I mean the threats were right there. And this guy did it. I mean if people don't like what you are doing because you are out there raising Cain too bad. But I think we are living in a system where I've never known anybody to give you your rights, you have to take them. That what I was teaching people to do, to take their rights. If you are going to sit around and wait for them to give you your rights its never going to happen so you've got to take them its your rights if people don't like it well tough and it all had to do with discrimination of the Mexican people. We have always been discriminated against, and I don't think it is ever going to stop. I see now how Vietnamese people are coming in, they are immigrants, yet I feel a lot of resentment when I walk on the campus, and I hear them speaking their own language to each other. They yell it across the way you know.

Me: If I was talking to my mother in Spanish and somebody yelled at her. They'd say why don't you speak English.

Sofia: Yeah, that's right and that attitude is still there. When they came here they had teachers that spoke their own language you know. And they don't call that Bilingual Education though, you know.

Me: They say that is special because they helped the United States fight the war. I don't know if that is true, how it happened.

Sofia: But it still is not right and then I think everybody has to be treated the same. I remember, I remember not being able to walk down the street with a taco in my hand because you did not dare walk outside of your house eating it outside of your house. I mean it was shameful to do that.

Me: To eat a taco in your hand.

Sofia: Yeah, you'd be called names, and see and it is not until the majority of society, until they how can I say until they can accept something then it is acceptable then it is ok. Because when you think back to the Pachuco period you know and now that we study that we take a look at what was happening. Were those rural gangs or were the people were really protecting in those communities. I think it was all political. I think they were protecting communities because of what the Marines and the Navy were doing there. They were going into those communities raping women and you know doing whatever they wanted. Now I think these young ones said it is not going to happen here. So they put a stop to it. It was all political you know and even though they were focusing they were gangs and all, that is not what they were. It was something completely different and I remember the women how they used to wear their hair ok. They used those pompadours, and I remember the men used to use those pegged pants and you know the certain way they dressed, and they used to wear those short skirts. The majority of society used to frown on stuff like that but then I remember later on um in the 50's early 60's when you know the majority of society started combing their hair like that then all of a sudden it was called "teased hair" I mean they gave it a name and it was acceptable. Um they like I remember when the kids started wearing those Frisco jeans and everything and then everybody was wearing those tight blue pants but as soon as they put it on the market then they called them "bell bottoms" and they were acceptable you know. If it has some profit for somebody it becomes acceptable you know. And that is exactly what has happen you know especially with our food. You didn't walk down the street eating a taco, and I remember when the corn tortillas, you would toast them and fold them in half and put the hamburger, lettuce and all that ok. We used to call those taquitos.

Me: Yeah.

Sofia: Ok. A taco was just a flour tortilla with food in it, anything in it was a taco. Now all of a sudden we have to learn a new language right, now it is called a burrito. I've never called them burritos.

Me: Yeah, or nachos and fajitas.

Sofia: Actually, fajitas is skirt stick you know this is what I was leading to but anyway all of a sudden we have to eat burritos, what we used to call tacos. Now we have tacos that we used to call taquitos, and now those little round rolled up ones that they deep fry and they put avocado on top those are taquitos ok.

Me: We used to called those enchiladas suizas. My mother used to call them or no I'm sorry that is wrong those are the ones with the cream cheese.

Sofia: We never made those little rolled up fried things I mean you know.

Me: I have never even heard of a fajita.

Sofia: Anyway, they named this stuff so they could sell it in the restaurants. And all of a sudden we had to learn a new language. And anyway a fajita is something that people in Texas used to eat them those long strip of meat on a stick and they would barbeque it and that was a fajita. Now all of a sudden they are selling these fajitas pitas. What's more ridiculous now they have a chicken fajita pita.

Me: God they are gross.

Sofia: I'm wondering what is the fajita pita anyway, is it the meat itself or is it that bread the pita bread.

Me: The pita is the bread, the fajita is the chicken.

Sofia: No, no its not.

Me: That's what they call it, that's my understanding of it.

Sofia: So why are they saying chicken then. Its chicken fajita pita.

Me: Oh, maybe they mean the way it is cooked.

Sofia: They don't know what it is and I don't even know. You know these people and look at what they are doing to our language.

Me: If you order a fajita they ask you if you want guacamole on it or salsa with it. What? When I was growing up we had salsa but it was different. We always had chile and then my mother once made; we had these men delivering water the first water at our house and this man looked at it, and he said I'm a connoisseur of salsa, and I said good for you. And he said that is good salsa I said no dear that is chile, and he looked at me. Salsa is what you Americans call it and chile I said that will put hair on your chest or it will take it off.

And he was telling me well I have one yet that is really hot, I told him sit down so I gave him some. This man was crying, he was sweating so I put a serving cup and I gave it to him so I gave him the rest of it here I said I advise you to wear asbestos gloves when you make this stuff. He told me damn this is good stuff. And he left calling it chile.

Sofia: It is so funny, you always hear that Mexican children have problems with the educational system because of the cultural differences ok. I never understood why; I looked at myself.

Me: Get in there and read and write and be your best.

Sofia: But it doesn't really happen that easy. Let me tell you, it happened to me not as a child but as an adult. One day I was right here in this building and we used to cook for the board meeting. We would all take turns cooking a dish anyway I didn't know if Maria the director set the meeting.

He said what are you going to make at the next meeting and I said I really don't know, and he said why don't you make some chili. I thought, I cook real good and I said how much do you want? He goes plenty and he goes like this. A big pot and I thought to myself, I said wait a minute, are they going to eat it and he goes they'll eat it and I said wait a minute I said they are not going to eat it. I just bring a little bowl, and he says no you got to bring enough for everybody. And I go they are going to eat it. Chile I said are they going to eat this chile and I'm thinking and thinking you know maybe I'll put a lot of tomatoes in it so it won't be so hot or maybe I'll make the pico that I eat. Maybe I'll put a lot of tomatoes and onions and a little bit of chile. And he said no, no, no we stayed on this for a long time and wasn't going to go away. And I said wait a minute and he said no, no, you chili, chili he was talking about chili beans and I was talking about chile, and I thought to myself that day, that happened here two years ago. That day I realized that we do speak a different language that we mean different things even though we use the same word and it was that day that I realized that maybe this is what happens to young Mexican kids they come in and get confused. They get confused and they really don't understand of what they are talking about cause I to me and it is true and after that I pay attention Anglos when they talk chili beans they talk about chile and to me that is not chile.

Me: I don't know what you call it. Chile for us is chile vinagre or you make your own or pico de gallo or something.

Sofia: So I told him you know what you are talking about one thing I'm talking about another thing and we went around and around for about five minutes and I thought to myself this is exactly what they mean about little children going to school and they interpret things one way and it means something else. I really understand I can see now why Mexican kids miss out on a lot on a lot of things and especially if you are raised really Mexican.

Me: It is a big problem. They were going to hold back my little sister one year because they said she couldn't make it because she spoke Spanish. They said she couldn't make it. She is graduating as a nurse.

Sofia: You know I was listening to my friend on a talk show and um there is this guy Stanley Diamond was talking about um this English only thing that the children should be immersed, just put them in there, and the guy doesn't speak a word of Spanish and I called in and he said well my wife speaks Spanish and I got mad I said you know what that is just like saying best friends are eating like a dog. But anyway I said you know no one is thinking about the education for these children all they are thinking about is language.

Me: Either language, either way they don't help them or they will flunk so matter what language they speak.

Sofia: So you have to worry about educating them not about the language itself because these children are learning the language fast. But you know people don't really think education of the children and that is one thing that has always bothered me is that people think that knowledge belongs to them and they don't want to share it with anybody and that's one of the things that is happening to the Mexican people here is that not enough knowledge has been shared you know. It has to stop but I attended a meeting on Tuesday with the um Educational Testing Service in um Emeryville and um they were talking about the needs assessment of Chicano students. I was

listening to all these educators speak and I thought to myself if we are going to sit around and wait for somebody to come and stop this drop-out rate it's not going to happen. We are going to have to do it ourselves and um the situation is just really critical. Children are victims of the system in situations and I think a lot of it has to do because our needs are different than everybody else's and I don't think our needs are being met the needs of our children.

You can't blame it on the parents its not the parents fault because when I was growing up my parents were not all that involved in my education but yet I was able to learn. There was something about the way the educational system was set up at that time that you know that you were able to learn but I know that during the time my children went through elementary school. I have one daughter who went through six reading programs and if I hadn't taught her to read at home. She was having a lot of trouble in school and math they come up with this modern math supposed to be using.

Me: New Math.

Sofia: Is that what they call it, New Math.

Me: What's wrong with the old math. If it is not broken don't fix it. That's stupid.

Sofia: And um.

Me: The new English.

Sofia: It is just very confusing; children get confused they get lost in the beginning years you know. I really think that um children should be taught to read, a lot of concentration in the beginning should be all in reading, spend all the time you can in developing a child's reading. And then once you learn to read the rest you can learn easy you learn fast. I think they are wasting a lot of time in trying to teach a lot of other subjects. I think the education of children so scattered anyway, really scattered. I went to school wondering what the heck am I learning this for you know.

Me: That's a lot of complaints I hear. Why do you need to take this class. I'm not going to use it for anything specific.

Sofia: And you don't, a lot of it you don't use.

Me: As long as you can apply it to whatever it is you are going to be doing.

Sofia: But the thing is that...

Me: Like you said you applied math to cooking and sewing.

Sofia: Yeah, you can.

Me: For you it worked.

Sofia: Yeah, well that's the way I saw it almost doing in that film "Stand and Deliver." Did you see that film?

Me: Yeah.

Sofia: When he walked in with a hatchet and the a . . . , I mean he was showing them. You show a child. I mean you put board it doesn't mean anything. When you show it to them then it has meaning.

Me: Then it is something that has meaning.

Sofia: They are going to have a thing at the California Chicano News Media Association is going to honor Jaime Escalante that teacher from "Stand and Deliver" in Sacramento I'm going to go to that I really want to. It is going to be a fund raiser to give scholarships to Chicanos students or Latino students who are interested in a Media career and it is going to be June 25, 1988 at 6:30 p.m. at a hotel in downtown Sacramento. I really want to go to that. He sure deserves to be honored I mean and that you know it is another thing when I watched that film.

Me: Yeah.

Sofia: They were asking him what does it take, and he says all it takes is GANAS you know how do you translate? These people that don't like Bilingual Education. How do you translate a word like GANAS? You can't.

Me: It is a feeling.

Sofia: There is so much in our language you can not translate it is there, and they want us to give that up they want us to lose that you know and take up a language that is so dry you know. We got to fight to keep our language. We can't let it go.

Me: You keep your language, you keep your culture.

Sofia: Yeah. But the feeling behind some of those words you can't translate and the same thing happened, I can't remember the words now, but like in a "La Bamba" and some of these films, and also "Milagro Bean Field War" where I noticed where they are using certain words in Spanish that you can not translate the feeling, and I sit there it makes me feel good there are some people in here that don't know what it means I know what it means.

Me: Its funny in "Stand and Deliver" they were using some they were speaking Spanish and there was some these two people in front in they said Harry what did that man say, what did the man say, and I don't know dear I think they were talking about education. I was thinking you jerks the guy is telling them to shape up and get your ass and do those problems. That is another thing "The Milagro Bean Field War" is not on. I went to go look for it, its gone from the movies. Yeah last week I went looking for it.

Sofia: It was there two weeks ago and my husband and I were going to go. It is a very good film.

Me: I didn't get to see it.

Sofia: But see there are things like that in our language that one feels you know and when I went to the Linda Ronstadt concert I sat there and I felt so much pride. I felt so much pride because I thought you know Luis Valdez another young man that's really been able to do a lot for us and our culture and our music together accept it you know people finally looking at it. When I went to the Linda Ronstadt concert at the end Danny is real militant.

Me: Yeah.

Sofia: Danny Valdez. He and Linda Ronstadt they are selling tickets for her concert again.

Me: Yeah.

Sofia: In November again. But anyway she comes out sitting on the cow catcher on the train and Danny is there with his guitar singing songs from the Revolution all the songs from the corridos they sang. Anyway at the end of that um at the end of that section there Danny starts in "Viva la Raza" and I'm going oh Danny shut up can't you see who is in the audience a lot of Anglos here it's a different type of people oh God here he comes people are going to take it the wrong way you know. "Viva la Raza" and the rifles start popping all this stuff and then they have these long sticks as they threw them out.

Me: Streamers.

Sofia: Mexican flags. A whole bunch of Mexican flags were thrown across the stage and people just applauded you know. I thought man finally I am finally to see something that makes me feel proud and its funny that they accepted Danny saying Viva la Raza. I don't know anywhere else where they would accept it. But because Linda Ronstadt has such a broad a cross section audience. Because she has sang like Opera, she sang Country Western, Pop and Rock and all kinds music. You can see all these people were in the audience you know. I saw the program and thought how rich our culture really is and it is true and people should enjoy this it is positive you know. All the songs were in Spanish, people didn't know what she was saying, but they were appreciating it you know and when I hear you know when people are saying that they don't want Bilingual education I think how limited these people are. How can they do this to us when our culture is so rich.

Me: That's stupid.

Sofia: Yeah.

Me: It's stupid and total ignorance.

Sofia: That is what it is. It is racist.

Me: Racist.

Sofia: Yeah. And you know it has to stop but going back to what I've been talking about, it is not going to stop. We have to stop it. We have to make sure that we put a stop to that because if we are going to sit around and wait it is not going to stop it is always going to continue. Things are not getting better for us even though we have more understanding of our problems, things are worse for us. And I think one of the reasons is worse because we are a threat because we are numbers are really increasing and that means that we are going to have to take charge and take control and take the power one of these days and they are not willing to give it up. They don't think we are intelligent enough to run the government. They don't think we are intelligent enough to manage businesses and all that. They're wrong. We are going to have to prove them wrong. And you know I remember hearing the 80's were going to be the year of the Chicano. Oh God, the 80's the year of the Chicano. I can imagine what it is going to be like in the 90's.

Me: We're already in 88.

Sofia: I mean it has been nothing. We haven't accomplished anything. But I know that we can change things and the only way that we can change things is that we organize and we force those who are in power to change. That is the only way I know. That is the only way that my father was able to make any changes, it's the only way you know the Farmworkers were able to get any justice, it is the only way that my husband went to a Westminster School if you read Carey McWilliams book "North from Mexico" there is a little part in there was called the West Minister incident. He went to school in this little town in Westminster which is right next to Anaheim, between Anaheim and Santa Anna. And um he went to a segregated school, and that shocked me you know what at first I didn't believe him because I thought that only blacks were segregated in the South. I never knew Mexicans were segregated here in California and when he told me that I say oh my god I don't believe it but when I read Carey McWilliams book um I can see now that was true. They finally had to go to the Superior Court. The State Superior Court, in order to be integrated. When they integrated my husband was in the 9th grade and what happened is that he had to compete with these Anglos kids. He wasn't prepared; and he failed the 9th grade and again he tried the following year and he just did not compete, so he finally had to drop out of school. My husband is extremely intelligent, I felt really very bad when he talks about it and um but it happens.

I have a film which is called the "Lemon Grove Incident". This is a film which was done on um Chicano kids that were going to the school in Lemon Grove down in San Diego but anyway he should start keeping copies even if he doesn't know what he is going to do with them yet in the library anyway.

[New Tape, Labeled May 18, Side I]

Me: Tell me about the Health and Welfare Commission. You gave me an example of this one lady needed to take one of her children to the hospital and there was just one bus that took you all day to get there and how, I forgot the gentleman who, some Italian name . . .

Sofia: Sam Del Majore?

Me: Yeah, he kept telling you, you don't need it, you don't need it, you don't need it.

Sofia: I don't remember how much I got into it. Sam Del Majore was the supervisor for that district. It was the area, number 2, that's the Lawkins area now, but he would say no, you don't need a clinic, he would not even listen to the people of that area. And we were concerned because there was about 19 doctors that were located on the East Side of the bayshore, and I don't know if I mentioned that my doctor was in Cupertino, and when I went over there to find a doctor, all the doctors told me that their quotas were filled and they couldn't take any more patients. So, we kept going before the board of supervisors and you know they didn't see the need for a clinic. One time I was at a meeting at the board of supervisors and I was shocked to hear a group out in the Los Gatos area complaining because they were going to have another clinic very close proximity to an existing clinic and they didn't want a clinic. And I said give it to us we need it out on the East Side.

Me: They just wouldn't.

Sofia: No. I guess they just didn't see the need for it. Most of the people who went to Valley Medical lived in that side of town. I believe that the services should be where the people are. Like I said at that time there, the transportation was just really bad. A minor thing was an all day event to Valley Medical.

Me: There was just one bus up and down Alum Rock.

Sofia: Once an hour, if you missed that bus you had to wait a whole nother hour. And when other buses were down King Road or Story Road, cause there was no Eastridge at the time, nothing. Did I tell you about the immunization clinic?

Me: Yes, yeah you said that not many people were coming, and 600 people showed up.

Sofia: yeah, yeah that's right. So anyway it took us a long time to get the clinic. In fact on the 18th of next week they are going to celebrate 20th anniversary and they have asked me to come and speak, be the keynote speaker there at the clinic and how it got there but it's surprising that it was 20 years ago. But anyway Sam Del Majore had been the supervisor there for 16 years - a long time. Anyways we started knocking on doors talking to people and they didn't know who Sam Del Majore was, they didn't know anything about supervisorial district, they didn't know that he was the person to represent them for the lack of streetlights and pot holes in the street. At that time there were a lot of areas that were not incorporated into the city. It was like one block was city, two blocks were county, and then the next two blocks were city like that and they had terrible terrible services because of that.

The garbage trucks would come to one block and the next two weren't theirs then they would forget to go to the following block and it was a mess and people on that side of town really suffered because of that. Little by little they started incorporating that area into the city and the services became a little bit better. Not a whole lot better. But anyway, Sam Del Majore used to own a hardware on, I think it's Willow Street, right near Bird. He had a hardware store right next to it so what we did is we was picketed that hardware store and picketed everyday, letting people know that this man was against having a clinic on that side of town. Then he was going to run for office again, he didn't make it because of all the publicity that he had gotten, bad publicity because of the work that we did. We didn't have a candidate to run against him and we got Sam Del Majore voted out. The people became that powerful, working around this issue of the clinic because we organized a lot of people, we had a lot of marches in East San Jose down to the board of supervisors. I mean big marches with lots of people and then again confrontations that we were having down at the board of supervisors.

We would pack the council chambers I mean the supervisors chambers week after week trying to get the clinic. I don't know if I mentioned this when I was talking last week but when we wanted to have the clinic over there then they said they ok we're going to provide transportation to Valley Medical. Did I tell you about that?

Me: Yeah, I wrote it down.

Sofia: So then they said ok we'll solve your problem, we'll just give people rides down to Valley Medical. So they got this big Greyhound bus, a big bus that the county chartered to specifically take people to Valley Medical and then they had stops throughout the whole East Side to pick them up and take them. I remember this it was during the winter time, it was a way of sabotaging our plan.

Me: Yeah, it was for the clinic.

Sofia: And then they said well we've never had a satellite of a branch like that, we don't know if it's really going to work and we kept saying to the people in the area it was going to work. What we did is that we went around to all the stops and we'd tell the people not to ride the bus, boycott it you know please.

Me: It was kind of hard.

Sofia: It was, yeah, in the winter time, but we would give them the ride because you know the people had a right, it was a way to get out there. But we took them, we took them to Valley Medical and we found other people to ride them. We thought that the clinic was too important so we had to do it. I remember in the newspapers they used to show these pictures of an empty bus riding around in the area, and it really worked.

Me: When was this, about 1968?

Sofia: Yeah, around there. You figure that the clinic will be 20 years old. We must have started about 1965. Anyway so the boycott worked and we had you know we really began focusing it more on you know listening to us and seeing what we were talking about. Well I can't remember how, there was an outfit from San Francisco that got involved and they came in there to do a survey of the area to see if a clinic was needed and I remember that the report said

that yes they need preventive health services, and not only but they also needed mental health services on that side of town. And we weren't asking for that. But they threw it in and we said fine you know we need the whole thing cause it would have eventually gotten to that point.

Anyway so things just seemed to go in our favor and after three years they finally said ok, ok just to placate us they said OK we'll give you a little office in the basement of Alexian Brothers and we had a small little room, I mean it was a little little room in the basement. So then we had to go out and drum up patients and let them know that the clinic was there because I know they wanted us to fail but they would have to get over it. So it was really up to us to let people know that the clinic was there. And I remember a Dr. Reger was the chairperson of the Health and Welfare Commission at the time. And after the clinic had been open for about three or four weeks he came to my house really angry one day and he said I can't tolerate this he said I want you to guarantee 50 patients a day. We can't handle this. Because at that time there were doctors volunteering their time to be at the clinic but anyway they didn't have anyone who was full time there. And so when the doctor was there and the clinic was open they wanted patients. Well, you don't tell people, look, you get sick at 2 o'clock in the afternoon every Wednesday you know so that they can have patients. And so what this Dr. Reger said to me, he said one day we have two patients and the next day we get 120, and the next day we get five and then we get 20 and then we get 200 and he says we can't deal with that. I got so mad when he told me that.

Me: But Why.

Sofia: But that's so stupid you know so I ran him out of my house and I told him I dare you to shut that clinic down, I just dare you to shut it down so I had a big old argument with him. They didn't shut it down, I think they were afraid because we had organized so many people. It was not me, I didn't do anything, all I did was to organize people to do it. They're the ones who did it you know, so when I tell you this don't think that I'm a real powerful kind of person like I can do it. I'm not. All I do is organize people and they're the ones who do all the work, all I do is get them together.

Me: I think that's the most important part, is to get people together.

Sofia: That's true, but I'm not powerful enough to stop something like that. So anyway we got the clinic open and more and more patients started coming in, little by little, it took awhile for the people to know the clinic was there. We got to a point where they couldn't handle it there was so many patients coming in so then what they did is that they had those little portables over on McKee Road, and then finally they got the big building in. And you go there and the parking is full all the time, all the services are being utilized and on top of that they have other groups that are using it like AA, and other things, and they have other services for the people on that side of town. And so of course they are real proud because they are providing services but there still has always been the threat of shutting it down whenever they talk about cutting costs that is the first thing they're going to do is to shut it down.

Me: To this day?

Sofia: To this day, yeah. I know that about four or five years ago they wanted to shut it down and we got people together and we killed it. And again I hear these rumblings you know and people talking about it. There're going

to have a fight on their hands because the clinic is really needed and it is very used. I don't know if you've ever been there. It's always full.

Me: Yeah, I've been there. I remember in high school my teacher for some reason wanted us to be aware of VD, kept stressing the point: you have the clinic here - use it, please use it. He says it's great, they're confidential, and they understand. And I always heard growing up, go to the clinic.

Sofia: It's still there.

Me: It provides I think a lot of information. If you go to a hospital, you're not likely to talk about VD, whereas a clinic, it's less formal but it gives you the same services.

Sofia: Its not as formal.

Me: Yeah.

Sofia: People feel more comfortable you know going there. I talked to a lot of people, most in out-patient clinic, you have to wait patiently and go over to Valley Medical and that makes sense because most of the people who utilized, that were utilizing it, were out patients and it just makes a lot of sense but it's really funny that after our big battle and everything and the clinic was there, then doctors started moving in to the East side. You know it's like all of a sudden it got a lot of attention and then they started moving in. And if you go to around Alexian Brothers Hospital and you see doctors offices all over place. They're all over, and it just really surprised us you know like I told you there were only 19 doctors on the east side of 101.

Me: Maybe they needed someone to go, most of the people are unwilling to pay, unfortunately.

Sofia: Well, doctors are like anybody else they locate to where the money is, and the money is really not on the East Side of town, it's not there. And I know there's lots of MediCal patients but if doctors are good businessmen they find out hey this is guaranteed money, you know and people go to a doctor and it costs you \$500, how long is it going to take you to pay \$500 and you know, if you get a MediCal patient the money is going to come and I mean you're going to get paid, and like I say you know every businessman knows where the money is at, so it depends solely on how many people.

I'm glad to see that we did have an impact on bringing the medical services to East San Jose. It was very, very important thing, it was a very big step, it was a big battle, it was like a three, three and a half year struggle, it was a daily, daily, and work around it. When I go to the clinic I feel very proud to see it because I sit there and I look about and I say I am probably the only one in this building who knows how it got here you know.

Me: You appreciate it.

Sofia: Yeah, I know all the people that worked on it, that marched, that screamed and hollered and did what we had to do to get it.

Me: Who were the people? Are they still around?

Sofia: Yeah, Ernestina Garcia I think worked on it, there's a person by the name of Joe Graham who's still doing volunteer work for me here on the whole issue of redevelopment, Fred Hersh was one of the organizers, Tony Esteneda who is an attorney and is working for Legal Aid now, was just a very young man, a very, very young man at the time, and that's when we ran into Tony and he really developed into a leader, a community leader. And that was one of the things that we were interested in doing is developing leadership out of the grass roots you know and we did come up with some good leaders sure, we did, but anyway Tony Esteneda was one of them, Jack Brito was another one who works with CASA LIBRE, he's another one. Sammy and Rudy Madrid and Irene Madrid and just a lot of people that are still active and maybe to some extent Jose Carrasco became a little involved around that. A lot of the people came from San Jose State because what we did, we organized everybody. But anyway, it was a wonderful time you know. Someone asked me tell me about the most memorable years in your life and I wrote up during that time we were doing a lot of organizing. It was so exciting to see the organization among the Chicano community. It was so wonderful I had never seen anything like it because there were students, the students were very involved. They were having their problems at San Jose State and we were trying to organize around issues of education and discrimination in that whole institute you know, and then we had you know part of our community were having problems with the police and then we had another part of the community that were having problems with health and transportation and you name it. But somehow we were really able to come together you know and we really came together and no matter what the issue was, students were very very involved in the issue of the clinic. I go back and I look at some pictures and I see students that were so young. Danny Hernandez who is an attorney now was very very active in the school and really having his problems but he had so much pride in being involved in the community issue. It's like there was no division of that's not my issue, I'm interested in this, I'm going to stick to this, and you know you students stay in the university and it was just wonderful. We had none of that. Another thing that makes me very proud to think back at the time is that San Jose gave a lot of leadership to the whole Chicano Movement in the Southwest. Not just . . . when I say San Jose I mean all of our community. The students were very influential in what went on with Chicanos in the Southwest and I remember that there was a lot of focus on San Jose just a lot, a lot of focus after we had a walkout at Woodrow Wilson Junior high school and it was a very successful walkout.

Me: This was after the Roosevelt walkout right?

Sofia: I'm talking about the Roosevelt walkout.

Me: For the Roosevelt walkout, I remember you were very successful with that, and it was the same principal who was at Roosevelt, his brother was the principal at Wilcox.

Sofia: There were five brothers that were principals. Five "Booksers."

Me: "Booksers," yeah, the Booksers, the prune growers.

Sofia: But after we had the walkout at Roosevelt, I guess it got known because I had this friend called Rosalio Munoz from L.A. He is the one who organized the Chicano Moratorium. You know, around the issues that were happening to Chicanos in Vietnam. Anyway he got really involved and he called me up and he said look this is happening in L.A. they are having the

same problem as you are and the school this and that and we want to have a walkout you know. So over the telephone I helped him organize that walkout in L.A. and the L.A. walkout got all the publicity. We didn't get all that publicity in San Jose but I'm saying that we were able to have an influence in what went there because they followed what we had done here and we did organize them over the telephone you know and they had a very successful walkout in L.A. But the point I'm trying to make is that we did give a lot of leadership to the Chicano Movement in the Southwest. We had had a lot of success in the things that we were doing here.

Me: What do you think about the leadership now? The Movement now? Do we have leaders of today?

Sofia: No, I don't see it.

Me: Why is that?

Sofia: I don't know. I think a lot about it. I think and I think. A lot of the people that we have in leadership positions have jobs that have them tied down now, a lot of the directors doing this and that. So many people at that time weren't working. Now everybody has to work and some of those people in those positions can't do it. And we don't have the organization that we had before, the students are really not organized like they were before, neither is the community.

Me: Is it because the students become snug because we have this and this and we don't need it.

Sofia: No, I don't think that's it at all. I think we always care, nobody has convinced me yet that Chicanos don't care. We care a lot about what goes on. No one has convinced me yet that we don't care about family or what happens in our community. We are tight we really are if you really look down to it we are tight. It's not bad I think a lot of it has to do with we're not greedy people, we're not greedy. When I look back at myself o.k. and my own involvement in this and I know I'm very aggressive and very assertive I know how I am I like to be on top of things you know. But recently I've been going back and taking a look you know why is there a lull in our movement? Why hasn't there been a lot of activity in a lot of things and I think one of the things, and I have been critical of myself, because I can see that once we got what we were after we backed off. We said OK, like the clinic for instance o.k. we have the clinic, we've got it, there is the building now lets move on to another issue. That's backing off. Once we had 193 units of housing out on McKee Road and Jackson used to be called tierra nuestra now they changed it to las casitas. Once we saw 193 units of housing built you know then we backed off and moved on to something else. We have to learn to control those things. We have to stay involved and make sure that these you know whatever it was we wanted is still serving the community. Now that the clinic should be community run, there should be a board, we should have left a board intact. At the housing we should have done the same. We don't do that. We don't. We just move on to something else. And now I'm happy to hear that MALDEF is training Chicanos to sit on boards to control, we have to learn to control. Otherwise - and that's one of the things that happened to us it was like once we won the battle it was kind of we went to another battle you know. And we are still fighting you know. Yeah, we won a lot of battles, a lot of them, but the thing is once we won it we have to stay involved we can't back off completely and move on to anything else. We have to stay there right on top of things, we have to monitor things. I don't

remember myself ever monitoring anything to the end to make sure that it was still with the community and still serving and still being involved.

And that's where the power is at, is in, you know. And I think that's why we didn't stay really involved in a lot of things, we don't have our figure on what's happening inside, and we got to penetrate these things we have to stay inside we have to find out what is happening. We do have more people working inside now to give us information but that's the hardest thing is to get the information about what is happening to our people because we don't have, don't have enough people in the inside to let us know. And we have to learn to be accountable to our community, we have to always be accountable and that's another thing that our people are so loyal you feel that you have to be loyal because you have a job here your loyalty should always be to your community. And we have to learn that, we really have to learn it. It's not being a traitor you know to anyone else because you stay loyal to your community. You have to learn do that. I think those kinds of things have made us feel kind of satisfied, like o.k., we got enough Chicanos in the university and its going to continue to happen and its not look what is happening at all the universities. It is six percent of the student population and it's gone way way down and at Santa Clara University everywhere that we have struggled so hard so hard and we fought very hard to get a few administrative positions and Chicano counselors but they are all gone. And I go back to Santa Clara University and I talk to Inez Gomez over there and they combined her position with somebody else they took her office away and pretty soon it gets watered down and you lose all that power that you have. That's way I say we haven't really really monitored all of that. And so what we have to do now, we have to go build a new struggle to get back what we had.

But anyway on the clinic, I was talking about the pride I feel about all of this. San Jose during that time was just a wonderful place to be. We were involved a lot of dangerous situations you know. I don't think I got into the whole police thing but that was a very very dangerous thing for our community you know opposing anything that has to do with the police. It was a very very hard time, really very very hard you know people don't pay attention then we have to beat them over the head you know to barely get their attention.

Me: May 18, 1988, last time we left off, you finished ...

Sofia: What have I talked about so far?

Me: So far, just Valley Medical Clinic on McKee Road that's all you covered so far and we were going to go into the COPS next - Community Alert Patrol - that was under United People Arriba. From there it went to Community Alert Patrol.

Sofia: O.K. last Thursday the clinic celebrated its 20th anniversary, and I was the keynote speaker. It was really nice Zoe Lofgren spoke, the board of supervisors and there were other, patients spoke, and nurses and anyway it was a really nice feeling. They made me real important you know. No, it was a different feeling because when the clinic, when we were struggling to get the clinic, everybody hated me, it was like I was a really bad guy.

Me: Why?

Sofia: Well the people on the board of supervisors and doctors you know. Some of the people who were making me feel important that day? Because I was their enemy you know 20 years ago. And the board of supervisors hated us, and people who were working for the city and county government both really hated us because we were fighting so hard to get that clinic. But there sits the clinic 20 years later, all of a sudden I walk in you know, they had all these newspaper articles about the marches and stuff like that on the bulletin board you know. And there they had my picture in the middle of the whole thing they made me feel like I was really important you know, and I kept saying this is really ironic you know 20 years ago you know they didn't make me feel like that.

Me: They probably threw darts the your picture.

Sofia: Yeah, Yeah. But anyway I walked in and saw my picture up there and I said oh my God no where did they get these articles from you know and but it was a completely different feeling and a different attitude it was all of a sudden why she, she was responsible for us having this beautiful clinic here. And that Bob Sillen the director from Valley Medical was there and he giving me a lot of credit. Anyway when I was speaking, I was telling them a history of the struggle you know and I was telling them this Dr. Reger, chairperson of the Health and Welfare Commission, tried to shut the clinic down, so when Bob Sillen got up to speak, he goes he know about that because when I got the directorship here he said, that he was going to cut 1 1/2 positions from that clinic and I got the nurses and people together and brought them together and we told him you better not, you dare not. And I know what she is talking about, I wouldn't dare touch the clinic because I'm not looking for trouble. Well, we struggled too hard to get that clinic you know for them to touch anything in there, but it was a beautiful celebration there. They had a mariachi and they had a big old spread of food. They had a mariachi band and they had folkloric dancers and some of the kids from my son's dance group performed. It was just a beautiful celebration.

It was a real community type oriented celebration, it was not real structured. The mariachi played and they were asking people what songs they wanted them to play and the gardener coming to me he said ask them if I can sing a song with them you know. So the gardener was singing and all of a sudden everybody had a lot of respect for this gardener that had a beautiful voice cause nobody knew he could sing so well. And he sang real real well, the man had a lot of talent. So he continued to sing several songs with the mariachi and then this woman asked me I want to sing a song too you know she was blond blue eyes and she had a real thick accent you know. Where is this guittia from. So I asked the mariachi if she could sing a song. So she sang La Agana, and she sang perfect Spanish she had a beautiful voice and I asked her if she was Mexicana. She said well, I don't know what to tell you, my parents are Anglo but she said I was born in Mexico. Her parents were missionaries. She was born over there and she hasn't been here too long so she doesn't speak English very well. It's funny to see that. So she sang and the celebration was just beautiful.

Me: So the crying and the screaming and the struggle, was worth it in the end.

Sofia: And its worth it see you know its really funny when you're an organizer it's a very lonely job, very lonely you know. Because you work so hard and because you're away from home so much, you get kicked in the teeth a lot. You expect some thank yous you know and you don't get them. You don't

get thank yous, you get I don't know, you just get a lot of criticism. Anyway, you go home and get yelled at by your family and your children or your husband and children because you're not around a lot and people in the government, and when you do something wrong the people in the community yell at you too but deep down in your heart you know you're right. And you're right and you can't give up the struggle up and after its all over you say darn it nobody says you know nobody really thanks you. You just don't see the thank yous but in retrospect you just know how grateful people are. I mean you know I never really felt that a real thank you until that day you know. They made me feel like some big old celebrity you know. But I say God it didn't do it you know I just got the people together the people who wanted to make a change. Anyway it was really nice to see that there was some recognition for the effort that went in, for all the struggle that people went through. It was really, really rewarding and that's important and it's too bad that the newspaper isn't there to pick up on this kind of positive stuff.

Me: Was it videotaped or anything like that?

Sofia: No, I should have taken my camcorder and videotaped it. But I kept thinking, I went home feeling so good and I didn't want to leave I was the last one to leave. I just stayed and enjoyed it all and it made me feel good to see people so happy and a lot of elderly people came up to me and they really thanked me for the clinic being there because they said if this clinic wasn't there we would have to go all the way to East Valley. And they were real happy I was there. Parents sent their little children to thank me to you know and it was really nice and um there were people from the Alcoholics Anonymous group I guess there.

Me: Yeah, they have AA groups there.

Sofia: Something was there, I don't know and they were thanking me too and I would be thankful to a lot of people and it was really nice I didn't take the thank yous personally like it was me. It was kind of thank you that the clinic is here you know. Because the credit really goes to all the people who struggled so hard to get it there. But anyway it just kind of made the whole thing really worth while. I can see that the thank yous do come not when you want them but they come. They come when its time 20 years and you know what made me so happy is that there were people that remembered that the clinic had been there for 20 years and felt it was important enough to have a celebration you know that was a really good thing. They were celebrating the fact that people struggled 20 years ago to put the clinic in here. The board of supervisors didn't do it you know, it was some of the nurses and some of the people that had been working there that long.

Me: 20 years, I mean the celebration.

Sofia: Yes, the staff did. Isn't it wonderful that they remember what day the clinic opened up?

Me: Yeah.

Sofia: I know, the more I think about it the more important I think it is that they did it. Really, really important.

Me: It is worth more to the people who appreciate it.

Sofia: And they invited other people who you know who were involved in setting up the clinic it was a wonderful thing. Just the thought it made it seem so important and I feel so good about it. So anyway that happened last week, last Thursday, it was an evening celebration it was just wonderful.

I don't know these last two weeks have been very rewarding because I been asked to speak to a lot of different classes at San Jose State and it seems to me like there is an interest again in the movement you know and what happened.

Me: 20 years ago.

Sofia: Yeah, and people have been asking to go speak on different struggles, speaking about Community Alert Patrols and People de Arriba, about the clinic and a couple of places. What it is to be an organizer, how do you organize, a lot of those kind of things. In these last two weeks it has been very rewarding, really rewarding, and I think those are the thank yous that never come and people. I think the message to me was the work that you have done is important. That's what I understood, even though it wasn't sad. So, that's why I say these last two weeks were very just very rewarding. Ok when we were organizing around the clinic, when we were organizing around Roosevelt School and I described Roosevelt school.

Me: Yeah, about the walkout.

Sofia: Right, one of the things that kept coming up over, and over, and over again was the way the police were treating the people you know, and all during this time I was believed what the people were saying because I myself was walking you know walking the streets a lot and knocking doors talking to people. I myself witnessed a lot a lot of police brutality and nobody had to convince me that there was police brutality. I saw it myself you know. One day when we were sitting across the street from the Community Improvement Center. . .

[TURNED TAPE OVER, "Side II"]

Me: The Community Improvement Center? That's where you had a preschool program? And you were located in Little Egypt - I still like that name. I remember it was from there you did police monitoring and it was with Jack Brito.

Sofia: So, when we had that preschool center on Lynette Way, in Little Egypt. We had a duplex and there were a lot of community meetings there. During the day we had a preschool program there and at night we used it for meetings, and I used to go there when it was hot in the summer time. I would go there and open the door. And one time I was sitting out on the steps just waiting for the whether to cool off and for people to come. And when I sat there I noticed police cars you know going around the block and then they started going around with their lights turned off and I thought it was really weird so I kept my eyes on them. Then all of a sudden here come other police cars and they stop in front of his house directly across from the center and they kicked the door down. They never knocked or anything. Just kicked the door down and went in and I got real scared. I went over there because it was the previous day this elderly man and his wife had moved in; they were very old like in their 70's. I thought what are these cop doing all I can hear is the lady screaming you know. So I went over there and when I got over there they were apologizing. They were sorry; that was not the house they were

looking for you know. They were looking for somebody else and you know it doesn't matter what, you just don't treat people . . . they were just really apologetic you know. So I saw a lot of that a lot a lot of that you know. On the East Side they would just knock, knock the doors down and go in. I saw a lot of cops stopping people. There had been a lot of complaints against the police. At Roosevelt school there was a cop that had a regular beat on the school grounds - that was his beat, that was his job. You know and I saw him really harassing the kids, I saw him shoving kids around and arresting them at school and it was just too much ok what the police were doing and the complaints were getting more and more serious. I can't remember from what year to what year, that the cops I remember had killed in a matter of five years had killed 16 people. We kept saying out loud this isn't right, I mean how can you get away with this, and in many instances the cops kept saying that they thought the person had a gun and it turned out that the person was unarmed. It happened a lot. One time this time a kid had a roll of coins in his hand and the cops thought it was a gun you know. And I saw many, many, many, times, I saw police stop people and pull their guns out and then they walked up to the car. In most cases they were stopped for traffic infractions you know. I said this isn't right because when I lived down in Campbell I never saw the police doing that, never. If you were walking on the street late at night they would give you a ride home you know. If you were walking out they would stop and talk to you and ask you if everything was ok and then they would go on they never treated anybody like that like the cops over here. So, there was another organizer a very very good organizer by the name of Fred Hersh that was working down there and um we worked together. We didn't work together at the Community Improvement Center. I met Fred when I starting working around the Roosevelt School District, that's when I met Fred. Fred Hersh is probably one of the best organizers that I have ever known. And he took some time away from San Jose and went to work with Cesar Chavez. And he got some of his training from one of Saul Alinsky's organizers.

Me: Who?

Sofia: Fred Hersh.

Me: He was organizing.

Sofia: Fred Ross was trained by Saul Alinsky.

Me: Saul Alinsky?

Sofia: Do you know who Saul Alinsky is?

Me: Sorry, I don't.

Sofia: Saul Alinsky is the God of organizing. I mean he has written many books. If you go to graduate school in Social Work you'll study him. Saul Alinsky is the one person who helped trained Cesar Chavez. Taught him about organizing and just helped him a lot. Anyway, he helped Fred Hersh a lot too. Fred Hersh is just one of those naturally born organizers. And I was very fortunate to have someone like him working with me. And I was very fortunate to have other people like Dr. Galarza that helped me a lot, I had Sofia Montoya and another older man by the name of Antonio de Bono who used to organize many years ago the fish canneries down in San Diego. I felt so lucky because this is a big monstrous job that we took on. When it came to dealing with the police I mean that was really really tough. It was scary

because there was a chief of police that was in there for over 40 years, named was Ray Blackmore and the police really controlled. The Police Officers Association really really controlled the police department and they did whatever they want, you know. So anyway, and we knew that what was going on was wrong and somebody had to do something about it you know. So that's something that as we worked on other issues we did keep our eye on the police department I mean that was our ultimate goal was to organize around the police issues. People weren't ready to tackle the police right away. I mean we had to take on smaller issues. There is a stop light on the corner of San Antonio and King Road.

Me: Yep.

Sofia: That's where we started even before the Roosevelt school. We told people you know are you unhappy about the stop lights, about the accidents in that corner. They kept saying yeah, we are unhappy because it way a four way stop and there was a school right next to it and there was a bar right on the corner right next to the school on the same corner as San Antonio school. I'm backing up a little bit just to tell you you know tell you how you have to organize people around other issues and then slowly work them into what you really want. So people said we are really upset about the accidents on the corner and we said do you want to do something about it and they kept saying yeah, yeah. Well, we said look it is very easy but you have to do it. We had neighborhood meetings, we had - this was right after Roosevelt school. We had house meetings, we had meetings on the street talking to people you know. We circulated a petition and we had people circulating petitions. We took people down to City Hall and we would say that these are the people that you know, are responsible for what's going on that corner. These are the people that represent you, and they didn't know who their representatives were. And we kept telling them and we would do the same thing when we went before the Board of Supervisors. And we said that these people are responsible for all the holes in the street and the lack of lights and bad garbage services and the people were really angry about all that stuff and the bad services. So boy they were happy, they were anxious to go to the City Council meeting, and so we got our stop light there and after we got our stop light, see, we started talking to people and kept saying see how powerful you really are you know. If you really organize, then you have a voice, and they can hear you. And that's how you bring about all these changes. This happened just around before the clinic right after the Roosevelt school that we did the stop light. And we told people you know, the people said we're unhappy about lack of transportation, and we are unhappy what goes on our schools, we're unhappy about the cops, we're unhappy about you know just a whole lot of things, there wasn't enough housing on the East Side of town. And so, they wanted an organization but they wanted to take on several issues. So that's what we did, we formed United People Arriba. Our very first meeting we had about 130 people there. It was at a school. There were about 130 people there and that's, ok we formed United People Arriba, and right after school we had the clinic. So this happened just before. And then we they were getting the stop light; we told them hey you know they are building a school over there; and they are going to name the school Joseph George. They didn't know who was Joseph George was right, so we had to educate them. We told them that Joseph George was one of the biggest liquor distributors in California and they are going to name your school after Joseph George. And not only was he a big liquor distributor there but he was distributing Parelli-Manetti wines that were being boycotted by the farmworkers at that time. So, we said we got to stop it, so we

stopped them from naming the school after Joseph George. So see the people began feeling more power.

Me: What was the name of the school?

Sofia: San Antonio school.

Me: That's funny cause I went to a middle school called Joseph George.

Sofia: Over on the East Side?

Me: Unh huh.

Sofia: Yeah, but they named it over there.

Me: Tough security?

Sofia: Yeah, Joseph George was a liquor distributor.

Me: I didn't know that.

Sofia: Why didn't they put the school on Saratoga or in the Los Gatos area or in Almaden or somewhere else why on the East Side? I mean why did they want to honor a liquor distributor who was destroying San Jose. Yeah, that is who Joseph George was, but we said no you're not going to name this school Joseph George. So, they did name another one. That is who he is. What an honor?

Me: Yeah, in my high school, it was named after a womanizer, a drunk and a leach. That's what they told me.

Sofia: So the people began to feel power. They could see that by getting together and by organizing themselves that they could do something. So after all these little victories that we had then we went after the clinic. That clinic about a 3 to 3 1/2 year struggle and all the time we were doing this we were documenting what the police were doing you know. And that was our ultimate goal but you know that the people wouldn't really go for it right away because it was a scary thing. Anyway.

Me: The police were that powerful.

Sofia: Oh yeah, the Police Officers Association. Anyway, after this we decided we wanted to apply for some monies to build some housing some affordable housing in East San Jose. And we got some money from the MOTT Foundation, and we got those family loans. They were federal monies, they were called Fannie Mae loans. I forgot what Fannie Mae stood for, there are abbreviations I forgot, but it was federal monies to go for housing. And we built 193 units of housing on Jackson Avenue and North Jackson. Right near, right around the corner, it's right across the street from Independence High School.

Me: McKee?

Sofia: McKee and Jackson. You go down McKee Road and a left on Jackson. Independence is on the left, the housing is on the right. We named it Tierra Nuestra but they change the name to Las Casitas. We were trying to turn it into a co-op housing. We weren't able to do it I mean we really had to

concentrate on that, but we didn't, we weren't able to move the people in that we should. When they finished the project; they had finished the front first so people started moving in, by the time the last ones moved in front the first ones had already been real organized and then there was a real breakdown. You know, so we lost it I don't know who bought it now but they changed the name to Las Casitas. And it is affordable housing they have I guess low and moderate housing. The thing is that the housing was built, that's the important thing. And the people began to feel more and more powerful and what happened is the organization was growing.

So anyway going back to what we were talking about United People Arriba.

Me: Yeah, at first you wanted to get the people organized then you went to Roosevelt and then the clinic and then slowly started getting into more issues. Then you said ok we'll go to the police because the complaints were getting more and more serious.

Sofia: Yeah, well the police was our ultimate goal and that was what we were really concerned about but when you organize you have to start where the people were at, and then wind up complaining about the pot holes in the street and the lack of street lights you know stop signs and that's where we were at, you know and that's where you had to start and those were the issues you had to take on first. And then they were concerned about school problems and discrimination that was taking place in the schools lack of health services in the East Side and those kinds of things lack of housing, transportation. I mean it was one battle after another and all along we kept focusing on the police and we kept talking to people about that, it shouldn't be like that and just really concentrating on that and then what happened during the five year period there were 16 people killed, most of them were Chicanos. Like I said, you know a lot of cases they were unarmed and the cops were armed and you know we said that this has to stop, it had to stop this couldn't go on. And so we started having fund raisers, saving all our money and we had big successful dances, and food sales and we had to earn money anyway that we could because we needed a lot of equipment. First of all during that time we Anti-Poverty Program which was the EOC, Economic Opportunity Commission. People would were writing grants for everything. So we put together a grant that we submitted to EOC to set up a patrol that would monitor the police, and of course they turned it down. The EOC wasn't going to fund such a thing, but we felt that they should fund it, and we felt we had to try anyway you know. We were determined that's what the community needed because the police problems were very serious.

And so, we turned our proposal in and they turned it down and we decided that we knew that we were going to set up our own patrol. We knew that we had a right do that. We had a lot of fund raisers. We had to purchase equipment. We had to buy a monitor to monitor the police calls. We had to buy two-way radios that we were going to install in the cars so that they could connect to the base station. We had to buy cameras and we had to buy tape recorders, and we had to buy office materials, you know, we needed a file cabinet to store our stuff. We needed a lot of stuff, you know, office supplies and, so we started buying a of the equipment little by little. I was surprised that we finally had enough to get some patrols going. We had to adapt the material, I mean the radios to the cars ok and what we did is that my husband is a welder, so my husband welded these brackets that we could mount on the top of the cars. And it was adjustable if it was a Volkswagen you know we could make it smaller, if it was a bigger car we could extend it and what happened it was a bracket that went around and it fit around the windows of the cars. Then we could fit our radios on top of there or antennas. We had

our antennas on top there and we had lead inside the car yeah, and each car had to have like a tape recorder, it had to have a camera, and the radio and we used to patrol. What we did is that we took the area where there was a problem with the police. And it was mostly central San Jose and East San Jose and that's where the Mexican and Black people lived so they were the ones having the problems. So what we did is took the area and divided it and we numbered the areas. We had like number 1, 2 like that so what we do on Friday and Saturday nights cause that's when we had the most problems with the police.

Me: Why was that, Friday and Saturday nights?

Sofia: Well, you know.

Me: It's when people would go out.

Sofia: People go out yeah Friday and Saturday nights people don't work. That's where you have dances and parties and all of that. And cops would break up parties early. And if you didn't break up the parties when they said break it up there was trouble, you know bad bad trouble. They would just come and break up the parties and that was it. And um, so we would send our patrols out into those areas and as soon as, you know the cars knew exactly what their boundaries were, and so what we would do you know we would monitor the police calls.

And when the police would sent somebody out, we would sent our units out there right away and our units were there already and most instances we would get out there before the police were ever out. I went out on the first patrol. Jose Carrasco went out on that very first patrol too. Jose, my husband and I went together in Jose's Volkswagen, he was driving and we were manning the equipment. We would sent our cars out there and we were only out there to monitor and document you know. We got real strict instructions about how we were supposed to conduct ourselves out there.

Me: Who gave you the strict instruction? What kind of instructions? Did you have to undergo any training, what to do, what your rights were as a patrol, what you can do and not do?

Sofia: Yeah, everybody who went out on patrol had to go through some briefings. We had a group of people who did it. See I would say there were over 1000 people involved in CAP. We had a lot of people that wanted to become part of CAP, that wanted to go out on patrols. And not everybody could be out, so we had teams, se, one team for one night, another team the next night, then another team the next weekend. And we went out in teams. I don't know how many people it would be you know on each given night. We had three people in each car; there was one person with the tape recorder and camera, another person with the radio, and the driver. I forget how many cars we would have out in each area. I forgot how many areas we had so we had quite a few out there. Then we had people at the base station. So anyway, we had a group of people that were trained to you know to give orientation to anybody that came on the patrols. And it was a very serious, very well organized thing. Before we even set up the Community Alert Patrol we had gone to City Council and complained to them about the police department. We had been doing this throughout the years and so we complained so much, and I think they knew we were right in our complaints, so they set up the Human Relations Commission. They said this commission is gonna do mediation and they are going to look at the whole thing you know. But the

thing is that the commission didn't have any power. It doesn't have the power to tell these cops stop, to fire them, it doesn't have power at all, so we said it was all for nothing because see what happens is that once a cop gets on the force whether he is good or bad they leave him on. And we kept saying no this is not right because if you are a production worker and you get a job and you can't do a good job they fired you.

But with cops and teachers once you're on it you can be bad because you're in there for good you know. So we said well here is the commission you know but no power to do anything you know. So we kept saying, we kept on and we go back to the City and complained and complained to City Council. The Police Officer Association was always there you know they are just like dogs you know everything that went on and we complained and complained some more. Then they set up the Internal Affairs Unit.

Me: They set it up.

Sofia: Yeah, Internal Affairs Unit. Well we started really talking about it you know. Patrolling cars they said Internal Affairs well its a unit within the police department you know, I kept saying what's this? It is like asking a bank robber to go and investigate a bank robbery. We knew nothing was going to happen you know. So, anyway we got sick and tired of it and you know meanwhile the cops are getting worse and worse and it was all being directed to Chicanos you know.

Me: Seems like the more you complained, they took it out on everybody.

Sofia: Yeah, yeah they were getting really - I mean they were really out of hand. So, we just went ahead and we set up our own patrols ok. We raised the money and set them up. We said we were very serious about it. We weren't just out there you know for the heck of doing it, it was dangerous because we would be out at night. We would be out to 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning patrolling, out at night you know; and so what we did is we got a group of people and we sat down, what is it that we have, how do we train people to go out on patrol you know. So we would sit down and we would brief them and say look when you go out on patrol you're not to get involved with the police at all not at all. You do not interfere with their arrests. You do not interfere with anything they do; if they are beating somebody up you take pictures of it, document it exactly, and put everything into the tape recorder. You take down the name of the policeman, you take down the badge number if you can, you take down the car number. You get all, everything that you can. You go out and talk to witness you know. We would show people how to document. You wrote it, you put it on tape, and you took photographs. Now, we would also tell people that you remain in your car at all times unless you really had to get out you remain in your car. You don't get out. We were real strict about all this you know.

Me: Strict guidelines.

Sofia: Very, very strict because we were very serious about what we were doing. And we had to make sure we had a good serious people out there that really cared about this. We did not have people that were going to go out and you know interfere with the police or go out and harass them you know. We were very serious because we were very serious about stopping what was going on you know in our neighborhoods. So we would train everybody who was going out on patrol. So it took a lot of training because we had a lot of people who went out on these patrols. I don't know, it was very successful.

I believe it was very, very successful; but then you know we found that cops would sit around the base station you know watching us, just sit around watching you know. We felt they had no business doing that but they were.

Me: They would sit at the base station.

Sofia: Yeah, just watch us. So one thing we made sure is that we never left alone. We would always leave in groups you know because we were afraid of them. They would sit there and watch us, they used to smear mud on the license plates; they used to remove their badges. You know we went to city council and complained about this, and they said they had removed their badges because we kept using it as a weapon against them and I don't know why they smeared mud on their license plates. Evidently they didn't want to be identified; whatever they were doing was wrong. So we complained and complained a lot about these things but you know complaints didn't do any better. But they used to try to harass us you know make a lot of snide remarks when we were out there, and they tried to provoke you know but we didn't let them provoke us, we just kept our distance. We did document a lot of police brutality. We documented a lot of it, and what we would do is that we would turn it over to people so they could help fight their cases in court because Chicanos complained about police brutality and it was like they would always believe the cop because the cop was right. But we went with our documentation, we were able to give this information to the cops so that you know they could help fight their cases in court. It was very successful that way. Anyway, one time we had this one incident that was really very very bad it was real serious I mean really serious. You know I was able to get some walkie talkies from EOC. Economic Opportunity Commission; they never helped us with money but they loaned us some walkie talkies. I'm not really sure if they knew that the walkie talkies were being used for patrol. But we had these walkie talkies ok. One time we went sometimes we would go out to the parks and something like that we would walk around you know. We would have to communicate with the walkie talkies. We had our walkie talkies out there, cameras taking pictures, the whole bit. Anyway, it was just a hot day in the middle of summer in the daytime. I think there had been trouble in the park that day.

Me: What park was that?

Sofia: Heller Park, anyway I can get you more details on this one incident. I have it written up, but there was a killing over there. Somebody killed somebody somewhere, sheriffs were involved in this when I got there. But anyway our patrols were there you know because something happened, it seems that the cops turned on our patrols. Well, the cops had pointed a gun at somebody, a man was sitting in a car. The cops had taken our tape recorder away and put it under the wheel of a car and there was a man sitting in the car and the cop had taken a gun and told him the man sitting in the driver seat and told him to back up you know. The man didn't want to back up because he didn't want to run over the tape recorder. Somebody else took a picture of the cop you know with the gun that was pointing at the man took the picture and the cops went over there and exposed the film. They just took all the film out and exposed it, they made the man run over our tape recorder and destroyed a lot of equipment, and they arrested some of our people that day. They got arrested I don't remember all the details behind who was arrested. Anyway what happened as a result of that is we got more publicity. We got a lot more publicity you know, and it was really obvious that what the cops were doing was wrong. And then shortly after that the cops were called out one night. I guess this guy Danny Trevino and his girlfriend were having

an argument, sitting in the car having an argument right in Guadalupe Auzerias area, and Danny was so drunk that he couldn't get out of the car, he couldn't move. So, what happened, someone calls the police because they were arguing. I think by the time the cops came she said that everything was ok. Danny was married to somebody else. But anyway, the cops came out there and they said that Danny made a motion like this, like he had a gun in his hand he went like this. And so two cops fired from behind and they hit him, one near the shoulder and the other in the head. They killed him you know and Danny was sitting in the car just sitting inside the car, and he was so drunk that they even the cops said he couldn't move latter on. But they killed him, the reason that they killed him they said is because they said he turned so quick and he looked like he had like he had a gun. He didn't have anything, but they said he made a motion with his hand like it was a gun. See, that same old excuse again. I mean they always did that they always said that over, over, over again you know. And I mean it was just unbelievable here we had we were going through all of this and so what we did to deal with the Danny Trevino, we organized a COPS Committee, Committee on Public Safety that one dealt with just the Danny Trevino thing. And we had a lot of marches to city hall and we got a lot of publicity. I mean we were just fed up; we just had it. I mean like there was not going to be an ending to this with the same old excuse. And they kept tolerating and tolerating.

Me: You reached a limit.

Sofia: Yeah, yeah I mean this just couldn't happen how could these cops kill anybody and make excuses and say you know well it only looks like he had a gun in his hand you know. I mean I couldn't believe what sissies they were you know because here comes a cop into the community. They come in a car, they have a rifle, machine gun I don't know what kind of gun they have there. They have another gun in their hand, they have mace, they have clubs. I mean they have everything in there you name it they got it right there plus dogs in the back and they are ready to attack you know. I mean that they are real sissies you know and there are two or three of them they really gang up. I mean it was just unbelievable what they were doing here in San Jose and nobody to stop them; I mean nobody could stop them. They could do whatever they wanted. The chief of police, forget it you know, the big old Mafioso that had been there for so darn long. Finally the guy retired and then here comes a guy who was more of a cream puff than he ever was. I mean this guy was a little wimp, some guy by the name of Murphy. He didn't last too long, the cops just ran over him you know, he didn't last to long. Meanwhile we got more and more organized like we had with Danny Trevino we had 2000 people marching down the street that's a lot of people to say that's it stop we're fed up we don't want any more of this you know. We marched to city hall; we filled the city hall chambers; we filled the cafeteria, people were just overflowing all over the outside. Jose Villa was very involved with this, by this time. I mean we had just had it you know and we just heard the same old excuses and they were all justifiable homicide. They thought this they thought that, just a bunch of racist cops that's all they were you know. White racist cops that didn't like Mexicans that's what it was you know. They were trained to say oh yeah all those people because they live on the East Side. I mean they're bad, they're poor, they're no good.

Me: That's it, they're poor and no good.

Sofia: Yeah, yeah and we were just fed up. We used to hear a lot of derogatory racial remarks coming from these cops. Just a bunch of young punks. I use to get so mad you know there were kids younger than own children

you know they thought they knew what the world was all about and then all these little Rambos that were coming back from Vietnam you know that had been trained to kill, and that's what was coming into the police force you know. There was hardly any Chicano cops in there.

Me: I wouldn't think that they would want to be in there.

Sofia: Who?

Me: Any Chicano cops, concerning that type of atmosphere it was.

Sofia: But the thing is they weren't letting them in. They were whipping them on the streets but they were not letting them into the police force. They were just not letting them in, they weren't going to you know. Like I said you know the ones who were coming back from Vietnam, big tough trained killers you know, that's what was going on in there. I was just fed up with it; I was so disgusted; I got so sick of it you know. Anyway just to think about it infuriates me you know trained killers that's all they were they were dogs that's all they were. You couldn't talk to anybody there was nobody you could talk to, nobody that cared. The city council you know, the city council hires the city manager, then city manager, then the chief of police, then the cops and then they got the Peace Officers Association that ran the whole show. It was like nobody tells them what to do. We were complaining to the city council, forget it, you know, go talk to the Internal Affairs Unit. We had people going over there and complaining just to show them human relations nobody was doing anything ok so then what to they do is stick an ombudsman in there, and the guy's got no power. What could he do? So by this time we were asking for a Civilian Review Board, that's what we wanted. We wanted a Civilian Review Board, somebody who could go out there and take a look and put a stop to what was going on. Somebody that the cops had to be accountable to. We were asking for Civilian Review Board real bad, we were real serious about it because you know there was no out. And so what we talked about and what I will talk about next time is city council itself but I want to talk about the Civilian Review Board and the five council districts cause, because what was happening at that time, we only had five people on the city council and those council people were elected at large; they didn't represent any one area. In fact the whole council districts that exist right now came out of the Community Alert Patrol and our effort that we finally broke the whole area up into districts.

Me: They had a choke hold on everything.

Sofia: Well, the thing is that the people on the East Side didn't have money to put into political campaigns. Everybody from the Willow Glen area and all the other areas you know they were the ones who put those people in office. I'll talk about it next time.

[INTERRUPTION]

They would walk around real tough, guns and everything, pushing people around. Pushing people around! Who did they think they are? They had no respect for anybody's rights, no respect for anybody.