AUSTIN HISTORY CENTER
ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT

Interviewee: Adela Mancias
Interviewer: Gloria Espitia
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Key Names: Armando Gutierrez, Frances Martinez, Edward Rendón, Frank Ramirez, Mr. Martinez on Rainey St., Paul Edmanos, Maria Limon, Johnny Treviño, Sylvia Orozco, Cynthia Orozco, Michael Zeleon, Hortencia Palomares, Sam Hernandez, Elias Mendez, Alfredo Rangel Vasco, Johnny Trevino, Zeke Uvalle.

Abstract: In her oral history, Adela Mancias details her involvement with both the Austin branch of the Brown Berets and *La Raza Unida* as well their various related organizations and activities.

Transcript

GLORIA ESPITIA:	This is Gloria Espitia Community Archivist at the Austin History Center today is Monday June 24, 2013. We're in the Holt reception room of the Austin History Center and it is currently 1:55 p.m. With us today is Adela Mancias who was a member of the Brown Berets of Austin, Texas. Adela, do you give me permission to record this, do this all history interview on behalf of the Austin History Center?	0:00:02
ADELA MANCIAS:	Yes.	
ESPITIA:	Okay. If you may—if you'll first of all spell your first and last name for transcription purposes.	
MANCIAS:	Adela is A-D-E-L-A, Mancias is M-A-N-C-I-A-S.	
ESPITIA:	Okay and can you tell us where you were born and just give us briefly a background about yourself?	
MANCIAS:	Okay. I was born in Plainview, Texas that's in the panhandle sort of halfway between Amarillo and Lubbock. My parents were both from	

the valley but they had wound up there because of work. They were originally—my grandfather and father were originally ranch—they worked on ranches and then farming and then we just went over there and they were working there. My dad moved around a lot, he was a welder—he became a welder and he moved around a lot. He always went to little rural towns and little rural towns have little rural minds, unfortunately. It was always these farming towns and in Texas and sometimes in other states including Kansas but there was always something—and I couldn't ever put my finger on it. I didn't know what to call it but you know the way teachers treated us, the way sometimes other students treated us. There's incidences where they actually said, You can't be at this part of the playground or You can't us this equipment because this is for the white people and this is for the Mexicans. That stuff hurt, it hurt a lot but I wasn't sure where to put it. I wasn't sure how to handle it you know my parents didn't talk about the word racism, I didn't hear the word racism it was just something that I knew was a way of life. Finally when I went to high school it was again in a small rural town in sort of south east Texas and as soon as I graduated I went off to college.

I didn't go to UT I went to Texas Woman's University for a year then I went to South West Texas and then I didn't know what I wanted to do, Austin was right here so I came here. Looking for something to do I got a little bit into education then I went back to school. I took a course and the course was Chicano studies—never heard of that honestly Chicano was even a new word for me. I took that course and oh my god that totally you know opened up my eyes and my brain as to who I was and what had been happening and what this whole life experience that I had up to now was. My professor was Armando Gutierrez who was *Raza Unida* and *Raza Unida* had been going on for a few years already. I mean since the sixties and there had been a lot of organizing and a lot had happened and this was already in the later seventies, '77 was when this was. It all made sense you know he put a word to what I had experience and he called it racism and he talked about all the injustices not just you know like what had happened to me but what was happening you know like everywhere in Texas, in the southwest. The history of Texas because that's something that I never got. The real history of Texas you don't get everywhere it's—there's a certain part of history of Texas that kids get in school, not really what happened. So I had no idea but really explosively angry because all of a sudden I understood it—I wanted to do something.

I got involved and I became a—well I started working with *Raza Unida* and they had a newspaper. That's where I worked for a couple of years eventually you know just helped to put that out. In fact it

was my work with *Valiente* newspaper that took me to East Austin because this was a statewide newspaper so we looked at issues that were going on all over the state. We looked at farmworker issues, police brutality issues, and this was a time when police brutality was blatant and it was like police murdered not just brutality and it was all over the state. There was young boy in Dallas that had been shot stealing a loaf of bread, Santos Rodriguez. There was a young man in Houston, I believe the name was Jose Campos Torres and he was beaten and thrown into the Houston bayou by the police. There was another young man in Odessa and I cannot remember his name, he was also killed by police brutality. In Austin there was a lot going on and it was you know, it was Chicanos but it was also you know African Americans it was this police state mentality that were just all kind of circling you know the wagons—we were going to do something. Well I am still working with *Raza Unida* and organizing on that level. I went to East Austin and I started attending meeting because at that time the Berets here in Austin were not a single issue. Although police brutality was huge it was also taking care of the community and taking care of other injustices that had been going on for years.

At that time there was the boat races that was in 1978. What that was was—let's see Festival Beach they had Fiesta—I can't think of the festival but they had this festival for just like you know years and years it was just a tradition. They would have this festival—apart of the festival were these motor boat races that they would have on the part of the lake that is where the Chicano community was. What that involved was people from all over, not just Austin but all over—they would drive you know like bumper to bumper traffic throughout all of the streets in the neighborhood they would you know park their cars and totally block everybody in. They'd be drinking beer when it was over they'd be urinating in yards you know it was horrible. It was not a good home environment for anybody and that was for I think at least a couple of weekends a year. I'm not sure if it was one or two but it was not a good situation. So the community people in East Austin had been asking them to stop the boat races or at least move them. It wasn't stop them, it was move them, it was get them out of here because this is not a good place for them.

Did not listen you know, they went on and on and so the Berets that year staged a protest and it became very violent. The police got involved and they beat up several of the Beret members and one woman Alma Perez in particular, she was pregnant. That got some publicity and it was after that that something was done you know, the boat races were moved. Or actually the boat races weren't moved the boat races just stopped. But it took that, it took that kind of action, it

took that kind of organizing, it took that kind of determination to make a difference. I wasn't a Beret at that time but I soon became a Beret after that so it was in there—you know time gets fuzzy for a bit it was like '79 '80 that I did become a Beret. Not all Berets were 0:10:00
from the community but a lot of them were. Most of them were and I always felt like you now the people that were born here and lived here and had their homes here and had their families here you know had a particular say about what happened and how it happened. That's kind of the way it was. The people that were native in this area were the leadership. The ones that—it was all self-determination really basically for their own community and we meet with people I mean if you'll notice—if you'll remember the cities that I said there was police brutality—incidences of police brutality. Every one of those places also had Berets chapters.

There was a Beret chapter in Dallas that we worked with and when we had something going on they came. The people from San Antonio—there was a Beret chapter in San Antonio and they came from Lubbock, El Paso, the Valley and so it wasn't just an isolated little you know local group. It was statewide and while there might have been something going on in California or anything like that this was our Texas. This was Texas that was doing this and so we would often have rallies whenever there was an incident or to bring attention to something we would travel. We would go to the Valley, we would go to Dallas and support them. That went on for a while and the thing is that as I mentioned before it wasn't just issues of police brutality, the Brown Berets in this town in particular and I'm not sure that the same thing happened in every location but in this town the Brown Berets were responsible for some very very fundamental changes that happened in the East Austin neighborhood for the Mexican American community. Because there had been a—the whole area had been zoned industrial for many years for back in the—when there was white flight and they all left and they just zoned it all industrial and that was in like the thirties, forties, and that's when you know Mexican families started buying houses and living there. You know what they could not fix their houses because they couldn't get a loan to fix their house because they were non-zone residential they would not give loans to homes where it was only industrial. So the homes becoming dilapidated, the young people were starting to move out and then it was like, Okay you know we've got to save this as our home neighborhood and that became the other issue was to work with that and that took organizing. The Berets—there were just a few Berets I don't know there might have been maybe ten, I don't know fifteen.

We went into the neighborhood and we had meetings in people's homes and we helped people become leaders. We helped people learn to talk in front of the city council, learned the issues, learned you know basically that they had a voice and they had a cause and that they could talk about it and they could change things. That was the main thing, you can change things. There were several community organization that sprung out of this depending on the area of the neighborhood that they lived in and there were several leaders. Frances Martinez was a leader, Mr. Edward Rendón, Mr. Ramirez, Frank Ramirez, Mr. Martinez from Rainey Street. Now that that battle—we held that one off for a while and that eventually you know what's going on now that one was lost because you know we always knew there was going to be gentrification and I guess we were hoping that people would just hang on to their homes and not have to sell and leave. That didn't happen although the zoning did happen, the re-zoning it go reeled back and that was because Brown Beret and neighborhood efforts. Wouldn't have been otherwise but anyway. So those were the cases and I think some of the issues or maybe not an issue but event that a lot of people remember is the Klan march.

The Klan march was also a part of police brutality that's why we were getting together but then the Klan came to Austin. They were going to have a rally and you know I know all about you know constitutional right to speak and everything but at that time it was like, No. These people are speaking—they were anti-immigration, they were anti-Mexican, they were threatening us on T.V. I mean and they aired it on the news so it was like you know we had an anti-Klan march. We went to the city council we tried to block it that way and needless to say they said not we can to refuse them the right to march they have to march. Everybody has a right to march. So we did a counter rally and actually it wasn't the Klan that attacked us it was the police and it was a very well-known event because it was on news nationally. People that I knew in other states called me about it and that became I think, I don't know sort of a watershed moment for everybody. Things—I guess because of the publicity I'm not sure exactly if it was a turning moment. It seems like it was but at that moment we got a lot of publicity from everywhere and the trial went on for weeks. We were arrested, three of us were arrested three weeks after the event for obstructing somebody else's—unlawful interference with somebody else's arrest. The person that got arrested was Paul Hernandez. Paul was the leader of the Berets at the time. He got severely beaten and it was all on camera. A T.V. camera had been—had gotten it from the top—from like a birds eye view from the top of a parking garage. I guess that's—I knew about the injustice I knew about everything but I had never really seen it so

close up as then in the courthouse where cop after cop just came and just lied and said you know, They did this and they did that. And I had been there and I knew that none of that had happened and they replayed it over and over again and they told the jury what they were seeing and till the jury after all—it wasn't—they didn't think anything about this man getting beaten. Held down and beaten and they got a totally different perspective of what was going on.

ESPITIA: You're there, right there on the spot while it was going on right?

MANCIAS: Yes.

ESPITIA: You and—

MANCIAS: Maria.

ESPITIA: You and Maria Limon.

MANCIAS: There were—Maria Limon and I were like really flanking Paul who was on one side she was on the other side and we were just walking along when they stopped us they just started pushing us back with Billy clubs and they immediately started poking him with Billy clubs—not pushing him back but poking him. You know the natural thing for you to do is want to help somebody and that's what we were trying to do. We were just trying to help him and then they turned on us and we were both beaten.

ESPITIA: I know she was hit on the head I believe. Were you—where were you hit?

MANCIAS: I was hit on the head too and I was knocked out pretty much immediately because I know they hit me on the head and I went down and then the next thing I knew they were dragging me out you know DPS officers were dragging me out from the crowd. Maria they did not knock her out. She did not go down with the first blow so they continued to hit her and we had video where she was actually crawling trying to get out of there and Paul just stayed in there and just took the beating. He had concussions and it took him a long time to get over that. 0:20:00

ESPITIA: Tell me because I have seen when you stood up at city council that day and the vote was taken by the city councilmen. Tell me because you spoke you were one of the speakers, what emotions were you feeling at that time to stand up, to say your piece and then to have the councilmembers one voting against and the others voting for the march. What was the feeling like at that point?

MANCIAS: I guess I could not understand why anybody and actually now I do you know like people have to do what they have to do in the positions they have to do. But to me at that time it was—how can you allow these people with the history that they have with the known history with what they have come in here into this town and said—because they actually said they—it was on T.V. one of the Klan members held up a gun and said, This is for Paul Hernandez. They showed that on T.V. and they were talking about Mexicans and they were talking about you know we're going to send everybody back to Mexico and I said, And you're going to let these people you know march. I think just by you know like—they're inciting riots, they're you know—they couldn't stop in another way but their positon was they have a constitutional right to speak. The person I think that I addressed directly was Mr. Trevino, Mr. Johnny Trevino. He was the Mexican American councilmen and Mr. Trevino had been favorable. He tried to be favorable with us you know because I mean he knew people, he came from that community so you know he tried to help. I knew he was troubled with this, I knew he was in a terrible position but I could not understand why he wouldn't—why he didn't just say, Yeah I know that's constitutional but you know what my principle belief is this and I'm not going to vote for it. Dr. Urdy did that, I believe it was Dr. Urdy voted against it on that principle. So my emotion I guess at the time—I was really angry and frustrated because I could understand, not really but I could see how the other council members you know might be—might use that as their reasoning but I just couldn't see Mr. Trevino because I thought, You're one of us. You know that threat was for you, that threat was for your family, that threat was for you know and I didn't see it.

ESPITIA: What was the end result of the trial? I mean what was the final result of it?

MANCIAS: The final result was, Maria and I worked with our charges and Paul was—he was charged with I believe resisting arrest. That's the only term I remember. Resisting arrest and it might have also been—I don't think they charged him with anything else except for that and nobody went to jail. Nobody and we did try to go on a civil right suit and did not get that. I think today if that happened today it would be different because what happened with Rodney King just a few years, no different. Maybe the only difference was that he was a single person and here it was you know like three people that got beaten up very very publically. All the news coverage that you could want but it didn't happen here.

ESPITIA: There were a lot of people that were—participated in the march against—during that day—on that day right?

MANCIAS: You mean at the anti-Klan?

ESPITIA: Yes.

MANCIAS: Yeah it wasn't just Mexican Americans it was African Americans, it was the Black Citizens Task Force. It was several very progressive organizations of students and other political organizations and you know people that just came—people in Austin just came to protests. It was big.

ESPITIA: Let's go back to when you were involved with the newspaper *Para La Gente.* Silvia Orozco, Cynthia Orozco, and some of the other individuals with *la Raza Unida* party. Were you learning—who else from the Brown Berets—were there any other individuals in the Brown Beret movement at the time that were also involved with that paper and with *la Raza Unida* party at the same time.

MANCIAS: Not directly, not that were a part of the Brown Berets. There were some people very active in East Austin. Marcos De Leon and Hortensia Palomares had also been students at UT and they were also you know had been working to some level and I'm not really sure because I didn't know them that well at that time with *Raza Unida*. It was two separate things, it was two separate things and there wasn't a whole lot of overlap. There tends to be some turf-dom and I think in my personal opinion was that you know *Raza Unida* was organizing. Okay, there's a need here, let's go organize and then there was East Austin that was saying, Hey we've got leadership we're already organized, we're working on it. You know we don't need that. There's always—you know there's always those rips in those things and so I don't think there was a lot of going back and forth I sort of just after a while I just went ahead and started working more directly with the East Austin community and eventually with the Brown Berets.

ESPITIA: How did you'll manage if you can just tell us how did you all manage the Brown Berets if there were few, you know not that many members, to get the community to support, to find their voice if you will. How did you'll do that?

MANCIAS: That's a good question. I think the people that found their voice—some of them came out when Paul got beaten up. Mr. Rendón who was a very strong leader, Haskell I believe is the area he lived in, you know east town lake citizens, very strong leader. That brought him out, that brought him out when you know he saw it on T.V. he saw they were beating up Paul and Sam Hernandez and Vasco they were

arresting him. They had beaten up Alma and he came out and he said, This isn't right, you know this isn't right. You know they're doing this for our community and so he got involved and was there for years and years and years. Same thing with Mr. Martinez. Mr. Martinez was a very soft spoken man but saw things very clearly and he has a little house on Rainey Street and he saw the writing on the wall and we had been working on Rainey Street going door to door you know talking about you know this is—there's this meeting going on you know and we'll be talking about zoning and protecting the neighborhood and we'll be talking about not bringing in this developer or that development it was always something and Mr. Martinez you know—we would have meetings. We would find someone to have a meeting at their home and he came and from the minute he got involved he became the leader for that neighborhood, the Rainey Street neighborhood. When people became leaders for their own area like Mr. Rendón he organized people in his area you know that whole Haskell Street that area. Mr. Ramirez came in too for the same reason he just saw you know it made sense and he saw that it was for the good of everybody. He came in and he started organizing that area as well. Frances Martinez, Barrio Unida was her area. They just saw—they saw the energy, they felt the energy, they 0:30:00
saw that things were getting done. They heard each other on T.V. you know like talking to you know like, When did people you know for the community come and address the council and you know directly and told them, Look this is what we want, This is what we don't want. We have this right you know.

We would pack the council chambers, we would pack them. That's back then when they had like these time limits you know where after you—after a certain time they don't have any more meetings. We stayed for more than one occasion, we stayed till one or two in the morning talking and people would stay. You know people from the community would get up on the podium—they had never spoken publically and they would talk sometimes in Spanish and they had translators. It was that initial energy it was like, Wow we have this you know this ability, this power to do this and it went on for several years. There was at least Town Lake citizens and then there was let's see Barrio Unido, Rainey Street, oh and then there was Echo Valley. Echo Valley Neighborhood Association and there was another very very strong leader there. I'll think of her name in a minute. But it was—that's what did it. It wasn't just our organization or Paul it was we struck a match and it energized you know. And then they did their own organizing. What we would do is we would go to their houses when they were having a meeting, a neighborhood meeting and we would help them with the facts. We would help them you know like you know they had the passion they could talk you know

to their neighbors and you know their relatives and you know everybody. We had the ability to go you know do research and bring in you know numbers and bring in like backup information because it wasn't just—I mean it was scientific it was—we weren't just you know throwing out you know just random information.

ESPITIA: Well you'll were producing documents.

MANCIAS: We did and we were researching history. We were researching projects that had been proposed for the area using government money suggesting that—because at the time there was these grants that the government would give for developing in a poor neighborhood so what they would do—they'd offer particular that got money with downtown but they—it would say, Oh it's part of this neighborhood because of how close it downtown so they got money for a hotel from the government. And those things are what we exposed and you know we had—we did a lot of the research ourselves. We had a lot of people helping us with research it was really really put together. We knew what we were doing. Obviously because we brought about change and if anything goes down in history of this organization as far as what has—what part it played in Austin is that it did change a lot of the zoning, it changed people's attitudes about their homes, it changed an attitude of the police department. It took a couple of police chiefs but that had already been exposed and that was never going to happen again without having a huge backlash.

ESPITIA: What was—what would you say of everything that the Brown Berets were involved in is there something that stands in your mind that would not have been accomplished had it not been for the Brown Berets? Is there anything?

MANCIAS: Yeah, those two things that I mentioned mostly is the changing of overseeing police activity because our protests, our actions, our voices and being in the community with this because it wasn't just us. We had people with us. They initiated a review board, you know that came from that that came from those actions. That came from us staging a protest in front of the police department you know day after day after day after day for weeks somebody was out there. Sometimes it might be one or two people but somebody was out there with a sign every day for weeks and weeks. So that had some change, some permanent change and the way that things are done. The other one is that ___(??) because that community is different and I drive through there now and I see all the little town houses and mansions and I go, Had we not done this you know it might have not been gentrified. But it was—this gave people an opportunity for

people to be able to stay more than they would have in the first place because some people were able to fix their homes and to stay there and to help their children want to stay there.

ESPITIA: One of those streets was Third Street was it not? Or is it? Third Street yeah. Tell me because there is—in David Montejano's book he mentions that of course there were few members but on—he makes a comparison with the Austin Brown Berets and San Antonio and some of the other chapters in Texas but as far as the Brown Berets in Austin he says you'll were very active. He puts it into three categories and then he says, Okay San Antonio they were doing this and they were doing this but they didn't do the three things. Again that had to have been a lot of work for you'll to be doing in—at that time how many of the members at the time also had family members that were part of the Brown Berets?

MANCIAS: Well just about everybody I would say had another member—like okay Paul his brother Sam were both members and leaders. Let's see Alma Perez was not from Austin she did not have any relatives here. My brother was in the Berets and he—his wife was—she actually lived on Rainey Street and the Beret wedding was theirs. It was in the back of Crista Mendez house who was my brother's wife. Which is now the Luster Pearl bar but that's where they got married. Elias Mendez and his wife. There was Alfredo Rangel, Vasco, and his brother in-law Zeke Uvalle was a Beret. Zeke is now living somewhere else but he was one of the original Berets that was here. Let me see who else was—that had relations. Well you know just people that were involved with each other but as far as like familiar relationships that was—

ESPITIA: And that made it sort of a little bit easier also I guess to be able to get more unified because it was within the family, it was within to—okay well you're living in the same home or have contact with them. Let's go back the Brown Beret wedding is very much of interest to me and I am looking for photographs on that but can you describe the wedding? Do you remember the wedding?

MANCIAS: My memory gets fuzzy on somethings but I do remember it was outside. It was um—we a table with food—this is really funny—we had a table with food and we had—they were like together in front and we were sort of on the side and I remember there were ants next to this table. We started just kicking them off and doing a little stomp with our little dance. I don't remember—I'm sorry I do not remember any of the words that were said then but it was a—a budging mode to you and to the cause and for our children and you know that sort of tone. I wouldn't call it so much as militant as just 0:40:00

very committed to the future—protecting you know family and community.

ESPITIA: And that was on Rainey Street also?

MANCIAS: Mh-hm.

ESPITIA: That was on Rainey Street. I wonder if anyone has thought of putting this part of the history of that Rainey Street—

MANCIAS: Brown Beret wedding.

ESPITIA: That might be—you know that's—they're going back to that time period so that could very well be. Okay now let's talk about another thing is—after the Brown Berets now—well let's just say do you remember why the Brown Berets ceased? I mean what was the decision to just stop while other chapters still continued?

MANCIAS: Well again it's always from my prospective because everybody's looking at this from different viewpoints and somebody may see things that I didn't see—of course see things in a different way then what I saw. From what I saw it started—it was a slow thing it wasn't just like real sudden it was a slow thing it was um-hm I think differences in some of the decisions that were made. Some of the leadership was you know, this is the way it is and other people disagreed with it and I think I'll be more specific. There was one issue in particular—it was a health clinic. There had already been—some of the people were troubled by one person being the just elevated leader and you know spokesperson especially when they didn't agree with everything that he said and so there started to be some rips there. But then there was one issue in particular it was a clinic that was proposed for—real close to Rainey Street it was like right across where—there's still some buildings there. There's like a—where the taxi office was. There's like a little triangle there and there was a woman who had had a child care center right around here in the community. I had worked with her. She was working with children, children in poverty. You know nutrition and parenting and that's what they—and she was heading—one she wanted to put a daycare in that area because she had two from her area. She wanted to put a daycare just helping children to grow up and a clinic. She went ahead and spearheaded it—she was always very careful to come and tell the community, look I'm doing this and I'm doing that you know but because I think she was seen as maybe that—when I told you about turfdom as—oh you know—she was strong. She wanted that clinic there and she wanted that daycare there because you know she had tried to find other places and she believed in what she needed. In what she thought what people needed and so—and

people around there were fine with it. This is where there was a split. Paul and you know some other Berets were against the clinic and there were other Berets that were for the clinic. That was just sort of like a—the initial chisel that started you know.

Then it just started you know—different issues and then some people fell away from it and there were other issues going on because I think this is true of any organization you know especially when you are coming together from very very very grassroots or very—you can be a great leader and you can have great flaws. That's just the way it is. A lot of the people—there were complaints about you now some of the Berets from some of the women that were not Berets but you know working with the Berets. There were complaints about sexism and they didn't you know—and so some of that's a point started to chiseling away. It's like you know when things get done and people just people just kind of sit back and start kind of like—it's like sort of like family when you're living with them for a while you start seeing their flaws. You know, I don't really like that. You know when it was just issues like, yes we all want the same thing and then you go and you fight and you're there and it went on for a long time and then when we won those things we were kind of just sitting back and going, Okay so now we fought and we won.

One thing I didn't tell you was another big thing that happened with the Berets was they wrote for a grant and they got quite a bit of money. I don't even remember how much money it was but especially for that time it was quite a bit of money so that they set up what was call the East Austin Chicano Economic Development Corporation and it was—they set up a revolving fund started with $10,000 and this corporation was made up of people you know that were supposed to be of the same mindset as the community, as the Berets. But they had professional backgrounds that would help with their position. There was housing person to help with housing, there was a—oh what were the other positions. There was housing, there was—I honestly I can't remember anyone else. There were like four or five positions that were paid through—and Paul was the director and I think that's kind of when people started going, Okay this is a safe bet now what is this becoming—how is this going to—and that money I know for sure that that money went—every bit of it went to help people with loans for their homes. Because it wasn't that much money and as soon as people knew that there was money you now to loan they went and they needed this to fix their house or they needed that and the money just went out. What didn't—I guess it was like again management skills. It didn't come back. It was supposed to be a revolving amount of money—put it back. But you know lack of experience that's the sort of thing that happens when you're new—

when you are starting. Those things—and all that played a part in the Berets sort of came together very very volatile it was just—and it was explosive.

A lot of change came out of it and that sort of like the natural cycle of a revolution and this was like a mini-revolution if you will. I really see it as that because it brought about change you know and then you know it kept going. When revolutionaries try to govern it's a different thing you know. I think with the East Austin Chicano Economic Development Corporation it was more, Okay there weren't so much fighting as trying to develop and there were—that same passion that had been there before didn't keep some of those people in the organization and they kind of started splitting up and going, Well I don't agree with you for this and you know I want to go this, and I'm tired of this and I'm tired of that—and it happened. Every one of them good people, every one of them a good heart, every one of them wanted the best for everything but clashing with other members and when you clash with other members the organization falls apart.

ESPITIA: I think one of the things that I have seen as I work on this project is that one, the individuals when they first started the Brown Berets here they were all young. They were all young and that is what amazes me you know is that they were doing so much. I think in the way they were doing much more than some of the elected officials.

MANCIAS: Absolutely.

ESPITIA: Then as time went by, because they were again as you said they were giving the voices to the people in the community and as they—and it became their friends they got a real close relationship, because after all these individuals they would march alongside them for anything that needed to be done and so forth. Another thing too and we go back to 1983 where the march of the KKK along with the demolition of Juarez-Lincoln and so all of that is coming along and then money becomes available. It is hard when you loan money to a friend of a family member it is very hard for you to go back to them and say, You know I need you to pay me, I need to get this. A lot of individuals also were not that well established in Austin. The one's that were with those that were supposed to have been knowledgeable I guess if you consider that, the professionals and somewhat—they were trying to find themselves and so all of that comes along. Oh, again when you get grant you've got to be sure you're keeping records, you've got to be sure you're doing all of this and again these individuals were not you know the lawyers and all the accountants that had that kind of experience. You're having to deal also with the 0:50:00

city, you're having to deal with the federal government, you're having to deal with all that other and so you're sort of being pulled in all directions.

MANCIAS: And you're absolutely right about all of that. The people that were hired for the East Austin Chicano Economic Development Corporation they that were hired did have those administrative backgrounds or experiences, however they were working sort of like for you know people that did not really believe in doing things you know status quo. The way that it had always been done and it was all about change and yet you kind of needed some of the skills that these people had to make it run right and be able to do things so that it would you know it would continue to be successful because it has to fit in this—it was like something that didn't fit into the bigger picture and in order to make it fit into the bigger picture you would have to change and in some fundamental ways and there was resistance to that change. So anyhow it's um-hm, yeah it's just something that in time—

ESPITIA: And that happens you know you see that in so many organizations. That happens a lot. Now let's talk about you, after the Brown Berets—did you get your degree? And if so in what?

MANCIAS: In education, after trying a lot of different things I really knew that I wanted to go to education for the same thing. Because after I worked—I was part of the Brown Berets it was really really clear to me that the only way that we can really change is to have people understand you know your world because that's what it took for me. To understand your world, to make sense of who you are, to be able to make a good living, to be able to be comfortable, to be able to provide for your family, to be able to do you know—that ultimately to me is the right that everybody has and yet you cannot do that if you do not get a good job because you can't read.

I saw an article in the paper today it's still the biggest issue schools in poverty are still the lowest performing. They are the lowest performing. So that became my life you know I'm just going to work and I've never worked at anything but a social low, social economic school. I've always worked with children, parents, you know who don't have the means and have not had a head start with reading you know coming to school they're already behind you know. Now with all the testing you know and I'm not going to get into that, that's a whole other thing. Our kids you know—we need too—every one of us and I'm only one person but the way I see it is this is what my life work is. I go in and one, yes I work to help them become good readers, I'm a reading specialist I feel like if a kid can learn to read

the rest is possible. I'm a reading specialist and that's what I've been doing for years so I work with them. But then you know I feel that my responsibility isn't just to teach children to read. If a child comes, crosses my path and my life as short of a time as it is you know I try to work with them—who they are, what they have to offer, what they can achieve. Every little seed that you put in a child, you never know, you never know. I have had children today who at a time when I—I've been teaching now for—because I would get in and out, I would always have that in mind but I would get in and out, but I've had kids from you know what twenty, twenty-five years ago say, Mrs. Mancias do you know I remember you. I've had kids who bring me their grandchildren now you know. So I feel like I've touched some lives and that's what I really wanted to do.

Another thing that I did on the way over here is I did five years of documentary work. I worked with Hector Galan doing what we did about three of those for Frontline and I loved that job because again it was change. It was creating change that was after I left the Berets as well. I left the Berets and I became like a social worker for one year and then I went and did this film work. It was the most exciting work, I would just go in and find the story—the first one was the drug war in Dallas and it was when crack cocaine had just hit you know it was just starting to get—it was in '87, we decided to do it there. Then another one was on Chicanas and AIDS and another one was farmworkers it was a follow up from Edward R. Murrow's, *Harvest of Shame*. That was just very very wonderful I learned a lot I just got married and I couldn't be gone for six months out of the year.

ESPITIA: Didn't you produce a children's program or something? What were you doing with—a public access T.V.?

MANCIAS: Yeah I did a lot of public access as well. I guess media is sort of like my thing too. With my friend Sharon at the time, Sharon Sharp. She was Sharon Stuart at the time and she lives in Louisiana now but we both produced a show on ACTV it was I think that's what it was called.

ESPITIA: I don't want to say *Cascarones* but it—

MANCIAS: No, no, no.

ESPITIA: Okay that wasn't—

MANCIAS: No it wasn't that. But it was we would interview people coming to town it was all issue related a lot of people like Native Americans you know we would help them to air their issues whatever their

issues they were working on. People from Mexico, the union workers from Mexico that had something going on. We interviewed them.

ESPITIA: *Let the People Speak*? No?

MANCIAS: No.

ESPITIA: Okay.

MANCIAS: You know getting names mixed up, I wanted to say it was *Para la Gente*. But *Para la Gente* was a newspaper.

ESPITIA: I've seen it, I've seen it, I know what you're talking about.

MANCIAS: I know, I can't believe it's slipped in my mind. But did air for quite a while and we would just set up it was real rouge we would just like you know get a camera, set it up as like somebody would say—Raul Salinas. I don't know if you know who Raul Salinas is. He would always come and say, You know listen there's this you now Indian brother coming in from here or there let's get the camera. And so we would we would get the camera and talk about you know _____(??) you know we interviewed—I'll start with the names. But that's the kind of issues we did and they were issues they were like global but local. It was about self-determination. It was about education. It was about civil rights. It was about women's rights and women's issues and land issues. So we brought that in and that was a way of letting 1:00:00
you know, our community know that we had these issues but were connected to a bigger world out there that had these same type of issues.

ESPITIA: It's amazing how you've been doing all of this at a time when right after you've been very much an activists at a young age then you go into and you pursue an education and teach education and still continue to be involved. What was the role of Latinas or Mexican American women in the Brown Berets at the time? Were you able to do things like what you were talking about with education and everything, sort of had your own little group of women that were so involved with children—because that is the one thing also that I see in a lot of photographs is that there would always be children around regardless. In the photographs there's always children. Were you'll able to do things like that?

MANCIAS: We had a vision to do that and we tried. A couple, Joan Salas we actually we talked about an doing a *escuelita* and it was helping—working with children like from our own families because we had a

lot of young children around. I mean it wasn't just like—they weren't kids it was a kids from people in the ___(??) and you know opening it up to other children who just publicizing things on Saturdays we're going to do this, we had little classes. I didn't want to make it like a school although I wanted to help kids that were behind in school. It was a lot of exposure—we would read them stories, we would do games. It was mostly just again to give them that exposure—what we were doing, how it impacted them, what you know, again you have a role, you have a place, you are a part of this thing, you can do this. Children lose their self-determination and their power so young. Yeah they lose it either because nobody ever cultivates it, helps them to know they have it or it gets blown out and you just have too. So it's really important I think to give children this whenever you can. And that's what we tried to do. We did not maintain it for very long. It was again too much coordination. We had the paper going, we had *La Concensia* going and then we turned into *El Aviso.* That just took time, you know you tried to spread yourself real thin so we knew what we needed and we needed a newspaper, we needed to inform people, we needed to help our youth so that we could bring them up at the same time. We needed economic stimulation and development to make it all worth it but with the resources and the time and you know it's like it was here but we could not pull it together.

ESPITIA: Was there anything—we're getting ready now to sort of end but was there anything in your mind, in your own personal opinion that you wished that the Brown Berets could have done that they were not able to do. Is there anything that they could have done for the community that you think might have been successful?

MANCIAS: I guess I wish that it hadn't become a splintered group as it is now because—I wish they had stayed together. Everybody that worked hard and there's a lot of people, really smart people, men and women that worked really hard to accomplish what was accomplished and as you mentioned before kind of like it splits more. It split up and people are doing sort of their own things. I'm doing what I'm doing. Paul's doing what he's doing, Gilbert's doing what he's doing, you know. Sam and Joan, everybody is kind of like—Angie's doing something and we're all doing good things. But we don't ever get together and go you know, this is what we accomplished, this is what came out of it. You know it may not be going on right now but we did it. We made it happen and it happened because of something that we were able to do and we don't do that because we're—

ESPITIA: Do you think that might change in October when we do this photo exhibit and when we do some of these programs do you think there

will be some that might come forward and say you know, I'm ready to go back, again reminisce of the past and maybe get a photo op out of all of this, everyone.

MANCIAS: I hope so and I think it depends on how everybody sees it—what everybody's perception is of it. You know like whenever you have an exhibit and a presentation it affects you in your own personal way. It can be good or it can be—it all depends. But I think it will depend on how people are affected by it and hopefully they can see what I'm hoping to see is what I said, this was an organization that through everybody's efforts you know and people's leadership and people's courage and people's love for their community and their people came together and in spite of all odds, because this is a very you know amazing progressive, there's a _____(??), even back then more kind of racist, blue blood and you're up against it and we did it.

ESPITIA: Well that's the whole thing and that's why activism and the Brown Berets of Austin and Travis County is the title of this project but that is the thing that I saw or I've seen as we collect all of this information and all. The fact that everyone started very young and at the end today cause we are here as you said everyone's gone in their different directions but I mean you've got a dean of student services in California, you have a newspaper publisher and very active in Waco. You have an environmentalist, you have a teacher, an educator, I mean numerous educators, you have individuals that still take so much pride in their community that I don't think a day goes by that they're not doing something you know. So in this I think brings back or at least I hope that in a way that it will bring back this pride that they were able to accomplish something and it started at a very young age. At the same time that this is going to be documented so that future students from the University of Texas or St. Edwards, or ACC when they come here to the Austin History Center at least they will have able to find more information and they can document that in their papers whether it be a thesis, a dissertation, or whatever even for those researchers and hopefully will decide to write a book. That's why videotaping, that's why you know doing the digital recording and all but it is amazing how so much was accomplished within ten years.

MANCIAS: And it changed the course.

ESPITIA: And it changed the course.

MANCIAS: It changed the course for this town and it's an important town and we were an important part of history.

ESPITIA: Very much so.

MANCIAS: So I think that is you know the biggest—it changed the course in a good way.

ESPITIA: Is there anything that you want to say before we end this interview?

MANCIAS: No, I thank you for the opportunity it's been cathartic sort of getting to talk about it. 1:10:00

ESPITIA: You know that's the same thing I was told when we did the Emma Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Arts Center oral history project. One of the individuals that was on the panel said, You know I wasn't going to participate. At the end she had decided that maybe she wasn't going to participate on the panel but then she did and she said you know it was very therapeutic for her. Very therapeutic she was glad that she did it. This is the one thing that I am so happy that I am able to call on individuals like yourself who are willing to you know document this for future generations and for others and now I mean the paper mount is growing as we recover this history and this is what the intention is to recover this history and to reclaim it. Reclaim it for the Brown Berets, reclaim it for those that worked so hard whether they be members or individuals from the community that were very active because that is another thing that people don't realize in doing the MACC oral history project individuals like Francis Martinez or Rowan Salinas you know other individuals, Vilda Roiz, they remember fondly of the Brown Berets. They remember marching alongside them. Everything that they did for them and so that is another thing. When you hear these individuals, they were not members of the Brown Berets but were members of the community then you know and so that is, that's another thing too that I—you put all of that together when you have two projects and both are related to one another somewhat that is another thing. So I do thank you for allowing me to document this and also I am looking forward to October. I hope that we will do this project and the programs that we will be doing in October justice as you know what the Brown Berets were able to also have justice at the end of everything else. So thank you very much.

MANCIAS: Thank you. 1:12:37

End of Interview