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**Interview with Antonio Nadal**  
**Interviewed by Pam Sporn and Tami Gold**

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[Start of recorded material at 00:00]

Antonio Nadal Hello, yes. Hi. My name is Antonio Nadal. How are you?

Pam Sporn I'm good, my name is Pamela. So, yes. Good. Okay. So thank you so much for participating in this interview project. We're learning so much about the struggle of college and how important it was. So we want to get your perspective. I'd just like to know a little bit about your background, your family background, when your family came from Puerto Rico and where you were living when you grew up and about your schooling. So just like when, when did your family come from?

Antonio Nadal My family came to the United States, from Puerto Rico as migrants in the year of 1950. I was two and a half years old. And the family migrated with my four older sisters. I'm the only male in my family. And I'm the youngest. My father's pride because you always know how it is in Puerto Rican families. The father always wants to have his su primogenitor, his son. So I was, as you might say, is his last wish. And when I was born, I had it was a difficult delivery because my mother was already in her early 40s. So I was in an incubator. I almost didn't make it and my father was almost heartbroken because he was giving out cigars. And the doctor said, Not yet. We have to see how your son does. He's a little blue. So I was in the incubator for a few days, I was born in the town of Arecibo, very close to Manatí, where my family is from, but there was no hospital in that time, because most of the births were done by comadronas, midwives. But at a Arecibo had a hospital, the larger town so my mother was driven to Arecibo, when I was born there, but really my family's from Manatí. So I don't know much about Arecibo. I know a little bit more about Manatí, from... not from living there, because at the age of two and a half, the whole family transported itself to New

York. And we lived in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, and what, what was at that time called Los Sures, because it was south from South 1st to South 10th. And we were on South 3rd and South 4th. So I was raised in Los Sures of Williamsburg, the old Williamsburg, not the one that is now very gentrified, and very expensive. Now, we wouldn't be able to afford to live there, you know, but there were many Puerto Ricans at that time in the early 50s that migrated to that particular type, that particular section of Brooklyn.

Pam Sporn And what kind of work did your family do when they came here?

Antonio Nadal My mother was a homemaker, word that is used quite often, actually, she did many things, because my mother came from an entrepreneurial family, people who are merchants, and she always loved business. My father was a professional. My father was a teacher, raised by a shoemaker, in his hometown. He was, from all the stories that I've heard from him and other people, who was very bright student. And actually was plucked even before he graduated from high school. He got right on, he was able to do that. But he was plucked because he was an outstanding student. And at the time, because Puerto Rico was under American rule, as you know, still is. The idea was to make all Puerto Ricans fluent in the English language. So they had to prepare native Puerto Ricans and the English language because eventually, all of us were supposed to speak English, not Spanish. So it was a transitional thing. So they plucked people out more outstanding students from high school, brought them into the University of Puerto Rico, and which was founded in 1903. My father was there in the 1913, 1914. He got eventually got his degree from the University of Puerto Rico as an English grade teacher. So he taught English, but he also taught Spanish because what they found out is that the kids were not going to learn English, unless you made use of the native language. So my father was a Spanish and English teacher. And he was very good. From all indications. He was so good that they even hired him to have a secondary job later on and teach veterans that were coming back from the second world war to get to eighth grade, which would be, would call their Elementary School Diploma at that time to be hired and stuff, needed these eight grades. So so my father was teaching the veterans he was teaching them English, Spanish, also social studies because he was like what we would call a common branch teacher. And he did that in Puerto Rico for 35 years before he retired, and he came with the family to New York.

Pam Sporn [00:05:04]  
Was he a teacher here in New York?

Antonio Nadal He tried to this was one of the big ironies he tried to become a member of the D.O.E., Department of Education, Board of Education. Ironically, from what he tells me is that they wouldn't license him because he had a spoken accent when he, in his English, his English was perfect. My father was a perfectionist when it came to grammar hold. I inherited that from him. But he had an accent. And they told him that Columbia University had these courses that you could go to, get

what's called an American accent. And he was so angered by that. He was a very, very proud man, that he wouldn't do that. So he stayed home. And what he did was he dedicated himself to writing letters for people who needed translations he was good translator. He used to do duelos. I don't know if you guys are familiar with the word duelos, when someone dies, you have a speaker, somebody who's a professional who talks about the deceased and talks about what he or she did. So my father was an expert at being "despir de los Duelos," which was to go to Speaker funerals. So he wrote letters, he did translations for people. And of course, he was at home. So when I went to school, and I didn't do preschool or anything like that, there was no Headstart or anything like that. I started in the first grade. But I was a Spanish speaker, because my father was an English teacher, but we never spoke English at home. So my first language was Spanish from the very beginning. And Papi told me, taught me, he taught me verb structure, he taught me accents. When I got into, into middle school, and later on high school, I was already fluent, fluent in the sense that I had literacy as well as the speaking background. But my father at home became a bilingual teacher to me, even before bilingual education, which later on, I specialized in as well as Milga, my wife, my compañera, the whole notion was to develop, in Puerto Rico, to develop your English skills, so that Spanish would be done away with and that was all I studied that intensively. There was a whole background to how Spanish became the native language of Puerto Ricans but English is an official second language and that was a big struggle it was probably the only struggle on the colonial rule that Puerto Ricans won from the Americans ,that Spanish was established as the first language. Luis Muñoz Marín, the first governor of the island had a great deal to do with that and his wife, Muna Lee, I think she was a big advocate of Spanish as a native language of Puerto Ricans. But English was established as a second language, and my father was part of that. Actually, he got a scholarship to become an English graded teacher because the whole idea was that he would be part of this whole regime of turning over the island to an English speaking colony of the United States.

Pam Sporn So, you've been in a really literate... a family imbued with literacy.  
Antonio Nadal Yeah.

Pam Sporn So and you had these skills as a young child.

Antonio Nadal Yeah.

Pam Sporn Being bilingual when you were in elementary school and middle school in Williamsburg in New York City.

Antonio Nadal Right.

Pam Sporn Was your... the fact that your family was also fluent in Spanish? Was that seen as an asset or a deficit?

Antonio Nadal Depending on my teachers, you know, in elementary school,

Pam Sporn Can we just start again because we were talking at the same time.

Antonio Nadal Yeah. My teachers in elementary school were a mixed bag, right. There were many who follow the ethic that if you're in the United States, you speak English, you don't use your native language in the classroom or otherwise. And then there were others that were more, I would say were more akin to understanding that it was a bilingual child. I was becoming bilingual. Let's put it that way. In the first grade, I didn't speak any English whatsoever. So my father had to take over. And that's when I found out that my father had tremendous skills in English. So he was tutoring me at home. And by the time I was in the third grade, I was a functional bilingual. I was above my third grade class, in both languages, and by the sixth grade, they told my father that I was reading at a ninth grade level. So I was a functional bilingual, at the end of elementary school. Then of course, when I got to junior high school, they had a thing called the Rapids, which, if you were very good in reading and writing and you took a test, you did the seventh grade and then you were skipped, you didn't have to do eighth and you would go to the ninth. And for those classes, they had language teaching.

[00:10:03]

Mind you, they didn't have it for the regular population. But for kids who had high reading scores and were good in language, you could take a foreign language, beginning in the seventh grade. So I started Hebrew. Why Hebrew? Because in the classes that I was taking in junior high school, what they call the SP classes, were mostly Jewish kids. A few white kids that were not Jewish. But you had the privilege of being able to take a foreign language. So I took Hebrew and I want to read, I really want to take French, but the Hebrew class was the SP class. And my father said, important that you take Hebrew because you will learn a lot about the Bible. My father was a very religious man. He mistakenly thought that the Bible could be read in Hebrew actually is Aramaic, and my teacher, my Hebrew teacher, back in the seventh grade, Mr. Saoirse said, "You're not learning classical Hebrew, you're learning modern Hebrew, after the Israeli state was established in 1947." Wonderful teacher, because he did something that later on I utilize in my own teaching of language, and that is teach performance before you teach structure. Don't teach...don't get into grammar and teaching verbs and all that, because the sad experience of American education is that kids that learn a foreign language are taught first their taught all this verb structure and, you know, basically literacy, but they can't speak. And how many times have I had students say, I took five years or Spanish or so many years of French, whatever, and I can't speak it. And that's because they put the cart before the horse because they follow the old grammar translation approach which meant teaching you structure before they taught you how to perform. Saoirse, my Hebrew teach... I still remember him. He was a Sephardic Jewish man. And he taught us, he says, "you have to get to know the language first you have to be able to speak. So we're not going to learn any grammar. You're not going to learn the Hebrew characters alef, bet. No,

no, we're going to start speaking and situations." So by the end of like, I would say three months, we was functionally speaking Hebrew. And then he brought in this is ... The vowel system. So we were already performing before we actually learned the structure of the language and that...

Pam Sporn Fascinating. So, let me transport you to Brooklyn College. What high school did you go?

Antonio Nadal Eastern District High School in Williamsburg. Right? Eastern District.

Pam Sporn In in high school. Did you learn anything about Puerto Rican history and culture? Were there any courses like that?

Antonio Nadal No. Nothing at all except for...

Pam Sporn Can you just say it in a full sentence?

Antonio Nadal At Eastern District High School, there were no courses on let's say Puerto Rican culture, actually nothing on Latin America really, because we were preparing to take Regents. If you know anything about New York City, and you're in what they call the academic program, you have to take three Regents in all the major subjects, English, Mathematics, Science. And it was only in my senior year that I had a teacher, Dr. Horowitz, who talked about American history, because we had to take the American history Regents, right. And of course, he got into eventually he got into The Spanish American Cuban Filipino War, what I call it, The Spanish American War. And that's the first time that I heard about how Puerto Rico became a part of the United States. And he used the phrase that has stayed with me even today. And he said, "Puerto Rico, according to the Foraker Act, belongs to, but it's not a part of the United States." Belongs to, and this is verbatim, belongs to but it's not a part of the United States. I said, Wow, that almost sounds like 1984 you know, that kind of speak. It didn't make sense to me. So he didn't do very much on Puerto Rico. He didn't talk about the people. He didn't talk about the resistance that existed against American colonialism in 1898. But it dropped a seed that later on was to blossom but that was in my senior year. So when I got to Brooklyn College, I began to put some of Dr. Horowitz's teaching into studying about Puerto Rico. And I was mostly you might say, kind of dorky about it. I wasn't doing anything about it. Other than informing myself. Wasn't really until I met Milga at Brooklyn College, cause Milga was very active. Her mother had been an activist, I guess, you know, when you talk to her, her mother was an activist in community, her father as well been a nationalist in Puerto Rico.

Pam Sporn [00:15:04]  
Could you maybe just start that again and say, "I met my wife, I met my future wife Milga at Brooklyn College."

Antonio Nadal Yeah. When I met when I met my future wife, and lifelong partner at Brooklyn College, was when I really began to understand the nature of what the Puerto Rican community was all about, and what was going on as, not from the intellectual standpoint because I was in college and really, my parents were not activists. My father was an older man, he was 55 when I was born, so he was at home. My mother was a homemaker. She would make limber. You know, she cooked for people who were coming, there were bordantes. So she was running her own business and all that, but we were not involved in community affairs and what was going on with the migration with the diaspora, as we now call it. And when I came to Brooklyn College with Milga, I realized, wow, her parents are involved with all this, right? And they were involved with PR, PRC, Puerto Rican Community Development Project ,PRCDP. It was during the whole era of the War on Poverty under President Johnson. So there's a great deal of activism in the communities and a reaffirmation of identity. So Milga was the first to get me involved at Brooklyn College with things that were Puerto Rican because she said, we should have an exhibition of Puerto Rican culture in the library. And there are Puerto Rican artists that are not known here. And maybe we can get them to come and exhibit their paintings. And the first ever exhibition of Puerto Rican art in the library of Brooklyn College. It was called the Gideons library, Milga was behind it, and a group that was recently formed called the Puerto Rican Alliance, P.R.A. celebrated, they celebrated their 50th anniversary in 2018. And they were the, the motor force behind the creation of the Department. What will become the Department of Puerto Rican studies initially was the Institute of Puerto Rican Studies and then the Department. So I was at Brooklyn College during that time, I graduated '68. But I stayed active with all the students, even as a teacher. And I was a good resource, I had a car. I was one of the few people who had a car, so I would take them around, you know, and I would take Milga around, of course, I was interested in her not just because she was an activist, but I said, man, she's a real cutie. She's smart, and all that. And eventually, you know, we got married in 1970. She got, she graduated that same year, and she went on as well to have a career at Brooklyn College.

My first job was a high school teacher at Eastern District high school for two years, I taught French, Spanish and ESL. So I taught English, French and Spanish to a group of kids that was known as the non-English Program, and in my first year without having any background in education at all a second language acquisition, or administration, just barely had a BA. I was made director of the non-English Program at Eastern District. I was there for two years and then an English teacher from Brooklyn College, wonderful guy, because I really started out as an English major. He remembered me he knew that I was bilingual. And they were developing a program of Bilingual Studies at Kingsborough Community College, under Title VII grant, and he thought about me. He called me up he said, Tony, I'd like you to work with this program. I said, "Jack, I just got a BA you know, working in college, I need at least a Master's just to be an adjunct or whatever." So he said, no, no, it's a funded program. So we're really outside of the funding system of CUNY. So I was brought in as an instructor of

Spanish, in the bilingual program, and a counselor for how to take counseling courses to do counseling, I don't know what the hell was, you know, what does a counselor do? And these were students who came in, that program recruited students who were Spanish speaking, but already had a high school diploma. Except they didn't have the English language. And many of them had bachillerato from Latin America, which is a lot more than, say, the typical high school diploma in the U.S.

Pam Sporn I just want to pull you back to Brooklyn College for a minute.

Antonio Nadal Yeah

Pam Sporn Cause we're really interested when you, Start again... you were part of the ground floor of the....

Antonio Nadal Yeah, because I was, again, I was kind of like a resource person to the group. Because

Pam Sporn Can you start again say, how you were part of the group how you and others started the...

Antonio Nadal [00:19:48]

Yeah, basically, it was through Milga. Because Milga was one of the original founders of the Puerto Rican Alliance. Actually, it started out as an ad hoc group of Puerto Ricans who were looking at what the Black students were doing on the campus. Not only that, but there were other students, white students who were talking about the fact that there were no democratic rights for the minorities. Remember, this was the era of the Vietnam War, and the civil rights movement. And there was a small core of Black students at Brooklyn College, that eventually called themselves B.L.A.C. ,The Brooklyn League of Afro American Collegians and they were...probably get to know some of them later on.

Pam Sporn I'm sorry. Don't say anything about us interviewing other people. Just be so seamless.

Antonio Nadal Sorry about that. Yeah. Okay. So we met we, we met up with students that were active in the Black movement and it was known then right, to B.L.A.C. There were also many active White students that supported our cause. And they were many more of them because most of them were middle class Jewish students who are radicals. And they belong to a group called the Students for a Democratic Society, S.D.S. But there was also the Young Workers Liberation League, which was an arm of the Communist Party, that were on campus. I mean, well, I didn't realize that there was so much activism that was taking place on the campus because it was an era, it was the era of the war. And young men had a vested interest of not being recruited into the Vietnam War, because we realized that it wasn't what we called an imperialistic war. Why did they, the Americans go in

after the French left to take over in Vietnam and then how it grew. And the fact that we were being recruited into the army, so we had to do well in school. If you didn't do well in school, you could be plucked out of college, and you were given the Selective Service letter with the token to report and we, if for nothing else, I did not want to go to Vietnam War. Right. And people like me, Black Students of course were struggling also on the question of segregation, and schools that were not adequately preparing them because many of these Black students needed help when they were Brooklyn College, academic help, but they were very bright and enterprising. And they had what I would say, they had a social conscience of what was going on. So Orlando Pile, Askia Davis and others that we met along the way, they kind of paved the way for us. So in a sense, we were kind of like looking at what Black students were doing. And then we came in, because they invited us to come to the meetings. I wasn't at the initial meeting, when the group that went in, I think, was four or five... including Milga. They said, "well, who are you?" Well, you know, we're an ad hoc group of Puerto Ricans and we're interested in what's going on because we don't have any, we don't have anything here in the curriculum. We wanted to see that Brooklyn College pays attention to it. He says, "So why don't you call yourselves the Puerto Rican Alliance?" I think it was on Orlando Pile, who is now a doctor in California who said, he suggested that the group call itself the P.R.A., the Puerto Rican Alliance, and it stuck. That was by '67. All right, and '68 the Puerto Rican Alliance, that student group was instrumental in, with Black students to get together and form the Institute of Afro-American Studies and the Institute of Puerto Rican Studies. That happened in 1968, the year I graduated. But I was, I stayed active even after my teaching at Eastern District High School. By that point, I was already dating Milga. She was just kind of giving me the ropes about everything else. And of course, I had an apartment so we met at my apartment to have meetings to strategize for the future of the Institute of Puerto Rican Studies.

Because if you know anything about Institutes, they don't have the power to develop curriculum, or to come forward and have a major because an institute can exist and have courses through other departments. So I said, "wait a minute, what we need to do is turn this into a department, because the department has the power to hire people to develop a major etc." An enormous enterprise, we were kids, what the hell did we know about anything about the university structure and how to develop courses and how you, you know, the protocol and everything. But it was done because we also got help from people from Puerto Rico. This was a time when there was tremendous repression against the independence, there still is, but at that time, more, so they were persecuting independentistas, as they call them, from the university. Many of them will let go, they were fired, outright. Because of their political beliefs. So in a sense, that was great boom for us because there is this group of Puertorriqueños who are PhDs, many with advanced degrees, that we could tap into if we're going to form a department. So we began to tap into that and the initial talent that was there. There were some people already a Master's programs that we were able to hire. So we were able to after

demonstrations and a lot of stuff that happened at Brooklyn College. The department came about in 1970.

[00:25:22]

So the Institute still existed because CUNY was able to keep Institutes. Institute basically for specific types of academic agendas that they do in other places. So we had the institute and we had a department in 1970. So the Institute began first and was offering courses those courses have been transferred over to the department and we developed a major in Puerto Rican studies. But we kept the Institute because a foundational principle of Puerto Rican Studies, from the very beginning was that we would be stressing the three areas that were important for us at the university. Number one scholarship, that we would we had to develop a scholarship around Puerto Rican Studies and as it related to the Caribbean, for example, and Latin America. So scholarship is important that we get our people to become to do research when they were hired, which every university has to do anyway, cause if you're a faculty member, what is it publish or perish and all that? And you have to develop, right?

The second part of that was teaching, transformational teaching that we would teach from the standpoint of developing critical thinking about our situation, who we were, because for most Americans, we were just a minority group. Most people didn't even know that Puerto Ricans were citizens of the U.S. What implications did that have for understanding our situation? So good teaching about who we were in relation to everything else from American society, in relation to other diasporas and everything.

And the third was to stay active in community. The Department would have a commitment to our community so that the education that we got to Brooklyn College wouldn't just stay at the tower. Right, but that we would have an active participation of the people who came before us and those communities like, Milga's parents, who are active in community so that we would have basic rights like voting, right, like good housing, jobs. So the whole idea is that they were the pioneers. And in fact, that's what they've been called in the literature on Puerto Ricans the pioneers, that we were not, we're not going to turn our backs because now we're in the academy, that we have to have that organic connection. So the Institute's job after 1970, was to do that, and we existed until '75 when all Institute's were done away with. But we had separate funding, we have funding for the Institute and funding for the department. The department would take care of the academic agenda and we would deal with programs that extended to community, but also bringing this newfound knowledge, as Frank Bonilla called it. This new research into our community and that involved a number of programs. So when I came to Brooklyn College, as a faculty member, not as a student, but as a faculty member because I first worked at Kingsborough in that Bilingual program that for students who, whose first language is not English.

I came from Kingsborough to Brooklyn College in 1972. I just finished a Master's and I became Assistant Director of the Puerto Rican Studies Institute. So I was in

charge of all the community and social programs, cultural programs of the Institute and I worked under the director who was Josephine Nieves, tremendously talented woman who had come from OEO, the Office of Economic Opportunity. She had a job that not only paid a lot more than her being a professor at Brooklyn College, but she was recruited to become the first Chairperson of Puerto Rican Studies in 1970. And she had the idea that just like the anti-poverty programs, were reaching out into communities to develop talent, to make sure that people will get out of poverty by strengthening their educational background. She felt, well, she instituted many of those programs that she learned to devise in OEO, the Office of Economic Opportunity, to Brooklyn College, and they loaded me with it, you know, because I was her Assistant Director, so she was really the Chair of the Department. And I was taking orders from her to run those programs and what were they? Well, one was called "Se Acabo el 'Ay Bendito'."

[00:29:47]

The cultural program, "Se Acabo el 'Ay Bendito'," was a series of programs were community students, everybody was invited in and out, and outside of CUNY, about Puerto Rican culture. We would highlight our history our artists, our singers are professionals, and also have a message that Puerto Rican culture is alive and well. So that first year was the only year that I stayed as Director of the Institute of Puerto Rican studies, but it was a whirlwind year, because we had to organize, "Se Acabo el 'Ay Bendito'," which is a yearlong program, "Se Acabo el 'Ay Bendito'," is, you know, "To hell would being so meek," right? Because 'Ay Bendito', is a phrase that Puerto Ricans used whenever something terrible happens, you do nothing about it, except to say, 'Ay Bendito'. Or, you know, may the Lord help you, something like that, right. So the 'Ay Bendito', is supposed to be a sign of weakness that we just say it, to commiserate with someone but you know, nothing more behind that.

So, "Se Acabo el 'Ay Bendito'," means do away with that phrase, and let's take action lets become activists. And in that regard that program, "Se Acabo el 'Ay Bendito'," was followed with some very concrete programs to help our community, particularly our students, many who had children. There was a small group of Puerto Rican students at Brooklyn College when the...didn't number more than a couple of hundred, but many were parents. So they hadn't, you know, if they were going to go to Brooklyn College full time or even an evening session, they needed babysitting, right?

So the idea came up from Josie, a group of planners, to have a daycare center that we would sponsor through the Institute. And eventually we got it through the Agency for Child Development, ACD. We got funding for it, and we developed what was known as La Escuela Infantil Bilingue. Bilingual Preschool for Children. So it was children, not only the children of our students, but other children that were in the community with parents who worked. We had about I think, I'm not quite sure the number but we started with about 30 children. We

opened up at 1448 St. John's Place, money was coming from the Agency for Child Development.

Then we used our faculty and our students to work in that center because many of them were educational majors. And they were majoring in another aspect that the Institute developed with the Department which is the Bilingual Teacher Education Program, Bilingual Teacher Education, so trained teachers to be elementary school teachers that would graduate and have two licenses, the extension license in Bilingual Education and the regular K-6, what we now called childhood... childhood teachers. So we will get those students were very glad to participate in the Little Escuelita with the kids because they were doing their practice there. So it was like doing the student teaching. And in addition to that, we hired other professionals that would come in. So it was a huge success and one of our faculty members who went on to become a major scholar in the field of Bilingual and Multicultural Education, Dr. Sonia Nieto was an instructor in our department and at that time, she was recruited in 1972, into the department as I was, along with María Sánchez.

So, María Sánchez, myself, Emilio Vargas and Sonia became the core of the Bilingual Teacher Education program. And what we did was we worked to develop bilingual teachers for the school system but also gave them the opportunity to work with our kids through the Escuelita which was being run by the Institute. There were quite a few programs but the ones that stand out the most that I was directly in charge of under the leadership of Josephine Nieves, our chair, was the Centro De Educacion para Adultos, a High School level program for adults because New York you can take your high school diploma or equivalency diploma in Spanish. So we developed a core of our students through work study, particularly Dominican students. Dominicans were a bit more fluent than the Puerto Ricans in the Spanish because they were more recently arrived. And they were at Brooklyn College and we used them in the Centro De Educacion para Adultos to teach the basic courses that you needed to pass through your GED. So they taught social studies, they taught language, even science, right. And we ran that Center, not at Brooklyn College, not on this campus, but at the campus downtown. One time we had to two campuses. So I developed since my background was in language, I developed a curriculum for teaching Spanish and English because the whole idea was to use their skills in the Spanish language to augment what they do in English and I had some already had some background in TESOL, Teaching English as a Second Language.

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So they were usually instrumental and of course, they organize themselves a couple of years after P.R.A. after the Puerto Rican Alliance, the Dominican students developed a comparable club, if you will, called M.E.D.O., el Movimiento Estudiantil Dominicano. M.E.D.O. and P.R.A. worked together as we have throughout the years, the Dominican students in the college and Puerto Rican students. Those are the two major organizations. They participated with us

in the struggle at 1974 when the arrests came and everything else, which is a separate story. So M.E.D.O. students and students from the Puerto Rican Alliance were instructors in the Centro De Educación para Adultos, the Adult Education Center for GED. We sponsored lecture series at the college. We also put out a journal called La Revista, which was a kind of an academic journal, but would also take, get students to write, so that they would kind of like be able to get into the academic scene with scholars from Puerto Rico who had come. Josie was able to recruit two particular scholars as visiting professors, because mind you, none of us were tenured. But these were people who were kind of outcasts in Puerto Rico because they were independentistas, but very prominent historians and one of them was a sociologist, Luis Nieves Falcon. He came as a visiting professor and so did Loida Figueroa, a famous historian who wrote interestingly, she wrote a book called "Breve Historia de Puerto Rico," which was huge. So it wasn't so brief, you know. So those folks helped a great deal and others that we recruited and being able to run the programs at the Institute and at least for those years in which these institute existed, and we also worked hand in hand with the academic agenda of the Department because I said it was a three pronged approach, community service, good teaching and scholarship.

Pam Sporn     What was the curriculum? What courses were you giving?

Antonio NadalWell, the department was an outgrowth of the Institute. The institute came first, in 1968. We had an enormous and difficult agenda. If we wanted a Department because we realized that the real power in academia, if you want to be able to develop courses, if you want to develop people, right, that could stay and give it the strength. Academic strength is that you have to be in a department. Institutes only exist as adjuncts you might say, to establish departments. So we were offering courses, basically Puerto Rican history, Puerto Rican culture. It was a course on music, which I inherited when I became a faculty member. Basic courses that were about identity about history, that later on could blossom into working with other departments and developing not only a major but co-majors, or even what they call concentrations. So we have to learn about that whole lingo as to how a major is put together. And we had some help from people in Puerto Rico who had vast experience there. And we had Josie Nieves, who understood the university structure. And we just had a whole bunch of atrevidos, which is what we were. We had to learn all this, right? At the same time we were also going through getting our academic credentials, you know, Milga finished a Masters and then eventually, she got into a doctoral program with a scholarship at Yeshiva University, where she got her doctorate. I enrolled at the...at the Graduate Center to do a doctorate in...it was literature, Latin American literature, with a concentration on translation that was part of the doctoral program. And I was enormously happy to have had a guy like Gregory Rabassa. The translator of the famous translator of Colombian writer, Gabriel García Márquez. His exclusive translator was Gregory Rabassa. So when I enrolled at the Doctoral program at the Graduate Center, CUNY, because everything was free, that's another thing I should say, you know, my whole education, which is something that I always tell

my students. We, we could afford it then, but we can't afford it now supposedly, we got an education we got to break through CUNY because we were poor people, you know, we couldn't afford the tuition of an Ivy League or whatever. But CUNY was free. All we had to pay was an enrollment fee of \$18, I think and books were very cheap because there were a number of bookstores and all that. So anyway, I took a course in translation with Gregory Rabassa and he just opened up, it was another tremendous moment in my, you might say, my consciousness. Because Rabassa was a very sensitive man. He was a professor at Queens College, but he taught at the Graduate Center as many people do, because the Graduate Center is really an extension of the professoriate, particularly the full professors.

[00:40:17]

So anyway, we had those. We were developing our own resources and we had some from Puerto Rico and people in community that had a lot of experience that came in to tell us how to kind of bring this all together. Because it was Institute and Department, as I said before. So gradually the major began to develop, that we need people to become social workers, to go out there and work with our community, but social workers that aren't just there to like, we might say, accommodate you in terms of food stamps, or whatever. But that would work with our communities to develop our communities, which is really the philosophy of the war on poverty. And Josephine Nieves understood that.

So we began to develop our major with a strong background in social welfare. And then, of course, we had to know about the politics of Puerto Rico. So we hired adjuncts, and we hired people from Puerto Rico and our own, to teach the politics of Puerto Rico. The whole question of what happened before 1898 and what happened afterwards. Most of that was done by historians, Loida Figueroa and Professor Nieves Falcon. So then we had two courses in particular that would deal with the history of Puerto Rico again, from the idea 03 that we are a colonial outpost of the United States in the Caribbean.

We got into a lot of flack from that, because there were a lot of conservatism in the university as well. And people began to say, this is a department that is moving radically, right? And they've even hired ex-communists or people who have a background in, in the struggle for independence, and many of them were indeed socialists and communists and, or nationalist, like, Albizu Campos. But the people who taught our courses included all that. So we gave our students kind of background that even students in Puerto Rico didn't have in their... at UPR or Sagrado Corazón and the other universities there. So it was a gradual process. It was, it was difficult, because we had to learn how to write curriculum, how to write a blurb, how to write a Bibliography for a course, right? And then the whole process of getting it through faculty council at Brooklyn College, the different committees that existed, because all departments have to have representation in those bodies. But we were small department, so many of us had more than one job. But we were learning, and we were learning on the run, you might say. So

that's basically what happened in developing the major that later on extended to other departments because we became an interdisciplinary major. So students could take courses with us, and by what they call cross listing, they could take a course in Sociology that would be accredited to PRS and vice versa. We call that "plugging and playing." So those concepts, academic concepts together with very, very good and progressive faculty in those departments. I mean, we have to give credit for the fact that we've got a lot of help from people in those departments that believed in what we were doing. I mean, I could name quite a few. But...

Pam Sporn But, so you said you'd have to struggle to win it and then maintain it.

Antonio Nadal Yeah.

Pam Sporn Was there any incident in those, the faculty committee, council that you could describe that was...

Antonio Nadal Well, we ran into a lot of flack, particularly in the '74 struggle. I mean, we've always been struggling '66 and '68 in 1970. And actually, a lot had to do with what White students were doing on the issue of civil rights on the whole issue of getting out of the war. And we participated in all that because we're learning from them. They had some tremendous organizers among the students, you know, I remember the name Mark Rudd, was at Columbia, he came to visit Brooklyn College and S.D.S. was enormously talented in terms of doing political organizing. So we have to learn from those folks. We learned a lot from those White students. We learned a lot from Black students who had been involved in the civil rights movement. So it was a perfect storm, you might say. And it was also the overarching issues that were taking place. You know, it was the war. It was the civil rights movement. It was these assassinations that took place of major people, Martin Luther King, Robert Kennedy, John F. Kennedy. It all came together to us and understanding not only who we were but understanding American society. So through the linking with other departments, many times I sat, I sat as just as an auditor, in courses with progressive faculty just to learn a lot more. The stuff that really wasn't taught that was now coming...coming forward through their scholarship. So it was a tremendously great period. It was hard work, very hard work because I was in graduate school, Milga was in grad school as well, while we were active on campus. And we weren't doing a lot of publishing because to publish, you have to sit down you have to write an academic article (laughter) is a the thing in itself sometimes it takes a whole semester. Well, you have to take time off, you know, you have to go on sabbatical to do that kind of thing. So we were doing everything, we were firing on all pistons, you might say

Pam Sporn [00:45:40]  
So what was the BC 44? And what was your role in that?

Antonio Nadal Oh, boy. Yeah, that's, that was the culmination, I think. The culmination of our struggle, and I think that...

Pam Sporn I'm sorry, could you just start again, just rather than saying "that" was, could you say like the BC 44 was the...

Antonio Nadal Yeah, the, the struggle of the BC 44, the Brooklyn College 44. You might say it was a culmination in what this department was going to be about, and its impact on the academic community at Brooklyn College. And it began with again the intransigence of the Brooklyn College Administration, because the issue that defined the BC 44 movement had to do with selecting a Chairperson for our Department. Because the person who had worked so hard to put us together, you might say, it was a tremendous push was Josephine Nieves. I have to mention her because she was just a tremendously gifted woman, an administrator, but she left and she left in the year, she left in 1973. And we had an interim chair that came in, who was from Puerto Rico, Juan Rodriguez Cruz, a historian, and he was going to go back to Puerto Rico anyway, so he stayed as an interim chair for one year.

So in early '74, we were Chairless, we didn't have a Chairperson. And the Department felt that even though we were not tenured, we're all young instructors. Maybe assistant Prof here and there, that we had the right to select our own chair, as every Department had. The administration's position was, none of you were tenured. Right. So your search committee, your appointments committee, cannot appoint a chair since you don't have tenured faculty. So we're going to take over that process, but we'll let you participate in the process of getting a Chair. And we went along with that. So the process was to develop a recruitment committee, composed of administration and department, two members of the administration, two members from the department, two faculty members, that were Richie Perez, who was very active as you know, in our struggle, and Sonia Nieto, who was our expert on bilingual education. Those are the two representatives of the Department in that search committee. They had the Associate, I think he was the Associate Dean of Administration, fellow named Muchiello, and who's the other person, oh, and the dean, himself, Dean Birkenhead. The fifth person in the committee, because it was supposed to be a committee of five, because this way you could get a majority vote. Finally, when you made the final selection, so the fifth member of the committee was Carmen Dinos, who is still alive. She's 96 years old, now. She lives in California. Carmen was a, first professor in our Department and then in the School of Education, and she's an expert on bilingual education. She's one of the, you might say the shining stars of bilingual education movement and scholarship, and the programs that existed. She basically came from the New York City School System and became a professor in our Department and the School of Education. And she put together with our help and the Department but she was the architect of the teacher education program, the Bilingual Teacher Education Program. Now Carmen was up for tenure that year, it was her tenure year. And the administration knew that. So, it was our belief that

she was going to side whatever the administration wanted, because it was perilous for her to go against the administration, if her department and the Dean of her school because the School of Education had a Dean and the administration, ultimately the President, Kneller, who did not want us to select our own Chair. Kneller is the chief academic officer, he signs off on all tenure. So, they figured that they had Carmen, you might say on a cliff, so to speak. And when the final vote came in, we supported the Chairperson, the senior member of our Department, was María Sánchez, right. María did not have a doctorate, she had an advanced certificate in Educational Administration, beyond her Master's. She had been an administrator in the Superintendent's Office in District 14, was well known as an activist in bilingual education and she was a consultant for the D.O.E. So María was a tremendous administrator who knew education which was really the major program of our department, at the time. So we wanted María, who was also in age and also in experienced the person that we wanted to be our next chair.

[00:50:47]

So we put María Sánchez as a candidate and the committee ultimately voted after a long process and a lot of discussion. We voted for her to be, by vote of three to two. The two administrators backed to a woman from Puerto Rico, who had who had a doctorate, she had she was on leave. And this is crucial. She was on leave from Sagrado Corazón, La Universidad del Sagrado Corazón. Which is a private Catholic University in Puerto Rico, but she had put in her resume that she was at the...she was a leave from the University of Puerto Rico. In other words, she lied. And it was in the resume that she reconstructed that later on, we found out not only that, but even in terms of publications and her experience and everything else, some of that stuff was bogus.

But guess what, in spite of the fact that we didn't put out all the stuff that we knew, we said, she's not the person that we want. She doesn't have the kind of credentials that we need to head our Department. Professor Sánchez is very knowledgeable of what we do. She has a tremendous background in administration and education. And this is why we want her, we know she's not tenured. Right. But, you know, surely if she comes into that position she will develop because she could even come in as an interim Chair, not necessarily in property as they say, but as an interim Chair, and then later on, you know, you guys can decide to make her permanent Chair so even we proposed that. The administration went forward against the search committee because the Kneller administration, the President, we found this out, any search committee is really an advisory committee to the President, it cannot make the final decision, it can recommend. So the President says I can make the decision. And he did. He selected a woman named Dr. Elba Lugo, which became part of our slogan later on in the struggle. He named her Chair of the Puerto Rican Studies Department, and that set off of you know, that opened up the furies opened up the Pandora's box, because our faculty, our students, and we had extensive work with our community, who wrote letters and said, you have to give them the right to select

their own chair. The Committee voted three to two and you are basically taking away their, you know, their selection. She was approved by the...then it was called to BHE, the Board of Higher Education, now it's called the Board of Trustees. She was approved by the Board of Trustees. And she was installed as the Chair of Puerto Rican Studies, except that we developed a whole movement. I mean, that's I mean, we had students participating almost daily in demonstrations.

Outside of Boylan Hall, inside of Boylan Hall. And because the administration would not budge, and we took the position that we were not going to allow her. I don't know how we got away with that. We wouldn't even allow her to come into the chair's office of the Department, which is 1205 Boylan Hall, right across the street from here. And students were on guard, we got the support of the Veterans Affairs students in the college. Most of them were Vietnam era veterans. And I don't have to tell you, it was a great deal of fear of these veterans because many of them really have serious problems coming from the war and everything else. They were coming in and we were working with them. Many of them were taking our courses. Many of them were Puerto Ricans and the Director of the Veterans Program threw his support of the veterans behind the Puerto Rican studies struggle, as they call it at the time, right?

And the slogan for the entire college and for our community was "Sánchez, Si, Lugo, No." "Sánchez, Si, Lugo, No." And because of Kneller's decision to go against the community, students, the faculty and the fact that he had received the information that this woman had a bogus resume, she had a doctorate, but she lied about even when she had taken her leave, her sabbatical. The reason for her sabbatical, by the way, was that her husband was a doctor. And he was doing a residency at St. Vincent's Hospital. We did all this research. So she was coming basically because he was doing that one year, at St. Vincent's Hospital to get his residency and she came along and she applied for the position at Brooklyn College, she had no, really no intentions of staying. This was going to be a gig while she was also on leave from Sagrado Corazón and getting her sabbatical pay, in addition to what she would make as the Chair, as a full professor, she was going full professor rank, right.

[00:55:42]

So, yeah, so we told we, what we told the administration is you hired someone who's bogus, she's not, she doesn't have the proper credentials. We found this out, you have this evidence, we actually put it, we send Sonia Nieto to Puerto Rico, to check out what she put in the resume. And over there, you know, they have an old saying in Puerto Rico with people, okay, you know, [slap], "Una galleta para que hablen, y diez para que se callen." So, all you have to do is prompt them with one slap to talk about this woman. And then you have to slap them 10 times to stop talking and they put everything out. And we documented all that, anyway because Kneller named her and we felt that he did not take into account all that we had given him, the President.

We developed a slogan "Kneller you liar, we'll set your ass on fire." And it was kind of like, I know, I know it sounds very, you know, you might say it's not very tasteful to use that kind of slogan, but it's stuck throughout the campus, you know, with the students and everybody else. And, and we picketed Kneller's house. Because, remember, this was a year and a half of struggle in which we were running a renegade Department with the support of people in the Registrar's Office, people in the Business Office, people in the committee's and faculty council who are progressives who are supporting us, so we were we were not allowing her to even come into the Chair Lugo, to come into the office. So the Dean, at that time, the Dean of Social Sciences, Thomas Bruce Birkenhead, put her in his office and had her send Directors to us about what she wanted for the Department from his office, on Glenwood Road. But she could not enter the 1205...

Pam Sporn How did you physically keep her from going in?

Antonio Nadal We had guards, we had all around, from morning all the way into the evening. And the veterans participated in that...of course, they were professionals, they knew how to do security, they even went up on the roof of Boylan Hall because at one point they had police coming in. And eventually they brought in the...I mean, we did get arrested and everything else. The movement developed that it was so massive that we decided we're going to get arrested, but I think the arrest has to be something that has to be widely known, because at that time, we had made many contacts with the press, not only the press in the college, we had some student editors that were writing for us, Richard Styewho later became a professional journalist was writing our narrative of what was going on. But the New York Times picked up on it, the Daily News was saying, you know, "Ruckus at Brooklyn College, Puerto Ricans." I mean, we developed a tremendously bad reputation among many people, because Puerto Ricans were stopping this august institution from, you know, doing its bidding. So it became a thing that we had to deal, with athletes, many of them what we call the jocks and hardhats, because they would come out, and they were opposed to the fact, they were using the word that is very derogatory, you know, that we were just a bunch of "spics" doing this. No.

So the racism came out everything else, the animus. You know, because what the hell this, a small Department like this, who shouldn't even be here, in the academic world is standing up, you know, the mouse roaring against the lion. So it became such a mess for them. And the fact that we would not give in because we then had letters of insubordination after the arrest, there's one...

Pam Sporn A brief step by step. So you decided at one point you had to get arrested tactically or

Antonio Nadal Right.

Pam Sporn Just tell me that....

Antonio Nadal [00:59:34]

Yeah, the arrest, the arrest at Brooklyn College of the what we would then call the BC 44. That came after the takeover of the Registrar's Office. The Registrar's Office, we knew was probably the most important place in that whole college because at that time, it had, not on computers, but on paper. It had the records of about 35,000 students, that were enrolled, at the college. So taking over the Registrar's Office was enormously important. We had the help of the veterans, and we had help from people who know about security. And we stayed there for, oh goodness, two days, more than week before the arrest came. The administration said we can't have any negotiation whatsoever with your Department unless you vacate the Registrar's Office. Right. And, of course, what the students were saying the student delegation at one point, I was part of that delegation that was negotiating with Kneller, President Kneller. He said, well, the only thing we have is the Registrar's Office. That's our bargaining chip to negotiate with you. You have the faculty behind you, most of the faculty, you have the administration, you have the police department, you have the FBI, you have the Justice Department, that is all. So you have all the chips on your side and what do we have, the Registrar's Office.

So you want us to give up the Registrar's Office? No, not gonna happen. So then, of course, they threatened, that they were going to bring in and they were going to arrest us, right, because we were breaking all sorts of laws, you know, at that point they started writing letters of insubordination for all of the faculty. I'm kind of proud of the fact that that letter is in my personal file, even though I'm retired now. So that was, what eventually led to the fact that we accepted that we're going to be arrested, right. I mean, the college itself, the infrastructure of the college was for vacating the Registrar's Office because we stopped the functioning of the college when you take over the Registrar's Office. And at one point, if I remember correctly once Kneller mentioned that the TPF, tactical police force was gonna come in and one student actually...

Pam Sporn Can you start that again?...

Antonio Nadal Yeah, what he mentioned that the tactical police force would come.

Pam Sporn When Kneller, President Kneller....

Antonio Nadal Yeah. Right. He said that if they had to

Pam Sporn Start again, say, I'm sorry. Say, when President Kneller said that...

Antonio Nadal Yeah, President Kneller, let it be known that we were going to be arrested and they would bring the tactical police force if necessary, which they which they did. At that point, one student, I don't remember who he was in the group, in the

negotiating group said, you do that he says and he lit a match. And he said 35,000 records will go up, and Kneller who had astigmatism, his eye actually crossed. Almost like, wow, these people are willing to burn 35,000 records in the Registrar's Office. So he said, okay, so let's let's see what it is that you're asking for. Right, mind you all along he was going to send the TPF, anyway. And that was just a bluff. You know, we weren't going to burn 35... But remember, all the records at that time were not computerized. There was no data protection that could have happened. So anyway, we did come to the realization. We had a steering committee by the way, I should say that the department was being run, María was our leader, our renegade Chair, but the Department was being run really by a steering committee composed of the faculty, students, members of the community, that have come in that were prominent in our community. It was a huge committee it was like 20 people, use to meet and all the political tendencies. We even had participation of White faculty, Professor of History, Hobart Spalding, very prominent with NACLA, who's a Latin Americanist, was part of our steering committee. Right, so the steering committee decided, listen, they're going, they're going to go in and we're going to have to vacate the Registrar's Office because after all, we are seriously hampering the work of the college can't hold the Registrar forever. So we decided that we would get arrested but we alerted that the arrests were coming and everybody knew that these arrests were coming. You know, all of our contacts and communities and newspapers at that time, Geraldo Rivera became our lawyer. He volunteered to be a lawyer, I don't know if you know that Geraldo was first a community activist before he worked with channel seven and all that. And he was, as he said, he was tight with the Young Lords who was still very active. So Geraldo volunteered to become our lawyer, when the arrest came and everything else. And they arrested us at three o'clock in the morning, brisk morning in November and we were taken to court, you know, arraigned and everything else. And we were released on our own recognizance and we decided who was going to be arrested and who was going to stay back to maintain the struggle.

[01:05:02]

Because we were still doing demonstrations, we were still doing meetings with administration. So the 41 students were selected out of a very, very large group that included all the student organizations of the time, M.E.D.O., P.R.A., B.L.A.C., S.D.S. people, there were White students involved. So 41 students were selected and three faculty members. The three faculty members that were there were Herminio Vargas, who passed away this past year, and he was like a bilingual and also a theater, a theater person. So he developed a theater group that was doing, you might say, revolutionary theater. So Herminio Vargas, myself and Sonia Nieto were the three faculty members that were arrested as part of the BC 44. So it's 41 plus three. And we developed the slogan, which actually came from one of the demonstrators, one of the students that I think Indio mentioned because we came back onto the campus after the arrest and we walked up that walkway that leads toward Boylan Hall and Whitehead and the library in a little walkway coming in from the Junction, Nostrand and Flatbush and we were shouting BC44,

BC44, and one of the students added, "we've come back to give you more, we've come back to give you more." So that became part of the slogan, "BC44. We come back to give you more," "Sánchez si, Lugo no," "Kneller, you liar, we'll set your ass on fire", those are the three slogans that defined the movement. It got out of hand for them and they realized that all the bad publicity that Brooklyn College was getting, right because members of the Jewish community in the you might say the business sector saying this is affecting us, you know, you're getting a bad reputation the colony is like, you might say the focal point of this community. So you got to do something about those Puerto Ricans, right.

So what they finally did in order to and this was after the arrest that, we had threatened to retake the Registrar if necessary, we would have to do it again, we would do it, right. So Kneller and Thomas Bruce Birkenhead, they spoke to a professor in the Poli-Sci department, fellow named Abrams, I believe, who was active in the creation of what was to become the Institute of Mediation and Conflict Resolution, IMCR. Actually, all mediation in the city really began with the creation of that Institute. I don't know if you know this, but in the courts today, because they're so jammed in their calendars with stuff that, you know, that judges can't deal with, they use mediation. And what they do is they train a core of people that deal with particular issues that once resolved by the parties involved, it could go to court if you have an agreement, and it keeps it out of the courts, in other words, right. And it's a way, it's a way it's a way to mediate, right? So it's mediation but remember the other part of that mediation and conflict resolution you have to resolve the conflict. If not, then you can't get the parties to sign a mutual agreement.

And after a long process, they came in with a fellow named Al Rivera, who was in charge of the team. He met with us, he met with the administration a number of times. By that time, everything about Elba Lugo and the whole process of the search committee, the three-two vote and how we had reacted in community, they decided that the best thing to do was to give Professor Sánchez the chance to become the interim Chair of the department, she would be put on probation for a year. And what would they do with Elba Lugo, who had been named by the BHE. She was in possession of that title. They moved her to the Graduate Center, to teach over and they maintained her rank and everything else. But she would teach at the Graduate Center, which is very interesting because Kneller a year later after that, he left, I don't know if he was kicked out or he left on his own accord. And he wound up at the Graduate Center.

[01:09:23]

And I could tell you a story that so ironic, oh my goodness, I was a student at the Graduate Center in a doctoral program at the time and it was in 42nd Street. I think it was, it the Grace building and most of my classes were on the 17th and 18th floor. So one time, this was after everything was resolved that María became the Chair, that Department went back to some kind of normalcy. Right. And I, of course, I resumed my courses at the Graduate Center, I became the Deputy

Chairman, under María Sánchez because I had, I had led the Institute as you know, so I had some administrative experience and I was like a second, her left or right hand man, you might say.

María was a wonderful Chair because she had all this administrative experience. She basically brought together the curriculum of the Department. She recruited people that moved to expand the major, not only in bilingual education but with sociology so we could train our students to work in community. We started a small business program, right, and she was already looking at the fact that the population at the college was beginning to change. It wasn't...the Latino students weren't mostly Puerto Rican, now, Dominicans were coming in, Peruvians, Colombians, right, the demographics of the city began to change. And María, as a leader understood that so she began to already project how our curriculum could change and eventually it wasn't under her. But eventually, it became the Puerto Rican Latino Studies Department, which is what it is now after 1990 and that happened with Professor Sánchez-Korrol, Virginia Sánchez-Korrol, a historian. But Virginia was a Professor toward the end of Professor Sánchez's career. She passed away in 1999. María retired but she kind of trained Virginia. So where this department could be going, she had that vision. Anyway, I am I seriously got back into my translation studies and Latin American literature, Caribbean literature at the Graduate Center. And I'm going into the elevator one day coming in. I was almost late for my class, it was 6:00 and it was like 6:05, and the elevator was jammed. And I came in, and I couldn't even stand looking at, toward the doors of the elevator. So I had to like shift and when I shifted this tall man, much taller than I, by the way, is there and I'm almost face to face with him and who is it? John Kneller.

The President, the ex-President, the former President, maybe I should say, ex, of Brooklyn College and he looked at me, looked down on me literally, he says, Hi, Tony. He knew me well from all the negotiations in his office and all that and I say, I never did what the students were doing to disrespect them because I felt, you know, there's no reason why we respect this man, so they will say, they would call him John or Jack, "listen Jack!" His name is John Kneller. I always and I always followed María Sánchez advice, always refer to these people with their title, as respect. So I said, "How are you President Kneller?" I'm looking up at him. He says, "oh so you're here." I said, "Yeah, I'm a doctoral student in literature." He said, "Well, I'm here teaching one of my favorite languages. I'm teaching French." So they had sent him also, so they packed him off to the Graduate Center. And it was the most uncomfortable three minutes that I've ever had in my life being jammed and facing John Kneller at the Graduate Center.

Pam Sporn I have a question about, you guys were holding this Registrar's Office for almost a week or all these days and 24 hours. How did you keep the spirit up and I imagined music was a part of that.

Antonio Nadal Oh, yeah. Yeah...well, as you know, I'm also a, or was a practicing musician, I had my own band I sing, I play keyboard. And the spirit was always there was

enormous amount of spirit, there was no problem for those students saying you know, I'm missing my classes, or my parents don't want me to be here. None of that existed, right. In fact, it was just an ebullience. It was a spirit, that we were there for a cause and that we were right. We were not going to give up. So yes, music was a part of it, because of course, there were many of us that were also involved in the Puerto Rican movement, and the movement on the island toward independence, right. And the independentistas had their own songs and poems and we knew them right ,because many of us had gone there. And I remember one in particular...was I'll sing it to you and I'll give you a quick translation.

[not audible; talking in background]

Antonio Nadal What do you want me to start from?

Tami Gold Tell us about the music of the independence movement.

Antonio Nadal Yeah, so well, while we were in the Registrar's Office, that we occupied, I think, was roughly a week or so. There was a tremendous spirit of militancy in what we were doing. And music played a huge role because we would have drums right. We'd have people who would come in and join us. And we sang songs and, in Spanish, that were part of a Puerto Rican movement on the island, and one of them it was very famous because I remember going and marching in Puerto Rico with the Puerto Rican Socialist Party, and other groups and it was the famous, "Mira La, Mira La."

[01:15:23]

"Mirala que linda viene, Mirala que linda va. La revolucion Boricua, que no da ni un paso atras. Si tu pasas por mi casa y tu ves a mi mama, tu le dices que hoy no me espere, que este movimiento no da ni un paso atras, tu le dices que hoy no me espere, que este movimiento no da ni un paso atras," and then the chorus comes, "Mirala, la..." etc. So, "Mirala que linda viene," it started with the chorus and then you had the lyrics come in, right?

So it was basically saying this movement cannot be stopped, and we had the translation for students whose Spanish was not that tough and sometimes we have sheets that they sang along with us right. So it was that kind of effervescence, right because there were many students that were aligned with political groups on the campus. At that time, it was not only the Puerto Rican Socialist Party which had a nucleus there, which I presided by the way, which had faculty and students, so the PSP was there. The Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers organization led by Richie Perez, who was a faculty member and they had their own songs almost in doo-wop style that they would they would sing, right. Ah, do I remember? Oh, my goodness, I forgot the one that was most... He only had one song. And it was pretty long and it was a doo wop song. Oh my god, I can't be, I'm sorry, I can't recall the melody right now.

But his particular group of students, the ones that worked with him, and...

Tami Gold Can you use the word, Richie Perez?

Antonio Nadal Yes, that's Richie, it was Richie Perez's group, actually, Richie was not the leader of PRRWO, it was a broader organization, but he was the organizer of PRRWO on the campus, and he had his own group of people, and included Charlie Alejandro "Indio", Jose Ojeda and others. And we had serious struggles with them because they were a Maoist group and the Maoist philosophy in the American left at that time was making a huge impact against the parties that favored let's say, Soviet socialism. The Maoist called the Soviet, Social Imperialists that was, they had the own terminology. And some of those things came to the point of fights between students and even faculty. But we also knew that although we had our internal struggles with the whole question of Marxism, Leninism vs. Marxism, Leninism Mao, Tse Tung Thought, even though we had those differences. We kept alive the fact that we were here for a purpose. This is a Departmental struggle about our right to select a Chair. So that's what brought us together. So we could talk to each other, even though we serious political differences internally.

So that's another aspect of it, that it was an internal struggle for the leadership of the movement and then there was the external struggle against the administration and all the powers that be, but we managed to bring it together and even years later of course, because Indio and I, Charlie and I had, he was my student initially, and he said he learned a great deal from me. But later on, he began to disagree with me because he was, he was part of the other bando, as we call it, the other group. But most of them, most of those folks over the years have come together and said, 'well, kind of foolish that we were fighting each other while we were also fighting a common enemy' you know. We should've stressed what was common to us as opposed to what was not common, you know, our differences versus our affinities. So yeah, that was that was an interesting period of time as well because we were, in many ways, we were political department. In fact, we were red-baited by the administration. At one of the faculty meetings, a professor from the history department a Lincoln scholar got up and says, 'this Department has declared itself a communist lead Department,' said, 'they're preaching Marxism Leninism.' He says, 'they are totally against the values...' and he just got gave a speech. And Richie Perez got up 'cause Richie was our representative to faculty Council and he said, 'You are red-baiting. That's what you're doing. You're attacking us for defending our rights,' and he got up and, in fact, it got so heated that the President dismissed the faculty council meetings, he says we can't keep because it was, got hot and heavy you know.

[01:20:19]

So...that was a process that I said, it was life defining because we learned so much about each other. We learned so much about the structure of the university and how it was lined up against us. We learned that in many struggles, you have to

sometimes give, you can't be intransigent that you can negotiate which many, by the way, the agreement that we reached with IMCR, the Institute for Mediation Conflict Resolution, was not in full agreement with the people in our movement, because they felt we had given in to the administration and to getting María as an interim chair, while this woman was still packed off to the Graduate Center with all her privileges and everything else, and that we should have kept that struggle to get exactly what we wanted. Not that the kind of agreement that we came up with.

It's very interesting because quite a few students and even some staff were recruited to become mediators by Al Rivera, because it was just starting the whole concept of mediation, was just starting, and they wanted people to come in because they would pay you like \$15, you know, for an hour, because it was supposed to resolve the conflict in an hour. So you were trained as a mediator, and they will give you a number of cases, pay you \$15 a piece, at that time. And then the decision was given to the court, if you had agreement. So later on, even I took the mediation course because part of my resume is that I was active in the Long Beach community, Milga and I still have a home in, a house that's not, this is the home, in Long Beach, and I became active in the Latino community there, which numbered about 1,000 people out of 35,000 in the whole town of Long Beach, and eventually I became a Commissioner of the Human Rights Commission. I think there were 10 commissioners that represent all of Long Island. So I represented Long Beach, Island Park and Oceanside and what we did, was to implement the law in terms of human rights, that you can't discriminate against people in their employment, or in education or issues of language, or even at that time, it was very important that the issue of LGBTQ, it wasn't called that at the time, but you couldn't discriminate against someone because of his gender preference, whatever, right. And so then I had to take the mediation training that years before had been implemented at Brooklyn College to resolve the BC 44. So I was trained as a as a mediator. And we have some very interesting courses over there in, cases in Long Beach of...one in particular of a restaurant owner, an Italian man would just come over he opened up a restaurant and two men came in and held hands in his restaurant and he threw them out. And there were two, one was an architect, I forget what the other one and they went to the Human Rights Commission. They lived in Long Beach and they gave us the case. There were three commissioners that would hear a case, right, and would render a decision. Boy, that was that man shocked when he was subpoenaed to come, before the commission. And he says, 'I don't realize in my country, this is not, does not happen in my country,' you know, this kind of thing. And he says, 'well, you're not in your country now, you're here. This is the law.' So they sued him and they got a monetary reward for it.

Pam Sporn      So just going back to the Department and reflecting back on this amazing fact that it's here, 50 years later.

Antonio Nadal Yeah.

Pam Sporn     What do you, what are your feelings about the staying power, the impact of this Department over these 50 years what's been its, major accomplishment. What is this major dent in the history of CUNY and broader education...and it's any connections to Open Admissions and who should have access to public education.

Antonio Nadal [01:24:45]

We were involved in all the struggles as a Department that had to do with the rights of students, the rights of access, the help that they would need, through remediation, which became a major issue with the most conservative faculty. They didn't see why Brooklyn College would have to have a remediation program for students coming in that didn't have the skills. And we fought all those battles, sometimes internally in meetings, at a point when I was already a member of the faculty council, this was already into the late '80s I would say, the Department is already pretty well established. We were moving into Latino Studies and I remember the then Chair of the Psychology Department, who got up at faculty Council, speaking against giving students any kind of remedial help. Which, by the way, many, many students, not necessarily the minority students, now have because they have to learn how to write a paper, you know, just like we had to, a lot of them don't know how to do research, a lot of them don't know how to take notes. They have to learn to become students, but they're bright. They have potential, you know, we always knew that, especially with our own. So that particular member of faculty, was the Chair got up and he says, 'Do you realize that our title here is that we're professors, we're not teachers. We're here to profess. Teachers use what we profess.' In other words, we're the ones who create knowledge. We're not here to become teachers that they should get elsewhere. If they don't have that then they don't belong here. So that drew the line, we knew exactly. And he represented many people, because Brooklyn College always had a reputation of, I don't know if you know this, but it was called the poor man's Harvard, right, or Harvard in Flatbush. And the whole idea was that many alums were against what we were about because the alums felt that if the college was in any way belittled by having students come in who weren't prepared, then that means that their diplomas, as alums didn't mean anything. So they wanted to keep you know, when Brooklyn College was admitting soon before Open Admissions, which came in the middle '70s.

Before Open Admissions to get into Brooklyn College, you needed a 92 average from high school and you had to do very well. You had to do like 12, 1300 in your boards, SATs. So that it was very difficult for students coming from schools that ill prepared you and mine was considered, my high school was considered at the bottom of the... even though we had an academic program, but it was mostly to prepare kids for commercial careers, you know, we weren't a vocational school, but that's what vocational schools and the lower level high schools were for. We were not at any level like Stuyvesant, or Tech, or Bronx High, or even the specialized schools that prepare students much, very well. So the students at Brooklyn College that came from those schools resented the fact that we were the

barbarians at the gate. So we had to struggle with that kind of reality as well, and who we were, and we had to reassert ourselves.

I think the major accomplishment of this Department over 50 years is that we have gained the respect of the faculty at Brooklyn College, that to our work with other faculty members and administration. I mean, Milga is a perfect example. My, mi compañera, because Milga became the first ever Latina to become a Dean and then later on a Vice President. And she took over a position that when we were in the struggle of the BC 44, we were picketing the Office of the Vice President of Student Affairs, who was Kneller (acolyte). So I remember Indio once telling her, 'oh, so now you're the man.' And I cracked up at that, oh so now you're sitting in the man's chair. Milga said 'Yeah, but I'm not a man.'

And so, the idea of us having to, you might say, gain credibility in that college came with our work with the faculty. The present Chair actually, she just stepped down, we are now the Chair of the department is a great Cuban guy named Alan Aja, very progressive scholar, he's a sociologist. But just before him this past year, the Chair of the Department was María Perez y Gonzalez, María Perez y Gonzalez, also a sociologist, became the first Latina to become the Chair of faculty council at Brooklyn College. And, like most of you know, if you're in a position like that, you can't be as good, you have to be better than whoever you succeed. And María is brilliant in that position. She served for three years as the Chairperson of the faculty council, which means all the committee's and everything had to report to her, in addition to her being the Chair of our Department.

[01:30:04]

So it was our scholarship its also the reputation that we got as teachers because, you know when you believe in something, and your formed in that, it's very hard for you to like, just let it go and say, I'm just another professional now, or as many departments that were ethnic studies departments or Puerto Rican Studies, Black Studies, they went more the academic route. The whole idea is that I got to establish myself as a scholar, or I can use this as a steppingstone to another institution, where I can shine and I came in through the back door, but now I'm a front door scholar. So we've had those people too. The ones who were thinking more about who they were, and what they wanted to accomplish as scholars and not because they believed in the fundamental principles that came with forming the Institute and then the Department. So that was sotto voce as they say, that was in the background, you know. But yes, I think that when we recruit people, now, we're recruiting people that pretty much adhere to those principles of transformational teaching, good scholarship, community being open, to community service we just recruited although I'm not, no longer a member of the faculty 'cause I retired. But I was instrumental in bringing someone who had been an adjunct, then went up the ranks to be a substitute instructor and now she has come on a tenure bearing line. She went to Boston for a while now she's back. She's wonderful, and she embodies everything that we're about. So this is the kind

of people that the Department it seems to attract that we have the reputation of being an activist department from '68 all the way 'till now, you know.

The impact of the department transforming itself but not dropping the Puerto Rican Studies agenda. The title is still there and some departments actually not only changed their, you might say their nomenclature, they dropped the Puerto Rican Studies part because makes a lot of sense that Latino Studies is more inclusive than Puerto Rican studies, or Latin American Studies or even Caribbean Studies. And many colleges, quite a few, changed their nomenclature, they started with the Puerto Rican Studies label, and that no longer appears. So, at least in terms of who we are, we retain the importance of Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans in the United States. And as one scholar, once told me a guy from the history of department, he said, 'Look, nobody looks askance at the fact that Columbia has Chinese studies, Sino Soviet studies, and they have specialized people that they bring in. So why, Puerto Ricans any different', why because we're a dot on the map? You know, we're not a huge extension of language. It's, our experience in the United States, what we mean, you know, as Latinos who came as citizens, and yet we're treated as second class citizens. And then had to forge an identity, and then also forge communities that will prepare students to understand who they were, as opposed to losing their identity and kind of melding in to the good old melting pot, right. So the movement toward Latino Studies is very interesting, because we not only are retaining our original label, you might say, working with Puerto Rican students, but now we have students that are going through pretty much the same thing that we did early on.

Dominicans and Peruvians and Colombia's were not citizens. So in a sense, they have a lot more to struggle, to reassert themselves, right. And they find that in our Department, because we're now teaching courses on the Mexican American experience, right, teaching courses on Latin America. They're developing an identity in the diaspora that they can't have, that they could have had in their home countries. But here they are realizing they're like fish out of water. So our Department is filling that gap, you might say, it's giving them a sense of belonging and they're learning from the Puerto Rican experience because in many ways, one of the big struggles in our community, and I'm talking about the community outside the university, has been that Puerto Ricans were pioneers in breaking through and getting the social services and the agencies and Puerto Ricans in positions in which they can implement policy. And that now is being watered down by many conservatives in our community are saying, we started it all and now it's the Mexicans taking over. And now it's the Dominicans taking over up in you know, Washington Heights, right. And this resentment, that Puerto Ricans are being set aside, and that these groups are now coming, are coming up and they're claiming their own.

[01:34:54]

And my position has always been no, we should not, listen, we have to create alliances. We have to come and go with this flow but maintain what we're about.

So what if did they learned from us? So what if did they, in a sense, took over some of the agencies that we created, going back to the war on poverty and OEO and everything else? The fact is that, they're going through many of the struggles that we went through, right. And I think if we collaborate and unite and bring together political forces, which we didn't even do ourselves in the struggle with BC 44, because we had our differences with other groups. Charlie, yesterday, Indio said, 'Imagine if we had put together all our common agendas, if we had thought about what made us come together as opposed to what divided us, what we could have done. We could have done a lot more.' I said, yeah, more is always better than less, you know. So yes, that that's also an issue that has come to the forefront. But I think the Department has been enriched by that because we have an experience with that we have an experience with dealing with difference and dealing with opposition, right. And we can't make our natural brothers and sisters who come in and they're poor and they want an education. I mean, I hear this a lot from my former Colombian, Peruvian and non-Puerto Rican students say, we've learned so much from you, so much from this Department of who we were. We're very grateful for that, but it takes, I think it takes all that coagulated experience that we had and what we went through to get to that point, and not go the route of discarding who we are, in order to join the broader Latin American Studies family, let's say and developing the scholars who then have no connections to community. So we have to maintain that tripod of scholarship, teaching and community activism, which we have. So there's no contradiction.

Tami Gold      When you were arrested, were you scared because I've been in situations close.

Antonio Nadal Yeah, personally, I was not scared for myself. I was scared for what could happen. Because we were involving students. In many ways we felt that they were our charges, and that we were putting them through something that maybe their parents didn't want them to be involved in. Of course, they were very enthusiastic because they had found themselves and they felt, 'hey, I'm with this agenda.' But I was, I was mostly scared that something could happen to them, right, or even to fellow faculty members that they be clobbered, they would wind up in a hospital or even dead. That's always the fear because we know that the forces of repression can be very, you know, serious in terms of what could happen to us, right.

So we didn't put up any resistance whatsoever when the arrest came. In fact, we were, we left the Registrar's Office and one of the secretaries that actually made that comment she said, 'It looks better than when we had it, they cleaned everything up.' We had food and everything else but everything was clean because we knew, in advance that the arrest were coming. So no, I was not I was not scared. In fact, I think I was more emboldened, because after that I knew that that struggle was going to continue. But we had to see it through we went through the mats. And were very proud of the fact that the 44 and the generation of students before that had put something together that had meaning for this institution because we have transformed Brooklyn College. It's not the college that I attended, which I hated, by the way, because my father said, we got to go

there because it's free, and you know, you could probably go to a high-price private school because you have the grades and everything else, but you have to pay but Brooklyn College was an excellent school. I said, I know...I also knew that...I would be alienated because you know that they had the frats at that time, big time and they even owned their own buildings. You know, on Glenwood Road, the frats were, you know, that powerful. Then they had the house plans. And it was a whole environment that was so alien to who I was. So what I did is I hung out a lot, in my free periods, I hung out a lot in the Student Center and I got together with some White radical students who were chess players. And I learned to play chess pretty well and I would spend my time, my free time playing chess, or in the library, right. So I graduated from Brooklyn College as a language major, and I did very well academically, because I had no real friends there except the ones when I got together in the Student Center. Right. And I saw the struggle that was going on, the college was a hotbed. And I don't know if you know that Brooklyn College was named by a former president, who was very conservative. They named the library after him Gideons, Harvey Gideons.

[01:39:57]

He named Brooklyn College when he came, a real conservative of the time, you know a real. He would be "Trump-er" today, and he named the college, "The Little Red Schoolhouse." And at the time when I first heard I said, 'why, why the Little Red Schoolhouse? What does he mean by that?' And what he meant was, I'm coming here to clean up and he did, fired many people. Because our student newspaper. I wrote a couple of articles one time on literature for the Brooklyn College publication was called, "The Brooklyn College Vanguard." And I got to learn later on at the word Vanguard has all kinds of connotations for radicalism, right. That it's a Leninist term, 'prepare the Vanguard.' He changed completely, he just completely fired the board of the students put them on, you might say, close to kicking them out of school, and they changed the name in the early '60s to "The King's Men."

"The "King's Men," Now we renamed as of last year, "The Brooklyn College Vanguard." It went back to its original name, but just to give you a small example of how he saw the college, and how he went after conservative faculty, you know, because there were people there.

Pam Sporn He went after...

Antonio Nadal He went after radical students, particularly S.D.S. types, you know, at that time, there were actually students in the '50s, who were the student arm of the Communist Party, USA. There were student radicals on the campus. And I'll tell you something, I learned as much from those students and meeting with them and finding out about how American society works, with reference to civil rights and human rights and everything else, than what I was getting in my classroom because I was a language major, I had to take Latin, because if you were a language major, you had to have your specialization in Spanish or French,

Portuguese, Chinese, but you had to take Latin, because that was like the foundational language and I had a wonderful professor for that course. And in 1967, there was the arrest at Brooklyn College, of students that oppose, mostly White students, that opposed recruitment of the military on campus, they would bring in people to come in and sit in Boylan Hall and were giving out information about how to travel and all the stuff that the military could do for you. And S.D.S. students opposed it and they demonstrated against them. And one young woman got so rowdy, and she ticked off one of the recruiters so much that he got up and he pulled her hair and knocked down. And that started, I mean, because there was so much activity on the campus, they emptied out the student center. I remember Professor Myers in the Psychology Department, dear friend of mine who passed away a couple of years ago. He was an activist with the students, Psychology Professor, a tremendous person. He went and got the students out...He said, 'Look, they're about to arrest students in Boylan Hall because of the recruiters'...You know, that was a single moment in my life because I have it engraved in my head that students just poured into the quadrangle, the Brooklyn College quadrangle, they poured, and they filled it up in front of Boylan Hall and they had speakers already, ready to talk about what was going on and the repression and everything else and all the issues of the moment and how Brooklyn College was now recruiting the military to come in to make us a school that was taken over by the American military. Point is that the Dean, Milga knows that, the Dean of Student Affairs at the time called in the police to have the students arrested. And they brought in the paddy wagons as they call them another racist term, by the way, they brought in the police wagons to arrest those students.

So they got to the front of Boylan Hall, two trucks, you know, to arrest the student demonstrators, the ones that were inside, because then there was the (hood paloy?) outside and the students inside. And I saw White students actually put their bodies under the tires of those two police wagons to prevent them from moving, going out and taking the students. So I'm saying, man, that takes a lot, because I told myself, I wouldn't do that. Damn, imagine if these people said, 'to hell with them, you know, let's just run them over.' Right under the ties. I'll never forget that it was so you know. Of course that led to have quite a few days of demonstrations. And this was shortly before I graduated, so I saw that happening when I came into my Latin class. You know I love languages. I would never miss classes. One thing I never did at Brooklyn College was cut. I always went to my class, no matter what I was about, I always went to my class.

[01:44:57]

This time I got up and I saw what was happening. I was already involved with P.R.A. and Milga, I was already, you might say nominally brought into the struggle and I got up and Professor Ronest says, 'Where are you going?'... 'I'm going out there.' So she says, 'Why are you going out there?' she says, 'you know, you're missing class.' I said, 'Yes, I know. But I have to be out there.' So she said, 'Well, you should know what the consequences of that are.' So she was a wonderful professor, but very conservative, imagine, she taught the classics, you

know, she was into the western canon all the way. And she just didn't understand like many professors, I had at Brooklyn, they didn't understand the whole student movement of the late 60s and early 70s. What they saw was barbarians at the gate. These kids are complete, they completely want to subvert what we're about. And, our view we were adding, we were making this institution a lot more democratic. You know, so it was it was a very interesting period, and at least in terms of my personal journey. As a student, as a scholar, you know, as an activist, that I still retain, you know, along with many compañeros and compañeras of the time.

Antonio Nadal We developed the first Puerto Rican Studies Institute in '68. They developed the Department in '69. And then we followed the Institute, Department in '70. It's the 50th anniversary, they are celebrating their 50th, we already got word that they're doing something big deal with their scholars and everything else. Hopefully, I can make a couple of those, you know, and then there was City College, because we always looked at City College. I said, Wow, that's the hotbed of everything else. But then we saw that many of the privates also developed Puerto Rican Studies programs, you know, and then we, Connecticut, we saw that in Chicago, you know, Chicago has a very, very thriving activist community. And I was talking to one of the organizers over there in Humboldt, what they call the Puerto Rican section, you know, because they have this and, and I said, so how did the Puerto Rican community develop here? I mean, you guys are 1000 miles away from New York. How is it that it's so active and so Puerto Rican and so nationalist. He said, 'you know, what? They gave us the lemons, they segregated us and we made lemonade. So we developed our own.' Segregation can sometimes bring people together, to realize why it's being done. So it is because of the fact that we were treated, in such a fashion that we developed a resistance to that. So that was an interesting... I said, Yeah, I suppose that's true. Because Indio was saying, 'you know, Tony,' he was telling me yesterday. 'You know, Tony,' he says, 'when you're oppressed, and when you're kicked around and all that, the thing that happens to people who have any conscience is they lose fear. You lose fear. The fear and the oppression is what gives you the wherewithal to come out and to be brave.' I said, 'Yeah, yeah, I agree with that.'

Because many of those things we wouldn't say and all that because we were, we didn't want to be labeled, you know. And because we weren't going with the mainstream, you know. So that is the struggle of academia today, we still have that struggle and many Puerto Rican scholars that come and feel that this is the steppingstone to other careers. And you know, it's totally anathema to what we're about, you know, I never wanted to go anywhere else but to stay at Brooklyn College and I stayed there 43 years, you know, first as a student and then as an activist student and then as a faculty member. And let me tell you something, if I had to do it all over again. I would gladly do it over again. Arrest and all.

Antonio Nadal Probably the most progressive President, and probably the best in my, and we saw like maybe seven, seven or eight of them in our tenure Brooklyn College. But probably the best in terms of my view and others, was a man named Robert L.

Hess. Who happens to be the nephew, one of the nephews of Leon Hess, who owns the gas stations and all, the billionaire. And the story that I want to tell you about that which involved our department is that we always gave a reception to whatever new President came to Brooklyn College. The department always gave that person a reception with music. Right and by the way, "que bonita bandera."

"que bonita bandera." "que bonita bandera." "que bonita bandera es la bandera Puertorriqueña" and that's a chorus right? And then you come in, "Esa es mi bandera, no puedo vivir sin ella. Que bonita compay, es la bandera Puertorriqueña. Coro! Que bonita bandera."

[01:49:58]

And we will have our tambourines. You know, I would bring my keyboard and accompany it with the chords. And when Robert Hess was made President of Brooklyn College in 1980, he came in the beginning of 1980. He had been at Chicago Circle, he had been the Provost, at Chicago Circle, and I had the enormous privilege of being part of a caucus. What they called, The Latino Black Caucus, that was part of the committee, the faculty committee that would interview the candidates for the Presidency. So we wound up at 10, and from 10, it was whittled to three and from the three included Robert L. Hess. And he was by far the one that most people wanted. Because why? First of all, he was an African scholar, who spoke several languages, spoke Spanish, pretty well French, and he spoke the Ethiopian dialect because he was an expert on Ethiopia. That was how he did his dissertation. Especially on the Haile Selassie, an enormously intellectually gifted man but also one hell of a politician, one hell of a strategist, you know, and we saw that this guy knew academia, and he knew how to handle adversity if need be and of course, at that time 1980, the people who ran the faculty Council, were the older Jewish faculty, very powerful group and Hess is Jewish. Was he passed away a few years ago. But he was not, he didn't observe any of the, you know, any any of the protocols of Judaism. Right. In fact, I think he was non-religious altogether. And that irked a lot of people, that he didn't have any complete identification with the Jewish community at Brooklyn College with Hillel, etc. But they want to bring him in because he had access, in their view, he had access to money. And the college was really in terrible disrepair into the '70s. I mean, the Lily Pond, the buildings, the maintenance, everything was falling apart, you know, and of course, here we are, you know, we were in the middle of all that we all struggle in the 70s and Hess said, 'I'm going to make Brooklyn the showcase of CUNY.' He said that he says and he even developed a few slogans. You know, if you 'If you go to Brooklyn, you're among the best' something, stuff like that, that he put around. And he reconstructed the Lily Pond. He made it a place where people could go and study with running water and fish and beautiful vegetation. He had the idea to reconstruct the tower, LaGuardia. And the library, was really his doing the library, which is one of the probably the best library of the CUNY system is the one in Brooklyn College. And he beautified the campus he says, if you want to be proud of a campus, which is which is bucolic in the middle of Brooklyn, then you have to give it that ambience. He went all out for

that right. And because of his connections through Yale, he was a 'Yale-y', B.A., M.A., Ph.D., Yale. The fact that he stood the storm and that he was approved, we gave him a reception. As he came in with his wife, Fran who was a real...liberal, Fran, she is still alive, Fran Hess. And we sang "que bonita bandera," and I led the chorus by the way. And his wife, whenever I see her, over the years after her husband passed away and everything she says, "you know Bob will never forget how you received them and that you sang "que bonita banderah," she says, "que bonita banderah." (laughter).

[End of recorded material at 01:53:46]