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Interview with Anselma Rodriguez

Interviewer: Douglas Medina

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Douglas Medina: So today is August 2nd 2013 at the Graduate Center 11:30 a.m. and I am here with Anselma Rodriguez. So Anselma, why don't you tell me where you grew up?

Anselma Rodriguez: Yes, my name is Anselma Rodriguez. You can say I grew up in New York City. I was born in the Dominican Republic in Santiago De Los Caballeros. And my family came to the United States in the early 1960s. I came to the United States in 1964. I was already a teenager, but from then on I have been in the United States.

Douglas: Tell me more about your family background, what did your parents do for a living?

Anselma: My family was a typical Dominican family. My father was a carpenter and my mother was a housewife. We migrated because we were a family of 6 or 7 children and my father couldn't make a living. He ran into opposition to the Trujillo regime, and (because one of his cousins had some involvement) that got my family in trouble. So my father could not find employment. It was very difficult for him to find employment and so they decided to migrate to the United States.

Douglas: When you came here, did you go straight into high school?

Anselma: When I came here, I went into junior high school; they placed me into junior high school.

Douglas: Tell me about that experience. Which junior high school was it?

Anselma: So we landed in Brooklyn, in the South Side. And so we lived on South Fourth. I ended up going to John D. Wells High School 50. And it was a very interesting experience. We were a mixture of some Latinos, some Jewish, a few kids from different places. I remember one young Puerto Rican, and I did not know English; which was very difficult.

And at that time the teachers were forbidden to speak to us in Spanish or our [other] languages, the Jewish kids who only knew Hebrew. There was [also] some French. So thank God there were few compassionate teachers. I still remember Professor Levine, Professor Bidu [?] and Professor Rosenthal who after they closed the door, spoke to us in different languages.

I remember particularly one class where the Professor explained to me in Spanish, explained to the Jewish kid in Hebrew. And I don't know if he was Haitian but spoke to [another student] in French.

So that is what helped me survive that experience. I also remember, sadly, a teacher, that started yelling and screaming at me. And they used to have a homemaking class... started yelling and screaming at me. And of course, I didn't understand because I didn't know English. And I started to cry and I remember my best friend Maggie Cruz, who came to my defense and yelled back at the teacher.

Maggie was Puerto Rican, and said 'how dare you yell at her, how would you like it if someone yelled at you because you didn't know Spanish?' And, of course, my friend translated for me what was being said.

Douglas:

Wow. So, that was a pretty intense experience you had.

Anselma:

It was pretty intensive. So because I went from being on top of my class in the Dominican Republic to feeling really stupid, really dumb and of course; I would look at the little kids and say "why am I so stupid?" They know English and I don't. And that feeling; comprehending: why should I know English. I had not been exposed. But I felt pretty stupid that I did not know English, even though we came in June to America. (Myself, my brother and my sister)

And my mother immediately [enrolled] us in English as a second language. That were given for free in PS19. There were some progressive people over there, but that was a pretty scary and intense experience. But like I said, there were some really wonderful teachers that kind of took me under their wing. And I remember Professor Rosenthal, who asked me to get permission from my parents so that she could teach me English after class, free.

I mean these are people that - are the unsung heroes of the community. I remember she was a nice Jewish lady. And thanks to her intervention I ended up making Aspira, which was kind of unheard of for some young kid that just came off board a Pan Am. Myself and a few other kids were not born in the United States.

Douglas:

You mentioned that the Junior High School, John D. Wells, was relatively

diverse. Can you talk about the socio-economic background of the students as well? Do you recall; was it working class, wealthy?

Anselma: We were all poor. Everybody that went to John D. Wells was - living in Williamsburg. We were all poor kids. I remember across from me, there was an Italian family. Down the block there were some black families, mostly Puerto Ricans in the community. But we were all poor. So I would say we were working class. Most of us at that time - that I remember, were not receiving welfare. And my father was really adamant about [not] getting welfare.

And my perception was, that most of the families were not getting welfare; they were working in factories or whatever they were working at. They made ends meet selling Avon, selling Amway. To this day I have a soft spot for aprons because that helped to put a couple of meals on our table. That was my perception. Whether I was right or not, that was my perception. We were working with - I had Jewish friends; I knew a Cuban family.

Many Dominicans started moving in that area on South Fourth. And we were all in the same boat, working in factories at least for the Latinos and the occasional bodega. And I don't know what the Jewish kids were doing, but my perception was they were also people that were working.

Douglas: I see. And what year did you graduate high school?

Anselma: I graduated in 1969 from John D. Wells High and I went to Eastern District, which was really a rough school. But that was not too far from my area, and that is where I went.

Douglas: Now tell me about CUNY. How did you become affiliated to CUNY; in what year and in what capacity?

Anselma: So some recruiters came to my school. Now I am at Eastern District. And they talked about - now when I look back, I think this was the precursor to Open Admissions - a couple of programs that had opened up for kids of a poor background. And in high school, I was working with the College Counselor. And I remember the name Bow comes to mind; I think it was a lady. And there was a College Discovery Program, there was the SEEK Program coming up; and there was the College Discovering SEEK. And I believe there was another program.

So because I was working with the Counselor, she told me about this. A group of people came to the high school to recruit people and I told my parents about it. And so I was chosen for a College Discovery. And it's funny because one day I was working, I was in the cafeteria and my friends came to me and said "one of your 'paisanas' from the Dominican

Republic is crying hysterically because someone told her she could never go to college.”

And at that point, they brought her over to me and I spoke to my - the teacher that I was helping; and I said I know about this Program that you told us about, the SEEK and College Discovery. And I think there was another program, so they ended up - my friend, America Castro, who I think now still works for Hostos Community College, ended up hooking up with that Program. College Discovery. And she was able to go to college because they helped her with the language issues. And she went on to get her doctorate.

Douglas: Wow. But what about you, you decided to go attend CUNY. Through which program?

Anselma: I decided to attend CUNY. My heart was set on Columbia University, because through the program that Eastern District had at that time - they would take us out to different places. And when I went to Columbia, I fell in love with Columbia. But of course, being that my family had no money and the language issue and all of that.

I believe it was my Counselor that said “well how about Brooklyn College?” And they took us on a tour of Brooklyn College. And I felt that if I couldn’t make Columbia then Brooklyn would be my second choice, because it had a beautiful campus. I fell in love with the campus. It had green, it had things and it broke my heart that my best friend, Maggie, the one that defended me earlier decided to go to Hunter College. I didn’t like Hunter. I said “Hunter is a building.” I loved the fact that Brooklyn had a beautiful campus. So, I decided to go to Brooklyn College.

Douglas: And what did you want to study?

Anselma: Psychology. Because, since I was a little kid, people would come to me and tell me - and unload lots of issues on me. And I felt like, “why are you telling me this, I don’t know how to help you out.” So I figured that if I became a psychologist, I would be able to help them out; little did I know. It was also the influence of two of my beloved teachers at Eastern District, Professor Gala, who was actually an English teacher and Professor [Gromet?], who was I think - he told us he was a Psych major and that was such a major influence; and also one of my uncles had gone to college in Psychology.

Douglas: I see. What were your grades like in high school, and do you recall what the admission standards were for the CUNY Brooklyn College Campus and Columbia? Was it realistic for you to apply at Columbia at that time?

Anselma: It was totally unrealistic for me to apply to Columbia. I didn't have the money. I didn't have the grades. I think I had overall an eighty something average which and I remember that because in those days getting into Brooklyn, the admission score was higher for girls than for boys.

Douglas: Really?

Anselma: Yeah. You can double check on that. And I made it, but I think I barely made it. And what happened is that I got through (this program which right now I am not remembering) gathered us and gave us some help. And then we were kind of on our own. Okay, and so my other friend, I think went through the SEEK Program which kept them through.

But my program for some reason was terminated. I mean those days I had no idea, you are a kid, you are not thinking about "what do I need to do." So, I had no idea what to do to get into Columbia. All I knew is that I loved Columbia, the way it looked.

Douglas: Okay. You were concerned more with the image they had at that time.

Anselma: That is right.

Douglas: Now, what did it feel like to be a student at Brooklyn College when you entered?

Anselma: Well, I think I was lucky because when I entered Brooklyn, they had peer-mentoring where they - you were paired up with a senior and also and a lower [classman]. So if you had any questions, those were the people that you went to. I also - because I know that I needed a job, I had gone earlier and asked if I could get a job. I don't remember why I ended up going earlier. I went to the Financial Aid office and asked if I could get a job because my parents could not really afford [it].

Even for me to travel back and forth, in those days that tuition was free but you had to pay the consolidated fee. And I had to work to save that. And I saved every penny from my little job that I will managed to get. [and] any money that my father gave me. So, I went to the Financial Aid office and they said "why don't you come back and we will give you a job here."

And I remember showing up on the first day of college and going to the Financial Aid office and saying "you guys said that you would give me a job when the school start," and they had forgotten. But I remember, and they hired me. I mean these days, it's like wow! So I was able to connect to the Financial Aid [office], so I kind of had a home.

And then the Puerto Rican Department was really instrumental because it had just kind of been formed. Now I realize, but in those days I had no

idea. So I was able to feel anchored, because the rest was really totally new. My family was new here, they didn't know anything about college life. They didn't know the right questions to ask, not to mention they didn't know that much English, even though they were learning.

So I was lucky that I was connected to those two places; the Financial Aid office (later I became a Financial Aid Counselor) and the Puerto Rican Department. And the mentors that they gave me, that was such a great idea because, you are a kid, you feel intimidated by bureaucracy. But people your own age, you will say "how do I do this, how will I do that".

Douglas: They are your peers you can connect with them. Tell me again, you started at Brooklyn College in the fall of 1969?

Anselma: Correct!

Douglas: Okay. Now, were you affiliated with any organizations, any groups, when you were a student at Brooklyn College?

Anselma: I was not affiliated with any organization, but I joined a couple of clubs. And a couple of us founded what is now called Movimiento Estudiantil Dominicanos. And I was friends with the Puerto Rican group, the Puerto Rican Alliance. It's like I kind of just hung out with them.

My family was pretty conservative so I tried not to get too involved because I didn't want my parents to tell me that "I don't want you to be hanging with these radicals". But those were the groups that I would attend and I would listen, to see what they were saying.

Douglas: And what were they talking about, what was radical about them?

Anselma: What was radical about them is that, they were talking about [the fact] that the minorities needed more access, more rights, and they would protest and they would do a lot of things that I feel, were influenced by leftist ideology; which in my family was like No! No! They were totally against anything like that. So I was kind of like watching, but trying not to be fully involved.

Douglas: Which is interesting because you mentioned that your father felt like he had to leave the Dominican Republic because of the Trujillo regime?

Anselma: Yeah. But you had to understand the dynamic. The Trujillo regime was really one of the most repressive regimes in Dominican Republic history, and I'm pretty sure it ranks right up with anybody else. But at the same time there was some real anti- leftist feeling that, even if you were oppressed by the regime, you will still be totally scared of anything that was leftist or communist.

Douglas: But your father was he active. Was he politically active?

Anselma: No! No! No!

Douglas: He just felt like he was....

Anselma: It's not that he felt. He was blacklisted from jobs. Even when he tried to get out of the Dominican Republic because he was not finding a job, and after his family ripped his papers [up]. (He had tried to go to Venezuela originally. And because in those days you had different places that if you wanted to migrate, you could go, Venezuela being one of them. The United States was just opening up and I believe Curacao.)

So what gave him the opportunity is that, the dictator was killed. And suddenly there was a window that allowed Dominicans to migrate at that time. I think the dictator was killed in 1960. Trujillo was killed, and that opened up that window for him. And my family decided that - it was before it got better for people like my father who because of some distant relative had opposed the regime.

The whole family got blacklisted. Okay, so before that got any better, even though the dictator was killed - that it was going to take a while. Meanwhile he had a family. So, we were living in the capital city at that time, but we moved to Santiago and then my father migrated.

Douglas: I see. So your father was blacklisted because of a past family member having been active and on the left, but your father was relatively conservative?

Anselma: Oh yeah. We were one of those people that go to church, pray every day, and communism was something that we didn't care [about or] what they had to offer. They were anti-God.

Douglas: I see. Now can you talk a little bit about CUNY in general? At the time when you were a student, what was the social and political environment like at that time, not just for Brooklyn, but just in general?

Anselma: Well. I could only speak about my experience. So going to Brooklyn College was amazing. It was also my family's very image of education. It was like next to God is education. In that order: God, education. So I felt so blessed, and in the interest of full disclosure, I am an awfully religious, spiritual person.

Well, I felt that it was a miracle because there was no way that I could have gone to school; had it not been for free tuition. And on top of that I had the opportunity to work so that I could pay, because my family even though it was free tuition, they still - I am sure they would have

made the sacrifice, but it would have been very difficult for them.

On top of that to pay for my tuition -- you had to pay for your books; and transportation; and meals and everything. I thought it was a miracle of God that I could go with free tuition, and then get a job so I could buy my books and stuff like that. And as far as the- - what did you ask?

Douglas: The overall context and feeling politically, economically, socially.

Anselma: It was - I felt that I was able to mingle with all the kids whose economic status was higher than me. And that felt awesome because in the Dominican Republic there is a real class division, and you know what you feel. It is just like blacks over here or people of color. There it is with the socio-economy, so I felt that it was really awesome that I was mingling. And no one seems to mind.

And then the whole political thing started to kind of unveil before my eyes, and I was very curious. I wanted to hear what people had to say, so many times, I felt like everybody were telling me "I have the truth", like in the religious movement. Like every political party was trying to recruit us kids. And my other experience was with City College, because my brother ended up going to City College.

Which I felt was a lot more active than we were, and more radical. And a couple of times, I would go to City College and I was like wow! Brooklyn College is like-- we were active in Brooklyn College but in my view, at least at that time, nothing like City College. I mean City College was incredible. They were recruiting people to go places and protest. We were kind of more - maybe it was my own affiliation. We were kind of more low key, doing things, working, but, in my view, nothing like City College. We looked up to City College. We really did.

Douglas: So what were some of the things they were active about? What were the issues?

Anselma: They were active about really allowing students of color to be admitted, and to be supported in the University. And they were active about discrimination. I mean, when I went to Brooklyn College, I felt the discrimination. That was why I was so happy to have those places of refuge, the Puerto Rican Department and Financial Aid [office], because people will just - will kind of look at you. I remember one experience that was really very painful.

I was in speech class and that was right before Open Admissions, because I came in 1969, that is prior to Open Admissions, and there was already rumors about Open Admissions; and so this teacher said that we should oppose Open Admissions, because it was going to lower the level

of education. And I looked, and there were two people of color there and myself, and a black young lady, and I felt like wow! She is talking against me and this other person. That was how I felt. And then later she came and said hello to me, and [was] very sweet. And I am thinking like "how hypocritical can you be, you don't like me being in your class and you are being so nice to me?"

Douglas: So issues around race and access to college were the primary issues that students at Brooklyn and City College were addressing?

Anselma: That was my perception. We got that people of color were not being admitted to, and did not have access to, the services.

Douglas: What about New York City? Were there any issues people were talking about beyond the issues of access to higher education? Do you recall or any national issue for that matter? What was it like at that time, Politically?

Anselma: Well, Douglas, when you are a teenager, you are not really thinking most of the time about national issues and things like that. But I remember the issue of housing being an issue that was being discussed. Coming from Latin America, we had a keen sense of international issues. I was more aware than my peers about what was happening in Cuba, in Venezuela ...

Douglas: Vietnam?

Anselma: Vietnam kind of came into the radar later, but as far as the issues - and yeah, Vietnam did come into the whole mix, and I even - they used to ask people to write to soldiers in Vietnam. And I became a pen pal with two young guys that were in Vietnam. One of them, I never found out if he got killed or not but somebody else, when he stopped writing, somebody else picked it up and said you were writing to such and such and now I am the one. He even came to visit me after he finished. I have a picture some place, I think.

Yeah. But you know, it's like when you are a teenager, you hear about things and kind of are aware. But you are not really critical thinking about what's really happening here. You just know that it is happening and it's kind of like an event. So that's how I saw it. I didn't see it as "Oohh, let's be active." It was more like me and my friends, well, we see some kind of injustice and we think we should participate. But I didn't have this keen sense that this is momentous, this is happening.

Douglas: And it sounds like there was tension between your college experiences as a student and also at home, Right? Your parents were...

Anselma: No! I kept it away from my parents. I didn't want them to tell me that they

didn't - because I was hanging out with a leftist group, which I felt was more receptive to me than the other kids.

Douglas: Who were the other kids?

Anselma: The other kids were the kids that did not get involved because everything was going fine with them. I mean if you were white, middle class, and everything is going fine, why [would] you fight for Open Admissions and Financial Aid and stuff like that? But I wanted to fit in, but people that welcome me in were the so-called "leftist group." So, I made sure I didn't tell my parents, because I knew that they would tell me - my brother was more open and they were always arguing. But, no, there was no tension because I made sure I didn't bring it up.

Douglas: I see. Okay. Now let's shift gears. Let's talk more specifically about Open Admissions. So why don't we start generally and you tell me what you recall about this thing they call Open Admissions. And was it actually called Open Admissions? Was that the term used for the program?

Anselma: As I recall, yes. It was called Opened Admissions. And by the time it happened, it was 1976 I believe. I was already...

Douglas: '70, '71?

Anselma: '70 '71. For some reason, all I remember is that suddenly, there were a lot more people on campus. And it just kept swelling up. And other than that, especially, before I started to work - it was kind of more people becoming more active and trying to discuss it. And then the war in Vietnam also became part of the mix, so the whole thing - my group of friends were mostly white kids. Not people of color and they were really interested in the war in Vietnam so they became very active in that.

Douglas: And what do you recall by the - specifically did you feel like you were invested in becoming an activist around Open Admissions, did you believe in it; was it a good policy change?

Anselma: I was, of course I was active. I mean I was invested, I felt that it was the good and right thing to allow people that wanted to better themselves to be admitted, especially kids like myself. I had no money, and because of the language barrier probably, I didn't have the best of grades.

But I felt that it was only right if people wanted to better their life; that they be allowed in. So I had, and I think my friends had, a general sense that it was a good thing. And we were hearing all around that it's a bad thing because it was really lowering the level of education.

Douglas: Who was saying that? You mentioned before there was a teacher who said that.

Anselma: Right!

Douglas: Who else?

Anselma: I just remember kind of getting that general sense from faculty. Many faculty, mainly staff at Brooklyn College. So the only place that I felt, that did not strictly feel strongly about that - was the Puerto Rican Department. But when I look back there must have been other people that were supportive of it, because I cannot tell you that everybody that I spoke to was against Open Admissions. But there was a sense that there were many people were against Open Admissions.

Douglas: And the main reason they cited for opposing Open Admissions was what exactly?

Anselma: That it would lower the standard of education because those of us, and I count myself even though I came right before Open Admissions. The main reason was that it would lower [the level], because we had less education, less preparation, and I think there was kind of a sense that we had less of a desire to better ourselves. Even though it is a contradiction, because just the fact that we were showing up at the door - how can you tell me that I don't have [the right] to decide to improve myself.

Douglas: Right. There was a contradiction there right?

Anselma: Yes.

Douglas: Did you participate in any demonstrations, any activities in support of Open Admissions?

Anselma: Quite frankly, not that I recall. Except by joining some clubs and doing activities. I don't remember. I remember more, joining the anti-war movement because like I said, my friends were mostly leftist, young middle class. I don't remember participating, per se, in a demonstration for Open Admissions.

I was already in the school. I remember that, when it finally happened I felt happy that now, people are going to have a better chance. Because I had already heard that many people were not allowed to come in to the school because of the whole issue of grades and race. People discussed that the real reason they didn't want people to come in was because of race issues.

Douglas: I see. Now why at that time, why in the late '60s early '70s did the question of Open Admissions become an issue, what did you think sparked that interest?

Anselma: At the time I really did not question it or even dwell on that, even

though, but when I look back I think it definitely was key to the Civil Rights movement. At the time, I cannot tell you that I said “Oohh, the Civil Rights movement is really also pushing,” it was also the time of the Young Lords and the Black Panther and all of that. And though we heard about it, I wasn’t putting two and two together.

All I know, sometimes I would hear people say someone get sick and someone is getting fat, why is he getting fat? I don’t know why he is getting fat. Are you eating the right thing? Are you exercising? Like at the time I just thought this is happening. It’s a good thing from my end, from my perspective. But even, in the Latino community, the [community] I was most familiar with, questioning the Young Lords and the Black Panther. Why are they doing this, why are they so aggressive?

I remember also the Puerto Rican community; again, because I am involved with the Latinos, being really active with Aspira and stuff that was going on in my church, with transfiguration and I have to say the other Dominicans and other were saying, “why were the Puerto Ricans doing that?” And me feeling like: “they are fighting for us, what are you guys talking about?”

Douglas: So you had the tendency to side with issues that you felt strongly about because they affected you as a Latina woman?

Anselma: Yeah. Even though at the time, I didn’t realize that that was the real reason. I just felt this is right, this can only be right.

Douglas: Now how do you think Open Admissions related to the mission of CUNY: what was CUNY’s mission at the time? The way you understood it.

Anselma: I didn’t know, per se, what it was. But I think it’s that the University had made a move to allow people - poor people - I didn’t think in terms of people of color, but poor people access to education, which, coming from Dominican Republic, where if you were poor (it doesn’t matter whether you are black, white, purple, whatever), you were not getting that quality of education and access to meaningful employment.

So, to me the mission was to allow poor people to get that level of exposure, education and bettering your life. Making your life better. That was my sense, that wow, this university has the mission to really empower people to get an education and to get a better job and get a better life.

Douglas: So Open Admissions ran parallel to CUNY’s overall mission?

Anselma: In my view, yes. At the time, I didn’t know what was the mission. But I just saw this, the university seems to have this goal: to allow people to come in and give them an education.

Douglas: Okay. Now can you remember which groups or even individuals, if you can name individuals were either opposed or in favor of Open Admissions?

Anselma: I don't know the group, per se, but the ones that opposed it seems to be white faculty and staff. And, again, I am not going to say everybody, because they were some Deans that were very - just like the experience that I had in my junior high school and in my high school, there were some people that were white and those were the people that were helping me. And when I went to Brooklyn College, there were people that were white and those were the people that were helping me. Because at that time, don't forget we didn't have that many minorities, so some people were really helpful. I remember Hilary Gold, who was there, came down. There was someone, Dean McGregor, I think it was the name. There are people whose names I don't remember but the people of color that were there were really helpful to us. Dean Nathaniel Jones who I don't know if he is still alive or not, was a huge help. He was - I think he was the first black if not - if he was not first, he was one of the first black Deans in Brooklyn College. And then of course people in the Puerto Rican Department whose name right now - there was someone named Felipe Pedrasa, who was my counselor, who was really wonderful. There was a guy from Spain - oh gosh! I don't remember his name but he was very helpful.

Douglas: So there were individuals and some groups who supported and those who opposed. And in your recollection it was mainly white faculty who opposed it?

Anselma: Yes. Faculty and staff.

Douglas: Faculty and staff. Now can you remember or what do you think motivated those beliefs whether you believed in them or whether you opposed it. Let's start with the opposition. What motivation did they have, what beliefs did they rely on to oppose it?

Anselma: I think it was racism and even back then even though I told you I wasn't thinking critically a lot, but I think it was - a lot of it was racism and also it was also a class issue, we were poor, they didn't want us to be there.

Douglas: What makes you say that?

Anselma: That was my perception. Because the people that were mostly coming to the university were poor, a lot of white kids that were also as poor as we were. Significantly, Italians were coming. And that was the perception that we had, that because we were poor and also if you were a person of color, it was like, No! we don't want you here. You don't belong here.

Douglas: I see. So, where should they go?

Anselma: At that point, you mean from the point of view of the people that were opposing us?

Douglas: Yes. Correct.

Anselma: I didn't think they cared. I think they simply - because there was clearly at that point no other option. This is it, if I don't get into here, you don't go anywhere. It's not like, no, go to your university of color let's say, or the university of the poor.

There was no option but that was that. I had a lot of white friends, which eventually got me in trouble with my activist friends who didn't even want me to be friends with white kids. When finally kids started to come and of course I wasn't raised like that.

And some of my white friends will say, "I really like you, I have a birthday but my mother doesn't want me to invite you. I wouldn't be allowed to bring you." I mean some of them were naive and innocent enough to tell me that this is the reason I am not inviting you to my birthday party is because I asked my mother and she said that no, you cannot - I cannot invite you.

Douglas: And as a 19-20 year old that can be very painful and ...

Anselma: Very painful. Very painful and I think that's what ended up pushing me to go with my leftist group, which I ended up marching with to Washington. And it wasn't necessarily that I was crazy about them, but these are the people that were welcoming me. So that's the group that I ended with, the Red Diaper group, I think that is what they were called then.

Douglas: Red diaper babies, right. Were there some white friends at the time that welcomed you and were not racist or did not have racist families?

Anselma: These Red Diaper kids.

Douglas: I see. So okay, there were two groups of white kids.

Anselma: Yeah.

Douglas: Some were more leaning towards the left, and others more conservative and more racist, maybe not because of them but because of their family?

Anselma: Right, Right.

Douglas: Fascinating. Now what about - tell me a little more about those leftist

friends and people in general, the people who supported Open Admissions. What drove them, what motivated them?

Anselma: I think it was a sense of justice and I think it was a sense that this was social justice. The whites that supported the Open Admissions, at least in my experience, were mostly these people with leftist tendencies. And, of course, the minorities were for the reason that, it would allow us to get in. So yeah, there was social justice. And don't forget that, looming in the back was also the war on poverty. So, part of my feeling was that, this was part of the war on poverty, which initiated housing, access to education and to health benefits.

Douglas: I see. So, there were not only ideological motivations like justice but also material interest, people need jobs, people need an education?

Anselma: Right. People need a place to live.

Douglas: Place to live. Now, which groups do you think influenced the final shape of the Open Admissions Policy?

Anselma: The people that were fighting for social justice. Whether it was the Civil Rights Movement or the people – the Puerto Rican group who were also fighting a lot for independence. But that group became an influence also for at least in my view, to make everything happen in New York. They were giving that kind of a push.

Douglas: Okay. Do you recall any specific group that really had an influence on Open Admissions?

Anselma: I remember - I mean, at least in my view The Black Panthers and The Young Lords. Maybe, because they were in my - or by our group, I think of those two groups.

Douglas: Ooohh. So, there were maybe members of The Black Panthers and Young Lords who were active within the campuses?

Anselma: They were active on campus but they were fighting their fight out there, and we are fighting our fight at this end. And somehow, this was the connection between the two.

Douglas: I see. Were there individual specific students who were members of The Black Panther party, and who were also students and activist?

Anselma: Not in my group. I don't know because – not in the group that I was relating to; but somehow I felt that there was a connection - there was a kind of synergy, a dynamic going on.

Douglas: I see. Now, let's talk about - let's fast forward a little bit to 1976. [Rodriguez Anselma Part 2] So let's talk about the imposition of

tuition, which came about in 1976. What do you think was the relationship between free tuition (you don't have to pay anything at CUNY) and Open Admissions. What's the connection between the two?

Anselma: First of all you did have to pay a fee. I remember because I had to save money for the fee. I don't remember what it was, but it felt astronomical to me at the time. Luckily there was Financial Aid and was able to save a little money. I felt that the imposition of tuition was kind of closing the door on those poor people that otherwise could not attend university. I felt that it was a step back. Even then I felt like this is a good thing, why are you doing this? And I felt that because of the tuition that would [prevent an] education to many people that otherwise would go far in education.

Douglas: How did the imposition of tuition relate to CUNY's mission in your mind?

Anselma: I didn't put two together at that time, but if I think about it. I felt it was betraying the mission of allowing access to a better education, to a higher education. It is closing the door. You had a door open now you are closing it. Because by imposing the tuition, immediately there will be a whole host of people that will not be able to go to school. Even though they made financial aid available, it was still a door that was closed.

Douglas: Did you participate in any demonstrations against the imposition of tuition and was there any movement to stop it?

Anselma: I don't remember right now if I participated in any demonstration, because like I said, I had already by then hooked up with my friend that were very much against the war and that is the group that I was going to Washington with. There was a Professor Butt Meyers who passed not too long ago. And he had - he was kind of a mythical figure in Brooklyn College. (and that is the group I was hanging out with and they were mostly leftist young white kids and I was part of that kind of group.)

Douglas: I see. When did you graduate from Brooklyn College? You entered in '69 and you graduated when?

Anselma: 1973.

Douglas: 1973. So that was before the imposition of tuition?

Anselma: Right. But I was hired as a Financial Aid Counselor, so I still stayed in Brooklyn College.

Douglas: I see. And you were hired as a Financial Aid Counselor in 1973?

Anselma: Yes.

Douglas: So you were able to see firsthand in the Financial Aid office the impact.

Anselma: It was like the flood coming in. It was a flood coming in.

Douglas: What do you mean by that? Say more about that.

Anselma: I had gotten a job at Financial Aid as a student. Remember that I told you that I needed a job so I went to Financial Aid. So I saw people coming in for financial aid. A lot of people did not know about Financial Aid, so we would get students, but it was kind of a normal flow. When Open Admissions happened and then with imposition of tuition, it triplicated, quadruplicated, quintuplicated the number of people that came in and applied for financial aid.

Douglas: Wow. And what kind of financial aid was available at the time for students who were affected by the imposition of tuition?

Anselma: There was the SEOG Grant, there was Study Program and there was the National Defense Student Loan that I remember.

Douglas: Was TAP available at that time?

Anselma: I don't think so. I don't remember TAP. Maybe, but these were the ones that I remember.

Douglas: Did you interact with students one on one?

Anselma: Yes.

Douglas: Did you get a sense that they were angry or they protested the imposition of tuition? Did they go out to Albany or to New York City Council member's offices to demonstrate?

Anselma: The people that came to Financial Aid, most of them except for the ones that were directly connected, (let's say with the Puerto Rican club that still exists in Brooklyn College) those were the ones that were making noise. But everybody else was just okay. If they were there, they were just trying to get their financial aid and in those days we didn't have computers.

We did it by hand. We had – I remember we had this calculator. You would come in and we would interview you, complete a form and try to figure out how much financial aid you were eligible for. But most of the kids that came to Financial Aid, they just came to get the financial aid. They were not – there were other kids that took over the President's office and ...

Douglas: When was that?

Anselma: I don't remember the year but...

Douglas: In opposition to the imposition of tuition?

Anselma: I am not sure if it was the imposition of tuition, but I know that they were not happy with their situation.

Douglas: You don't remember the name of the group or individual?

Anselma: No, I don't remember.

Douglas: But there was some movement, some activism?

Anselma: Right.

Douglas: Who were the group or individuals who opposed the imposition of tuition and those who supported the imposition of tuition; and not just at CUNY but in the city and New York State?

Anselma: My recollection is vague but it kind of went down the racial line. It was like Blacks and Latinos opposed the tuition, middle class used to be in favor of tuition. I would have to say again, I think the people that were also opposed to the war in Vietnam and the people that were for the Civil Right movement, (which at the time I didn't realize) were also against imposing tuition, because that would mean again closing the door on people.

Douglas: What about – but why would whites support the imposition of tuition? They would be affected as well. Why do you think they would support it or at least not oppose it?

Anselma: At the time, I feel it was a racist issue, that is the only explanation that I could come up with. It was just because if they didn't impose tuition, more Blacks and Latinos would come in and poor people. And I think I had my Latino mentality, I think that my friends here that, grew up here would have thought that it was more of a race issue, whereas I coming from Latin America would [frame] the whole issue [around being] poor.

Giving access to the poor regardless of race. We just kind of had that mentality that if you were poor, it doesn't matter what you are, you don't belong with the upper social economic people and they don't want you. It doesn't matter if you are black, white or whatever. So in my mind the imposition of tuition is to keep all of those people out no matter whether you are black, white or whatever.

Which kind of got me in trouble with some of my more active friends of color, because they felt "why are you hanging out with these white kids?" In fact, there was a Dominican young guy, at the time he was young, he came and chewed me out in front of everybody. And I was so upset and then I started to cry and then my friend America, that I had helped out earlier, defended me. She chewed him out and later on, after we both

kind of grew up and matured, he came and apologized to me. He called me a bourgeois and I resented that a lot.

Douglas: Why would he say that?

Anselma: He felt that, they were more active doing stuff probably during the protests. I was not participating in that. He felt that I was being a bourgeois, that I didn't want to go with them and hang out and do those kind of things, because I had this bourgeois mentality. And it's funny because he did come to me later after we both graduated and said "I was unfair to you because I didn't realize that you- I was a bourgeois". Because he was (interviewer laughs), he was from a family that was better off financially than I was.

Douglas: So he was white?

Anselma: No, he was black.

Douglas: Black. Okay

Anselma: Yeah. I think he is still alive. He ended up- he did not have to work. I had to keep two jobs throughout college to pay for myself – even though there was free tuition and everything. And part of the reason I did not have time to hang out the whole day is because I had to work.

Douglas: So you didn't have time to be an activist, per se?

Anselma: Correct. I mean I was a part time activist. I was always (interviewer laughs). So I didn't know how he got this epiphany, but after we both graduated, he came to me and said "I apologize. I called you a bourgeois and I chewed you out in front of everybody and I realize that I was a bourgeois". I said yeah, isn't that funny. I couldn't go and join you guys in your protest because I had to keep two jobs and you had the luxury of not doing that. Later, like I said, I kind of became friends with the leftist group on campus because they are the people that welcomed me and he was an activist for Open Admissions and things like that. And ...

Douglas: You don't recall his name?

Anselma: I think he was Juan Rivero.

Douglas: Juan Rivero?

Anselma: Juan Rivero. So later, he kind of, down the line hooked up with the leftist groups that were protesting the war in Vietnam and stuff like that. And then, that was part of the reason when he came back to apologize to me. He kind of said "Well I had this limited view of what was going on".

And now I connected the whole thing together, which for me as I tried to

explain to you before, I had the sense that it was a very naïve kind of analysis, but in my analysis it was all connected. It was not only that blacks and Latinos and poor people are not allowed to get a higher education, better employment, better housing but that this whole thing was all connected it was not just my little issue, but it has this larger connection.

And I think that Juan later when he joined the leftist, the anti-war movement, I think that he saw we are not isolated. One thing affects the other. It has this synergetic ability. That it's not only that people of color are not allowed to get a higher education but that other groups are also not allowing them housing, access to better jobs.

Douglas: Politics is interconnected right?

Anselma: Correct.

Douglas: All the things are moving parts also?

Anselma: It creates a spider web. And I think I had a rudimentary view of that at the time, but some people did not see, they just say we are not allowed to get an education. I don't care what is happening anywhere else. This is the main issue.

Douglas: The imposition of tuition came to be in 1976, do you recall who were the most influential groups in imposing tuition?

Anselma: No. All I know is that it was happening. I don't know who was the most influential group.

Douglas: You don't remember any news stories or people talking about it?

Anselma: I remember people talking about it. I remember the news story that it was coming, but I was not really paying attention.

Douglas: So you may not recall or maybe you do recall some of the reasons and beliefs that they gave for supporting the imposition of tuition. Why end this tradition of free tuition at CUNY?

Anselma: The only thing that I remember very generally is that, they felt that it was very expensive to have all of these people coming to the university. And don't forget these people were so grossly under prepared. It was not only allowing them to come in and register for classes, you had to give all those other services. You had to give remedial classes and you had to give financial aid because the people are poor. So, it's not only allowing people to be admitted to the school, to the university, but you had all this other baggage attached to it.

Douglas: Resources that they needed?

Anselma: Right. So, in my view it was an economic issue as well as a racial issue.

Douglas: So, from what you are saying, just correct me if I am wrong here but what you are saying is that there was a very close connection between Open Admissions and the increasing enrollment at CUNY and the imposition of tuition. It was not sustainable economically for Open Admissions to continue as it was free tuition and therefore that was the belief driving people to impose tuition?

Anselma: Yes. That was my perception, but at the same time, I felt that it was not totally true, because at the time I felt that the city was probably rich enough to be able to allow for admission without having to impose tuition.

Douglas: Well, if you recall, there were some arguments at the time also, that this was in the context of the fiscal crisis of New York City in the 1970s. So, people were making that argument that, yes, the city can no longer sustain free tuition not to mention the hospital services, the pensions for unions and the working class safety net that existed at the time. So, again, this was in context of the fiscal crisis at that time. What do you think about that?

Anselma: But again I wasn't thinking in that context. All I knew is that, in Dominican Republic, which is a very poor corrupt country there is free tuition. And I am thinking, if the Dominican Republic has free tuition, why doesn't New York, which is a far richer place? Again, this is not a sophisticated analysis. I just -at the time sometimes it's good to be innocent.... (Interviewer laughs)

Douglas: Ignorance is bliss, right?

Anselma: Well, I wasn't thinking about all that other stuff. I am thinking the Dominican Republic is very poor and yet you can technically get a free education at the university level.

Douglas: Wow. So, let's move on to the last part of the interview, which are the closing questions, which I have for you?

Anselma: So we can go and have lunch.

Douglas: Yes (laughter). Do you think that there was a connection or relationship between these two policy changes that was Open Admissions and the imposition of tuition? You sort of alluded to the answer as Yes. But can you talk more about that?

Anselma: Can you restate the question again?

Douglas: Was there a relationship between Open Admissions and the imposition

of tuition? There were two major policy changes at CUNY.

Anselma: Yeah, I felt at the time that, yes, there was definitely a connection. And the connection was we don't want these poor and these people of color. And I am saying poor and people of color because again, I felt that it was not just a race issue it was also an anti-poor issue. I felt that definitely this was our way to trying to close the door on these people that wanted an education. In my view it was not only about getting a better education but it's, the key that opens the door to this larger access. It was not just about just getting the education, end of story. It was also getting better jobs, better housing, better healthcare. So, I felt that defiantly there was a connection.

Douglas: Say more about that in terms of the changing politics and demographics of New York City at the time. How did these two policy changes relate to New York City?

Anselma: I felt that New York City was a relatively wealthy place – it was trying to keep the poor in their place. And I have to keep repeating like a broken record that, it was not just the issue of getting an education, but housing and better healthcare and better employment. So it was not just denying these poor people and these people of color an education. It was also denying them access to a better way of life. Because when you get an education, it is not only, now I have the knowledge, now I have this degree, but now my mind has expanded and you cannot BS me, as it were. And maybe that is kind of a more Latino mentality, because that's what education meant for us. Not only do I have more knowledge, but I'm also able to defend myself better. I'm also able to act better on my own behalf and also on behalf of my family and my community.

Douglas: Okay. Now which individuals do you think benefited the most from Open Admissions and from the imposition of tuition? Did anybody benefit from the imposition of tuition?

Anselma: I never thought about it in that term; did anyone benefit from the imposition of tuition. Wow. That is a philosophical question. In a way, in a very philosophical way, I think the people that decided you can impose tuition and that is not going to stop me from going for my education, I think those people benefited. To close the door was not a barrier. People still came and this asserted the sense of pride that to say, you didn't give it to me; you didn't gift it to me; I had to pay and I still did it so. I think in that sense people benefited from that.

Douglas: And who suffered the most from the imposition of tuition: who was affected the most?

Anselma: I think the very poor and people that could not manage the system. Because working in Financial Aid, those that also worked in Financial Aid and in the SEEK Program and in the College Discovery program and those programs, sometimes we tried to talk to people. We try to make them understand. Some people say "Wow, I don't get it, they are getting financial aid, they are getting this and they're still are not making it."

And we tried to make them understand that giving someone financial aid was just one item, but there was so much more. When somebody was that poor they needed financial aid, but there were also a lot of other needs, economic needs and the family and there were all that host of other issues that are not simply addressed by giving someone a grant to go to school.

I remember having that conversation really early on with some of the faculty, mostly with staff, that they would say; "why are they still failing, why do we have to do all this remedial". Luckily in my job, there were some, there were mostly white then but eventually, we got a whole bunch of black counselors. I remember Meredith Wilson and what was the name of the other lady, that they were really committed.

It was not just a job, it was kind of a mission and there was some white counselor that also had that kind of empathy in the mission but there were many people that did not get it. They would say "why are they still failing" and you could not explain to them that maybe some families even used financial aid as a source of income to solve some other issues. I mean, I was lucky that in my family, was like "No, that is your money, that is your money". And in fact, later on I asked my dad, "why didn't you ask me to help you towards the rent or whatever?" But I knew what many families did - I was aware as a financial aid counselor.

I remember many students saying "well, my mother needed a washing machine and how could I not buy it?" and me scolding and saying "you have to invest in yourself because then you will be able to buy them a whole bunch of washing machines." We had an emergency loan that was put into place. And we had kids that would come in, get their Pell Grant, the SEOG that later on became the Pell Grant and they would come for a foreign emergency loan right away. And we would ask "what happened?" "well, I had to help my parents pay the rent or whatever."

Douglas: So in terms of Open Admissions, in general who benefited the most from Open Admissions?

Anselma: The same people. The same people that otherwise who would have not

been able to afford it- like me. At the time if it wasn't Open Admissions, I would have not been able to go to school because my parents could not afford it. My friend, America Castro who is now a Professor at Hostos Community College, who by the way, maybe she could be one of your people.

Douglas: Yes. It's actually one of my questions but go on.

Anselma: We wouldn't have benefited and the guy that became her husband, Nelson Trinidad would not have benefited. The people from my community that decided to go to school, they would not have benefited. So those people benefited and I think ultimately the whole city benefited from Open Admissions. That was the original question right? Who benefited from Open Admissions?

Douglas: uh...Huh

Anselma: As far as imposition of tuition, I think that those students that despite the imposition of tuition, when they got the degree or even if they didn't finish, they benefited. Because they could demonstrate to themselves and the people that came after them that it was not just about the tuition, we had the desire to go to school.

Douglas: But there was a drop in enrolment too when tuition was imposed at CUNY wasn't there?

Anselma: I wasn't aware because for a long time the enrolment was really large. But eventually there was a drop in enrolment, but I think it's more complicated than that.

Douglas: It wasn't because of the imposition of tuition?

Anselma: I don't think that was the only factor. It may have been, but this group like I mentioned before, [there were] a lot of other issues that needed to be taken care of.

Douglas: Now we have been talking about Open Admissions, which is about access, admissions, opportunity, giving people an opportunity to obtain higher education and also talking about the question of equity and excellence right? Academic excellence you mentioned before that that was one of the main arguments against Open Admissions.

Anselma: Right.

Douglas: Because academic excellence would suffer. What do you think about those issues? Access, excellence, equity still resonate, are they still issues at CUNY today?

Anselma: I think they are. I think sometimes people are losing sight of those issues, but I think they still are and I think there is a core group of

faculty and staff that still believe in that, and I think they are still fighting for that.

Douglas: What is that?

Anselma: They are for academic equity and academic excellence. I am a little afraid that the university is becoming more of a corporate model and that, this may be lost along the line. But I think it's still at the core of the people that are working. I am not sure of the people on top, what their thoughts are. I think they are looking more at the economic model - because let's face it that CUNY is an engine for economic well-being of the city.

Wall Street is like one leg of this table, this chair or table. But definitely the university is the another one of the legs, the engine that keeps the university going. It's education that the university offers. It is not an expense, it's an investment and it's too bad that the people that were thinking, whoever thought about imposing tuition did not think of it as the investment that it really is.

Because any state without an educated citizenship is a state that is definitely poor and if you don't believe me - this is not just philosophical hyperbole, I think you can check where there is a population that has no education, it's defiantly a population that is poor economically. Never mind about spiritually intellectually, whatever just check-it out.

Douglas: Fascinating. Now....

Anselma: That is me. I am a fascinating person. (Laughter)

Douglas: Is there anything that I did not asked you about that you wanted to mention in terms of your history at CUNY; in terms of when you started as a student, as an administrator now. What is your position at CUNY now?

Anselma: I am the Coordinator of Graduate Studies and Students Services for the Associate Provost for Academic Programs.

Douglas: Okay.

Anselma: What you did not ask me is about the first and second generations coming into CUNY, and the kind of services that are offered to them. And it's not a criticism against you; I think this is something that has been overlooked, even by well-meaning people, people that are social activists. And I am not blaming anyone but it's kind of a constructive criticism that we have to look into it.

Douglas: Say more about that. What do you mean by first and second-generation students?

Anselma: I am seeing that people that come in with a lot of enthusiasm, their families are really happy that they are going to college but they need tools, they need skills, they need someone to mentor these people, so that they can have a decent chance of succeeding and a decent chance of completing their mission of getting an education and being better citizens. I think that just to say let's have Open Admissions, its great and it's something that needs to be done, but it needs to be taken to the next level.

One of the arguments that I would have, once I started my position as a Coordinator of Graduate Studies in 1994 is that, yeah this is great, this is fantastic, this is excellent that people are given the opportunity to get an education – but just like a Fortune 500 company, what they would do if they hire you, immediately, before you start they would give you some kind of training, coaching so that you get the kind of tools that you need to succeed in your position.

Douglas: Well you mentioned that you had a peer mentor when you first started at Brooklyn College in 1969.

Anselma: I did. Yeah, but somewhere, there was a peer group and it was very serious and along the line that was dropped. And for the Puerto Rican Department we tried to do that. I think this is something that really definitely needs to be looked at.

Douglas: Okay. In relation to Open Admissions, and perhaps even the imposition of tuition and then further...

Anselma: Absolutely. Let's say with the imposition of tuition, some people come into money that they never had before, and there was no attempt in teaching you how to be financially educated. And I think that there is something practical that needs to be done. Don't look at the money as, I got the money, but I am getting the money, how do I best invest it? Not just, I got the money, I have some necessity, let me take care of it but I got the money, let me be strategic about it, be savvy about it; let me invest it instead of spend it.

Douglas: So financial literacy should have been part of that and that should be researched more?

Anselma: Absolutely.

Douglas: I see.

Anselma: Even now I think it's something. Financial literacy needs to be something that we should devote energy to. And as far as the academic, there are other issues that we should be looking at. Because, you have

the first generation of people like my meditation teacher use to say that “you need enthusiasm to lead a war.” But you also need other tools.

You need people that can tell you No, No! This is the door that you opened, this is the way you move because otherwise – you will eventually get it, but it’s going to take you a lot longer to get it. And some people don’t get it, and they leave frustrated.

Douglas: I see. Okay for the record and just for my information once again tell me exactly what your history at CUNY has been, when you first became affiliated with CUNY and where you are today?

Anselma: I was a student of Brooklyn College. I was admitted in Brooklyn College and I was hired right after I graduated as an intern.

Douglas: In 1973?

Anselma: In 1973. And I thought that I was going to leave after two years and it’s almost thirty (30) years later and I am still there.

Douglas: What different positions have you held since 1973?

Anselma: So I came in as a financial aid counselor intern, and then my first post gave me the opportunity to direct a satellite office. So I was in charge of that office for a little while, then after the crisis in the ‘70s, that shut down City University, I was recalled to the main campus Brooklyn College. And there I served in different capacity; Loan Officer, SEEK Advisor, Liaison with Financial Aid.

Then I became the Liaison with the Graduate Division. I was the person that corresponded with them and then in 1994, and oh I was with Admissions. Financial Aid and Admissions merged for a while so we were doing that and recruiting.

Douglas: At Brooklyn College?

Anselma: At Brooklyn College and for Brooklyn College. And there I was very active in Financial Aid and the organization, the National Organization, but then when I was with Financial Aid and Admissions; and then in 1994 the Dean of the Graduate Studies asked me to join his team and I decided to take that opportunity so I have been working there.

I was working as a Coordinator of Graduate Studies which is a whole different story about people of color, minority and I had to bring it back, middle class and poor people getting access and a whole frame of first generation getting to this level of education. And that entails a whole host of things that we will never get into that because...

Douglas: We are not going to get into. Yes.

Anselma: But, so then I joined the - like I said 1994 as a Coordinator of Graduate Studies, Dean Brownwell asked me to join his team. And most recently about two years ago the Graduate Study was dissolved. So, I joined the Associate Provost for Academic Programs. My portfolio right now is to deal a lot with graduates' studies issues, but its leaning more towards graduate student's services -for master's students.

Douglas: So you have seen many different facets of Brooklyn College life?

Anselma: I have and I participated on many committees. But I am really proud to say that all this time, I have been, I feel part of the family of the Puerto Rican Department, that has kind of kept me from forgetting that kind of plight. Not that I want to forget it but sometimes you get into your little corner and you get a little bit oblivious about the struggle and the issues that come out of your community. But all along I have been part of the Puerto Rican and now it's the Puerto Rican and Latinos Department, which have always sought to work with the community.

Douglas: Great. You haven't mentioned the union, when did you become active in union work at CUNY with the PSC and were you active back in the '70s; because then it was not called the PSC, it was called the Legislative Caucus, correct?

Anselma: I became part of the union - active in the union in 1995/1996. I was not happy with the union at the beginning because I felt that it was not representative of the staff. And then there was a law that came that said that whether you joined or not they would still going to take your fees, because, I forget what the law was called but anyway, I said I might as well join them officially because whatever benefits that came, I joined officially. But I became active in PSC 1996 because they sought me; they asked me to help to organize HEOs. [Higher Education Officers]

Douglas: 1996?

Anselma: 1995 or '96. Yes. Or '96, around there. And so I decided, I think, this will be my way of giving back to the community. So I joined. And I became a delegate along with Micanas. And then this year, because I really believe that the union needs to do some work on its own and so on, I decided to step down as a full delegate and become an alternative in favor of having somebody else take the position.

Because I really believe that no movement can stay vibrant if you don't make it organic, if you don't let other people come in. That no matter how smart you are, knowledgeable, wise or whatever, eventually there is a fatigue, getting comfortable in your group and not really seeing everything the way it really is, so I believe in term limits. (Laughter)

Douglas: Great. So, Anselma is there anyone you would suggest that I talk to in relation to my research, my study of Open Admissions and the imposition of tuition?

Anselma: Definitely, my friend that I mention during my interview: America Castro. I believe she is a Professor at Hostos Community College in the Bronx and her husband, Juan Nelson Trinidad. They probably are going to be smarter than me much more alert than I was. Because I was – as you can see from the interview, I’m not really doing critical thinking, stuff is happening and I’m - but I think they were far more alert than I was, in terms of the political force and events.

Douglas: Great. Anyone else?

Anselma: I could not think of anybody else right now but those two definitely come to mind. They are community activists and I think they are great people.

Douglas: Excellent.

Anselma: And they are a product. A lot of people could criticize Open Admissions in general, allowing people of color and poor people no matter whether they are colored or not. These two, America has her PhD. I am not sure if Juan has his PhD, but these people graduated again against a lot of odds and I think this is living proof that all those people that are against Open Admissions and allowing people. This is living proof that this is a good investment.

Douglas: Last question. May I contact you to follow up to clarify anything you said anything that we talked about?

Anselma: Absolutely, Absolutely.

Douglas: Excellent. Thank you so much, Anselma

Anselma: Thank you for doing this. I can’t wait until...

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