

Interview with: José Colón

Interviewers: Ruth Glasser and Amanda Rivera-López

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Transcriber: Ruth Glasser

Machine: Sony Memo-Scriber

Tape 1, Side A

001: Born in Comerio, PR. Came to CT in 1966, right to Hartford. "I came to Htfd following my sister... She was like my mother. She took care of me when I was a little boy." He had made some mistakes in his life in PR. "She asked me if I would come down and live with her because by that time she was by herself..." Lived with her for 1-2 years then went on own. Doesn't know what year she came, had to be in the '50s. He had other family here before her, his aunt. Thinks she was 3rd Hispanic family in CT, Consuelo and Angel Colon. One of first ones here with Olga Mele. Another family thinks live in FL now, doesn't remember last name, but perhaps 3rd family to live in CT that Maria S knew. That's why she came here, to live with aunt. She came on own, misunderstanding between her and mother, M wanted to be a nun and her mother didn't want her to. Very involved in church in PR.

043: "She had to drop school to take care of me and my other sister... We was the last in the family..." Felt uncomfortable going back to school later, talked to aunt in CT who told her to move there and start a new life. Then JC followed. "According to my sister... a lot of other families came in after that. And they would all get together down in Sacred Heart Church... That was the first church that... had a Hispanic service." Father Las Heras from Spain, first one to give Spanish service. That's how my sister started... in the church, in Sacred Heart..." She got original church organization together, Legion of Mary, started in basement.

064: "From there she start seeing... that the Hispanic people need, and then she started getting involved with helping people... At the time... for example, they couldn't find places to live... a little discrimination... They was bringing a lot of people to work in the tobacco, in the farms, so some of them... decided to stay here, so it was kind of hard for them to stay because they was having problems trying to find rent, trying to find jobs... Once the farm closed, it was no other need for them so they had to go back to PR... or they had to find another job. And most of the people who came at that time... was people with a low education so it was kind of hard for them to stay but they really want to stay." Most of them ended up on welfare pgm, hard to get jobs or decent apt. Even for projects, had to qualify, long waiting lists.

082: "She noticed that it was a need to...start let the people know that we're here, we would like to stay, we want to get involved. So she start getting people together in the church, and from there on she get married and she have a broken marriage... She was working at the time in the factory...that make hot dogs and sausage...in New Britain...that was her first job... Through the church she met this guy...involved in... the church and he knew that this guy have a store that it was going to be for sale. And my sister, she couldn't drive a car, she had to depend on someone to drive her to work, and she was having all kind of...problems... She saved a little bit of money...It was a candy store, newspaper, magazine, and things like that... He must have [] we'll be able to help you, like getting the mortgage...to get the business. So she talked to me about it and I said, it's a good idea but... did you like to be involved in business, because she wasn't a business lady at all... She always was working with people... I said, you know what a store is? You have to get up in the morning and open it, you've got to stay the whole day there... you're not that type of person... But she said... people can come here, and I can help them. And I said well, listen, it's your life, it's your decision, you take it from there. So with the help of this guy they managed to get a loan and she managed to buy the store, and that's the store on Albany Avenue, 246 Albany Ave, I still remember, Maria's Newsstand. Used to be Henry's Newsstand... They sell cigarettes... candy... a lot of stuff." Doesn't remember the year she bought it."

126: "By that time... most of them was people who come to work in the farm. You didn't have at that time educated person. It was just people that came here and then some of them... decided to stay, some of them... blew their money and now they don't have a way to get back... She had to go down and work with the state, see if she can them a ticket so they can go back. That's how she start get involved helping people. But the community growing more and more... Now they bring someone else, now they have a place to stay. So now they bring the cousin, the brother... The community start growing up and it was getting bigger and bigger... Not just Puerto Ricans... all Hispanic... Cubans was a big group coming in and I think it was people from Peru... These people, they wasn't involved with the farms, they was... probably involved in another state and then they start moving... into CT. I'm getting... all this through her... I start with her at the time that she decided buy the store."

148: Used to work in store on weekends, do paperwork, prep for her, purchasing, places where could buy things out of state cheaper. "When she was involved in the store, that was just like a... city hall, where everybody who have a problem would come to her and she would either help them, saying this is the proper way of doing it, or she'd call me and say can you stay here, I have to take this person... to the welfare, see if we can find a way to help this person. Or someone is sick and she go to the store... At that time I was working in a factory... Whitney Change [?]... I think I started... 7 o'clock and I get out like by 3:30... So most of the action that she did was... after... I get out from work, so I can stay in the store."

165: He started looking to better himself, how ended up working in Motor Vehicles, couldn't help her as much, had a lot of problems being first Hispanic working for DMV, came under Equal Opp Employment Act, people didn't want to accept it, he came in

1968. Took 2 years of training to qualify for job, going to school and working half day at DMV, just to take the test. His English not that great, had to carry a dictionary to training. Would have to come home and figure things out. So didn't have too much time for Maria aside from weekends, told her would have to find someone else to help in store. "She hardly spent any time in the store... She opened a store, within half an hour she already have a client waiting to go somewhere."

192: "Now she see the need that the Hispanic people need...it was getting worse. It was not just matter of finding places to live, it was not just taking people to the welfare. Now...you're taking someone to the hospital and you need an interpreter, because that person hardly speak English...and then education...these people bring kids, they don't speak English, they go to school...It was some politician, I can't even remember his name, he must have realized the Hispanic people was growing up. And I guess it's when they get involved in politics so he need these people's support. So what better place to find someone who'll help him? So that's why he went to my sister...I think the first mayor was Mayor Atherson...or it was someone else before Atherson but I think she deal a lot with Atherson, I think he's a lawyer... This guy... was the one who came down and said to her listen, I need your support, we can work together, we can help the community, and that's how she started getting involved in politics. She saw that there was a need for the Hispanic to have someone who can help them in the city hall because they was having problems with police officer arresting people for, people can't explain...they have a problem...they can't find interpreters, so the guy ended arrested for something that problem if he explain it he wouldn't be arrested."

222: "So she decide that she was going to get involved in politics, she call me and she said...what do you think...because we used to talk a lot. And I said, you don't have the heart to be a politician...Politicians, they're good and they're bad, and you're always good... You have to be facing people who are going to criticize you and you're going to find people who are going to thank you, and you're going to...have two different personalities and you're not that type of person. Once more...she said, well, there's a need and I have to do it. So little bit by little bit she get involved in politics, not just running on a position, helping politicians to get elected. And then when that person get elected...now she say well can you help me now, how can we better us in this area here. So that's when projects start coming in and that's when you start seeing people in big projects like...I think there were like 5 different project, Rice Heights,... Charter Oak... Way before that...it was a different name. And it's still by Main St, way down at the end, almost by Windsor. I think that was the first project and actually that was...her first apt right there, and my own apt."

246: "Now the community's getting better and bigger...She went strict more for education, that was her main concern. She thought that education was the most important thing that we could help the...Hispanic community... She thought that was the major problem. Because there was no communication, and if there's no communication, people can't go anywhere. So right she get involved with the board of education...The first time that she get involved with politics. But prior to that...in order to get...the Hispanic people together, she needs some numbers, because that was the only way that she can

work on... a political part. So what she did was, she got a group of people together, and that's where they come out with the Puerto Rican parade... And I believe the first president of the PR parade was Jose Cruz... He can give you a lot of information about way back... They get this group together and they decide to do a parade in Htfd. That was the first parade... Now we're getting people involved from other places... other groups from other cities start coming out. So now we say, well we can expand that. So that's how they make the PR parade for the whole state of CT..."

275: "At the same time, she was working with all these politicians on other issues, and one of the biggest issues was education... When my sister get upset, she let you know. And this guy one day walk out of the store and she was nailing this guy so badly with her little broken English. And she said, listen I got enough with you people, I've been working with you people all this time, I don't see any progress, you people helping us, and I said, this is time for us to do something about my Hispanic people... Education is the main thing... Kids go to school, they don't have teacher... who help them... speaking Spanish or whatever, we're going to have to do something about it... We need some teachers that speak Spanish and help these people... It was a school that was going to be closed right next to the post office... Right in downtown Hartford. It was another building right next to it, it was a school and it was going to close... and it was going to put a parking lot. So this is when you say, I want you to get that building for me. And for some reason they managed to get that bldg and that was the first school and it was La Escuelita Bilingue... They managed to get that bldg for bringing these kids when they come from Puerto Rico and put them in there to prepare them... [to] start speaking English to bring them back to the other school."

303: "So now that they had the bldg... they need teachers... She said, well, I have to get some teachers... It was hard for her to convince the board of education to bring... teachers who speak Spanish... She wasn't on the board at the time. So that lead to her to get in the board. Because she was going down to all the meetings and she'd speak... well this is the need, we got the building... first, you don't have a place for it. They had to qualify like any other teacher, but it's kind of hard to someone who... have education in PR now come over here and take a test in English and pass and qualify to be a teacher like everybody else... She said, they need time... Can you get a location where the teachers can... prepare themselves... That's when she got the building there, La Escuelita Bilingue. So now they need teachers... She get involved with the board of education and that's when she decide really to run for a position, because before she wasn't running for any position. She would help... politicians left and right, that store there was just like a city hall, but she won't... get involved."

327: "So now she see the need to get involved... a vacancy, it was a guy there that for some reason was elected every year, and they want to get rid of that guy, and they knew that the only way they can get rid of that guy was my sister. So they brought him... to her attention, and they convinced her, because she didn't want to really run... She's always been a Democrat from day one. She won't change for nothing. She was a Democrat even when she was in PR. So they convince her to run for that position... and she took the guy out. And from there on she was a member of the board of education. And when she was

involved with the board of education now she got the opportunity that she can say well, now we're going to bring teachers that speak Spanish, and they start bringing teachers from PR and they put them in the Escuelita Bilingue, and then after that she was going through all the states looking for teachers... I still remember her flying places and sometimes I didn't even know where she was."

350: "By that time the community is getting bigger, bigger, bigger, and bigger... After that she get involved in another position... Now she got teachers coming in, now... they can't say they couldn't qualify... they did something that now they could qualify for come to teach here and they can qualify in any school... I guess because of the amount of people there was now in the city. I think it was more Hispanic people in the city of Htfd than American people. So they really need to have the teachers... But now it was another need. That was a need of changes in the law, like for example people trying to get a driving test. They couldn't pass the driving test because... they didn't speak English and most of the test is in English. So it was a need to bring people that... speak Spanish in different state agencies. So that's how she get involved a little... deeper in politics. And now she start demanding that it's a need to have interpreters in all the state agencies... at least someone who can someone go and speak to. And... she went all the way down to Washington... to get the tests... they'd be able to speak the second language. Because that was another big issue. There was places they didn't even want you to speak Spanish, and if they speak Spanish they threw you out. It was just like... a crime or something like that. So she went down to Washington and fought so Spanish wouldn't [?] be the second language in the United States."

388: "She did so much that it's incredible... She dedicate some much herself into be involved with helping people that she forget about her life, health, business, everything. She was a person that-- after that I couldn't talk to her any more other than brother and sister. Anything that was related to business she shut me off quick... This is my life, this is what I choose to do. She was having a lot of problem with my family in PR. Because my family want her to get back to the island, she didn't want to. She said, you take me in a box, I'm not going back to the island... My job is here, I got a lot of things to do here, and after I accomplish what I have to do here, I don't want to talk about it. She confront my mother, she confront all my brothers, she confront everybody, she don't want to get involved... Even when my mother pass away she left the house for her. Nope. This was her life."

410: "Another issue was that they didn't have a Spanish... radio station. So she managed to get this guy from Cuba... I guess he had a lot of money. He was working with a company... There was a radio station for sale, WLVH... There was a couple little stations but they was... running like an hour or two and after that it was over. And she thought it was enough Hispanic people in the state of CT and they should have a radio station. So this one, it was 24 hours and it was for sale, so she managed to get this guy and I guess it was a lot of things involved trying to get a radio station... Once more my sister's in Washington, fighting over there to change things that we'd be able to get a radio station... This guy lived in Bgt (think Grimalt Mestre was announcer, possibly owner, and Joe Picard one of DJs)... They managed to get the money, they managed to get this guy to

buy the radio station and bingo, we got WL VH, the biggest radio station in CT, and it was all Hispanic."

448: "The one that helped my sister a lot in politic was Ella Grasso. Ella Grasso, my sister, they came to be real good friends. And Ella Grasso understood the need I guess because the Italian people went through the same thing that we went through, way before that. So when Ella Grasso was in position my sister was able to do a lot of changes...and that's how we got the Spanish test...and that's when we have the radio station, and then that's where they start bringing teachers that they didn't have to qualify. If they have education, have been a teacher in PR they accept that. Because...PR is part of United States but they was kind of treated as different. But she must have find a way to say listen, we citizen, you should recognize our title the same way that someone who went here... The University of PR it came to be one of the most important university, so it was a lot of people from United States going down to that school there to get degrees... They start recognizing that if a doctor come from PR he got the same qualification of a doctor here and the only thing they have to do is give him some time that he prepare himself and pass... whatever test was required. The same way with the teachers... They work and then they give them some time to take the test and they get the license here and whatever. Well all those changes was Maria, the one involved."

480: "She dedicated herself, that it was sometime that I walk at the store and every time I walk at the store it was someone knew here... So now of course she was losing money, she didn't adminstrate the store, people was taking money left and right, people borrow money from here and she keep going down, down. Most of the while she was so bad she didn't have no money to buy anything so she call me... let me borrow some money, I used to give her some money... She called my other brother, who's in PR, she almost got him broke, I find out that after she pass away... And the store keep going down down down because it's no more store, it was a store the main thing was like a city hall, elections, that's where people go and register themselves, that's where her... headquarter was, that she got all these people to work in the elections... The only one who go over there and buy stuff, it was kids and candy, the rest it was just people to go for help."

506: "From there then she decided run to a position which she was a state reps and once more... it was a guy there... He was a state rep in her district, nobody could get that guy out, so they thought she was the only one who could get him out... He'd been in that district for too long and he wasn't doing a proper job... Political things that I didn't know because I don't want to get involved. Every time I get involved with her I got a confrontation so I says, do whatever you have to do. So she run for state reps and she won. And she was working for that district, she did a lot of changes, she find a building for the... elderly person, she built a school right in that district there... Right across from the store... on Albany Avenue [shows picture he got of her last week, and school]... Quirk... They took a picture of her the day they opened the school."

541: "She opened... I think in Albany Ave, it's another building there for elderly... Way back again it was another building that they opened too for elderly people... Education, it was a main concern for her and kids... But then after that the elderly people... By this

time now people is coming in. Now we got lots of people but now people start getting old... We talking about 35 years back... They got a park naming one person that was very involved helping her, Quiroz, in Park St, it's a park... in that person's name... then after that she started getting involved with different group of people. Like the first organization was Spanish American Association. It was in... Park St. That was the first Hispanic club. From there on, then, La Casa de Puerto Rico came in. And she was one of the ones involved to make that. Then was San Juan Center... But the first one that she was involved was Community Renewal Team... I think that was the one that first came in."

588: Of course the Puerto Rican parade, it was going every year, and it was getting bigger and bigger and bigger. And she was involved with that. Then San Juan Center came in, and the last one that she work that I remember that she work very very hard and I think that took a lot out of her was the... Spanish American Merchandise [Merchant] Association, which is run by Julio Mendoza. Julio Mendoza was like her son... He came in like a little kid. She raised that boy all the way up to-- he's a big shot... Juan Fuentes was another one. He came down here, she raised him. All these people... there was kids in here now, the 3rd generation came in. Now we start getting doctors, we start getting... lawyers... But that organization... she worked very hard and caused them a lot of troubles to get... people to come up with money so they can borrow money to businessmen that they can have business."

619: "Then she was involved with a lot of things with Park St... For the community people to get involved in business... Albany Ave actually was the beginning. But for some reason Albany Ave people start moving out because for some reason the city of Htfd... at that time... it was run everything by Italians and French at the time, so they became more to Park St at that time, everything was just... going to Park St and... the North End, it was just... left out, because it was all project there... There was 2 project by Main St. And there was another project way down on Albany Ave. It was just like project, but all the good families... they're living like the South End. By that time then, everything was the South End. So it was kind of hard for them to deal with the North End of Htfd. And then people from the North End of Htfd start moving out... to the South End. Why? Because the Italians and the French, they're moving out. So if you notice right now, I was the first person who bought a house in the South End, in Victoria Rd. When I move in there it was all Italians... They used to call that Little Italy... I think it was like 20 years ago that I bought a house there. So all these people, they start moving out. So most of the Hispanic move to this area here. So Albany Ave and Main St start dying. Now I think the Jamaicans... and people from other countries start going to that area there, and the Hispanics, they're moving out."¹

677: "When my sister pass away, I went to the Board of Education because they invite me to a couple of meetings because they was trying to build a school in her name. And they were having a hard time to put a school in her district because it was no longer Hispanic people there. So that's why they had to put it in Park St. The group of people

¹ Put this together with effects of the riots, urban renewal, and the building of I-84 which played an instrumental role in clearing out the North End. See David Burgos transcript for some of that info.

they're still in that district there, Hispanic, they was fighting that because they wanted the school built where her district was. But for some reason that they convince the board that it was no longer Hispanic there and she always worked with Hispanics so they have to put it where the Hispanic people was. And now South End is turning to be like no longer a Little Italy, it's a little Puerto Rico, starting all the way from Park St...all the way now almost down to here in Wethersfield, it's all Hispanic. So then they decided build a school her."

705: "She deserve it [to have a school in her name]... She deserve that and she deserve more... I'll never forget this day, I go to the store.."

Tape 1, Side B

010: "...a little name tag that said the man of the year or the man of the month... because women wasn't recognized at the time... I said how you manage to get the man of the month. It should be the woman of the month... It's run by men and she was named one of the persons... She was named in so many other areas. I think she have a plaque in front of the... library in Htfd with her name on it, next to Ella Grasso... Mark Twain... right in front of the city hall in Htfd... They was trying to get... a statue or something. And that was another big issue and I think it died because... once more... they're fighting to put it in that district there and they want to do it by... Park St and it was a confrontation."

031: "She was involved in so many things... Like I said her life, it was other people. Especially kids... Anything that got to do with kids. She dropped whatever she had to do if a kid have any problem, starting from the health all the way to education. And she knew that the kids... was the future. And any family who come down with kids, she go out of her way to make sure that that kid had the proper education and make sure that that kid prepare himself so when he grown up he will be someone that is equal to everybody else. And that's how you start getting people like Julio Mendoza... the leaders now, she brought those kids all the way to be where they are. And whatever they are... they have to thank her for that. Because she opened all the doors for them."

044: "I'm very proud to have a sister... well known in the state of CT and I think she's in the Hall of Fame... too [he gets invitation to events in her name]... She was so well known that it's still a lot of people who remember my sister... One person who helped my sister a lot was Olga Miller [sic]. Olga Miller is another person that... should be well-recognized in this city too. Because her and my sister was head to head all the time... It's just that my sister was more because... nothing was in my sister way."

059: "She died just because she didn't take care of herself... Working so hard, she start finding herself in trouble... She was having heart trouble then after that she came to be a diabetic. There was no way she could [?] a diet... Sometimes she didn't even eat. Sometime I got a phone call, you better go and fight with your sister... because she forget the insulin. And if anything happen to her, she's history... A few times... She'd fly away

somewhere, no insulin, now I have to find...her doctor to call wherever she was so they can prescribe...A few times I was very very scared, I thought I was going to lose her...Finally one year, I think it was a week before Thanksgiving, I got a phone call that nobody opened the store, and by the time I get there she passed in her sleep. Once more...she didn't put the insulin. She came in late that day, again she was involved in something...She forget about the insulin, she went to sleep and she never get up."

076: "My sister was a leader way back since she was a little girl. And I think that's where my mother was having problem with her. I think my sister was the first female in PR who went to be in a jury in court. So she got that back since she was in PR, that she liked to be involved with other people...When she was probably 18...At that time I wasn't even born, I get this through conversation with my brothers. Sometimes we used to talk about how everything start...My sister didn't have any education. When my sister came here I think she only got like the 5th grade...She went back to school here. She went down and she took the test for the high school, she passed the test...then she decided to take some courses in college because she was having problem with the language barrier. Now she have to write letters and she had to sometimes speak and she need to improve herself. She went to college...This woman's incredible, this is helping people at the same time and she going to school at the same time...She managed to complete her high school. Then...when she was involved...in politics like running for state reps, it was a need for her to have some college course and she went down to college."

099: "I can spend a whole day talking to you about things my sister did. And of course me I always behind her in everything that she did...advising her and I never was involved with her in anything that got to do with politic other than helping her. I don't believe in politics, her and I we bump head a lot of times into that issue. She used to tell me about how people used to be governors...about how ignorant this guy was or...different issues...I think Weicker was one of the ones that she...hate more than anybody else, when he was in Washington. I guess because every time she was there for something for CT he being from CT and they was expecting him to do things for the state, she was bumping head with him all the time. Then when he run for governor...it was one of the biggest thing for her...She was not just known in CT, she was known in PR, CT, and I think a lot of other states...Now she get into helping other state too, like NY...helping organizing the parade in NY...she went over there and she brought a guy who came to be the head of the board of education here...She want someone this time who be Hispanic. And they went down to NYC and they pick up this guy."

133: "Since she was little she want to be involved in helping people. That's why she want to be a nun and because my mother didn't let her, she must have realized there would be another way of helping people...She started in PR being involved with the church there...at an early age...She took care of my sister Luz Consuelo and myself...She got a twin brother, he's still alive, Pedro Colon. The 2 twins, they both got history...He was well involved in PR too..." Broke his spine when smaller, stayed short, but very involved in politics and helping people there. Could walk into to mayor or gov office any time and everybody knew Pedro Colon. Other 2 brothers went to service, one for 33 years, other 18 years and then went to work for hospital in NY, master electrician. Both

retired now. Sister in PR came to be a teacher and a principal, only one who really got a high education. Pedro didn't go to school just like Maria, they're both the same. Now he's away from politics because his health is like with Maria, didn't pay attention to it."

167: JC is the youngest. 7 years between sister and self, then 6 years between sister and brother. Between brother and twins 4 years difference. Almost 21 yrs difference between him and Maria. He was 24 yrs old when came here and she was already mature. He's baby at 55. "When I born, my mother of course had to work... My mother and my father, they don't have any education, they was tobacco workers and they have to work to support us. My oldest brother lie in the military, he went at the age of 16... There was the war going on and it was no jobs... There was no income, my mother had to go to work and my father, so who was going to take care of my sister and I? Maria. And Maria left the school to take care of us..." When he went to 1st grade she wasn't as needed, when she decided to come to US. "I still remember her when she left, she broke my heart because she was my mother. I never spend any time with my mother, my mother was always working and when she come home she was so tired because... those tobacco people they're going on the farm and work all day long in the sun and then some days they stay inside the ranch sewing the tobacco... They was working like for 12 dollars... a day... I come from a real poor poor family... And my sister sometimes she... go work herself... She was involved working with the tobacco too. And when she came here, she went to work in a tobacco farm, that's the first job she have... She didn't came in with that group of people because like I said my aunt was here already, that's how she came, but it was no jobs... for us... She had the group of people and she tell them what to do with her little broken English and most of the English she learned... here... She didn't have any background in English at all because she didn't go to school. Me at least, I had a little bkgd in English because I... took some classes in English... when I was going through high school in PR."

225: "When the people come from Puerto Rico, because they couldn't speak English... of course they have her to be the leader to tell them what to do. So the foreman say, okay, Maria I want these people to go and do this, that was Maria, okay, you, you, and you and you, this is what you have to do... When she started getting... the English language a little bit better, that's how she found a job in the factory."

238: "My mother and my father didn't have any education at all. My mother and my father didn't even know how to sign their names... We come from a real very poor family, but we all work very hard. My brothers through the military, my sister involved with the community. The only one who really didn't have to work very hard was Luz Consuelo because my brothers at that time, the war was over... they all came to... have good jobs with the military, so they support her to go through college, and they were supporting me through going to college too." Luz C continued her education, married a nice guy who helped her, so went from teaching to principal and retired. "But my brother Maria's twin and her for some reason no matter what they did, it was just like they born to do what they did. Because my other brother too, he didn't have much education either. He quit school, he hate school, he dedicate himself to work and he was a businessman. Opposite of Maria. That guy... you give him 5 dollars and by the time you turn your eyes back he

got 20 out of it." He used to work for Intl Dept store, one of 1st US stores that went to PR. He was in charge of dept. JC remembers him talking to all the bigshots in English. Store had to get a name, were looking for a way to let people all over island let know that store there. Brother came up with idea. He was small and there was big guy called El Gigante de PR. Told to run a contest if could tell difference between weight and height of El Gigante and him. They did it and store succeeded, he became well known. Then owned his own restaurant.

295: Julian Vargas involved in business, thinks first person who owned business here, restaurant. "He came to work in a tobacco farm here... And he was one of the people who decided stay in the United States." He or Mariano Cortez first businessman. "Julian Vargas was the first person who have a restaurant right on the corner of Main St and Albany Ave... The reason why he put a restaurant was because the tobacco people come down they don't have a place to eat most of them they were single... and he saw the opportunity and he opened a restaurant, I think it was the 1st restaurant that the Hispanic people have in Hfd... After that I think it was Mariano Cortez opened a... clothes store... Enrique Rodriguez I think opened a jewelry store with someone else, and then it was a furniture store, Caribe something, I think that was owned by a Cuban. And then it was a bunch of other stores, Cuban, like Cubanito bakery... Then after that I think it came in Aqui Me Quedo or Comerio Restaurant." Thinks AMQ came in first. "But all this... came to be after Maria work... very very very hard. Sometimes it was 3 o'clock in the morning and I called my sister and my sister isn't... still home yet... Now I have to get into the car and chase around calling friends, do you know where my sister is?... She didn't drive so now she depend on people. She go with people and now she have to wait until someone bring her back. And sometimes she was down in Bgt and she don't have a ride back... Sometimes she'd call me."

343: "I'll never forget this day. The PR parade. She called me. You have to get me down to Bgt. It's their parade and I have to be there. At that time I have a broken marriage... and I have a sport car... where there's only 2 seats. I said well, Maria, I got a date but you want me to take you I take you down... But I have to drop you and that's it, I'm coming back. She said no problem... Come and pick me up, I'm late. So I go down, pick her up. I get down there, she wasn't dressed... She pick up whatever dress she got at the store because she got everything at the store, it's just like her home there... Now on the way down she says I have to change clothes, I'm late. In my little car, she starts changing clothes, and here I'm driving on 91 and there's all these tractor trailers driving... and she's taking clothes off... Nothing stopped my sister. You can't tell her it can't be done. If there was a need, she said, I'll find a way to do it."

372: "During the riots... in Htfd. She was the number one person in that riot. She was the one next to the police dept... telling people to stop doing what they was doing... They was destroying the whole... Main St... She was with the speakers, talking to people, and help the police dept and tell them yes, we understand, we've been discriminated but we're going to work it out... She came to be so involved with the police dept... in everything... Any time the police dept needed an interpreter or... they have a problem, they need someone to work it out, who it was, Maria Sanchez. Matter of fact, she was so

involved... with the police dept that she have a color guards group with the police dept. She organized that... it was a group of girls and boys... She got involved and we have to get police officer Hispanic in Hartford... And she managed to blow [?] the test to be a police officer so they can get Hispanic people involved."

402: "Many occasions she cried to me about different issues that she confronted... just being Hispanic and on top of that being a female... When she was in places that for the first time they don't know who she was and how she was treated. But once they know who she was things changed." One of biggest problems with Weicker, treated badly in Washington, came back and said couldn't believe it. Many occasions told that never going to get something done, worst thing you could tell her. Now she will find away, no matter how or what take.

433: "She imagined like how the Spanish people's going to be like 20...30 years from now, and that's what her goal was, like, what I want my people to be 20 years from now. What do they need? And that's where her mind was all the time... Baseball, they opened a league for kids in her name... she made the kid get involved. She said, you people have to get involved in everything... She managed to convince these kids to get involved... All these kids right now we got teachers, we got doctors, we got lawyers, we got everything and everything is because of... her... And she'd go to school and if a kid have any problem she go down and bring the kid and talk to him... because sometime the parents can't handle... the problem."

463: JC confronted a lot of discrimination at DMV. "When I was working in a factory... Whitney Change... First I worked for Futuramic down in Htfd which was one of the first factory that hire Hispanic people and when I start working there it was this Italian lady, I'll never forget her face, she said to me, you know, you... don't belong here... You look to me like you're a very smart person... What the hell you're doing in here? Get yourself a better job. And that stay in my mind." She corrected his pronunciation, although understood everything had problems speaking. Only had to tell him once and he got it, when she realized he was smart. "From that day that she told me that, I start thinking about it... So I start putting applications in different places and my cousin... they was here first and they was going through school here... and they're having a better education than I did, and they have better jobs, so one of my cousins said, why you don't fill an application in the factory that I'm working for." Did application but didn't pass interview because of English, but they said would let him know. "But what happened was the community was changing and now people don't want to work there because it was better jobs. So now they have to start hiring minorities. So they call me in the factory and say we got a job for you as a handler. Handler was giving job to people, and that way I didn't have to speak much... I worked there for 4 years... The second year that I was there I came to know every single job that was there... because I'm a person that all I have to do is see things and I learn it... they got this job to do and the guy who run that machine... was sick. And they got this job to do and they have to get that job done during that week or they would losing the contract... I heard my boss talking to my cousin about it... he couldn't run that machine and he was there before me... I said, tell him I run the machine for him... I went down, run the machine and I put

the work out. So...he don't want me to be a handler any more, he want me to run the machines, so he said, can you run any other machine? I said, I can run any frigging machine that you got here...I said you want me, I'll prove it to you. And with my little broken English I did. I run every single machine without no problem.."

549: "So now they thought I was so good that they thought that they can put me into a school and be a die and toolmaker, which is making part for the machines." He said would do it but problem because of English. One year passed and no answer. Then saw newspaper that DMV giving test in Spanish. "I had to better myself, I had to find a way to get out of this because now there's 4 years that I don't get any response about going to school. Now they're using me to run all the machinery...So I went back to my boss and I say...Are you going to put me in school or not?...Because if you're not going to put me in school I'm going to find...something better because I can't spend all my life working in the machine." Said couldn't do anything till personnel decided. Called sister and asked if could find out how could get DMV job, since she knew people.

594: Washington decided on equal opportunity employment, would have pgm to help people to get jobs that they qualified but hard for them to get the job. Come up with training to help people. But big cut in pay because working overtime at factory, with training would get less than half of what making, maybe \$75 a week. Talked to wife, having problems, she thought crazy, but he knew things wouldn't work out, said had to think re self. Went for p.t. job at 750 Main St, applied for p.t. job cleaning. Now got extra money that losing. Went to state, put in application, took test and passed, qualified as applicant, like 60 people applying for job, not just DMV but for all state agencies. Took like 5 people for Dept of Labor, 4 in another dept, needed someone to speak Spanish because would give Spanish test at DMV. After passed they told him, half day in school, half day at agency, learn what would be doing. Did for 2 years, qualified to take test. Studied very hard, they told him what on test, but everything that studied not in test so failed the first time. Doesn't know if did it on purpose. Failed with one question. Went back to state and told them what happened. But doing such a great job that they couldn't lose him. Said would have to do something to keep there. Opened position as inspector's aide, gave him another 2 years to qualify for taking test again.

672: "The first day I walk in here...they took me to personnel. The guy told him what was the purpose of me being here... They brought me to this room...then introduced me to my sergeant who I was going to work for. I shake hand with him and that was the last thing that I did. They put me in one corner, nobody speak to me...for 3 weeks. I come to work, I go to that corner, and I listen what everybody was saying, but nobody tell me, do this, do that..."

Tape 2, Side A

002: Went back to school and was doing well. Out of 5 who came to work with JC at DMV 2 quit within a week, couldn't take it. Part of pgm for Hispanic and black. He was only Hispanic. Guy wanted to know why people quitting. "When he ask me how I feel

working in here I say, why you ask me, I go over there and nobody talk to me. Nobody tell me what to do. He said, What? I said, that's the reason why the other guys quit too because we've been treated like we aren't even there." He went to personnel and asked guy what going on, told what happening, asked why not giving anything to do. Said that they were not able to do it. But asked if given opportunity to do it. "After the meeting was over, the guy called me in his office and he said to me, as long as I work in this office here...you will never make inspector...I'll never forget that...Now with my little broken English, my answer back was, I'm not only going to be an inspector, someday I'm going to wear your pants and I'm going to have your job. And that was my goal since that day."

031: Took training, suffered 2 years, failed test, but within a month that at DMV knew everything an inspector doing. Started learning every law, would go home take Title 14 (DMV "Bible") knew every fee, prepared self little by little. With help of a couple of inspectors who understood problem, they asked for his help, and started learning the job. After became inspector's aide, took another 2 yrs, took a lot of abuse. "The same way my sister used to cry about her problems, I used to cry to her about what I was going...through." Would take weeks to tell all he went through. But worked self up to do job just like inspector, proved to agency that job could be done, didn't need 4 years education, 4 years of mechanical experience, 4 yrs required being police officer and other requirements for job. Once trained, you could do it. Most that you needed was to understand people, listen, do the right things, education needed to make reports, etc, but if you go to training you learn. Guy who wanted to get rid of him sent him to another training so he would fail test. Sent him to state police academy. You had to be there for 3 months, competing with all these people that went to school here. 3 worst months of life. Got out of academy with dictionary, every day locked self in room trying to understand everything. Little by little got it, passed academy test. Came back and qualified for job, took test and failed by one question. Knew all about motor vehicle law but nothing about it on the test.

077: "I'll never forget the word red tape. That was one question in the test...It's...slang...at the time I didn't know that..." Had to wait 2 more years to take test. Was doing great job, inspector's work. Took test again, finally passed it. "I went down to tell the guy that was in charge of the office at the time...I said, I got the job. I says, and wait...I came to be very well known by the whole state of CT because I was the only Hispanic in the agency. Now of course they need people to help with the book...help with the test, and...I was the one in front of all that." Got more knowledge, involved in other issues, agencies. Chance for promotion, doesn't want to say everything that went through. Has had failed marriages because of job. But made commitment to sister to stay here till she died, commitment to self that would succeed. Applied on many occasions for promotions, denied, always had a reason. Finally a vacancy for his current office and they couldn't find anyone to run it. He went to personnel and to commissioner and said if gave opportunity could do the job. You had to take a test for promotion. Said if was given a test guaranteed failure. So they came out with qualifying according to resume, what know and what do. He did all the paperwork and came to be number 3 on the list, got the job. Doesn't think agency has ever done anything better than that. Has

probably been working for 15 different commissioners, always came to be number one person for them. Even represented CT in DC re CDL licensing. Worked very hard.

152: Should have gone back to school. One of reasons came to US, was supposed to stay with sister to go to school. Didn't work out, needed money and to work, to help sister with her problems. If had gone to school would be a different person. Feels that earned everything he did, never used sister for anything. Can never say that went to her for help because she involved in politics. Did everything self, even when new commissioner started even when Jose Salinas became 1st Hispanic commissioner. He wanted JC to put in for this job. JC said didn't want job unless agency felt that he deserved it. JC applied for many other jobs, was number 1. Became sergeant in 1987. Was 35 years old. Found some pictures when made inspector and sergeant. Put in for lieutenant job many times but #1 many times and they always picked someone else. Could write a book because of all the things he went through with DMV. And he wasn't the only one discriminated against. Other people worked with him and all left. Thinks only 2 that survived, one lieutenant, another made sergeant. After him came other Latinos, thinks only one survived and he retired. Blacks only 2 survived. Others left and went to other agencies. All who stayed from group took the heat and made good. Wishes they could bring that program back, always told sister that pgm helped a lot of people, all kids that come out of school and have nothing to do should be trained.

232: One example. One time federal pgm came out, noise abatement for cars, tractor trailers, etc. Supposed to come out with enforcement area to check vehicles. Ct was one of states. Used to go on hwy and set up area when vehicle passed by, mike and picked up noise, inspector and radio call. "My boss used to take me and put me in the winter and then switch me in the summer... In the winter you cannot wear any other clothes than your uniform and the jacket that they give you. The jacket they give us at the time... was a jacket that is... to walk from the car to the bldg but not to stay steady outside. Well you have to wear that jacket and that's it... This day... it was... probably 5 below zero and we was working this day... I was right on 84 working at the rest area by exit--before you take 32-- and I was with my little mike... sitting in a chair, waiting for vehicles pass by, freezing. State trooper came in with a car, park over to make his report. And he saw me sitting there... I was getting colder, colder, and colder. Finally I was frozen. The state trooper decided, I have to check into this. He go over there, he find me frozen in a chair. He had to call an ambulance... and take me down to the hospital because I couldn't leave the post, I have to stay there." When good weather took JC out and put a friend in.

285: Everybody he works with comes to be good friend, people admire him for the way he treats them. Once original people left and new people came in, saw him as a different person. He feels different because working with people who don't know his past. "But now they see me as a different person... They don't see me as a Puerto Rican any more, they see me now how someone who's worked here, who have a lot of experience, who got a lot of knowledge, and he's my boss. But before when I was working with that group of people... ay ay ay ay... Everything was because I was a foreigner... or because you was black... It was that tension and that stress that you had to go all those

years... They don't see you as a person... For years and years and years it was like that... Time changed that, now people see us different."

309: "What my sister went through was worse than what I went through. Because being a leader and being involved and talking to these people and trying to get things done... I imagine what she went through. I imagine how sometimes she feel... I can never figure why she just [didn't] say to hell with it and walk away... That's what give me the power to hang in there and to find a way out... She keep saying to me, someday you will see the light... and she was right. Everything she did is different now... They can't see people any more like we're strangers."

334: Thinks whole world progressed a lot. He has to go to court a lot, deals not just with Hispanic but a lot of foreigners, do the test in different languages, sometimes people confront that in court and he has to testify. People believe that shouldn't give test in this language, that if people don't speak English shouldn't have the right to drive. A month ago in court because Polish guy in accident and person died. And lady suing DOT and DMV, DOT because she claimed shouldn't have put a divider between the hways and that person can make a turn, and suing DMV because guy didn't speak English, shouldn't have a license. So JC had to testify re way they test the people, why state does it that way. All this has changed now, "we proved that as long as you know what you're doing and you do the right thing, it's not who you are... you're just like anybody else. Driving a car, I drive the car the same way anybody else drives the car." It took some time to prove that but they did.

364: "There's a lot of people here that they are the way they are because they admire my sister. I've been in many testimonials." Goes down sometimes and represents the family. Sees a lot of people who used to know his sister, tell him there will never be another Maria Sanchez. The new generations growing up now don't know about Maria. He goes to her school once in a while, kids want to know who she was, he speaks about Maria's life. For them it's like talking about George Washington, they go, wow, she lived that. They don't have that confrontation now, they go to school like any other kid. "My son, just like any American, go to school the same way... If I talk to him about what my sister - he's like, come on, it was like that, Dad?" He knows that it takes time for things to change in life, we all have to adjust, so took abuse, etc like that was his life, he had to go through that but doesn't want anyone to go through what he went through. Even some of people that are retired and come back say they don't know why he's still there, they would have quit by this time. He says he made a commitment. "I did... what I told my boss I was going to do. When I got my promotion, they couldn't find pants, he had to give me his pants because it was the same size, and he had to give me his badge. So I did get his job... The day he called me in the office to give me my badge... I said... remember what I said to you in the office? I said, I got your pants and I wear your badge." By that time he had realized that he did the wrong thing, they had had a talk and he apologized, let JC see that the way he was brought up, came from his family that this is the way you see people. JC said he understood but you have to accept changes in life. "He retired, I made the dinner for him, I was the one who run the retirement party for him."

450: "I changed a lot of laws, I opened a lot of doors for the people come in... not just... black or Puerto Rican, even American people... We lowered the standards for the job so other people can just fit in... To qualify for this job, it was incredible... Four years of college... four years of law enforcement... you have to be a police officer first." State agencies re evaluated and changed standards for a lot of jobs. There was no way that people could qualify to do the job. Lots of changes, different pgms brought in. More agencies open. When he filled out application for job it didn't ask if you were black, white, Hispanic. Now if you speak 2 languages you're ahead of someone else. 3 languages even better. JC was going to retire this year. Commissioner left but before he did JC told him "You're going to have to do something about the Hispanic community... I'm the only one in this office so far, you'd better starting hiring some more people, especially inspectors, so I don't know what's going to happen now because I was going to retire, I'm getting tired." It still is a problem, don't have enough people in some agencies to help, and this is one agency that needs more help, this agency deals with every nationality, need more people who speak different languages. Sometimes Polish guy walks in here and nobody who speaks Polish. Neverending problem because people constantly coming from different countries. When JC started working at DMV there was only one black person. He was well-educated person, he kept taking courses when working and was almost a lawyer. He was an inspector when JC came. He came to be a director and then retired. A bldg like this with 300 people and only 1 black, it's a target, wonder how he did it. And JC being first Hispanic, sure a lot of people wondered how got job.

627: Some people are still suffering. DMV has been hiring, has hired a few Hispanics, they talk to JC and he advises them, says it's nothing compared to what he went through, can help them solve their problems. Is sure that in other agencies there are people who do the same. If he dies now he dies happy, did a lot of good things, helped a lot of people, gets a lot of letters from people. Likes when Hispanic people come down and ask to speak to a supervisor and they see that he's Hispanic.

688: [Maria Sanchez] "Every day that she get up she accomplish something... There was no one day that Maria Sanchez didn't... accomplish. I'd... go and talk to her for the weekend, she'd tell me everything that she did in that week. Every single day she accomplished helping someone or doing something.