

**University of Texas at San Antonio Archives and Special Collections**

**MS 317. Archives for Research on Women and Gender Oral History Project**

**Olga Morales Aguirre Transcript, May 30, 1997**

**Tori Beckman-Wilson:** ...start talking about all kinds of things to kind of work our way into it. Um, first, I'd like you to say your name, where we are and the date, if you would.

**Olga Morales Aguirre:** O.K. Sure. My name is Olga Morales Aguirre, today is Friday, May the thirtieth, nineteen ninety-seven, and we're in my office at the Mujeres Project in San Antonio Texas.

**TBW:** Wonderful, O.K. I've done some research to find out about you, who you are the the program and one thing that, that very rarely ever comes out when you're reading things like that is what led you to this place? What led you to this program and what in your background made you want to start a program like this?

**OMA:** I think what led me to do this was the discrimination I felt in my employment prior to setting up Mujeres Project.

**TBW:** Really? Can you tell me a little bit about that?

**OMA:** Yes, I can. Um, I was working for probably the largest provider of family planning services in the United States for women. And, uh, as a Hispanic there, I kept sensing that, even though um, they talked about diversity and empowerment for minority women there was very little done to, to move it along, to move an agenda along. And I started noticing that beyond, uh, the diversity issue, there were issues that I felt were very offensive to me. I'll give you a perfect example. Um, I, because I was in charge of educational products being developed there, um, I was always getting input from staff, um, all levels of staff from nurses' aides to physicians to nurse practitioners and clinic managers. And I remember, um, one particular meeting that sort of, um, forced me out, was that I was sitting along a table of about thirty women and I was asking them for their input on educational brochures and one of

the women said to me, um, she was a wonderful black physician who I truly do respect and love, but I was amazed that she herself did not see the bigger picture. And her words still haunt me. They were, “You need to develop a brochure for these people that they understand.” And I felt offense, offensive, I felt offended, but I wanted to hear her, I didn’t want to react. So I said, “Can you tell me what you mean and what would you like to see?” And she said to me, “Well, you have to draw stick figures because they don’t read and they don’t understand.”

**TBW:** They meaning Hispanic women?

**OMA:** Yes, the Hispanic women, because most of the clinics provide services for Hispanic Women.

**TBW:** Here in Texas?

**OMA:** Here in San Antonio. And so I said, “O.K., so you would like stick figures saying little comments?” And then I said to her, “How do you know this is so?” And she said, “Because I sit them down and make them read to me the brochure.” And I was appalled. It was very humiliating, and it was the last step in my career at that agency. I said to myself, “I, you know, I must apologize for my people and their inability to understand you.” And I said, “I’ll try to come up with a brochure that is stick figures and legible for our clients.” And shortly after that, I left. Um, two things were appalling to me. One was that a professional woman who was trying, in her best way, to help women did not see her attitude or her bias. And the other thing was the women sitting around the table, beyond her inability, were minority women who refused to speak out in defense of this woman. And after the meeting, one of the family nurses aides came to me and said, “You know, Missus Aguirre, uh, the doctors are wrong.” And I said, “What do you mean?” And she says, “The women understand exactly what is in those brochures, and they know how to use the products and if they don’t know, they ask us when they leave. But they don’t like to be forced to discuss this by anyone like a doctor or a woman who doesn’t speak our language or doesn’t understand so they feel comfortable asking us, but they really don’t like to discuss it with a doctor.”

**TBW:** They asked the clinic aides?

**OMA:** Yes, the clinic aides.

**TBW:** Did they tend to be Hispanic?

**OMA:** The clinic aides, they were all Hispanic or black and the physicians were white, and some of the nurse practitioners were white, one black.

**TBW:** So it was a comfort thing?

**OMA:** Yeah, it was. And it was, um, an issue that was clearly defined for me. I saw that, and I also saw at the same time that when we were talking about AIDS and HIV, that all the funds were going towards men. And their need for services. And everyone was delegating women to, um—and when I say everyone, I mean everyone including women—um, women were classified as either being a transmitter of the disease or an incubator. And I found that very offensive, and so, um, I was having a hard time at my job, because the more I challenged the old concepts of racism and diversity, the more I became labeled a troublemaker. So for all intentional purposes, I was really forced out of my position. And when I resigned, I was asked to withdraw my resignation. And I found that probably the most insulting situation I could have been in, then it began, “Well, where are you going and let me bargain with you. Are they offering you more money?” And so I, I decided to leave regardless of whether we would starve to death or not. Um, I was going to be, I was going to leave and I was going to do something that I felt was important. For myself and for women.

**TBW:** That’s extremely courageous.

**OMA:** Well, I think I was just mad, I was offended as a woman. So I went home, took my savings and incorporated. Worked out of my kitchen, had a terrible time financially.

**TBW:** For how long?

**OMA:** For about a year. I gave myself a year to make it or not, two years to do better. The Presbyterian Church gave me a space to work out of, rent free. And no one came to help. All those

women who said, “Well, we’ll help you, we’ll go out and do outreach, and walk the streets with you and we’ll do this.” No one would come. I felt absolute abandonment and disappointment.

**TBW:** What was it that made you continue in such a situation?

**OMA:** Um, it was my faith in God. I was not afraid of failure, because I knew it would not fail. I really felt that this mission had been given to me, because I certainly don’t have the intellect to think of this, this was something that I was told to do, and I just followed the orders. And I was not afraid, and I just kept going. My husband would help me, he would answer the phone. Um, we lost our office, because the United Way had lost funding for the Presbyterian Center. So one of my dear friends who finally came to my aid and realized that I was out there alone was Yolanda Gonzalez Alvarez, an attorney, and she said to me, “Oh, go get dressed up and we’ll ask the Mexican-American Unity Council for some office space. And just follow my lead.” So her and I went and spoke to, at that point, it was Ascenete Flores, was the president of the Mexican-American Unity Council, and we told, we were all dressed up, and we told Ascenete that we wanted a suite of offices and we wanted this, and we wanted that, and she said, “O.K., O.K., how much can you pay?” And we said, “We want forty-five cents a square foot.” And she said, “O.K., we can do that.” Which is an extremely little amount. And then we said, “We want it this way for two years.” And she said, “Allright.” We said, “We want it free for four months.” She said, “Well, we can do three and you have to start paying on the fourth month.” And we said, “Allright.” So we didn’t have any money and we were in a suite of offices.

**TBW:** That’s really, um, that must have taken a lot of nerve to do that. Did you friend, did Miss Gonzalez inspire you to do that?

**OMA:** Well, she gave me the humor within that. You know, she’s very, she’s funny and witty and she would make me laugh in a time of despair. And she was a friend I could count on. And it was very interesting, because when I had no visual presence, I had no advocacy among other women. When I started to have a presence, when I was in this office building and I had a suite, then everyone thought,

‘Oh, she’s made it, so let’s do this.’ And so instead of getting more women advocating for me—and there was another woman that always helped me with her prayers, and that was Sister Mona Smiley. Sister Mona was always praying for me with her prayers and her good thoughts. Along the way there have been many, many women, women who worked for the Texas Department of Health, women who worked for the City of San Antonio who I had made friends with, and they knew the quality of my work and my ethics and so they would access grants towards me. And we were finally down to our fourth loan from the Mexican-American Unity Council and, um, I just knew we were not going to make it. And I got a call from this woman from the Mennonite Church, who said to me, “There is a volunteer here who believes the way you do about reproductive rights and HIV and AIDS, and she would like to volunteer.” And I said, “Oh, thank God.” So her name was Theresa Dutcher. And Theresa and I would go out every day, to the neighborhoods passing out flyers and condoms and talking to people, come back and eat our cold sandwiches, because we didn’t even have a microwave to warm up the food. And we did this every day, and we plugged along, we worked very hard.

**TBW:** So in the beginning here, your main way of reaching out and contacting people was literally walking the streets. Meeting people face to face. Where did you go?

**OMA:** Yes. Everyday. We had a plan, we were there on West Commerce, and we walked all the streets around West Commerce. And sometimes it was so hot, we couldn’t stand it. We’d have to come in, we’d leave early, like about nine o’clock and come back by eleven thirty because it was so hot.

**TBW:** You must have worn out many a pair of shoes.

**OMA:** I don’t even remember. It was so much fun.

**TBW:** That is so tenacious. I mean, because most people would say, “Oh, this isn’t working, I can’t get it going,” and just give up. You just kept going. That’s great.

**OMA:** It was my pleasure. I never, it was the greatest thing I have ever done. It was wonderful.

Right at that time, my husband had a heart attack. I had no money. My car was getting ready to be

repossessed, so I turned it in. My children were being dressed out of Goodwill. I was behind two months on my mortgage payment. My husband was trying to keep up with me and he had a major heart attack. Had to have triple bypass, it was terrible. And Theresa, my Mennonite volunteer, uh, would go faithfully every day and man the store while I was in the hospital trying to get my husband through this terrible situation. And my children as well. And, um, we made it. See I went and turned in my car. I felt that there had been too many sacrifices made by everyone to turn back. We needed to move forward. That was the greatest crisis, I think, for this agency. And, um, I remember when I finally got my husband well and at home, that u, we were down to fourteen dollars a day. We had fourteen dollars in the bank, 'cause we would hold a little fundraiser here and little fundraiser there. There was fourteen dollars in the bank. Theresa was more frugal than I was. And so we'd go to Office Depot, and I'd say, "Oh, I need four notebooks." And she'd say, "No, you can just get two." And I'd need three boxes of clips. "No, you can just get one." So we'd buy one of everything to get by. It was incredible. We had a word processor and that's what we'd do everything on, the word processor. And one day I remember we were sitting down and talking at my desk, and I told Theresa, "Well, we're down to fourteen dollars." And I got all this mail and I'm sure it's like, "No, thank you ma'am," and we're not going to get funded. We had two letters. One from the National Council of La Raza and one from the Chicago Resource Center. And, uh, so I opened the first one, and it said, "Congratulations, you've been awarded." It was for four thousand dollars.

**TBW:** That must have seemed like a fortune.

**OMA:** It was a fortune. Then I opened the other one and it was for another six thousand dollars.

[pause in tape] So here we go, we got funded. And we went and bought—the first thing we bought, guess what it was.

**TBW:** More paper clips and stuff.

**OMA:** No, we bought a microwave. [laughs]

**TBW:** You bought a microwave. First things first.

**OMA:** We bought a microwave, because we were tired of cold food. We did not want to eat any more cold food. We bought a microwave, we bought a copier, we bought a computer, one computer, we bought paper galore and we had so much fun, because now we didn't have to go to Kinko's and copy everything.

**TBW:** Right, which probably took a lot of time out of your day.

**OMA:** It took a lot of time, yeah.

**TBW:** What year was this?

**OMA:** Gee, it was in nineteen ninety-two.

**TBW:** So you started the whole thing in...

**OMA:** Ninety-one.

**TBW:** Ninety-one. So this is the 'we're going to make it in a year' period.

**OMA:** And we did. 'Cause it was in July and it was August when I started the Mujeres Project. It was like—'cause I remember, I remember I was so saddened by the fact that I couldn't get funds. I had been without a salary almost a year, um, nothing was working right, I was beginning to owe Mexican-American Unity Council money now, and I went to church and I said to God, "You know, this was your idea it was not mine. And you told me to do this, I've done what you said, and it's time for you to hold up your end of the bargain. I'm really upset with you. I'm tired of working and you not helping." And we had two checks in one day. So it was unbelievable, from that day forward we started building.

**TBW:** So that was kind of the turning point.

**OMA:** It was the turning point, and it was the point that uh, that um, when you're a winner everybody's your friend.

**TBW:** True. Very true. So now you're in your offices, you have some equipment you can make everything look...

**OMA:** We have two offices now, we actually have almost three. We have an office in Harlingen, Texas, it's called Mujeres Project of South Texas, and we have Mujeres Project Houston.

**TBW:** Did you ever dream it would be this big?

**OMA:** No, no. And it wasn't again, my ideas. We were approached and asked to do it by funders in those areas. I don't have the—I'm not the smartest woman in this world. I actually think I'm not one of the brightest, maybe I'm average, I don't know. I do know that one of the things that has helped me to be successful is that, uh, I refuse to believe that we as women can not and do not demand what is rightfully ours. We don't get enough money for our AIDS services, like men do. Yes, we're impacted greatly, and women don't say anything about it. Uh, I'm not a genius, but I've always been true to my beliefs, and I think that is what sets me apart from the other women. My husband always tells me, "You know all the people you work with, all the people I've met, nobody really gives a damn but you." And he says, "I see that, and you don't see that. People are only interested in it as long as it provides them with a salary and a little moment of glory."

**TBW:** That's why, I guess, I'm so surprised at this whole story of you giving up a salary, using your savings to start it, there goes your car, all this trouble with your family, all those hard times and...

**OMA:** Well, it was not my idea. It was not my idea. I felt, um, I felt discrimination at that agency that profoundly shook everything I believed in. And I said, "I know I can do better, and I will show better." I don't like women's lives being manipulated, and I believe that if you're going to offer family planning services and products, that you need to disclose every bit of information to that woman. Not what you think the woman should know, but every bit of it. And then let her decide.

**TBW:** And that's how you perceive major health care organizations.

**OMA:** And I still see it like that. Yesterday, I was at a meeting with Metro Health, I sit on their advisory council on informational materials that they give out to all the women in their family planning clinics. And in the brochure was every conceivable method of birth control except abstinence. And I said, "Why do you not provide abstinence as a choice?" And they said, "Oh, we're sorry, we forgot." But I don't see anything wrong with that. I might not agree with it.

**TBW:** It's a legitimate choice.

**OMA:** It's a legitimate choice. I might not like it, and I might say to you, "I know it does not work, because most people don't abstain." But nevertheless, it should be there, and let the woman decide. So, you know, that's fine we moved in that direction of saying, I'm tired of family planning organizations saying they know what's best for women. And I'm tired of churches saying the same thing, and making women feel guilty because they choose a certain method over another.

**TBW:** Now that, that is kind of an interesting, interesting idea. Because you've said the idea of starting this whole project you believe was from God. Who led you to it. Are you Catholic?

**OMA:** I'm very Catholic.

**TBW:** O.K., do you see any kind of, any kind of problem with...

**OMA:** No. I might be totally nuts, I don't know. But I have had many conversations with my dear Lord, and I have always said to him, because I have been a proponent of reproductive rights. I mean, I move out there and I have the key for women to do whatever they feel they have to do, whatever their conscience dictates to them. And I, my life has been threatened, it has been threatened in churches in front of my children, and I have often wondered, you know, if I'm doing the right thing, because I am a Christian and I am a Catholic. And I've gone to church, on my moments alone and said, "These thoughts that I have, these ideas that I have, I know that you know them. And I know that you don't have problems with them, because if you did, you would have stopped me a long time ago. Yet you encouraged me to move forward and you encourage me to speak out, and I don't understand this." But

I know that I'm comfortable in my decision. And when one of my girlfriends was excommunicated from the church, um, she was the only woman in the United States that's ever been excommunicated and her name is Rachel Vargas, in Corpus Christi. The Reverend Gracida (sp?) excommunicated her. And Rachel and I had done some public speaking together, especially in El Paso, Texas. And KWEX called me and said to me, "How do you feel about Rachel Vargas being excommunicated?" And I said, "I'm appalled and dismayed," you know, all the terms we use and they asked me, you know, if I was going to be asked by the Archbishop here whether I would give up my position or be excommunicated, what would my choice be?

**TBW:** Yeah. What would it be?

**OMA:** I told the reporter that no one can take God away from me. And that's how I felt. And if the Bishop here felt that he had to do that, to do so.

**TBW:** Has anybody ever said anything like that?

**OMA:** No. No one ever has. I'm very close to the, many priests, many nuns in the Archdiocese of San Antonio. I know that the Archbishop Flores knows of my position and I also know that he is a very wise man and a very religious and devoted man to his to his leader, the Pope. But at the same time, I know that if the Bishop had wanted to make me a scapegoat, or anybody else, he would have done so. But obviously, he's very tolerant, that I think that's what's kept me in the church.

**TBW:** I've just been real curious about this in general. Do you think that's more a kind of a, way of dealing with issues with the American branch of the church, rather than the European or...

**OMA:** Yes, I think so. I think so, but you know, I'm not a Planned Parenthood, I don't provide abortions. And so...

**TBW:** Then you think that that would be the final line? That that would be it?

**OMA:** I don't know. I can't say. All I know is as a health advocate, because I consider myself an advocate and an activist in health issues, that we're given certain liberties, that maybe someone else

doesn't have. Um, but I think that we're far away from being a provider of abortion services. I think that because we believe in choice and women's right to make it, I think that sort of gives us, them, a gray area of tolerance. But, I think for me and Mujeres, it's been a very difficult time. In nineteen ninety-two, it was extremely difficult and this year has been extremely difficult.

**TBW:** Why? What happened in those two years?

**OMA:** I think in ninety-two because of the financial parts, and my husband's illness was critical. But I think this year has been extremely difficult time, probably the most worrisome for me. It has to do with the hatred and undermining and contempt that I have felt from men and the agencies they represent not only in San Antonio, but within the state of Texas.

**TBW:** Now are these agencies that you seek funding from, and that you have to go deal with for funding, or that you work with? Or what's your relationship with them?

**OMA:** Well, most of the agencies that provide services like we do in the area of AIDS are run by men. And these are, um, gay men and when the issue of AIDS began, I don't think women and services were, was an issue. And, you know, if we got seventeen thousand and they got a hundred thousand, we were lucky, and happy, to have seventeen thousand. But over the years, as services for women have increased, so has the infection rate. And so we've been pulling more and more funds away, and we've become a threat.

**TBW:** So it's kind of like you're fighting over the same pot of money. It's a zero sum sort of thing, if you get more money, then I'm losing it.

**OMA:** Right. And I find that there is, um, a hidden underground of men in Texas that determine funding. So I didn't want to deal with that and I had to deal with it this year. We lost forty thousand dollars in our Harlingen office. And to try to figure out what was going on and piece it together, I spend many a sleepless night. And, um, and I guess the world of business is frightening to me.

**TBW:** It can be very cruel.

**OMA:** We signed a contract to, with another agency to, with another woman's agency to provide services, and, um, after the contract, after the grant was funded and we had to sign contracts, she chose not to honor it anymore, even though she'd gotten sixty thousand dollars. So we had, we're having to sue her and take her to court.

**TBW:** Oh, who wants to do that.

**OMA:** Yeah, which is something that I—I'm not been injured. What do you do? How do you do it? Is it the right thing to do?

**TBW:** Is there any reason for that, that you able get from the organization?

**OMA:** Well, it, it was based on—it was very interesting, because here you have an organization that has difficulty with her finances. And as a subcontractor for them we would have gotten something like thirty thousand dollars to do the services. Well, the Texas Department of Health said to them, "You know, you have a lousy financial situation, you have difficulty controlling your finances, and your audits are not as good as they should be, so we don't think you can handle a subcontractor, so you can't do this. Even though the subcontractor's a really good person, and blah blah. But you can't handle a thirty thousand dollar subcontract. But here's sixty thousand dollars anyway, just for you." [laughs]

**TBW:** That doesn't make any sense at all.

**OMA:** No. So if you can't handle thirty thousand dollars, how can you handle sixty? I mean, so we, we, I think this agency has grown up, and we're in the business world and we've had to learn to go in there and learn how to fight. And, uh, we can do so because of the strong board of directors I have now who are women and men and the staff. But we started out as something really small and comfortable and non-threatening and wanting to get along. Now, it's out there in the real world, and we have to fight for every cent we get.

**TBW:** And how has that changed you personally, or has it?

**OMA:** It's changed me a lot. I realize that even though, um, I want to be kind to staff, I can't be. That I have to be business like and rules are rules. I've learned our business associates, in fact, are not trustworthy for the majority of the time, and that you have to be very careful about what you say and who you say it to, and who you trust. And there are some people who you can trust. I've learned that you gain respect by how much money you control in this city. And how, um, you wield political clout, which is totally contrary to what I still believe, and I feel uncomfortable with it. And I've learned that, um, personal integrity doesn't have much value in the business world. [end of side one] [side two] ... a check with money, you know, I never expected that. I just expected to have two people in the office and manage maybe, two thousand dollars every six months. And now I write checks for large amounts, hire consultants and all this other stuff, it's mind-boggling.

**TBW:** But it's got to be gratifying in a way, though, that that your efforts, from, I mean, those efforts you made at the beginning and the sacrifices you made at the beginning are really, they're paying off.

**OMA:** I don't know. I don't know. Um, we held a conference in Houston last September, and we invited about 400 women to come, Latina woman because we were going to be documenting the reproductive health of women, doing surveys. It was very interesting, we had um, Dolores Fuerta (sp?), who was the woman that helped Cesar Chavez through the grape boycotts as our keynote speaker. And, you know, I'm paying all these consultants, and I'm writing all these checks and I think, 'God, they're spending so much money.' People don't realize how much things cost. And I'm going, I'm complaining all along, and so we, I fly half of my staff to Houston and half of my board are all flying to Houston and stayed at this absolutely wonderful Hilton hotel. We do this, we do that, pay for the banquet fees, pay thousands of dollars for this and, uh, here I am, sitting and looking at all this audience and this group of mariachi kids from one of the middle schools there started playing. And the minute they started playing—and I'm even having difficulty now—I started, I couldn't take it. It just overwhelmed me and I had to get up and walk away. And the photographer that's been documenting

the visual history of Mujeres caught me, 'cause she and I had been together for a long time working on this project, and she said, "What's the matter? What's the matter?" I said, "Don't, whatever you do, don't put this on camera. It's just hit me what we've done." So I think we've done it, I don't know what 'we've done it' is yet, it's yet to be defined. I just know that it's empowering for, particularly Latina women, to have a Latina women's organization that isn't a social group, it isn't a political group, but it's a health-based group, you know? That's, that's empowering. And if I've done anything, after all these years, I think that's the greatest thing. We have ourselves to critique materials that are defined for us or developed for us. And I don't know what I've done today. I really don't know what I've done. I just know that I'm very stubborn and that I demand that we speak for ourselves. Um, we have this golden opportunity right now to work with the city of San Antonio and the Texas Department of Health, where we are going to develop a fotonovella. It will be the first time in the history of the state that a minority woman's organization is going to develop a storybook for its clients, who are predominantly Mexican-American and it will be talking about health and prevention. And I think if all these years have come to this, that's where it ought to be, because I go back to the brochure.

**TBW:** Right. The stick figures and everything...

**OMA:** Sí. It's funny how my journey has come around.

**TBW:** I think—how many clients do you have? How many people do you serve? How many lives do you touch?

**OMA:** Every day we touch lives, that I'm not even aware of. My life is in front of a computer, which makes me very unhappy. Um, my staff, here in San Antonio alone, they have to touch anywhere from ten to fifteen thousand women a year and their families, children and everything. In the Rio Grande, we do another five thousand to ten thousand. And in Houston, I know we do, on an average maybe a year, a thousand or two, because we're in development phase. Um, it's astounding. And everywhere we go, they want us to open another office. I have to say no. Um, we're not ready yet.

**TBW:** Can you see yourself opening offices throughout Texas? Maybe even further?

**OMA:** Yeah, but I won't be around to do it. I think I can see it, but I think it needs someone else's vision to move it. I don't have that kind of vision.

**TBW:** What kind of vision? Large business...

**OMA:** I don't know. Yeah. I've done my work. My only thing is, we cannot forget that we as women must work with each other and defend each other and demand for each other. I am just appalled how we, as women, really don't help each other out very much.

**TBW:** Why do you think that is?

**OMA:** I don't think, I think women like me and women in their thirties like me, don't get it. Just like men don't get what we're about. And I think it has to do with team sports. I think the younger woman that's in her twenties, maybe twenty-five, who's been playing soccer and basketball and all these wonderful sports, I think she's going to be the person that'll be the catalyst, because she knows what team-building is. And team sports. When for us, it was like, "Let's just sit down and talk about boys." There was all this competition. I think I'll see the change there, I don't know. As I said, I'm not very bright, I just have little ideas.

**TBW:** I think you're doing yourself a great disservice.

**OMA:** No, no, no, no. I mean, I made a D in college math, I made a C most of the time in high school math and I control millions of dollars.

**TBW:** Now that would scare me because I have the same kinds of scores in math.

**OMA:** That's what I mean. I've had auditors here from the Texas Department of Health, CPAs, and their math is wrong and I catch them. And I tell them, "That's not right." And they go, "Yes, it is." And they do it. "Oh, you're right Missus Aguirre." I don't know how to do it, but I can catch simple math and subtraction. I catch the CPAs all the time.

**TBW:** Now, do you do the budget here, do you do it?

**OMA:** Mm-hmm. When I do the grant, I do my budgets, then I have a wonderful bookkeeper that does the accounting, and we have a very sophisticated accounting system.

**TBW:** Because when you do the grants, you have to do an outline of the budget at the same time you submit it, correct?

**OMA:** Yes. And then, after that the federal and state regulatory agencies demand so much from us. And sometimes I think that because we're women, and minority women, that they demand more. And that's what kind of...

**TBW:** Do you think that assumption goes that far? Those kinds of assumptions?

**OMA:** Yeah. I wouldn't have said that three years ago, but I'll say it now.

**TBW:** You have much more experience.

**OMA:** Yeah. I mean, you know, they put us through the evaluation process over and over again. Trying to find problems and when they don't find any they find it [unintelligible].

**TBW:** It's astounding that people would still, after all these years. And you face that kind of thing all the time.

**OMA:** And if I've learned one thing, it's tolerance. Just to sit there and look at the greater picture.

**TBW:** Because if...

**OMA:** If I say the wrong thing...

**TBW:** ...the money's gone and you're helping no one. That must be a tough situation.

**OMA:** It's horrible. Horrible.

**TBW:** It's precisely the thing that spurred you into doing this in the first place.

**OMA:** And do you know who have been the worst monitors and the worst audits? They have been women. Every time I see a woman walk in, I cringe. When I see the men walk in, I'm comfortable, because I know we'll be treated fairly. I can't believe this, you know? I just can't believe it. It is amazing. It's happened to me, but I've heard it from other women, as well.

**TBW:** Is there a strong network between the different, uh, public service organizations in this community that are headed by women?

**OMA:** I think so, because we've all faced similar circumstances. Yeah.

**TBW:** Do you ever get together with people, talk about what's going on?

**OMA:** Well, it depends. It depends what color you are. The white women stick together and the Latina women stick together. And, occasionally you have an exchange of Latinas and white women, but it's usually pretty superficial.

**TBW:** Why?

**OMA:** I think it has to do with territory and money and power.

**TBW:** It's back to the money. Because everybody's fighting for the same kind of piece of the pie.

**OMA:** Yeah. Because you're gonna see the white women in power in those positions, are women who have been in agencies that have been around for a long time and the Latinas are in the up-and-coming ones. You know, I see it all the time. There's a lot of racism in this town.

**TBW:** Which is kind of surprising to me. I'm a newcomer to San Antonio, lived here for three years. And I'm really surprised.

**OMA:** Well, I'm a fifth-generation San Antonian and you can tell, I'm very surprised.

**TBW:** So you grew up here, and went to school here?

**OMA:** I grew up here, my parents grew up here, my grandparents grew up here... I'm always asked what part of Mexico I come from.

**TBW:** Really?

**OMA:** Yeah. [laughs] It's inherent. And people don't know they do these things, say those things.

**TBW:** I'm calculating this in my mind, five generations, that was long before this was even American territory.

**OMA:** We were founders in this area. We were Canary Islanders. But I always hear, “What part of Mexico do you come from?” [laughs] I always say, “What part of Europe did you come from?” and then it hits them. But I don’t like to do that because that, that’s not fair. But I always wonder, um, if the shoe was on the other foot how would they feel.

**TBW:** Yeah. That’s what I was thinking when you said that. No one’s asked me what part of Germany I came from lately.

**OMA:** Well, you know that organization I left to come and build Mujeres, my boss asked me one day if I was going to a conference. And I said, “No, no, no, I’m too busy to go.” And she says, “We need for them to see we have a Mexican.” And she was not even aware that she’d made that statement. And I thought in the back of my mind, well, do you want me to put on huraches and a braid?

**TBW:** Yeah, or a big hat.

**OMA:** Yeah. And I just thought, when is this thing ever gonna end? I guess never.

**TBW:** Do you feel like things are getting any better, in that respect? I mean, are we, as a city, coming any closer to kind of an acceptance, or?

**OMA:** Oh, I don’t know. I had to accept some things when my daughter started dating a white young man. Which I did not like, because we’re very traditional, and I felt, culturally, that it should be a Hispanic male. Um, he was probably a lesson in civility for me, because I just totally love him. On the other hand, here was a family, a white family, with this absolutely gorgeous blond, blue-eyed boy dating this Chicana, I mean, a Latina girl who has the spirit of her mother and father and someday is going to be a great lawyer. But, it was difficult for them. And I’ll never forget how cultures don’t really understand each other in this city. One day, Mariscela, my daughter, said, “Mom, Missus, um, Brian’s mother wants me to go over to Brian’s and study with him, and can I go?” I said no. She says, “Please mom,” and started crying. I said, “I’m sorry in our culture you don’t do that. The boy can come to your house and sit with you.” She said, “Please, please, please.” I said, “Well, I’ll tell

you what, I've got a meeting in that area. I'll go drop you off, but I'll have to have permission from the parent, the boy's mother." So I got to the door and Missus, Brian's mother says, "Come on in." And it's a very well-to-do family, and I go in and I said, "I want you to know why I wouldn't let Mariscela come over." And she says, "Why wouldn't you? They can study here." And I said "It's not part of our culture." She said, "Oh, my goodness, I am so sorry." I said, "That's O.K., I knew you didn't know, but I wanted to tell you why. It isn't because I don't trust Brian, it's just that a proper young lady from a proper home doesn't do this. He can come to our parlor, and we can watch him." [laughs]

**TBW:** How did she react?

**OMA:** She was embarrassed, and she realized that we had our culture and we were not backwards, barefoot Mexicanos. [laughs] And so I went and picked her up about nine thirty, and we said goodbye, but I could tell she had learned a big lesson in cultural etiquette. I think things are changing, I think our children will change it. And I think that, um, this city's a lovely one, because it's so diversified. Anyone that comes in with any kind of biases is going to have to go through some soul searching. You can't love our food and not love us. So I think things are changing. I think for us as women, as professional women, things will change with our advocacy towards each other.

**TBW:** Now, you mentioned your daughter. Who's going to be a lawyer. How do you think things will go for her?

**OMA:** I think she's gonna have a real tough time, because of Hopwood and the quotas. She refuses to have anything to do with the University of Texas system.

**TBW:** Does she want to go to law school in-state?

**OMA:** She had planned to go to UT in Austin, but she refuses to do that now, she won't even apply there. Um, the same with California, she won't go to California. I think our kids are going to make a big difference. I think, um, we've opened many doors for her. I personally think many doors are beginning to shut again and even more dangerously, because it's so quiet and so skillfully done, I think

she's going to have a rough time, but I think she'll persevere. Um, I think in this world, there's just too much to do to be wasting our time fighting about racial biases and inequities. We know all the inequities, you don't have to pay someone to define it for you, it's been defined. We've got to move forward.

**TBW:** And how can we do that, in your opinion?

**OMA:** I don't know, I don't know.

**TBW:** Do you feel like your doing it in your work here?

**OMA:** No, I think I create more problems. Because people confront their biases.

**TBW:** Do you think that's a problem? It may be for the people who have to do it.

**OMA:** I don't think that's a problem. For the people who have to do it, yeah. But for us, it's rough, too. Because we, you know, we tackle a large segment of the population that doesn't want to be found. They're having to deal with these issues and they don't like it. When a chunky Hispanic woman gets up there and calls them, you know, you're biased. No one likes to hear that. Or 'you're a racist,' no one likes to hear that. But you damn well better think about it when you go home. So I think it puts us on the hot seat, and we take quite a few lickin's, but we keep going. My girlfriend, Lynn always tells me, "Don't let them see you sweat. Take the high road." And I do. So, I think, um, for me, there's three things I would say. One is, you got to be able to trust women, regardless of what happens. And just because I'm a Latina doesn't mean that a Latina is going to be my advocate. Because two of the women who have been my strongest advocates, has been a black woman and a white woman. And both of those women have done more for me than any Latina that I know.

**TBW:** So do you think gender is probably a more important issue for you in your work than...

**OMA:** Anything else. I think it crosses racial boundaries. Mm-hmm.

**TBW:** How many children do you have?

**OMA:** Well, I've got four step-children and two mine own. And, um, we have, we have three physicians in the family, so we can never get sick because everybody has a different opinion so we've learned not to ask any of them. [laughs] Hey, you know, just forget it, we'll go to our own doctor. We have an interesting family.

**TBW:** What was your mother like? I'm curious because it's always interesting to find out about people's parents.

**OMA:** My mother was illiterate. My father was illiterate. He could barely read or write. My mother had, um, her oldest child was born, my sister Gigi (sp?) was born severely retarded. And I take care of her, as well.

**TBW:** Now?

**OMA:** Yes. She lived with me—my mother died seven years ago. She lived with me for two years, until I could not care for her anymore. And now she's in a nursing home, but I do visit her on a daily basis. And I am her guardian. She is probably one of the most important human beings in my life. And she barely communicates with me. She mutters yeses or nos and we talk about stupid things all the time, because I know half the time, she doesn't know what's going on. But that's O.K. We just sit there and laugh about it. She can't walk anymore and she can't feed herself.

**TBW:** That's a big responsibility.

**OMA:** It was a, it is a big responsibility, and it gets heavy, the burden, but I move on. But my mother was the one that had the biggest burden, because she had to raise this child and have three other children who put all types of demands on her life. And so mother probably was one of my greatest, um, I'm not going to use the word supporters. She did more for me than anyone else because she was so negative.

**TBW:** About what?

**OMA:** Anything. And everything. It was like, don't do that because...

**TBW:** You can't do that, or you won't be able to...

**OMA:** You can't, yeah. She was afraid of everything, she didn't want to do anything. She didn't believe that women needed an education, you had to get out there and marry someone who could provide you with a living, and so everything was negative to her. Don't do this, don't do that. Women can't do this, women can't do that. And, uh, but then near the end—and we didn't have a very good relationship, because I was always getting into trouble, I was a tomboy, I was this and I was that. So, no matter what I did, I didn't please my mother, so I learned to just forget about it and move on. When she was getting to the point of dying, we became best friends. And we talked about issues such as reproductive rights. And, I said to her, "What do you think about reproductive rights and a woman's right to have an abortion? Are you comfortable with me going on TV, are you comfortable with this and that?" She said, "Oh, yeah." She said, "I don't think it's anybody's business what a woman does." And she said, "You're doing the right thing, just continue." And so, at the end of her life, we became very good friends. And she became my inspiration. And it was long in coming, but when it came, it was very good.

**TBW:** Do you think she was so negative because of her own position in life? Maybe she felt powerless to change it?

**OMA:** Yes. She felt totally powerless. And in, in having to raise a child who was severely handicapped. That was really hard. And I think the worst part is having to leave that child in someone else's care. So, it was a toughie. It was a toughie. And I think that, that as a family that we all suffered from the dysfunction of having a severely handicapped child and a mother who was overwhelmed. So, it is amazing. I don't talk too much about my sister, because I don't want anyone saying, "Oh, Olga, you do so much..."

**TBW:** You're a saint, a perfect person.

**OMA:** Nah. She's my sister and I'm delighted to do it, I wish I could do more. Everytime—I hate to fly in airplanes, but I do so because I'm called upon to do so a lot, but everytime I go up, I say, "Oh,

dear Lord, please don't let me die this time. I've got to come back and take care of Gigi and I've got to do this and this. Please, it's not time yet." So, I always feel guilty whenever I'm away from her, because I don't want anything to happen to her. She's sixty years old. She's a cutie.

**TBW:** And you said there are three others. So you have two siblings.

**OMA:** I have two siblings, yeah.

**TBW:** And they're younger than you, or older?

**OMA:** One of them is older. My sister, Josefina, is older and my brother, David, is younger.

**TBW:** And you grew up here in San Antonio. Where did you live?

**OMA:** We lived on the east side of town. Do you know where East Commerce Street is? Yeah, we lived on East Commerce Street, and then we moved on to um, the west side.

**TBW:** So you went to which high school?

**OMA:** Fox. Fox Tech. [laughs]

**TBW:** Did you have a pretty good time in high school?

**OMA:** Yes, I think so. High School was fun for me, it was an opportunity for me, um, to be adult-like, you know.

**TBW:** First attempts at adulthood.

**OMA:** Yeah, it was fun. It was fun.

**TBW:** Did you go on to college?

**OMA:** I went to college for a little bit, I went to San Antonio College. And then I dropped out, then I went back, and it took me forever to get my degree. I didn't know what I wanted to do, it was the sixties, you know.

**TBW:** I think it's hard to ask anybody, of seventeen years old, you know, "What do you want to do? What should you get a degree in?"

**OMA:** I didn't know. Well, I'm fifty-one years old now, I founded Mujeres six years ago.

**TBW:** And so you feel like you've found your life's work here. This is what you're supposed to be doing?

**OMA:** Yeah, and it took me a long time. [laughs] You know, and sometimes I think, 'Oh, my goodness, why am I doing this?' But, it just, the work just goes on and on, and people demand, demand, demand.

**TBW:** How much longer do you think you'll be doing this? How much longer do you want to be involved?

**OMA:** I think, um, I want to remain involved here for maybe another two years at this level of intensity. 'Cause my concern is I want to make sure that we have our, our new office building. We need a building of our own. And I'd like to see that happen, and then I would like to, after those two years, I think it will take 'em two years to do that, I would like to leave and let some other leadership move in. Um, I would like to continue as an advocate for women, um, in whatever capacity, only the Lord knows. But, but I did not build this place to be here forever, to become my kingdom. That was never my intent. And actually, I think I've overstayed my, my visit here. Yeah.

**TBW:** That's pretty rare, I think, because many people who do build...

**OMA:** Want to stay there forever, yeah.

**TBW:** Or at least want to have a hand in, you know, to make sure that it's...

**OMA:** No, the only thing I want to have a hand in is that if I ever see the direction of this agency going in the direction that it was not meant to go, then I would be very angry. Uh, because it cannot be an emphasis on children. There are many agencies emphasizing children, the emphasis must be on la mujer, the woman. And what her needs should be defined by all of us. And once we stray away from that, we're in trouble.

**TBW:** Has the temptation to do that been there?

**OMA:** Yeah. It has, not be me, but by boardmembers who said, “Well, it’s easier to access funds for children.” And I, no. No, no, no. It has to be women.

**TBW:** It seems to me that, that sticking with your idea that it has to be women, that’s the first thing you have to take care of when you’re looking at the welfare of children. Because if, if the woman, the grown woman cannot be healthy and cannot make decisions for herself, what’s gonna happen to the children?

**OMA:** Nothing. The woman is the center of the family. She’s the *mujer*, she’s the catalyst, she’s everything. So, that’s the hardest thing to do, to keep the focus on services for women.

**TBW:** Sure, because there are many, many good things to be done for all segments of the population, but...

**OMA:** It’s got to be woman-centered and so that’s, that’s been my job to always guide us back to what we have to do. And I’ve strayed a couple of times, too. I mean, I got so wrapped up in fighting the AIDS community for funding, I thought, “What the hell’s wrong with me?” I’ve been wasting my time fighting these guys when I could be focusing, really, on women. I need to focus on women, and so I put the brakes on and I said, “Whoa, that’s enough.” You know, if you want to fight and this and other money, be my guest.

**TBW:** Have you ever withdrawn a grant request just to get out of that? Or would it come to that?

**OMA:** One time, we were, we were, we wrote a wonderful grant for [unintelligible], right? And they awarded us something like three or four thousand dollars. And I was insulted. And I said to them, “How dare you offer me four thousand dollars?” And I said, “Take your money and...” [laughs] And the next year I got thirty-nine thousand.

**TBW:** Sorry, sorry, let’s try again. Did you have to renew, did you rewrite the grant?

**OMA:** No, it was the same. It’s funny.

**TBW:** Well, I'm sure there have been so many frustrating moments and then so many extremely gratifying moments for you over the years you've been doing this.

**OMA:** Yes. There's been a lot of gratifying moments. I think Houston was gratifying. [end of tape]  
[tape two]

**TBW:** Why? Well, this is a unique program. There aren't enough programs like this that, that seek out and try to deal with specific issues for one segment of the community that is so overlooked, so people are surprised.

**OMA:** I don't know why we get attention, and I don't know why, I don't know why a lot of things—we just do what we should be doing to provide services for women or accessing services for women or providing advocacy for women. Um, I mean, there's millions of dollars that come into this city for health and human services that are really for women, but every time you see it, it's really stereotypical or negative. She's either on welfare or she's a victim of domestic violence. She's always a victim. You know? And I'm so tired of seeing women portrayed as victim. I, a woman, like my mother, or just a typical housewife in this city, lives with funds that are so poverty, the level is so bad in this town. Yet we know her kids go to school, she feeds the family, you know, they have a car, and they have all this on seventeen thousand a year. And no one gives that woman credit for what she does. Now if she can do that, we can certainly come in here and find ways to access her a mammography, a pap smear, whatever, and make damn sure that whenever she goes there she is treated with respect and kindness and that, um, she is given correct, factual, total information.

**TBW:** So that...

**OMA:** And to me, that's just the right thing to do. I shouldn't get credit for that, that's what all of us should be doing. Well, you know?

**TBW:** Absolutely, it's just treating a fellow human being with...

**OMA:** You know, guys come in here all the time. And we treat them really well, and they keep coming back, because they say, “You guys treat us better than anybody else does.” And we say, “O.K.” And that’s our motto. We’re going to treat you with courtesy, kindness and respect. And, and, I am so delightful, I’m delighted that people honor us by coming out here—the newspaper, when we do this and that, but to me, when someone walks in and one of the caseworkers or one of the educators can do something for that person, and they don’t feel humbled, then I think we’ve, we’ve helped this community to grow. I don’t want anyone coming in here with hat in hand, thinking that they need to be humble to receive services. That’s appalling to me.

**TBW:** Which seems to be the case. You have to kind of grovel to get anything.

**OMA:** And that’s totally contraindicated here, I just refuse to deal with that, it’s so negative, so wrong. They can write all they want. You know, the documentaries they did on me, I haven’t even looked at them, I refuse to. Oh yeah, I refuse to look at stuff like that. It’s not important.

**TBW:** Well, I’d love to see it.

**OMA:** Well, it’s there in the audiovisual—it’s not important, it doesn’t matter. What matters is what, you know, what we do on this earth the time we’re here.

**TBW:** It’s your contact with people, that’s what matters.

**OMA:** Yeah. It’s, it’s, I just can’t stand the thought of having lived here and breathed this oxygen and not given anything back, I mean, it’s just a total waste of time, energy and resources. We’re put on this earth to give something back to this community, and um, it’s just my honor to everyday come in and give what little I can. Um, it’s just, it’s a total joy, it’s a total honor. I want to give more, I just don’t know what else to give. Yeah.

**TBW:** What about people who are—you’re making me think of people—you obviously care, and believe in what you do, in your work. There are so many people who wake up and go to these jobs that

they absolutely hate, and they just keep slogging in and slogging out and punching the clock. What would you say to them?

**OMA:** I feel sorry for them. I would say hang it up and go do something you really want to do. And I am forever grateful to that family planning organization who ran me out and made me so angry, because if they hadn't pushed me, I'd be there doing the same thing. You know, and I have to tell you, that just because you get funded in nineteen ninety-two, I didn't get a salary until nineteen ninety-four. I made damn sure that my staff got paid, and I started pulling some, I think I got ten thousand dollars for the year, and I was so delighted to get that. My family wasn't, but I was.

**TBW:** I assume that was probably a fair jump down from what you were doing before.

**OMA:** It was, it was.

**TBW:** It's a real testament to your family that they were so supportive and willing to stand by you while you're doing this.

**OMA:** Yes. I'll tell you, when I get my awards, and I've gotten my share of them, um, I didn't realize how important those awards were until my children said something to me about it. And, um, two things were, have been critical in my life. One was, when I was threatened in church by this man who I felt was going to attack me.

**TBW:** Can you tell me about that?

**OMA:** Sure. It was my daughter's confirmation. And we had all gotten dressed up and my brother had flown in from Houston with my sister-in-law to, for the confirmation, because she was going to be my daughter's sponsor. And so, uh, I had just spoken at a rally down at one of the parks on reproductive rights so my picture was in the paper about a woman's right to choose and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah blah. I didn't think anything would do anything, so I went to the mass for her confirmation and my husband was on one side and my brother was on his right. And this man, a couple of pews in front of me recognized me and he started making gestures at me, like the sign of the cross and he started

pointing and tapping other people, saying, "That's her." Uh, I started feeling afraid, and here, the confirmation was going on and you could hear mumbling going on. And my—I told my husband, "I'm getting afraid that man is going to get up and hit me." He said, "Who?" And I said, "Over there." He says, "Oh, my goodness, that's John's father and mother. One of the schoolmates and best friends of my daughter. And, uh, so my husband says, "Just ignore him." So then the people, there were two men sitting in front of me and so they turned around and started doing the same thing. So my brother said, "What is going on?" I said, "I guess I'm going to, they're going to do something to me." He told my husband "Move down, and let me sit on the other side of her." And, um, so they, they both started glaring back at the men, and one of the men, after he made the sign of the cross to me, um, was so angry, I could see the hate in him, that I made the sign of the cross back to him. And he was angrier. And I thought, 'Gee whiz.' And that was one of the few times I've felt afraid. So communion time came around and it was obvious they were not going to let me go receive communion.

**TBW:** Those two men?

**OMA:** Those two men. And so they stood up to block me, and my husband and my brother escorted me all the way to the altar and I received communion and came back. And they settled down a little bit, not much. But it turns out the Monsignor who was performing the service was a very good friend of mine and my husband. And so when they were up there taking pictures of the Monsignor with whoever the participant was, he called me and my husband up, and he hugged me, and I hugged him, too. And he said, "How are you doing?" And I said, "Fine." And when they saw that the Monsignor was a good friend, they backed off. By that time, we were pretty uncomfortable, so my husband said to my daughter, "We need to leave right away." And she said, "But there's a party going on." Her dad said, "No, we're leaving right away. Let's all get in the car and leave." So we left and we all went to a restaurant and some of the kids joined us with their families. My daughter says, "Mom, what is the matter?" Because we're all sitting there, like, you know, shaking. And my husband said, "Your

mother was attacked in church and it was very frightening.” She said, “Who did that?” And I said, “John’s parents.” And she started crying. And I said, “I didn’t want anything to go wrong during the service, because it was your day, and I didn’t want a commotion.” And she said, “Mom, I’m so sorry.” So that has always stayed with—and my children have always said to me, “We’re concerned for your safety.” I had never heard that. And the only other time was when I got an award in Profiles of Leadership. And, um, I got up and I said I want to acknowledge everyone, particularly my children. And I said, “It is comforting to this old lady when I get off the plane and I’m tired and I’m scared and I’m glad that the Lord has let me land safely, when I get off the plane and waiting for me are the two of the best faces in the world and that is Ben and Mari.” And I said, “That means more to me than any award anyone can ever give me.” And they never heard that. And they said, “Mom, you don’t know how important it is to us to see you get off the plane.” And they said, “That’s why we’re here every time you fly.” Children are wonderful, they’ve put up with their mom. I don’t want them to feel that I’m a super person and that anything that they do will not measure up to their mom. I won’t allow that. I’m very traditional, I make all my cookies, I make all my cakes, I bake all the time. We spend a lot of time together, but I’m very concerned, because I don’t want to do so much and I don’t want to be seen so much to where I’m not mom anymore.

**TBW:** So family is the first thing in your life.

**OMA:** Family is the most important thing in my life, this comes second.

**TBW:** And that’s what seems to have brought you through this whole time.

**OMA:** It’s the strength of my family. And I knew my mother is there with me. Uh, I did this a year and a half after she died, and there were times that I said, “Mom, I can’t do it anymore, you’ve got to help me.” It’s been scary and it’s been interesting. I don’t know how things happened or why they did, they just did.

**TBW:** Immense force of will, I'd say. Just for the tape, I'd like you to explain, we'll make this brief so we can end this today, explain very, very briefly explain what the Mujeres Project is all about. I know, but I'm not going to be writing anything about this, it will just be on the transcript.

**OMA:** The Mujeres Project is a very simple concept. We believe in education and prevention on any health issue that affects a woman and her family. We believe that if you wait until you're really sick until you go to a physician, it hurts everyone, especially the family and the woman, it just hurts her. So we try to encourage women to understand the issue of prevention, health maintenance. And that's one concept. The other is, we believe that a woman has a right to choice, and to any information dealing with reproductive health, and reproductive rights. And the third thing we believe is when it comes to HIV and AIDS, that we will always advocate and provide services for a woman and her family, because we felt that she had been, um, forgotten and um, underfunded. And so we have fought for that, women and their families with AIDS services. Basically, that's what we do. We do it advocacy, we do it through outreach, we do it through brochure promotion, we do it through case management, we do it through network meetings, we have a Latina Action Network, in the Rio Grande valley that provides meetings every month for over sixty-five people. And those can be community-based educators to community leaders. So that's what we do.

**TBW:** Wonderful, O.K. Is there anything we didn't talk about today that you feel is important or that needs to be discussed.

**OMA:** I just want to say that no woman can do this alone, it takes a very dedicated staff, special women, special men, it takes a wonderful board of directors to trust you and move forward with you. It takes a lot of time, uh, I think the thing I would say is that I've had to make some really tough decisions that cost me friendship, if there was friendship to begin with and I never, um, I never realized that friendship was so special until it was called upon. And so, for me, it was a big learning situation to realize what real friendship is, from another woman, or another man, and that regardless of what

decisions you make, you're always the bad guy. And I had to learn how to live with that, and I wish there was a better way to deal with that. Because business is business, it's not personal.

**TBW:** And that's a hard lesson to learn, especially in an organization like this where you know everybody so well.

**OMA:** Yes, but business is business. Thank you.

**TBW:** Well, thank you, I really appreciate your spending this time today.