

Pesquisa FAPESP nº 2021/04556-0
ENTREVISTA COM V4
Cidade: Vallejo (Califónia, EUA)
Entrevistado: V4, 67 anos, analista de sistemas aposentado
Entrevistador: Rodrigo Sartori Bogo
Local de realização da entrevista: Online

TRANSCRIÇÃO

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- You can talk, no problem.

V4

- Yeah, maybe I should give you a brief history about me and in relation to this PB and the career and stuff that led up to PB. I was born and raised in Oakland, California, which you know is the center of a lot of social change, right? So, I was always around social change. And so that, and I always have a heart for people, and I want to help people that have needs. So, I've always had that in my career. I was a contract analyst for Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory and that was a great career. What it provided for me was it, it was a corporate structure there. It allowed me to communicate with various backgrounds, you know? Education, business, age groups, all of it. So that allowed me to really be able to communicate with anyone, right? And then it also, a high level of written communication. So, which actually flowed over to me because in PB you have to write, and you have to research, and you have to support the argument. So, that helped me a lot. I had a good time and that's my story.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Great, great. And just to know a little bit more about your background. So, you were born in Oakland, and did you do college and what have you worked during your professional career and now what is your work about?

V4

- Yeah, so let me go through, I can go through the college stuff. Let's see. When I graduated from high school, I went to school for two years, received the AS [Associate of Science] and then I lost focus, got married and then got divorced. And after that, listen, I went out and got BS [bachelor's degree] in information system with an emphasis in forensics, computer science forensics. But that was what I was working for the national laboratory. And I'm 67 and I've always engaged in some type of education or learning throughout my life. Even now I'm doing some database courses so that I can improve my skill set there. So, I'm always learning. And what was the second part of your question?

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- What are you working with right now in the nonprofits that you are part of?

V4

- So right now, so being that I'm retired right now, I sit on it. Well, it began as this, my wife began her nonprofit that was called Mothers Against Hunger. She went out and she fed the homeless people, the unhoused people. So, I joined her with that, and I was interested in it. And then along came an

opportunity to serve on this participatory budget program here in Vallejo. And I served on that actually for two sessions. I went back to the second session, and I just supported the other delegates in the work that they were doing because I had acquired that skill set to get through it somewhat smooth. And then now currently I sit on the Vallejo Together nonprofit, which is an organization that addresses the homelessness here in the city of Vallejo, but it's from a mental health approach, right? There's a lot of people out there that are mentally ill and we're trying to help them with that. And I also do some data work for another nonprofit out of San Francisco, which is called PACT. And what they do, they ensure that children in homes that have not gone to college, their parents haven't gone to college, they make sure that they are the first ones to go to college because education is the key to [fight] poverty. This is just my opinion. Education is the key to poverty. Social balance. So that's my story.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Great, great. I have just to... part of the bureaucracy of the interview. First of all, you authorized me to record, but you said that off record. So, it's just if you can send that like on record, if that's all right [laughs].

V4

- All right. You want me to say it on record? - **Yeah.** - Okay. Whenever I speak or the, I don't quite understand. Okay.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah. Just if you can say that you authorized the recording.

V4

- Oh, yeah. I do. I do authorize this recording between Rodrigo and I. So, there's some right here.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Great. Thanks, V4. Yeah. So let me also for my part, like just I was talking about me before the recording, but just to let you know, my research is focused on mid-sized cities and how PB can have an outcome, some territorial impacts. So how different types of designs or different types of PB have different results in the city. So, I'm focusing in mid-sized cities because firstly, because my group study, the laboratory I'm part of, in general studies mid-sized cities, but also because PB... normally PB is studied in big cities.

- Yes. - And, but in general, if you see the history of PB, it has a long preeminence in also mid-sized cities, and Vallejo is probably together with Chicago and New York, the most famous case in the United States. Also, because it was the first citywide PB in the US and it's run by the city management for a long time. Normally we see the nonprofits with a strong work, for example in Chicago, it's not a citywide process. Also... so it's a very interesting case. That's why I'm studying and comparing it with other cities.

V4

- Yes!

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And also, my research is part of a bigger project research we have in Brazil that's called the social-spatial fragmentation. It's a research project that we are focusing on identifying the transformations in cities around the world with processes that came especially after the 1980s. It's that idea that there's new types of urbanization with gated communities, shopping malls and verticalization and other processes cause stronger fragmentation in cities. Back in the day, cities were more like... even with segregation, even with inequalities, people would gather and be at the same spaces, for example, in downtown or city center and now with this gated communities and gated clubs and a whole process that focus much more on personal security, cities are more fragmented. This is a hypothesis, it's an analysis we do, and we have a lot of evidence that this is happening in metropolitan areas, especially in the "third world", in the Global South. But we also have... but our research focuses on mid-sized cities. So, if you can see that happening also in mid-sized cities. Well, also my research relates about how PB has any connection to that. So just to brief you about my research and what I'm studying. So, you said that you are part of nonprofits, you have a trajectory with social movements. - **Yes.** - And I would like to know how do you became part of the debate around participatory budgeting, how that happened?

V4

- Well, if you notice who I am and just by the tone of my skin color, here in America, it's well known that in documented that people of color are sometimes subjected to different type of rules, different type of... and I'm sensitive to that. I can handle it because I am who I am and that's fine. So that's what really drove me to wanting to help others because I understood what it felt like to be subjective to that type of oppression, even if it was over or sometimes it's real subtle. So that's what drove me to do what I do. And I am a man of faith, and I believe in helping those that have needs.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Great. And for how long have you been a member of nonprofits and part of social movements?

V4

- Probably for the better part, let me see. Well, I'm 67, probably for the better part of a cumulative... probably about 18 years total. As far as just looking at joining different organizations, just to understand, first of all, you have to understand what's at stake in how we can help. I joined a lot of organizations when I was younger, just to try to understand the landscape of trying to help people. So, I began there, but most recently I've been sitting on this board for the past three years and I've gained a lot of insight and I also provided a lot of insight for the group, just because of where I come from and able to navigate through some injustices that people go through when they're living under bushes and under bridges.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Okay, great. And you said that you participated in one specific cycle of PB, right? The cycle seven?

V4

- Yeah, I think it was cycle seven, yeah.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And there are other like political spaces in Vallejo or in the Bay Area that you are participating or looking for investments or beyond PB?

V4

- Yeah, so I do follow other nonprofits in other areas that are in the same category as we are, as a nonprofit wanting to help the people that are unhoused. Because it's important to find out what they're doing throughout the industry in order to make it more efficient in our end. This nonprofit more efficient, right? And that's how I do that. And sometimes I communicate with them and sometimes I communicate with organizations that could be viable partnerships, right? That may have a program or service or something that may aid in what we do. Those kind of relationships. So, everything is relational, right? Those kinds of relationships are very important. Even in PB, relationships, it's all about relationships in order to get something accomplished.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Right. Great. And especially about the nonprofits which you are working right now, you said that you are working with the unhoused and looking for benefiting this community and this group of people. And when this nonprofit was created, and I would like to know a little more about its name, the origin, the scope and reach of your activities.

V4

- Right. Okay. I'm going to eventually send you the website. Can you repeat the question? Sorry.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, it's fine. Just about the name, the origin and the scope of the nonprofit.

V4

- Okay. Thank you. Yeah. So, this nonprofit is a young nonprofit, to be honest, three years old. I was a charter board member. Actually, I didn't want to be a member because I didn't want to really commit to a nonprofit that was just coming off the ground because I knew that there will be a lot of dynamics that had to be addressed before we could even address the people in need. So, for the past, the organization structurally has changed, because before it was like a volunteer type entity. It wasn't a program-service defined nonprofit, if that makes sense. So, before people were giving out the food, they were doing what they were doing and that was it. But now today this program organization has programs that support

mobile showers, so people get showers, access to laundry, so that they can access help in mental services. So, right where we are now, right. As far as an organization to make certain that those people can get those, just the basic needs. So, we have storage with clothing, of course, but we have a program for what I call "inclement weather situation", when it's hot, when it's cold, when there's fires there and it's smoky, get out of that. So, that's the type of work that we're accomplishing and we're building upon day by day. But it involves partnerships. Some of the services and offerings that we offer, we aren't qualified to do that. So, it's important that we have relationships with those partners. And that's pretty much it from a high oversight, high level report.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And you said that you looked for funding from PB during cycle seven. Can you tell me a little bit more about this experience?

V4

- Certainly. It was a... it was a different experience for me because I had never involved myself in that level of... what should I say? Social, political type arena. There's an involvement in it, right? And then it's a social aspect. But when I began with them, what I lacked was the understanding of how that process works. That was the greatest challenge for me, because many of the projects that were brought forth couldn't go forward because of maybe a code coding, maybe some departments. Sometimes there's resistance from the city to not fund a particular project because they deem more important. Sometimes you might think potholes in the streets are more important than people under the bush, right? They might think capital improvements to a building is more important than capital improvements at a playground, to children go there and be children. So that was a challenge in the beginning. What else? Yeah, yeah, I think that's pretty much it. I'm pretty sure I have more to say about that.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- But did you get the funding in the end?

V4

- OK, so the particular project that I decided that I was going to author was called "basic needs for the homeless". In other words, the homeless need hygiene kits. They need food. They need shelter. They need access to transportation, because that's the greatest challenge for them. If they are to get it, they're given an appointment to maybe get a Social Security card or some other service, sometimes it's impossible for them to transport to the destinations. So, yes, I wrote that particular project in. Of course, the writing that I wrote when I wrote contracts and things was very helpful because you have to support the argument. You have to say how you're going to, you know, how money is going to be distributed, so on and so forth. So, yeah, it was awarded, and it was funded. And at the end, at the end of this cycle, all right into the cycle, there may be projects and then they're given to the community to vote on. And the project that I had authored was the number one vote getter and it received US\$75,000. US\$75,000 was

distributed and was managed through a nonprofit in the city that could provide that work. So, the funds just can't go to Joe Blow, and they say that you're going to do something. It must be a vetted nonprofit that is specific for the work and scope of the project. So, it was important that I selected the right nonprofit to make sure those people got all of those benefits for transportation, all those things that were in that project. I don't remember all of them off in. I made certain that the recipients or the clients would receive all the benefits, access to all of it in order to stabilize their lives. Thing that I couldn't was housing. That's a total different subject, housing.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- If I'm not wrong, there was a project in, I guess, maybe the third cycle that was about housing for the unhoused.

V4

- Yes!

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Now, at the time, I think it was something like US\$700,000 this project, and it changed a lot. And now it's in a place called the Blue Oak Landing in Sacramento Street. I went there yesterday and took some pictures. But do you know more about this project? Do you have any information on that?

V4

- Yeah, I have some limited knowledge about this particular project. So, the nonprofit entity that I sit on, it was created by a woman called Maria Guevara. And she was very instrumental in setting up nonprofits to help what we call our friends that live on the street. During that cycle, there was a petition or a project to say "look, we need to get these people in a navigation situation". In other words, a navigation center, right? You bring people in, and they go out to where they need to get help, right? So, Maria was the catalyst in getting that US\$750,000 for the navigation center. But I think what the city realized was she was not able to deliver for the navigation center. And they somehow rescinded that offer or didn't send the money and it just didn't get done. So that money, yes, indeed, was used for the Sacramento Street 74-unit project.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- So, the city changed basically the core of the project, right?

V4

- Yes. Because listen, in order to provide a service or produce something, you have to be qualified in that particular industry, right? And Maria was great relating with people. She was great with getting people to come together. But she probably did not have the expertise to actually pull together partnerships to build a navigation center. Because in a navigation center, you have to have partnerships, relationships,

you have to have partnerships with the city, with the county, with the state, and sometimes the federal government. So, her loan could not get it, probably get done. And that's just my thought on that. I don't know that to be true, okay?

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Okay, no, no problem.

V4

- But as an analyst, that's what I would look at. If I were to issue a contract, this company has to be technically sound. They have to be able to produce what I'm asking them to produce, right? I think they funded that differently than they could produce what she wanted to do. So that's my opinion.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And just another question about the nonprofit that you're working on right now. Do you look for projects and funding in other cities besides Vallejo, like in the Bay Area, or are you focusing just in Vallejo?

V4

- Right. So, it's about locality in this community. What we're going to look at first, we're going to look at any entity within the community or within 25 miles of the community that could provide support and help us in a partnership for this nonprofit. Yes, and we do look at organizations outside the area, because they have demonstrated that they have achieved what we're trying to get done, right? Those entities have been successful in what we're doing and what we don't want to do and what we don't need to do is reinvent that wheel, if that makes sense. We need to gather their ideas, their concepts and their business plans and so on and so forth, so that we can also have those same services here in the city. I hope I answered your question.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Of course. Of course. And focusing more on PB itself that you're part of, did you have any conflict or tensions with other political or social actors that were involved in PB? Like the steering committee or other members of the community?

V4

- Right. So, when it came... yeah, when I sat on PB and I was working on that project, I didn't come up with against much opposition, but how it worked was that in the beginning there were projects that were put out and then we voted on which projects that should be addressed. There were some people in the audience that just thought it was absolutely ludicrous that we would get money to help somebody that doesn't have a house. They thought it was crazy. They thought that money should go to sidewalk payment or the arts or some other entity, right? That was the only opposition that I incurred. But

whenever I had a question, if there was something I didn't quite understand, I would actually go to the stakeholder, whether it be a department in the city, the steering committee, which was helpful. And there were some delegates there that also had served on what they call the "social projects". So, I was able to get help from them, but I didn't get any direct pushbacks from anyone. And then again, that doesn't bother me that people want to push back. I get they have their position, but I proceeded forward, but I didn't have any issues, none. The only issue that... if I recall, there was one issue whereby there was something we couldn't provide, because we wanted to get what was like a street person, a person to actually go out and... you know, you have to market once you get the money, you have to go out and tell the people "money is available for you to receive these services." So, we wanted to hire a coordinator to go out there and talk to the homeless people and say "did you know that these are available to you?", and there was a lot of pushback on that because we wanted to pay them. Because for everyone that helps the homeless people, they are volunteers. And they just had a problem with paying a person to go out there and tell these people that these services were available. But I overcame that. That was the only pushback that I received.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- That's interesting. And so just that I can understand that. So, the nonprofit was created from a group of people that wanted to help the homeless, so it didn't come from the homeless. It wasn't a nonprofit created by homeless people, just for me to understand that.

V4

- It was not. It was created on compassion for homeless people. When you have a cause and you want to actually help someone, yeah, you create that cause and you're standing that cause.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- One thing that I thought was interesting in our conversation, you said that this was this debate and this pushback from people that thought at the moment that it didn't make sense to provide and fund for people... for the unhoused. I would like to know if do you think there are other areas besides the funding for homeless that need investment from PB or for the Vallejo City in general? What do you think that need more investment?

V4

- So as far as more investment, what's important also to me are the children, right? Children are our future. We need to invest heavily in the children. So, in this society, there are people that feel that they are entitled and they're selfish, they don't want to help anyone, and they don't want anyone to help people. They don't want any of it around them. They're called NIMBYs, "not in my backyard" type people. "No, you can't do that in my backyard. They can't be here. Don't put that there". So that's a societal issue that flows over into people. I hope I answered your question.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Great. Because one thing that I find interesting and you already spoke a little bit about that, is the fact that, okay, the funding in Vallejo PB is not that much, we're talking about US\$2 to US\$1 million per cycle. And you can also say your opinion about that after I finish the question. But what I saw is that, okay, you have US\$1 million and \$300 [thousand], \$400 [thousand] of this million goes to pothole repair or to street repair. Or every year the police department gets funding from PB. I got a call from the police yesterday because I asked them about that "Okay, why do you receive that much money from PB?". I asked them that. And they told me that "ah, we have a funding department where we get grants". So, they're organized. So, they organize themselves to get funding from PB and the community supports them because most of the community likes funding for the police. But in general, I don't see any funding for housing. And I know that housing is very expensive, but street repair is also very expensive, and people keep funding that. So, I would like your opinion on that. And for example, why housing doesn't appear in PB besides street repair appears a lot and the police department gets a lot of money.

V4

- Right, yes. So, I really don't understand the politics of cities, right? In city government, there are politics that influence everything and what can't occur and what can occur. And when I sat on as a CB delegate, I was surprised and shocked that there were capital improvement projects trying to get the PB money, which is designed to help local communities, right? So, every city has to have a budget for capital equipment and salaries and stuff for its emergency services. So, I just, I did not understand why those types of projects were taking money away from more critical projects, like after school care for children, improvement of parks, anything that's involving children, anything that's involving people that live on the street. I just didn't understand why those funds were going to those different types of organizations when the city itself... I'm certain every city had a budget before PB came along and they purchased this capital equipment, requisitions with that money. But now they're trying to subject this, it's a small piece of money, \$1 million. And I don't know, I don't recall how much they received from the federal government and all these other local taxes and things, but that million dollars doesn't go far. It really doesn't go far at all. And then when it's consumed by new radios for police [laughs], right? Because that to me did not make sense, because that's something that is to be budgeted in the city, but out of the PB funding. And that's my position. That's my opinion. So, I don't understand the politics part. And that's always an influence in anytime you have a program like this PB, it's going to be influenced by politics, because there's going to be some guard rails in there that keep you... that make you choose a project that the city truly wants. And I sensed that when I sat down the first time, I sensed that a lot of those projects, I looked at them and they were for the city [office]. Not to the community, because how it works is that they ask the community "what is it that you would like to see? What is it that you need the city and the city as input?". No one asked for police radios [laughs]. No one asked for police radios or a new fire truck. No, they didn't. But somehow, they ended up on that project list. So yeah, that's what I don't understand. So, I hope I answered your question.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Great. When I did an interview and the interviewee told me that the streets here cost more than US\$20 million per year, in general. So, for example, you have, I think the PB with the most investment until today was like US\$3 million. I think it was maybe the first or second cycle.

V4

- Right.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- So, I would like your opinion on that. Do you think that this amount of money is enough, or it has like any possibility of making an impact to the community? What's your opinion on that?

V4

- Right. So, no. So, first off, that money is not enough, right? I mean, there should be at least US\$3 million, maybe US\$ 4 million to address the needs of the community in order to make the community healthier. You want a healthy community by addressing some of the issues that they talked about. But Vallejo is very unique, because I do know that they filed for bankruptcy. The city bankruptcies, which meant that they as... fiscally they are not responsible, and they just somehow got away from it. I don't know. Maybe... I don't know, maybe it was because of emergency service pensions or whatever, but it filed for bankruptcy. And then as a result, they tried to sell... the citizens of the city were upset and said "what in the hell are you guys doing?" And then this PB thing was to pacify the people that said "what are you doing? We need to know what you're doing with our money?". And I think this PB addressed that, so that the citizens could look at the money and say "we're having this money and we're using it for our benefit and health". But it's not a lot of money. Not a lot of money.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, I remember that I had a talk with Marty Brown, she was a councilwoman at a time, and she got PB into Vallejo. The idea in this context of bankruptcy of the city and her original idea was to have like more than 50% of the taxes, the local taxes for PB. So, this would give much more investment than PB has today, much more millions of dollars. - **Sure.** - And I saw that the investment decreased, so it started with US\$ 3 million and now it's like US\$ 1 million. What's your opinion on that? Why do you think that decreased?

V4

- Again, city politics, city government not truly understanding what adequate funding will do for the citizens of this country, this community and the health of the community. What they're looking at, they're looking at the purse strings, they're trying to control the purse strings by limiting what we're able to access. And actually, I don't know, they can't get police officers to work here. They can't hire people to work for the city, you know? So, we pay taxes, and I don't know exactly what's going on with

the financial aspect, but it tells me that it's not being right. The wrong people are not in place in the city government. We need to have our best and our hardest operating running the city in order for it to be viable and functional so that these programs such as this receive adequate funding and not just have funding that they can pawn off the pensions or do some type of crazy project. And I know of one crazy project, that the city spent US\$35 million on a building down near the waterfront as the new police headquarters, US\$35 million for a building. That wasn't retrofitted for their needs. So, there's going to be additional costs to get it retrofitted for their needs. So it was, man, I think those type of deals are those backdoor deals, where people sit on city councils and they have relationships and they get with these other people and then, US\$35 million for a building. If you saw it, you would say "that's impossible!". So, failures like that that actually impact the funding for people. That's my opinion.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Where is that building?

V4

- That building is on the waterfront. It used to be an old insurance building; it's near the yacht club.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Ok, near the yacht club.

V4

- Yeah. And if you travel down there, they may have the name on the front of the building. You'll see it. That's a US\$35 million, I saw that.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- I'm going to take a picture.

V4

- So, that's what happens with politics and city government. They can allocate all the money they want for anything that they deem is "good for the city". Because right now the police department has been in the jurisdiction of the department of justice for over 20 years. So, I don't know why if they thought buying a US\$35 million building would address their policing issues, but it doesn't.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And concerning these politics that evolve around PB, do you think that the steering committee has too much power in the process?

V4

- I can tell you this. When I sat on the PB during cycle seven, after cycle seven, I did not join the steering committee. I sat on the steering committee while they were conducting business to understand how much influence they had over those processes. And they had limited influence over any project. What they were doing, they were making certain that things weren't compliant, we were following the rules and so on and so forth. So, they did not influence, they had no influence or power, right? They had great knowledge. They had knowledge to tell us "that won't work because this code is currently in the city. In order to get this to work, we have to change the code. Getting code changes just may not happen." So, they were great.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Okay, nice.

V4

- I'm still thinking about serving on the steering committee, because it's something I can handle, with regulations and codes and stuff. And I'd like to understand that just a little bit more also. So, if I go back, I can understand those political hurdles that have to be.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Okay. Great. And you said about, for example, this investment in US\$35 million in a building for the police. - **That's right.** - Concerning public funding, how do we evaluate the public policies and programs concerning housing? Public housing. Not just in Vallejo, but maybe in the state or in the federal government.

V4

- Yeah. So, listen, I'm limited in this area about my knowledge about public housing, but this is just what I can see based upon what I see here in Vallejo. So, in Vallejo, there's a HUD [Department of Housing and Urban Development] office downtown, that is the housing authority over Vallejo to ensure that there's adequate housing for people, certainly social-economic backgrounds and so on and so forth. My opinion, I went over there and sat down with the director of that particular entity, she's no longer there, just to see what their thought process, but they were limited in their purview, because everything was controlled by the city, if that makes sense. So, it's the housing authority, but the city controlled any type of effort that they will try to put forth to try to get housing done or the navigation center, our navigation center was going to come in, it's going to be down here in South Vallejo. And that got exterminated. The housing authority was in control of that, and they were trying to get that project complete, but there was a lot of pushback from the city because they wanted to kick the can down the road. They wanted to keep the funds, but kicked the can down the road, because the funding was there for that project. And then it's really difficult to get adequate housing in Vallejo, because developers are in the business of getting a return on their investment [laughs]. They are not in the business of building the project to lose money or just to break even. They earn it to get a return on their investment. So new buildings, it's very

complicated, particularly like that 75-unit building that was just built. I don't know what they paid for that. I just don't recall what they paid for it. But it's just a drop in the bucket. Vallejo has maybe 5.700 unhoused people. And that's probably a best estimate, because we don't know who's jumping from couch to couch or who's sleeping in their cars. So, it's a great need. So, I hope I answered your question.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, of course. It's 5.700, right? - **Yeah!** - It's a lot for a city of 100.000 people.

V4

- It is. Yeah. So, in this complex, this homelessness bit is complex, because there are cities that are local, that may move their homeless out of their city to other cities. San Francisco is a prime example. Years ago, some cities were caught busing people over to San Francisco, giving them a one-way ticket on the bus to go to San Francisco. So, it's complex, very complex.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- That's kind of crazy, to be honest.

V4

- Right. These are humans we're talking about. This is somebody's child, daughter, auntie, you know, and humans can be kind of mean. But anyway, that's another story.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- I see that. Absolutely. But one thing that I was asking and I got different answers from the other people I had interviewed. It's about redlining here in Vallejo. And do you see the old rules of redlining influencing how the city is today?

V4

- Yeah. Make me understand redlining. Make me understand that.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Redlining was this process where there were segregated neighborhoods.

V4

- No, I get it. Because you said red. Yeah, right. So again, you can look at me and I can tell you historically by experience, I know what that looks like, tastes like and smells like. Because when I was born, the only place that black people of color could live was in a certain section of Oakland. And so, yeah, it exists because it is a part of this, it is a systemic issue, right? The systems are already in place to ensure that they think people are separated and segregated. And how they do that best now is through the dollar. The cost of housing, the cost of rent, right? That's how you can really keep people out and away from

certain areas and things. So yeah, the redlining, it's here. It's not obvious, but we can drive through neighborhoods, and you'll distinctly know where you are and where you are. For sure. Right. And yeah, it's just historical, it's part of this country, it's historical. I hope I answered that.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, exactly. Yeah. We always say that cities are like a lot of layers of time. You know? - **Yeah.** - It's a space of layers of time. Okay. It's interesting to see that. Yeah. And about the nonprofit you're working with... I don't know if I'm taking too much time.

V4

- No problem.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Are you all right, V4?

V4

- Yeah. Hey, can you give me a pause? Let me take my dog out. He wants to go out, my dog.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Of course, of course.

V4

- Okay. I'll be right there.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Go there. No problem.

[Brief interruption in the interview]

- About the nonprofit that you are working on, do you have any schedule of meetings or assemblies? Or it doesn't work like that?

V4

- Yes. So, for every nonprofit or organization, you know, should have bylaws, and our bylaws state that we have monthly meetings. - **Okay, monthly.** - Then there's additional meetings by committees for special projects and so on and so forth. Because right now, I'm actually overseeing the bylaws to make sure that we're compliant.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And with how many families or individuals are you working with? Do you have maybe an idea of how much people already you helped? Or are you like keeping in touch?

V4

- Right. So, this is the fact about this nonprofit. As I told you, it was a young nonprofit. It began as a volunteer model, now it is this nonprofit service model. And we've restructured and we've had to get our systems in place, so on and so forth. So, right now we don't have that, we're collecting that data. Just this year we finally started collecting data. Because data is important when it comes to grants and all these other things, so, we have these tracking mechanisms and so on and so forth in place. But this I do know, that throughout the city there are certain sections throughout the city where there are homeless camps, encampments, and we serve all of those encampments. So, there's probably two to three hundred people, geez, every day. Because they're getting meals every day, they get showers once a week. And that number is just a guesstimate on my head. But next year we'll have data where we can, when the grant comes out, we can say we serve these many people. We need these funds for this project or this service.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- It's a lot!

V4

- It's a lot, and it's complex, you know, because homelessness is very complex. It's a very, you know, it's... yeah.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- I know. And we're talking a lot about how you are working with the homeless people. But can you say, I know that you are getting the data, but from your experience, the main racial and gender profiles of the population.

V4

- I do have an idea of that. So, I think the last report that we got, it wasn't, we didn't produce the report, but it was a report from, you know, each year there is a timing count of the homeless people that the federal government wants. So, the states, in order to get money for homeless, you have to report it. So, the states mandate that down, flows down, the county files down to the city and we have that count. What was I going to go with that? What was that question? Man, I haven't eaten, that's why I'm kind of slipping here.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- [laughs] No problem. Now about the racial and gender profile.

V4

- Right, right. So, at the last, last comment, this is the numbers that came across. It was like 57% were people of color, African American. It was probably, I mean, so I know that was 57% [black], Asian was like 2%. Hispanics involved; it was about 23%. I forgot the other, but the greatest ethnicity among homelessness are people of black people.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And there's an important difference between men and women?

V4

- Yes. Do I remember the women? It's a majority of men. But listen, there are women out there's that unknown that people don't like to talk about. There are families out there. With a husband and wife, and domestic violence impacts all of that or those some of those families and stuff. Right. I wish I had the numbers to give you, but I just don't.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- No problem. If you have at some point, you can also send me at another moment. - **Yeah.** - And one phenomenon that's kind of common in Brazil, where most of our studies happening is that churches or religious movements work together with social movements. Not necessarily, but it happens a lot. Do you see that happening with the homeless, like churches or religious communities trying to work with them or supporting them?

V4

- So just recently, it's just a recent phenomenon that churches are talking about, you know, the homeless people. So, here in Vallejo, there's something that I have noticed that there are numerous churches in Vallejo and those churches, because I'm a man of faith, that they're designed to help the community, right? Many of them are not helping the community. They're just helping the people in the building. So on this nonprofit, we came up with an interfaith coalition. We sent them out letters to all of the religious organizations here in the city and said "hey, we want to bring everybody together to address the homelessness issue in Vallejo." And I think there's probably over 200 churches here. So, that particular coalition is in existence, we meet on, I think, the third Saturday, second or third Saturday. I have been on travel, so I kind of forgot. So, we meet with those organizations, and they actually have things in place. There's one church that has always addressed homelessness by feeding them. Just recently, in the past two years, there was another church that used the mobile shower unit that we have. They host that at their church. Because everything has to be mobile because there are different encampments throughout the city. It's not just one central building where you have everybody, you can address them all at once. You have to take the needs to the people because they can't transport to where you have. So, in our nonprofit, we have two vans that will go out and get people for the showers, for the laundry, for appointments. For appointments to make sure they can get their benefits on and so forth. But when it

comes to these churches, they become a mission in action. I don't know if they're reading the Bible. I read, but Jesus points out helping people, putting this on people to improve their lives.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And is there a political side in the nonprofit? Like, I can say, if you have like political ideas or radical ideas that you are talking with the members or with the homeless, is there that?

V4

- So, no, that's a part of our charter. It's not inclusive in our mission. But yes, we want to support... Let me see. Can I find something? I have some notes here. I know I wrote something down. So, we want to actually, we want to insert ourselves in getting changes to laws and codes to address helping the homeless. And that's as close as we get. There's no one specific person that does that, but I get that because in order to get codes and regulations change, you have to have relationships with the entity that controls the... or enforces the code. So, we don't have yet, but yeah, it is a part of our nonprofit, that we want to be able to influence political changes for laws and ordinances.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Ok. And I'm finishing. But I have a question that it's kind of broad, but I would like your opinion on that.

V4

- That's fine.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Do you think that PB contributes to the insertion of low-income communities and local resistance and the fight for the rights to the city? PB helps on that?

V4

- Right... Ask that question again, a little bit slower.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- OK. Do you think that PB, as a process, contributes to the participation and the insertion of low-income communities for the local resistances? Like the local movements and the rights to the city?

V4

- Do I believe that? So, look, I do know that on the PB there is a requirement, particularly for service projects that are for social, for the community. In order to receive funds, the funds must be allocated to people that are within the poverty line or below. And so that's just the rule for the PB to address the social economics aspects of that. But when it comes to the city, I don't think they have any such

statement or provision that says, you know, we really want the rest of the people that that are low income, those that are under educated, those that have all have these mental issues and things that they don't address. That's not addressed, which is a result of why cities are kind of altering a lot of crime and homelessness and all these other things. Hope I answered that question.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Of course. And considering that even with the low investments that we're talking about PB, but with these rules, with this focus on low-income population, do you think that PB has a positive impact against inequalities and for social justice?

V4

- So, I think that I think that's two different aspects of it because the social justice is one and then poverty pieces is another, right? So, with our with our nonprofit, we are definitely addressing inequities and injustice. We have a partnership with an organization that that's what they do. They address those inequities and injustices for people that are poor. And we even we had a relationship with the court to try to get them and they currently have a diversion program for people that are low-income, low-income people, you know, they don't need to go to jail, they need to continue to work. Low-income people need to, you know, if they have a mental illness or some type of substance abuse, they need help. They don't need jail. So, we're focused on those types of programs and services. I hope I answered your question.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah. But do you think that PB has a role in that? In social justice or territorial justice?

V4

- No, I don't see that. No. Just from my experience of doing that one cycle. No, I did not see that or sensed that. It was just finite projects; they were finite projects. They didn't address social injustice, they didn't address, you know, the under education of children, schools and all. It did not. It did not. PB does not address that. In a pretty short... the city wouldn't permit that anyway, it's not a tangible thing, right? They're looking for tangible things that you can point and say "look!", right? You really can't look at justice and equity and say "look!".

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- I agree. And I told you about the fragmentation that we are approaching.

V4

- Yeah. That was interesting.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Do you see that PB address at anything like this social, this urban fragmentation? Do you see this appearing in PB or in public policy?

V4

- Well, let me see. When I said PB... no, I didn't notice it. I didn't notice fragmentation in PB, but at the city level, city government level, I witnessed some of the fragmentation. You know, some of the causes of fragmentation, let me say that. Because it's caused, it's just not organic. You know, people cause that, right? And I did see a little bit of that at city government level. Because it's just... you know, the city of Vallejo has always been that way. You know, historically, they've always been that way. Not all of them are racist or anything, but yeah, they just always been that way and they always wanted to be that way. But hopefully they get the right smart people down there, people that are qualified. Those things may change, they very well may change. And I sense the changes coming as people are more involved in the civic and social aspects of their community. Now, there was a time when people went in their house and closed the door. It's no longer. And I'm finding that the generation, I'm 67, the generation... like the Gen-Zs, the young generation, they're involved. They're involved in all aspects of, you know, these social injustices and inequities. So, the country as a whole is changing, it may take some decades.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah. Social changes and urban changes, they take time, they take a lot of time.

V4

- A lot.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- One thing that... PB started in Brazil, right? So, it started in normally with governments that were very radical and they're very focused on giving more voice and more funding to poorer neighborhoods, to poorer people.

V4

- Yeah, yeah.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- That is what we call at the time "inversion of priorities". So, normally the priorities were the elite and downtown or the high-class areas, they move it to the peripheries and to the... into like low-income population. This is in the core of PB when it appeared in the first time in the 1990s. Do you see that on Vallejo PB?

V4

- When I sat there on the PB, I didn't sense that in written and more than likely the reason why I didn't sense that is because I was trying to grasp just the concept of PB. Because that was my first cycle, trying to understand the politics of it and so on and so forth. But optically looking at the city, I do see that. [Brief interruption of the interview] Yeah. So optically, as I travel through Vallejo, I can see that fragmentation that you speak of and the redlining that you speak of. I can see. Optically, I can see. I hope I answered your question.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Of course. And well, V4, do you have anything else that you want to address or talk or comment?

V4

- No, I want to thank you for doing this work, because this work is important. It's important to the growth of this planet globally, it's global... It can have a global impact. So, I appreciate you doing this work and digging in and doing interviews and things. What I'm going to do, I'm going to send you an email and I'm going to have the website to the nonprofit and I'm going to have my phone number in there. If you ever need to contact me, call me. "Hey, can you look at this? Can you help me with this?" I'll be glad to.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Of course! I can do that. Thanks a lot. And I thank you in my name and in the name of the institutions that I'm part of. The São Paulo State University, the Boise State University. We are together trying to research that and propose that also, not just researching, but also proposing policy based on our research. And I would like just to reinforce how all the information we had, our conversation is based for scientific purposes. - **Yes.** - And the transcription will be available just for members of the project. And as I told you, if you have any further questions, you can also talk after our interview. I would love to have also the email that you will send. We can keep in touch.

V4

- Yes!

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And just for recording, if everything was all right with the interview and everything is ok.

V4

- Yeah, everything was fine with the interview. I felt very comfortable. At times I just couldn't respond with an immediate answer just because of my limited experience in some areas and stuff, but what I told you was the truth, from my heart. And I just want to thank you for the great work that you're doing. Continue to do all that good work in the above all things. Be great.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- No problem. Thank you very much. Thank you very much. I will!

Fim da transcrição