

Pesquisa FAPESP nº 2021/04556-0
ENTREVISTA COM V6
Cidade: Vallejo (Califórnia, EUA)
Entrevistada: V6, 75 anos, aposentada
Entrevistador: Rodrigo Sartori Bogo
Local de realização da entrevista: Vallejo City Hall, sala de reuniões

TRANSCRIÇÃO

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- (...) That I'm gonna make it. And it's like, okay, it's a lot of questions [laughs], but I am happy if you can help me with that, like, of course, I don't want to waste that much of your time.

V6

- Okay.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And first of all, I have to just give you a background, brief you about what I'm doing. So, I have my research, is about the territorial impacts of PB in mid-sized cities. So, Vallejo is one of the cities I'm studying. But I'm studying two more cities in Brazil and one city in Poland. - **Oh, wow.** - And my idea is to compare them, see how PB is relating to the cities, you know? And my research is also part of a broader project in Brazil where we're studying what we call "sociospatial fragmentation".

V6

- Oh, fancy name.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- It's a fancy name, I agree [laughs]. But it's this idea that changes in cities in the last 30, 40 years have fragmented more society and cities itself. It's a hypothesis, we are researching that, and we have good evidence that this happens in metropolises and big cities, but we're looking for that in cities that are smaller, like mid-sized cities, like Vallejo or other cities in Brazil. And in my research, I try to see if PB relates anyhow to that, if I can see any connections. Maybe I can't, but maybe I can. That's why I'm researching it, you know? - **Okay.** - But also, not just that, also to see if there is any differences between the impacts from PB in mid-sized cities or in big cities.

V6

- Big cities, yeah.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- If I can see differences. Okay? - **Okay.** - Does it make sense to you?

V6

- Yes, it does because in a small-sized city, or even in different parts of the country where we have districts or counties, they have parishes, and then they have pockets inside those parishes, especially in the South they have parishes. And like in New York and stuff, they have what they call wards, the fourth

ward, fifth ward, which they did have in New Orleans, but in their smaller cities in the South, there are parishes. And so, yeah, it would make a difference.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And to start, I would like to know first your authorization for recording.

V6

- Yes, you have my authorization to record.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Great.

V6

- Yes, because I can repeat myself without worrying [laughs]. But the old saying is I can chew my cabbage twice.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Okay, great. First, I would like to know if you can give me a personal background. Where are you from? How did you...

V6

- Get involved with PB?

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, get involved with PB. Your professional career.

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- Okay, I was born and raised here in Vallejo, in Vallejo General Hospital. Matter of fact, I'm probably one of maybe 20 Native Vallejoans that are still here. I was born in Vallejo, Vallejo General Hospital. I went to Vallejo schools, graduated from Vallejo Senior High, and married young, then went back to school. And ended up with my bachelor's at Sonoma State University.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Which major, sorry?

V6

- Liberal arts.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Liberal arts.

V6

- Yeah, I started out political science, and then in order to complete it, I went to liberal arts. And right now, I'm attempting to get into a master's program, so I can get my master's. And not for any career or nothing, it's for self. It is what I want. - **I know how it is.** - Yeah, because at 75, I'm not looking for a new career [laughs]. And I got involved with PB because I'm also the local secretary for our NAACP, our National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. And our president at the time said, well Marti Brown was a council person then.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- I met her.

V6

- Yeah, and they were friends, and he said, he told me that they had this new program coming to Vallejo. They were going to try out participatory budgeting, and I met with him and Marti, and Marty explained it, and then he took me to breakfast to convince me to just participate. And so, you know, he tricked me into doing it, but I did. I became part of participatory budgeting from the inception. So, I was chair, and then I was vice-chair, and right now I'm still a steering committee member. - **Okay.** - And I do love PB, and I told them when we got it going, hey, it was a 10-year project. Of course, with COVID, it extended to 10 years. So, and I said "I'll be here until it doesn't exist anymore, or I don't exist", because I do believe in that process. It's something that has helped me understand the city's politics and get more involved, and I think it's good for the citizens because if you want people to believe in whatever your vision or whatever... they have to be involved and you have to engage them and make them feel that they're a part of that change that everybody wants to see. And the key issue in getting people engaged, to me, is you need to meet people where they are. So, we were very and still is a very diverse population here. So, it was hard trying to target everybody to get their input, but I think PB did a good job.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Do you think that this is the main challenge?

V6

- Yeah, yes, the main challenge I think is making or assisting in making sure that we target everyone to be inclusive of all our audience, young, old, black, white, green, blue, rich, poor, medium, people that have ideas and dreams of a better environment and making the place where they decide to work, live and play a better place for everyone and that would be inviting to others. So, and trying to really target the areas where we needed to be more visible and more vocal has always been a challenge, but I think as a whole we've done a great job of it. It was exciting getting the community involved in PB. It's been a challenge, but it's a fun challenge. It's a learning process, because you find out what works, what doesn't

work, what might work in one community might not work in the other community. But the one common thing that really works is, when you engage the public, you have to have a draw, there has to be something that makes them want to participate. So you have one thing, food draws people together, so you always want to feed them at your functions, and you got to be inclusive and make it available to the old people as well as the kids, and we fought really hard to drop that voting age to be inclusive of the kids that are 14, 15, because they have great ideas too. They live here. They're our future. So, and we got to get them involved at a young age. And since I was involved with NAACP, which has always been their vision to have equal opportunity, voting rights, housing rights, whatever, for the challenged population or marginalized populations, it was easy for me to transition to get those same populations involved in PB. We started out with, we had events at churches and playgrounds or whatever, trying to be inclusive of everybody. Now I know, and I'm sure the majority of us realize there is no way you're going to please all the people all the time. So, there'll be some disgruntled populations, but there is a way that we should be able to ease their frustrations, and that's when it becomes challenging, because sometimes you have to find the spokesperson for that population, because a lot of cultures have certain, [let's] say, individuals who are actually the voice for that community. So, you can't ignore that in their culture. And in the black culture, a lot of the spokesperson were those leaders that were ministers, so you had to be inclusive of their church. In the Asian community, the elders were, so you had to have a relationship, build a relationship in the different populations within their culture, in order to draw them into this idea of participatory budgeting. And it's possible and it has worked. We've seen it grow from Vallejo being the first and only city to go nationwide... I mean to do citywide, excuse me, I meant citywide with PB. And once other cities did their wards or their parishes, they were able to, some of them, to make it citywide, which is a great thing. And I just, I hope that, well I will say this, as long as I am physically and mentally capable to be a participant, I will and I will promote PB anywhere, because it does give the community that voice that this is their city, and they have a voice to make that change that most people want to see.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And so you think that PB is promoting an integration between, like, racial, social...

V6

- Racial, social, economically, educationally, because you got to include the school children, you got to include the churches, because of the culture.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And you see that happening here?

V6

- And I did see it happening here. Now COVID put a limit onto some of it, but it was something that it was a God given thing that...

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, it happened everywhere.

V6

- Yeah, it was worldwide. We had no control over that. And really, there's a lot of things we have no control over, but it's our reaction to what happens. Yeah, how are we going to respond to this situation or that situation? And sometimes our reaction determines what the end result is going to be. And so we just totally inclusive of everyone, it has to be.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Good. And there's one concept, like PB started in Brazil, right? - **Right!** – So, when it started there, especially in Porto Alegre, but not just in Porto Alegre, one of the most important things was what they call "inversion of priorities". Yes. So, people who needed most received the most.

V6

- And that's what it should be.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah. Do you think that's happening here?

V6

- I think the attempt has been made. And in some cases, that is what really happened. And due to unforeseen, say, city ordinances or people participation or whatever, that part of it was not always achieved. But we were wise enough to recognize, in some cases, that that didn't happen. And then you try another plan for the next cycle. And so revamping, there's been a lot of revamping of PB, and I think that that's good because when we started out, it was like we were all grasping.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, tell me a little bit more about that, the beginning.

V6

- In the beginning, because it was like "this is new!". None of us had ever experienced this before. And it was new, and it was scary, because "is the public going to respond? And what if they respond all negative to what it is that we're trying to do? What do we do if they don't get it? And then what is our comeback? And how can we, what do we need to do to make sure that we're all on the same page?". Because these are people, we were people that had never met each other before, had never worked together before. And here we are trying to introduce this program to a city where we had neighbors. And like I live in a neighborhood, my current neighborhood, I've been there probably 20 years. I didn't know my

neighbors. But I remember growing up in Vallejo where everybody knew everybody, even if they weren't in your neighborhood, because that's how small of a town we were and we were either connected through the schools or through church or family, or even employment. And here we are trying to connect the whole city to grasp this new idea of being a part of our city government, which a lot of people didn't even participate in. And so, it was scary because what if we do this and nobody participates? What happens? So where do we go from there? And how do we convince strangers that this is a good idea and could work for them? Plus, how do we convince them that this 1% sales tax is actually something that will benefit them in the long run? Because when you're talking about people's pocketbooks, you're getting up close and personal. So, it was scary in the beginning, I won't deny that it was scary. And to be part of this change, and then to actually be vocal in the newspaper, publicly, having radio conversations about it, TV conversations about it. And convincing people that "hey, I'm here for the same reasons that you would be here. There needs to be a change in our process in our city to benefit all of us. So, I'm not gaining anything out of it. It's not a paid position, people. It's not. This is volunteer! So, whatever I'm getting out of it, that's what I want you to get out of it. I want you to feel that you can come up with an idea for your name. Say there's no sidewalks in your neighborhood. And that's the idea that you came up with. The part of the city where I live, we need sidewalks. So, you come up with that idea. Well, we're here to ensure that you know who to contact to do that. You got your city people planning and whatever. You have your public works department. We've given you access to those people. So, you can write up a good proposal and then we're all going to vote on it. How open and honest could that be?" So, I mean, it was it. It was a scary thing in the beginning. The more we went into the different cycles, the more comfortable... I can only speak for me, the more comfortable I got with it. And I could see where this is something we probably should have done years ago.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And you said about the taxes and how people get more attached to the process because it's their money in line, right?

V6

- Yes! Don't you care what you do with it? You pay PG&E [Pacific Gas and Electric Company] because you're going to have light and heat. You pay the water bill because you're going to be able to take a bath or drink water whenever you want to. You buy gas in your car because then you can go wherever you want. Well, if you're going to pay taxes, you want to know what I'm going to get for paying these taxes.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah. So, the point I'm going to get into is... you are part of the process since the beginning, right? The investments from PB decreased over time. It was in the beginning...

V6

- US\$ 2.5 million!

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah. US\$ 3 million, 2.5 million. And then it got to US\$ 1 million. And then US\$ 500.000. What's your opinion then? Why did it happen?

V6

- And part of it is stuff that was beyond our control. It's inflation., our economy was bad. I couldn't say in some cases. Maybe we made bad business decisions. There's a whole lot of reasons for the money being decreased even though we're paying the tax, because we still see that now. We pay taxes on everything and it's still, in some cases, we feel we're not getting our money's worth if we're paying this tax. But if you stay a part of that process, there's a slight chance that somehow, we'll figure out a way that the benefit from it can still be to the public's best interest.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And, okay, but do you think that it's important to have more investment, right? Do you have this debate in the steering committee?

V6

- Yes, we do. In the steering committee there's always these debates as to... but it still falls back to what is our reaction to what has transpired. Now, so if the city makes a bad decision on a business investment, we know we're all going to be infected. But if we don't voice our disagreement or agreement with it when it's time to vote, when it comes up for discussion, we sit back and grumble amongst one another. It's not going to change anything. So, you still have to convince the people that, hey, if you disagree with it, come to city council meetings, write your council person, visit your mayor, be vocal about your disagreement and dig up the facts. Don't go on what the public says or what's in the newspaper. Read for yourself and stay involved.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- That's interesting to hear. One thing that we're talking about is the design of Vallejo PB, it's citywide, right? So, it started like the whole city and the people can propose projects that are even from their street or the entire city. - **Right.** - But you also told me before that you can see differences between communities, how communities react and can be from if they are low income or if they are from Asian or from African American people, there's differences. Do you think that if there was a division from districts, like PB could be citywide, but the projects should be for the districts. Would it be different? Would it be better or not? What's your opinion on that? You think that the outcomes would be [different]?

V6

- I think certain portions of what PBs have spent on, like infrastructure and stuff would have to be citywide. Services, depending on if the services were, like, for health reasons, that would have to be citywide. But if you're talking infrastructure where sidewalks or streets, then it could be by neighborhoods because some neighborhoods are totally rural. Some are within the city, and they have different needs at different times. So that has to be taken under consideration. But for any health, I think if it was a health issue, like a public service issue with our health, that would be citywide because I'm sure there's people that are, say, handicapped or incapacitated in all neighborhoods and all cultures. But for actual... like I mentioned, the sidewalks or the... - **Capital projects, right?** - Yeah, capital projects, that's citywide because there are, well, in most neighborhoods now, there are sidewalks, but there are still some areas of the city that are incorporated that might not have sidewalks.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Okay. And talking about the projects, what types of projects receive more investment? And which are more common appearing?

V6

- I know one that irritates me [laughs] is that people, because they don't understand how local, state, and federal government work, they always throw the pothole problem up there. But they don't understand that cities and states get federal money for the keep of their streets. They also refuse to believe that there's a time cycle for the streets, I'm sure that if public works could fix every street all at the same time, they would, but they can't. They have this much manpower, this much money, and to prioritize the street process is a major project for them.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And it's expensive, right?

V6

- It's been very expensive. So that has... and most people don't take the time to try to understand that. They just know they backed out their driveway and there's a pothole there, and they bought tires four times in three years and they're sick and tired of it. Well, little did they know that across town, Mr. Joe is having the same issue in his neighborhood. So, it's something that it's going to take time, it's very expensive. And I don't know what the solution is to make it even better.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- It appears every year on PB.

V6

- Every year they want up, there's a pothole project, which I think could probably go more to the schools, because we got to be there for our young people. We got to be there for our young people and our

elderly, because some of them are not in a position to participate as much as they would like to. So, somebody has to be the voice for them and the kids... If you don't start young incorporating them into your political process, it's hard to get them interested when they're 25 and 30 [years old], they'll say... - **Already working...** - "I'm working and that's all I could do is work and take care of myself and I'm not interested in what happens over here or over there, I just need to take care of self". And that's because they don't understand they've not been included in that process of how things work. And so, it's an ongoing project and we're steady trying to improve, like our rulebook or whatever, or educate them into the projects, and how they work. Because people get disgruntled because "well, I submitted a project for the first time, and it didn't win so I'm not going to do it again". Well, that's not going to help the change. So, you resubmit it. There's nothing wrong with resubmitting it for the next cycle, and tweak it a little bit and maybe it'll end this cycle. But you have that opportunity to participate and that's the key to participatory budgeting, you need to participate.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And thinking about that, like these changes that happened, in the beginning there were the assemblies, and now they don't exist anymore. And now, just for the delegates, but the beginning the idea generation was also in assemblies, and now everything is online. And also with the pandemic, the delegate...

V6

- Yeah, there are no public gatherings and...

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- But now the delegate meetings are still online. What's your opinion on that? In the quality of the process.

V6

- Well, I do think it made a difference because that personal contact really made people feel a part of it. But I'm one of the people that still believe in wearing the mask and the gloves and I don't attend a lot of public events. And, and I don't... In fact, I just now started since summertime [of 2023], going back to my own church in person. So, in my case, because of the age I am and we're more vulnerable, I am still cautious about the public contact and stuff, so I understand that and there are people that think "okay, it's gone", well, COVID is not gone, it takes too many different forms. And yes, it did make a tragic difference. Because I believe that the public contact was one of the ways that we really promoted PB. And what we're doing now, trying to create that social media stuff that most of that generation that we usually miss, and I think by being online and making an extending the process of idea collection and being able to do it online and double check online is wonderful. And it should... I hope that this cycle is an improvement by doing it like that, having more stuff available online. Not eliminate any personal contact at all, but I think that we are online, and I don't see a problem with our budget delegates or even having like we used to have our in-person assemblies. And we can do things like PG&E or the Public

Utilities Commission, they have their general meetings or public meetings, via Zoom. And it doesn't have to be so business like because there's games you could do to make it more lively, people started having Zoom birthday parties and Zoom baby showers and stuff. So, we can do our assemblies like that, if we so choose, and I think it can work.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Okay. Good. I like to hear your opinion on that. And there's a more broad question, sorry. That is... so you're a local, you lived here your whole life. And there's this thing I would like your opinion about. Vallejo can be considered like a periphery city; it's in the periphery of San Francisco. Do you think that?

V6

- Yes, yes. We... I've attended city council meetings in surrounding cities that were considering PB, and some of them even adopted it and I could see it working anywhere, because it helps the city, really, because you're getting your citizens involved in a government process that they're paying for. And it's how it can benefit them for being a participant, because we can sit and grumble about everything all day, any day, but what are you doing to help the change? Because you got to be part of that change that you want to see. And so, if, if we can do it, I don't understand why. And we were in the midst of bankruptcy when we did it, and so when there's been other cities that are bankrupt and have tried this, and didn't see anything negative when we did it, it was great. It not only helped our image and stuff, but it did help the citizens because we were known as "Okay, that's the city that went bankrupt and blah blah blah" and then we became the city that first did citywide participatory budgeting, and they accomplished this and A, B, and C by doing participatory budgeting, which improved our image. People became proud of their city and actually felt that they were actual part of that change to improve. And it's hard and it's always been a struggle to get rid of negative press, because people have a tendency, it's just human nature, that they'll believe the negative press before they believe the positive. And so, I just think we were a great example for our surrounding cities, I think we were a great example nationwide. Because there are cities that have gone bankrupt and never recovered.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah. And being like a low-income city, that does PB...

V6

- Right, like a bedroom community, is what we were known for.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yes, it was good to influence your neighbors, are like "we can do it, you also can do it", like this.

V6

- Yes! Because we've met with surrounding city councils, the mayors, and it was like I said, we were... I lived in a neighborhood I didn't know my neighbors until PB.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And the nonprofits here, they have a strong role in the process?

V6

- Yes, a lot of nonprofits participate in PB, and it's because most nonprofits are what they are, they survive on grants. And when your grant money runs out, a lot of them fold, or they run the bare minimum, PB help them to figure out. There are projects they can do that they can create to be self-supporting. They could be sustainable, and it helped a lot of the nonprofits that way and I believe that that's why a lot of the nonprofits participate, because they see it's a way to sustain their nonprofit.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And beyond that, like, the nonprofits are participating and being part of the process, but do you see also conflicts happening, not just with the nonprofits but from PB with the city council, with the mayor...?

V6

- We may have conflicts, yeah, there are conflicts, because people disagree on the what, who and how certain things need to be done. Some people are just stuck in "we've done it this way for 25 years, how come we can't do it for another 25 years?", and you want to look at them and say "well, how's that working? What have you accomplished in those 25 years? Have anything changed? Have you measured the growth or none growth or anything?". And just because we've done it that way for 20 or 30 years doesn't always make it right. So, yeah, there's conflict and there's conflict within your board members. I might think that it's cool for somebody to put a project up to put, say, handicap rails on all your buildings with stairs. And somebody else might think that "hey, it just, it takes away the look". But what would you rather have? A handrail to prevent a fall, [or] no handrails and somebody falls and sues?

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And the projects that are happening, from PB, are both capital and expense projects. Do you see them happening more in neighborhoods that are low income or through all the city?

V6

- Not more in... No, not in... Sometimes it's almost, I guess it just depends. In some cycles...

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- It changes?

V6

- It changes, because in some cycles... in the beginning it was more citywide. Where it was almost similar projects needed in all the... We weren't [divided by] district. We were one city, and it seemed to flow better. Now that your district sometimes seems like it's competition, or the people that, I don't know, some areas wanted more outdoors, outdoorsy, like the parks and recreation stuff. Others were like, want their capital projects, their streets, their sidewalks, their tree service or whatever. Things like that. Where others wanted dog parks or... And they were more vocal and more participant than other communities so that's part of the tracking process, we have to see which communities are not being heard and we tried to incorporate them more into the participation.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Okay, okay. And a final question I have about the PB itself, then I'm going to question you about Vallejo as a city, but about PB... The more broad question. Do you believe that PB Vallejo looks for social justice?

V6

- Not always! - **Not always?** - Not always, I will be honest, not always. I know that we try. Sometimes it doesn't come out that way, and I don't have a total solution. But there are some things that it just depends on where the board's head is, and the participants, what are they thinking what is it... and if they don't voice a different kind of need and then how are we, as board members going to work what we do, around what it is the community really needs, if the community doesn't share that with us. And, or even if the board members don't share with one another their true feelings, how they feel about certain things. So, sometimes we've been spot on with what changes need to be done. Other times we've made mistakes, we're human, and we do our best to try to correct them so that it doesn't have a negative effect on the entire projects, or on the entire process of PB. And that's where we have to be mindful of, be mindful and careful that we're actually being totally transparent and totally inclusive. Because when we don't, then that's that little spot for error can blow up. So, I think we've done a great job for the last 12 years. We've done a great job. And yes, there's been some not so happy times, but there's been more happy times than there's been bad times. So, you have to weigh them out and give yourself kudos that, for the most part, we've done what our community has asked for.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And, actually, I'm going to do another question about PB. What's your vision of future for PB in Vallejo?

V6

- I hope that PB becomes a natural part of the city of Vallejo's government, like it's not a special project, it becomes one of the line items for our city budget. Because if we don't consider that, there's the chance that you will go back to the old ways where the people don't have a voice or feel that they don't have a voice. And you'll have that negative conflict between the city government, the community, and it just won't work, you just can't keep doing that.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Okay. And talking about Vallejo in general, as a city. What do you think about the changes that happened in the last 10 years?

V6

- You know what, I will be totally honest, because like I said in the beginning, I can chew my cabbage twice. When you have poor leadership, and excuse the expression but I grew up with this expression, shit rolls downhill. And if your leadership is bad, what do you expect? What do you expect?

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- They go downhill, yes.

V6

- Look at our country when the leadership is bad, the whole country goes down, it rolls downhill. And so, you got to correct the top, in order for the rest of it to flow and benefit the general public, because that's what we're here for, the people. We wouldn't have a job, if the people wouldn't vote for you, and politicians need to understand that from your local to your state to your federal, if the people don't vote for you, you will not be in that position. So, you have to look out for the people. And, and it's like it rolls downhill and there's, I don't know, a nicer way to put it. So, if you don't correct your leadership, you can't expect no more from what gets at the bottom.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Okay. And do you think that this influences how Vallejo is right now?

V6

- Right. Because Vallejo has had... We've had good leadership, and we've had bad leadership, right now we have some mediocre leadership. And so, you get mediocre results, you can't expect excellent results when you don't have excellent leaders that are actually looking out for the people. A pastor gave us... an old pastor that I had gave a sermon one time on what drives you. And if money is your drive, is your focus for your drive, nothing good is going to come out of it. So, the city, at some point, the leadership has to not be so concerned with the money they can make for themselves, or what they leave in the coffers when it's not their term anymore. They need to know what quality of life that they leave their citizens in and what quality of life have they prepared for the next generations. And forget about self. Because I've never seen a house, nor a Brink's truck, nor any personal belongings, following behind a casket [laughs]. So, you want to leave a better legacy.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- One of the many changes that we have seen in cities that are not just in Vallejo or California, but like everywhere in the world, are appearances of more gated communities, you know? Like for high income people, gated communities for middle class people...

V6

- And prison-like communities for low-income people!

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Exactly, for low-income people and more buildings, like, high buildings. Do you see this happening here?

V6

- In some areas of Vallejo yes, and it's like, why would you... the one thing that kills me when they build gated communities is like, those gated communities, those people, have basically the same needs in the communities that aren't gated. So, how are you going to service the non-gated communities and the gated communities on an equal basis. And you should not determine the service that any community gets based on their income. If we need a pharmacy in our area, and the gated community needs a pharmacy in their area, then we both should get a pharmacy. If we need new schools, we need better public services... If I have two autistic kids over here and I'm in a marginalized community, and Susie lives in a gated community and they have an actual autistic center for autistic children, and I don't have one, but I can't enter that gated community for my autistic child, that's not right. If you're going to have gated communities and people pay to live in gated communities which is fine, but the services that the people need should be the same. Regardless.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And you see these differences in services happening here?

V6

- In some areas, yes. There are areas that are bombarded with schools, better schools, health facilities and then there's areas... Like we have food deserts, there's areas with no grocery stores and Mom'n'Pops [restaurant chain], not to knock the Mom'n'Pops, but they charge more because they have to stay in business, but these people can't really afford Mom'n'Pops prices, but they're forced to use it because there's no other food source in their area.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And I'm going to dip down more this, because I think that's very interesting, what you're saying to me. Do you think that these differences that you see here in Vallejo, they are like, they got more reinforced by the gated communities, right? They have any relation to the redlining that happened here?

V6

- Oh yes, that will... to me, and this is my personal opinion. 'Redlining' is just a new name for... redlining, when they went to districting, that was a new name for redlining. And, my personal opinion, and I said that when it happened, and I will not change my viewpoint because that's exactly what it is to me. And I was a victim of redlining way back when I was first married and I went to look for a house, and the realtor only wanted to show me houses in neighborhoods where blacks lived. And after a couple of, maybe, three houses, I finally told her "Why are you only showing me houses in these areas? I don't want to live there." And she made a comment about, well, it seemed to her people were more comfortable with their "own kind".

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- In these words?

V6

- In those words, and I'm like "Oh, hell no, you got to go. I'm not dealing with you." Because that is not right. That is not right.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Do you think that these areas of the city that were historically redlining, they have less services?

V6

- Yes, then other communities. Yes, yes. And it still exists and it's not just Vallejo, it was throughout America. It's sad. It really is that in this day and age we still deal with that kind of... It's not a nice way to put it, we still deal with that kind of racism, no matter. It's, it's just so... It's just irritating is frustrating and it's irritating, and I just want to take people and just shake them and say "all money is green and it means the same way, doesn't it matter if it come out of a black hand, a brown man, a blue man, a white hand, is still money". Nobody should be judged by their race, their economic status, their religion, their gender, none of that should happen. If I have the money to buy a house, show me a house what my money can buy. Don't change the price or the area because I'm black. And then, Susie might not be as qualified as I am, but you'll make a way for her to buy in the gated community. Yeah, it still happens, and Vallejo is guilty of that, and when they decided to go district, that is the first thing that came to my mind, is just a new version of redlining.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Interesting. And what's your opinion on gated communities in general?

V6

- I think they're nice if that's where you want to live. Me personally. I don't want to live in a gated community, I don't like having to buzz people in or buzz people out. It's a "free country", and I want to

live free. I want my friends to feel welcome, and they don't have to like schedule a certain time that they're going to come by so I can buzz them in or buzz them out and get looked at funny because "what are you doing in here and who are you going to visit?", like, no. And there are beautiful communities and some of them are really nice, but my personal choice, I don't want to live in one.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- I can see that. And normally these communities, they have an argument about safety, right? What's your opinion about how public safety is here in Vallejo?

V6

- Well, It's not... but see, that goes back to the leadership and it's not what it could be. I mean, people have brought suggestions and different programs they need to try. But it all stems from if your leadership is not open to it, trying something else for public safety, you're... you beat your head up against the wall.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And I was here the entire week since Monday, and I walked around a lot. I normally walk a lot. - **Oh, okay.** - I just bike around, I don't have a car, so, I walk around a lot I took the transit and everything here. And, but what I saw was that you don't see that much people in the streets, using public spaces, normally, you see more the unhoused.

V6

- Yes, lots of the unhoused, America needs to be ashamed for that.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And then, like people, that have their houses walking around. Do you think that the gated communities or the shopping malls or those places that are closed by, have influence on that? Because what I'm saying is, if you have a park in your community, you don't go to the public park. If you have a plaza in your community, you don't go to the public plaza. You know, do you think...

V6

- No, because I think the media has... And yes, society has changed, and public safety is not as public safety as it should be. So, the fear of being a victim has gripped. Lots of communities and lots of people, and they just don't come out like they used to.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Or just use the car, right?

V6

- Uhum, and they'll drive through, they'll go right to where they're going and go back home. And I'll admit, I don't walk in my neighborhood like I used to.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- You think that the media has...?

V6

- Yes, and the media has a role. The media has a tendency to sensationalize a lot of stuff, and then when you have issues with your public servants, those people that are there to serve you, you got internal issues and out. Turn on evidence that they're not doing the right thing, either. It makes people fearful for even coming outside, and they don't want to be a victim to the police or to another citizen. So, they stay home. And I remember during COVID more people had made improvements to their outdoor space at their homes, because they spend more time there now than they ever did. And that's part of their public safety, because they don't feel safe in the parks or at a lot of functions. Public safety paves a real big part of how we live, work and play, because as we know there's mass school shootings, there's shootings in the churches. It's just a scary thing. And if your servants, who's supposed to serve the public for safety, can't get a handle on that, you just don't feel safe, so you try not to participate in those kind of things.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And we were talking about the homeless, right?

V6

- Oh my god, that's so sad.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, it's a problem. It's a problem in the whole America, but here in California it's like, it's terrible. I'm walking around here...

V6

- I know you've seen a lot.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah. It's like a mid-sized city and has much more unhoused people that, for example, I live now in Boise, Idaho. It's a city that's like four times the size of Vallejo and...

V6

- You don't see that many.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- No, no. You see, but much less.

V6

- I'm just returned from Baton Rouge, Louisiana. And I didn't see that many homeless, but they do have them. But I didn't see that many. But here, it's like encampments.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- A lot of them, right? And regarding that, do you see any construction of public housing happening here in Vallejo?

V6

- Not that they would be able to afford! That's just it. There's not affordable housing, because developers come in and they want to develop 200 single-family dwellings, but with people for income starting at US\$100.000 [a year]. What about the people that don't have an income? Any income or it doesn't exceed US\$30.000, which is, what, US\$2.000 above the poverty level. Hell nowadays, US\$40.000 might be the poverty level because people are losing their homes and everything. And it just, and we're all like a paycheck away from being one of those out there on the street. So, I don't know, it's something that America really needs to work on, our city needs to work on it. I mean, it's just so unreal that that many people can remain homeless.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- In the richest country in the world.

V6

- Supposedly!

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Supposedly.

V6

- That's what they keep saying, but they don't treat people like that. Look how many people have lousy healthcare, and then you get politicians that were fighting a government, that was trying to improve it, and still trying to tear down everything that he did to make healthcare available to the majority.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, I'm from a country where we have public health care.

V6

- Yeah, universal health?

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, we have. It's one of the best systems in the world. Of course, we are a Global South country, so there are especially infrastructure problems, but the system is for everyone. And when I got here, and I had to do a surgery on my knee. - **Oh wow!** - Yeah, at least I had insurance. But it was a whole process and all the unsafeness of not having a public system. It's kind of crazy seeing from the outside.

V6

- Oh yeah, it's crazy seeing it from the inside [laughs]. Thank god I had a job and I have medical coverage. And at the age that Social Security still exists, so I have some coverage. But I feel for those people that are out there that have none and they got children and it's like, what do you do? And then you go to one of the clinics that supposedly are "free", but they treat you like you're an animal or something. It is not right. They're human beings. And a lot of them are out there not by choice.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Of course. And do you see any of these debates on homelessness, for example, appearing in PB?

V6

- Yeah, because we've had projects that... several projects to help the homeless. And some of them have not been resolved and it just, I don't know, it's just a vicious circle.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- V6, we finished. If you want to do any comment or talk about something that you didn't talk, that you want to talk...

V6

- No, I think I talked to much [laughs].

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Of course not, it was amazing. I'm very happy for you to be here today to talk to me.

V6

- Yeah, I feel comfortable talking... this is funny, I feel real comfortable talking to you. But then I talk, so...

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Thank you. The interview is for that, for you to talk.

V6

- And all of this is from my heart, I really believe in PB, I think it should become an integral part of every city's government, so the people will feel that they have a voice and that they can say whatever it is they want to say, or both on issues that affect their lives.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- I agree. That's why I'm studying it.

V6

- And I don't blame you that's good. That's good.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Well, I would like to thank you first, in my name, thank you so much for being here.

V6

- Oh, you're more than welcome. Now how do you say your name? - **Rodrigo!** - Rodrigo, okay.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And I would also like to thank in the name of the institutions I'm part of, the São Paulo State University, and the Boise State University, where I'm working here in the US. Originally my PhD is in Brazil so it's São Paulo State University. - **Okay!** - I'm doing a period here in the United States. I would also like to reinforce how this recording, our conversation is all for scientific purposes. The transcription will only be available for the people who are working the project, I'm going to translate it to Portuguese also, so we're going to... we can use it in Brazil.

V6

- Oh, okay. And they're gonna say who's that lady that did run her mouth so much [laughs].

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- [laughs] No, of course not. It's going to be very... all the conversations we had are going to be very helpful. Very helpful.

V6

- Oh, good. I'm glad, I'm glad.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- It's going to be very useful for me, for my research. And I'm open for any questions you have in the future if you want to like, talk to me and keep in contact. - **Okay, sure.** - I'm free for that. And just for bureaucracy, I just wanted to know if everything was all right with the interview and the recording.

V6

- I agreed with the recording, I'm fine with it. I think you're a wonderful research student. That was great, you handled yourself perfectly. And I'm glad I was to be of any assistance. And I hope it my input helps in some kind of way.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- It will. It will, of course. Thank you, V6. Thank you.

Fim da transcrição