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### COPS/Metro Alliance-StMU Oral Histories with Linda Davila

Qiuying Chen

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## **COPS/Metro Alliance-StMU Oral Histories**

**Narrator:** Linda Davila

**Date:** 03/26/2024

**Location:** San Antonio, Texas

**Interview Session:** 1 of 1

**Interviewer:** Qiuying Chen (Kitty)

**Transcribed By:** Qiuying Chen

**Transcript Edited By:** Kensley Dieckow 05/2024

### **Narrator's Biographical Information:**

Linda Davila has been a leader of the St. Timothy Parish in San Antonio and a member institution of COPS/Metro since 2013. Linda is also on the pastoral council at St. Timothy's and has been actively working to solve immigration issues within her community. She also attends listening sessions at St. Timothy's regularly where parishioners share their personal experiences to shape COPS/Metro actions.

### **Summary of Interview:**

In her interview, Linda explained her role in COPS/Metro and shared her optimistic point of view on racial dynamics in San Antonio and COPS/Metro. She also shared examples of COPS/Metro expanding its membership beyond the West Side and increasing diversity within its organization. However, she claims more work must be done regarding immigration rights. Lastly, Linda shared memorable experiences from her work with COPS/Metro, including collaborating with Texas State Representatives on immigration legislation and city officials on affordable housing bonds.

### **Interview Key Terms:**

COPS/Metro, San Antonio, Diversity, Race, St. Timothy's, Immigration, Parish ID, Living Wages, Affordable Housing, Listening Session.

**Length of Interview:** 13:39

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**Linda Davila Interview Index**

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## Linda Davila Interview

**Kitty**

0:00

Hi. My name is Kitty. Can you tell me your name and how to spell it?

**Linda Davila**

0:07

Sure. It's Linda Davila. So it's L-i-n-d-a, and Davila is D-a-v-i-l-a.

**Kitty**

0:18

Okay, thank you so much! So um, what is your position or involvement in COPS/Metro?

**Linda Davila**

0:25

I am a member of St. Timothy Catholic Church, which is a member institution of COPS/Metro. So I'm a leader with St. Timothy Catholic Church.

**Kitty**

0:35

Ah I see I see. And what makes you want to join COPS?

**Linda Davila**

0:43

Well um, just the good that they do. I got back into it, I was Pastoral Council Chair at St. Timothy.

**Kitty**

0:51

Yeah, when did you join?

**Linda Davila**

0:54

Back in... 20, I want to say like [20]12 or [20]13 somewhere. I don't remember, maybe 10 years ago, 11 years ago. And I was at pastoral council at St. Timothy. And we had listening sessions with our parishioners to see what was on their mind, what was keeping them up at night. And so that started my work was COPS/Metro, yeah.

**Kitty**

1:26

Okay, that's cool. So um, I'm just going to move on to my demographics questions.

Linda Davila by Qiuying Chen

**Linda Davila**

1:34

Sure, sure.

**Kitty**

1:35

So how has the demographics within COPS changed since you joined?

**Linda Davila**

1:39

Oh, we've expanded to more... When I start- When I restarted. We're mainly institutions on the West, Southwest, and East Side of town. And now we have several that are expanded to the North Side of town. So we're covering a lot more territory now.

**Kitty**

2:01

Oh that's great! Are there any Whites or Asian or non-Mexican American or Latino, people work in COPS? Like, you know, other than Latino?

**Linda Davila**

2:13

Yeah. Yes. We have a good mix. Actually, we have Our Lady of Guadalupe in Helotes, which is um, well there are Latinos there, it's a lot of non-Latinos in that organization. As well as St. Thomas More, which is on the Northeast Side of town. There too.

**Kitty**

2:38

And they are part of COPS? Like actually...

**Linda Davila**

2:41

Yes, yes, their institutions. Yeah, yes.

**Kitty**

2:44

Yeah and, how would you describe the racial climate in San Antonio when you first involved with COPS/Metro?

**Linda Davila**

2:53

Hmmm, racial climate. I don't... I think in San Antonio, there really hasn't been to me from what I can see a lot of racial tension, right? I think San Antonio culture just lends itself to be open to all kinds of minorities, and getting along with others.

Linda Davila by Qiuying Chen

**Kitty**

3:22

Even though that's 10 years ago? When [Indiscernable] still have tensions?

**Linda Davila**

3:25

Yeah, I think, I just think, going to City Council districts that represent different areas of town really helped. And COPS/Metro had a hand on that, and making sure that every section of the city had a voice in city government.

**Kitty**

3:51

I see, cool. So how has the relationship between COPS and other minority groups evolved over time?

**Linda Davila**

4:01

Well, you know, as I said, we've expanded recently to other groups and including, we now have maybe 3 or 4 member institutions who cater basically to the Black-American. So that brought in a lot of new ways to look at issues, right? And new ways to do things. So I think that's a good thing.

**Kitty**

4:35

Yeah! And, how does COPS/Metro approach the inclusion of diversity voice and perspective within the decision-making process?

**Linda Davila**

4:47

Well, they develop anyone that's interested in making a difference, they're gonna to help. So if they... From a member institution point of view, if they see, maybe it's mainly made up of immigrants. Well, they're gonna help those immigrants, you know, they're gonna do something to help them. And one project that they were resurrecting is Parish ID. So some immigrants may not have an ID to present, we're gonna give them one, and the city, the Chief of Police and the County Sheriff have both agreed to accept those forms of ID. We help them, yeah.

**Kitty**

5:36

Oh cool, effective!

**Linda Davila**

5:37

Yes.

Linda Davila by Qiuying Chen

**Kitty**

5:37

So has COPS ever partner with other minority groups, I probably asked before, and gotten long-term success?

**Linda Davila**

5:49

Other minority? Other than Latinos?

**Kitty**

5:52

Other minority groups and organizations, I would say, yeah.

**Linda Davila**

5:57

Hmmm, I'm not sure how to answer that. [Both Laugh] Because we're, like it's a... We're member-based. So wherever that organization is, we're gonna have representation from that community. So. And we're expanding this year, or we have started trying to expand our bases in San Antonio. So I think it's even more diverse. And it's diverse as far as religious faiths go, because it's not just Catholic, it's all faiths that we have now. And it's, it's really good.

**Kitty**

6:38

Yeah, that's cool! So can you share a specific initiative or campaign by COPS/Metro that you believe has made a significant impact on racial dynamics within the community?

**Linda Davila**

6:52

Um, yeah...

**Kitty**

6:56

It's okay if don't...

**Linda Davila**

6:57

Yeah, I think the immigration issue. We work with the Archbishop. It's been a few years, maybe 5 or 6 years ago, when the federal government was trying to pass a law that would make it very hard for any immigrant to get a Green Card here in the U.S.. Or if they were taking advantage of some of our programs, they were gonna be cut off. It was really bad legislation. And so we made a campaign to write to all these Senators and Representatives. And it worked, because that didn't pass, that immigration bill, those changes didn't pass. So that made a big impact.

Linda Davila by Qiuying Chen

**Kitty**

7:43

Yeah, I could imagine. And, maybe it's similar but do you think that COPS has a good relationship with other minority groups in general? Good relationship.

**Linda Davila**

7:56

Uh-huh, yes, we have a motto in COPS/ Metro; "No Permanent Enemies, No Permanent Friends.", right? So even, you know, so it's whatever the issue is...

**Kitty**

8:09

So that's the motto for, kind of...

**Linda Davila**

8:11

It's one of our... Yeah, one of our mottoes is, "No Permanent Friends and No Permanent Enemies."

**Kitty**

8:16

Just benefits? [Both Laugh]

**Linda Davila**

8:18

Yeah, just the one. If we have to work with somebody that maybe we fought against them before. Well, that doesn't matter. We have an issue, we want to tackle. We're gonna build a relationship with that person. Yeah. Yeah.

**Kitty**

8:34

Oh I hope I didn't interrupt, I just jumped in.

**Linda Davila**

8:35

No, not at all. So our other motto is, "Don't do for someone what they can do for themselves." So we want to develop people. Let's say, we at this listening session we heard somebody say, "Well, I'm having a lot of trouble with my taxes and this, you know, I'm about to lose my house." We asked them, "Well, do you want to do something about it?" And they say, yes. We help them develop into someone that can work with the city or the county, whoever they have to work with to get that issue resolved.

**Kitty**

9:13

Cool. And so, looking ahead, what do you envision as the future of COPS/Metro's work in promoting racial justice and equality in San Antonio?



**Linda Davila**

9:26

I think the issues... We're gonna expand. And the issues we tackle, especially education and living wages. It's gonna impact everybody, people, because we're gonna work, If... No matter who you are, you work for the city, we're gonna demand that the city pay you a living wage. Or we're gonna demand that, if you're in a school that the district be paying living wages too. And, so it's gonna help. It's not discriminating against anyone, we wanna help everybody be on the same level.

**Kitty**

10:10

That's great, Everybody...

**Linda Davila**

10:12

Yeah I mean, everybody will benefit from the program.

**Kitty**

10:15

Yeah. So actually that's all my demographic questions, but there are some additional questions that if you want to answer?

**Linda Davila**

10:22

Uh-huh. Yeah.

**Kitty**

10:25

Like, was there a specific event or moment that sparked your interest in... Wait, I am so sorry...

**Linda Davila**

10:33

Okay. That's okay. [Both Laugh]

**Kitty**

10:37

Can you share a memorable experience or moment from your time as part of COPS? And how did it impact you personally?

**Linda Davila**

10:48

Good question. Let me think. Um... I think we were fighting the city on this program... Housing is my passion, making sure that people can stay in their homes, right? And be safe in their homes. So, we were fighting the city on this program where they were taking the taxes we were paying and giving it to developers to develop these luxury apartments, you know. And the developers wouldn't have to pay any taxes for 15-20 years. It just wasn't a fair program. So we started working with the city and trying to kill this program. And they did look to revamp it, and with our demands, even though the program still went through, it wasn't as lucrative for developers, so it kinda died. So we kinda still got our objective done because we put in things that they had to build affordable housing. If they're gonna use our dollars, they gotta be able to... People have to be able to afford to live there. And so, that made me very proud. We made that change.

**Kitty**

12:06

Oh, I see, and you feel, being part of this...

**Linda Davila**

12:09

Yes, it's power. But it takes a lot of research and knowing who you're dealing with, and knowing what the rules are. So it made me grow a lot.

**Kitty**

12:23

Yeah! So I guess that's the, one of the lessons you've personally learned.

**Linda Davila**

12:29

Yes, yes.

**Kitty**

12:30

Yeah. Are there any other lessons?

**Linda Davila**

12:30

Well, I learned a lot about property taxes, and how they work. [I] went to Austin and met with, with the lawyer that actually put in the... Wrote the laws on what governs our taxes today.

**Kitty**

12:43

Really? Like, create a new law?

Linda Davila by Qiuying Chen

**Linda Davila**

12:47

They, well he had the, this lawyer was hired by the reps. to, you know, to put together a new law, and this was put in maybe the [19]90's?

**Kitty**

13:01

I am so sorry interrupted again, I feel like I interrupt again.

**Linda Davila**

13:05

No, no, that's okay. It was like in the 90's. And, then this law went into effect and it's really unfair. And so we went to that lawyer and met with him like, what other... Let's write something that will be fair, you know, for all residents. And so that was an interesting experience.

**Kitty**

13:26

Yeah so cool! So, Thank you so much for letting me interview you!

**Linda Davila**

13:29

Yes, you're welcome! I appreciate it. Thank you, Kitty. You take care.

**Kitty**

13:36

Yeah!

**Transcription Notes:** This interview was lightly edited as needed for readability which may include inserting paragraph breaks, removing redundant words, or adding clarifying words. Added words or words difficult to decipher typically appear inside brackets.