A TEI Project

Interview of Rose Ibañez

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1.1. Session ONE
MAY 1, 2011

SINGSON

This is our first session with Rose Ibañez. This is Precious Singson. Today is May 1 [2011], and we are in Carson [California]. How are you, Rose?

IBAÑEZ

I'm fine. It's a nice day.

SINGSON

Yes, it is beautiful outside. As in all good interviews, I think it's best to start from the very beginning, and we'll have to start with your family's background. Well, actually, let's start with you first. When and where were you born?

IBAÑEZ

I was born in Subic Bay, Philippines, in a U.S. [United States] Navy hospital on July 31st, 1954, and, as my mom [Rosario Adan Estepa] said, I was the biggest baby born that day, eight pounds something

ounces, and back in those days, most babies were like six or five pounds.

SINGSON

Especially for Filipinos.

IBAÑEZ

Yes.

SINGSON

Now, why were you born in the Subic Bay area?

IBAÑEZ

My mom and dad [Pete Flores Estepa] got married, and then when they got married my dad joined the navy, so she was able to get the benefits at the hospital.

SINGSON

I see. So perhaps we should talk about your dad's background first. Was he in the Philippines already at this point? Or perhaps you could talk about where he was born and where he grew up and how did he end up being in the navy.

IBAÑEZ

Okay. My dad was from Pangasinan, Sison. From what I remember or what I was told, he was like the second of also seven in the family, and his mom passed away during World War II, and because of the difficulties they were having during the war, I think she also passed away after childbirth and then the baby died soon after. So he felt the navy was the only opportunity he had. According to my mom, he didn't finish high school, so he joined the navy and wanted to feel that that was a good career move, and then married my mom.

SINGSON

Was he in the U.S. Navy?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, U.S. Navy. So he heard about it, either got recruited by somebody and had a lot of other friends who joined, so that's what happened with him. My mom and dad were young sweethearts. They knew each other since, I guess—because they're close to the family, they're town mates, so since teenagers.

SINGSON

So your mom was also from Pangasinan?

IBAÑEZ

Yes.

SINGSON

If you can tell a little bit about her background.

IBAÑEZ

She came from a bigger family; from my understanding, I think it's like twelve. She went on to college. The name of the college was the Far Eastern University, but she said she only got the two-year degree in elementary education. Then they got married and moved here after four of us were born there, so four of us were born in the Philippines.

SINGSON

How were you able to migrate? Is it because of the navy?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, through the navy. My dad wanted us all to go there, to the U.S., so that was his dream, was to go to the navy—not his dream, his way to establish the family and get, I guess, a stable income, because my mom wasn't going to continue her education. She wasn't even working. She was raising us already by the time we left.

SINGSON

This is around what time? Is it after World War II?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, definitely after World War II, because I was born in ’54, and my sister was ’51.

SINGSON

Did you go directly to Oregon?

IBAÑEZ

Yes. Our first stop was—well, first station, my dad was first stationed in Coos Bay, Oregon, which is a very small town. First of all, we flew on the navy plane, and all I can remember flying that navy plane was getting airsick. It was longer than I thought. I think I threw up lots of times, running back and down the aisle because I couldn’t keep still, and just getting airsick. That’s all I remember about the small navy plane. So when we got to Coos Bay, it was cold. Never had that cold weather, nothing like the Philippines, because all I remember was it was always hot, and coming to Oregon it was cold.

SINGSON

So you have a lot of memories of this migration. How old were you?

IBAÑEZ

I was four, I think, four and a half. Yes, it’s funny how you remember these interesting experiences, but the plane was definitely my experience. [laughs]

SINGSON

Do you have any recollections of the transition of your Philippine life?

IBAÑEZ

Mainly all I remember in the Philippines was waking up from a nap, because my uncle [Manuel Flores Estepa] was upset with me because I couldn’t sleep and it was hot, and looking out the window

and seeing the vendor, a vendor selling something. That's why I think I wanted to look out, because I was hungry, and he was mad at me. Then I remember the plane, and then from the plane, landing in Oregon.

SINGSON

The reason why I ask, too, is if you were living in the Subic Bay area, there's a lot of relationship between U.S. soldiers and Philippine families there. Do you have any recollections of that at all? How was your family life while you were living in Subic?

IBAÑEZ

Actually, I don't remember that much other than my uncles, either one or two uncles babysitting for my dad and my mom. That's pretty much it. My mom said we did live—I'm not sure if we lived in navy housing, but we lived where there were a lot of people that were already joined the navy, so we were living next to folks like that, and I don't remember that much about it.

SINGSON

Then when you moved to Oregon, was there also a lot of Filipinos with you?

IBAÑEZ

No. [laughs] I think we were the only Filipino family. I don't remember anybody who was Filipino. We rented a house behind this lady who had a beautiful rose garden. That's all I remember. We were in a smaller house in the back, because we saw the roses all the time, and it was cold. They had a lot of fruit berries, like boysenberries and raspberries, because I remember picking them. Then we were able to walk to school, but it was maybe a good mile, but all I remember is up and down these hills and stuff. Then going to that school, I think I still have pictures of it somewhere, and I know I'm the only person of color in that school. [laughs] Then my dad would always tell me the story when he wanted to pick me up, he said I was so anxious to get out of the room that I stepped on top of the tables and walked across people's fingers to get to my

dad. Then there was another incident. He told me I walked home alone one time, and because of this dog, this big dog was either following me or whatever, I knocked at someone's house and just asked the lady to let me in because I was afraid of the dog. But my sister [Remedios Estepa-Brown] had a different experience. Because she was darker, some people thought she was black, or African American at that time.

SINGSON

But we are on the West [Coast], so do you have any recollections of your sister, because she was darker, if she has any experiences based on race?

IBAÑEZ

That's the only thing I remember, when people were thinking because she was darker, they assumed that she was really African American, or black at that time. But, no, I can't recall anything even with my classmates, if they thought I was different or anything like that. But getting out of that room might be an incident. [laughs] I just wanted to get out, I don't know. But we actually didn't stay there that long. I think at the most we were there maybe six months. Then we moved to San Diego, transferred.

SINGSON

So we can begin the story here in San Diego. Was it an easy transition because there were already a lot of Filipinos in San Diego?

IBAÑEZ

Yes. Well, first we lived in one of those Quonset huts. It's like half-dome steel houses, because you had to wait for navy housing, so we were in these Quonset huts.

SINGSON

Families could live there?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, and they were divided in half. They're like duplex huts, I guess you'd call it. But that's when I got my first measles, and that's when I found out about—I think we got to see more television. Some people had some nice television sets, and I got to play around with a lot of people. It was always busy. Then when we moved to the navy housing, we met a lot of friends we got along with. Some of them were like my mom and dad's—actually, a couple of them were my mom and dad's families that they remember from the Philippines and what they call like compadre, comadre, so we hung around with their kids and stuff. And, yes, I noticed more people of color. Even the teachers were African American.

SINGSON

Were they integrated, the housing?

IBAÑEZ

Oh, yes, yes, very integrated. But we were like one of the last few families to live there, because then they started to demolish a lot of the homes, and that's when people started to move out.

SINGSON

Move out of the navy houses?

IBAÑEZ

Yes.

SINGSON

A lot of the Filipinos also lived in those navy houses, also moved out when they started demolishing these?

IBAÑEZ

Right. It's funny, I think that's when we started pretty much following where other people went to, so like National City then became like the center, and people knew each other again. We didn't know many of the kids, but my mom and dad knew some of the families. In fact, I think one of them moved only a block away, or we were only a block away from the kids we used to play with.

SINGSON

In the navy?

IBAÑEZ

In the navy, yes.

SINGSON

So you moved to National City, and this has sort of become a Filipino town?

IBAÑEZ

Definitely now, but then, yes, it was like a start of one. There was the Filipino stores, there was the church, predominantly Filipinos, and you'd see more Filipino families and kids playing on the street and things like that.

SINGSON

What kind of religious affiliations or organizations was your family participating in?

IBAÑEZ

Because of my dad always out at—you know what? Actually before we moved to National City, we moved to San Diego. So there was another house, and we lived behind that house, but it was owned by Filipinos. In fact, they were well known. The family owned a barbershop and pool hall, Luzon Café. That's the Luzon family. So we lived behind their house and then next door was the Monzons—there's another Monzon, but this is another Monzon. They're not related. So these were the two Filipino families we knew when we first moved from Oregon. The area was predominantly African American, because that's when my teacher—I remember, the first thing I remember, my teacher that was sad. That's when John F. Kennedy was shot. She was African American, and she cried in front of all of us, and we were wondering why, and, of course, we didn't know until later what happened. I mean, she told us then, but I didn't realize the impact until I got home, how sad that was.

SINGSON

How old were you?

IBAÑEZ

I think I was in first—it had to be first grade, because in Coos Bay I was in pre-K[indergarten] and kindergarten, so this was first grade.

SINGSON

And you went through a predominantly African American school in San Diego?

IBAÑEZ

Right. Yes, predominantly African American. All I know is I did have a Japanese American friend, but that was pretty much it, and there may have been some Latinos, I guess. I'm not too sure. But it was predominantly an African American neighborhood.

SINGSON

How were the relationships between African Americans and the Filipino families? Was it just a small Filipino family, just you and the Luzons?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, very small. I don't think I know any other Filipinos, except for maybe at the church, but then we didn't really know them that much, because it was a neighborhood church, Catholic Church.

SINGSON

But as far as you know, how was the relationship between the Filipinos and then a predominantly African American neighborhood?

IBAÑEZ

I think they're pretty much—I mean it was cordial, but we weren't close. You know what I mean? We didn't go to visit people or friends, or I didn't even have a high school close friend that was African American till I moved to National City and then I grew up

with one of them who was African American, but not when I was there. That was funny. I think it's because we only stayed there another less than a year. I can remember first grade, and then I went and moved to National City. Yes, I think maybe a year, because I think I started second and third in National City.

SINGSON

Now, why did your family move so often?

IBAÑEZ

Well, Coos Bay, my dad got transferred, and I think because he didn't know anything available, he must have heard about the Luzon family. And you know what? I think it's because of the pool halls. I forgot to mention, because people always ask, "How come you didn't speak Tagalog when you were growing up?" I always tell my kids, especially my daughters, "You know, there's a history lesson behind that. It wasn't because they didn't want to. It's because of the period." My dad was in the navy. Everything was very patriotic. He only wanted us to speak English. So after I learned to speak English, he made me recite the Pledge of Allegiance in English at the barbershop. That's how proud he was. So I think he knew the Luzons at that barbershop, because it was all in that same area, the barbershop, the pool hall, and the café.

SINGSON

Now, I'm curious because when you think of having a Filipino barbershop and the café, there are a whole lot of Filipinos in the area, but then it seems like this is in a predominantly African American—

IBAÑEZ

Oh, no. This one, the Luzon was downtown [San Diego]. It was close to the area, but not in the downtown area. We were sort of called the south, like South L.A., but we're the South San Diego. You know how L.A. now is South Central. That was sort of like the South Central of San Diego where we lived, because it was predominantly African American. But it wasn't close to downtown,

but it wasn't that far either. National City is farther. And, of course, all I remember were mainly Manongs. I didn't see a lot of the navy people there when I went, and I think my dad just knew, as you talk to other Filipinos, he knew where to hang out and where to eat and this and that while he was stationed. The navy base isn't that far from downtown at that time.

SINGSON

So you went often with your father?

IBAÑEZ

I can just say from that one incident, I remember that one. I don't know if I was there often, but I remember that one time where he took me to the barbershop and the pool hall.

SINGSON

So I guess now your experience in National City, you were in third grade through elementary, and then you stayed there until high school?

IBAÑEZ

Yes. We lived in the same house until high school. Actually, till college, until I got married.

SINGSON

How was your experience—because this is also during the 1960s, when the Civil Rights Movement is pretty much in high gear. Do you remember being touched by it or having a feeling of what's going on in a national—

IBAÑEZ

Nationally? It wasn't until high school that I became aware. I mean, I heard about it. After John F. Kennedy passed away, my parents didn't talk about it that much, what happened or what was going on. It wasn't until the Vietnam War that I began to hear about it more because of my sister going to college at that time, and then some of the students in high school. National City was pretty much

diverse, African American, Latino, and I think not that many Japanese or Chinese, because I didn't know that many Asians until I came to L.A. It was Filipinos and Samoans, Guamanians, that type of thing. We formed that in high school, because people were also getting involved. They wanted to do a Third World Student Club, and so I got to one of those meetings and heard their concerns, and it was about making sure that our issues were addressed, that we had more minorities teachers and that they address our issues. All I remember is their concern was mainly minority teachers, because there wasn't that many. That's when I remember also having a high school counselor who asked me why I wanted to go to college. [laughs] And I felt offended, because instead of helping me go to college or saying, "Oh, here are some schools you might think of," I thought it was more questioning why even bother, because—

SINGSON

You're a minority.

IBAÑEZ

—the counselors there were all men, and older white men. That's all I remember. I can remember ninth, tenth, and twelfth grades, they were all the same.

SINGSON

You mean all the same counselors?

IBAÑEZ

Same counselor. I mean, not the same, but they were all predominantly—they were only men and older white men. In fact, the whole school, most of the administrators, I think, were all white. The teachers were predominantly older white, because every teacher pretty much knew our family, because we always had one grade after the next, so my sister would first have this teacher, and then I would eventually have the teachers two years later, but then my brothers and sisters would have them a year later, so we all had the same teacher, and they were white.

SINGSON

How did you react to the question? I mean, what did you tell him?

IBAÑEZ

Oh, I was saying, "Well, because I want to attend, I want to go. My sister's going there and she really likes it." So I don't think I got anything positive from him, because he didn't continue to talk about it or to even say what colleges. He said, "Okay," and just left it at that.

SINGSON

This Third World Coalition, who were mainly there? Was it the Asian, Latinos?

IBAÑEZ

No, it was the blacks who led it, the black students. In fact, when we had our twenty-fifth reunion, we kind of talked about it. Was it twenty-fifth, when you have your school reunion? They were kind of like the leaders of the Associated Student Body, so there were leaders who were African American.

SINGSON

So they were already leaders of the school themselves, and then they created a coalition for all different minorities.

IBAÑEZ

Right. Yes.

SINGSON

Your relationship with African Americans, how is it, how would you describe it?

IBAÑEZ

I think I had opportunity to interact and become close friends. Like in elementary school I grew up with one [Doris Fontanilla] who was in the neighborhood, but then she moved away, so she was like my

best friend in third and fourth grade kind of thing. Then there were more Filipinos I hung out with after she moved out. Then when it came to high school, it was sort of like we hung out with them. I mean, it was like—

SINGSON

There weren't any tensions?

IBAÑEZ

No, no tensions. The tensions would be with the white students versus us, and I can't remember if there was a lot of—I didn't see any tensions with Latinos or blacks. I think I would say of the population, we were probably, as a whole, 50 percent, and the other 50 percent were still white. [interruption]

SINGSON

We are recording again. We just needed to move the microphone because it was in an uncomfortable place. So we were talking about race relations in high school, and you mentioned that there were a lot of Filipinos there too. Were there any Filipino groups that you joined or were active in?

IBAÑEZ

No. I think what happened, in campus we weren't active as Filipinos, but outside in the community we hung out as Filipinos, and that was because there were Filipino dances that we went to. Even though the Filipino dances were like the Sampaguitas or the regional dances or the Beauty Queen dances, the young folks went to those because the older folks also recognized they needed to have young people attend and geared some of the music.

SINGSON

Can you describe what they are? Are they sort of a formal dance?

IBAÑEZ

Oh, yes, they were formal dances. They're like either they were held annually, like these Filipino organizations, or they had them,

because I remember going at least once a month. But they're different associations, so it's not always the—because my friends, the reason why is because my friends were active. In fact, my high school friends had sisters who danced with the Filipino folk dancing, Pasacat, and then one of my other friends dated one of the guys from Pasacat, so that's how we knew or hung out, going to these dances, because they would perform. Plus they would also have dances for us young people to dance. Then we got to know a singing group. I think it was a young singing group, a band that also performed, and I can't remember their name right now, but I still keep—I see their names, I know who they are, and so they used to sing.

SINGSON

It seems like there's a lot of youth, so maybe you can give me a sense of the number, the population of Filipinos, Filipino families in National City, or is it more like a San Diego area type of reunions?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, it was mainly San Diego, but most of the Filipinos at that time were south, so the big bulk of them were National City, and then if you go further south were Montgomery High [School] or Imperial Beach [High School], so further south. Our rivals, Sweetwater [High School] had a high school rival which was Castle Park [High School] and then that wasn't predominantly Filipinos. I think Filipinos started to come in later in that area, but most of them were in National City or Imperial Beach.

SINGSON

Just to clarify, your high school was Sweetwater?

IBAÑEZ

Sweetwater High School, yes, and so I would consider—oh, when Florante [Ibañez]—I think there were some people who were going to San Diego High [School], which is more like near the downtown area where we used to live. There are some areas further north, but

not as much as, I would think, National City was. Even our middle school was predominantly a lot of Filipinos.

SINGSON

So I'd like to get a sense of how the organizations reunited Filipinos or got them together, because I guess one of the things about Filipino history or when you talk about Filipino communities, there's a sense of they're all spread out. There really isn't an ethnic enclave for Filipinos. So how did the organizations serve as this site for them to gather, and what is your sense of the functions of these associations?

IBAÑEZ

Well, I can definitely say there were large Filipino regional organizations, so the ones that people always talk about are the Pangasinan Association or the Bicol [Association], because those were my friends. My friends' parents were involved.

SINGSON

And your parents were in—

IBAÑEZ

My parents were not. My parents were completely opposite, because my dad was still in the navy. He was always out, and he didn't really get involved. My mom, of course, didn't, if my dad wasn't, so it was mainly my friends' parents that we got involved, and then when they started to dance, then I knew more about the dances they were doing.

SINGSON

So you were into folk dancing too?

IBAÑEZ

No, my friends were, my friend's younger sister, so that's how we knew about the folk dances. It wasn't until I got to college that I experimented or had fun with folk dancing.

SINGSON

Then these associations, they have a lot of these youth dances. What else do they provide for the kids? I guess did it help you get a sense of Filipino identity?

IBAÑEZ

I think it had me, yes, in terms of Filipino identity, that there was first these organizations available, and that there were a lot of people like me, a lot of young people who I can relate to, and then the beauty contests. [laughs] In fact, I remember my mom asking if I wanted to—or some people asked if you want to run for or be a Beauty Queen, and I said no. But there were friends that I knew that wanted to be Beauty Queens. But, of course, you had to sell those tickets. And it was an annual thing, so I think those were like all the regional organizations put it together and they picked one from each region to run and be Beauty Queen.

SINGSON

So it's a big southern California type of—

IBAÑEZ

San Diego area associations and the Beauty Queens.

SINGSON

What do these Beauty Queens do for the young Filipinas?

IBAÑEZ

Well, the main thing was to raise money for the organization. That's how they saw it, as big fundraisers. I'm not sure if they did scholarships or anything like that, but I remember it was just to make money for the organization, so they had to sell lots of tickets.

SINGSON

And for the younger people?

IBAÑEZ

It was more of a party scene. It's a place you'd hang out, go to a party and dance. I mean, high school, I think that's the other thing. High school would have dances, but we didn't go to them. We mainly went to the Filipino dances. High school was for seniors—it wasn't until you were older that you'd go to the senior dance or those formal dances, and that wasn't a big thing. I mean, those are Sweethearts Ball. In fact, I didn't even date a Filipino in high school. It wasn't until college I dated Filipinos.

SINGSON

Was it by choice?

IBAÑEZ

I think it was that, and there was hardly any around too. I remember in my sister's generation, I think she would tell me, "We can count the number of Filipino men my age, like ten or twenty." I think in my generation it was like twenty or thirty, but they were all spread out and had girlfriends. [laughs] There wasn't that much among our circle of friends. In the dances we would see the same people that we would always see in different places. I can't remember if there was that many.

SINGSON

Are you saying there seems to be more women Filipinas than Filipinos?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, more men. There were more Filipinas than the Pinoys.

SINGSON

And they're mostly second generation.

IBAÑEZ

Right. We were all from that period, all our parents came through the navy. Our fathers came through the navy, and we all only spoke English.

SINGSON

And there is no mixing with—because by 1965 the immigration gates opened for new Filipinos to come in. Did you get any sense of new Filipinos coming in the community or joining the associations?

IBAÑEZ

No. I think it was still the same generations and same people until later we saw a sense of more Filipinos coming in, but I was already in college and having the younger—by that time, I didn't go to a lot of the churches in that neighborhood. It was in college that my cousin actually came through the navy, from the Philippines. Yes, I remember in college we had a debate about martial law with my cousin.

SINGSON

Because she was pro-[Ferdinand] Marcos?

IBAÑEZ

He was one. Because he was in the navy, of course, he was a little bit pro-Marcos, but he didn't want to talk about it, either, so there was also the fear factor, and then he didn't feel that we knew what we were talking about, because we weren't from there. So it was still that attitude. I mean, he listened to us, but at the same time, "Why are Filipino Americans concerned about what's going on in the Philippines?" kind of thing.

SINGSON

Well, that's a good segue, because I think what I wanted to ask you about, the reason why I wanted to dwell with your experience as a young Filipina raised here in the U.S. is what your sense of identity is out from all these activities for the second-generation Filipinos. Did it have any effect on you as an activist? So these dances and Filipino Association activities, did it have any effect on you, on your identity?

IBAÑEZ

Definitely. I think it just made me aware of being Filipino. My sister, because even though she got active at San Diego State [University], she didn't hang around with a lot of Filipinos. I was the one who was hanging around with Filipinos. Her friends were mainly Latino. Her best friend was Latina, and then in high school she hung around with the foreign-exchange students, and that's when I learned about other countries. She liked one of them, whereas my friends were primarily Filipinos.

SINGSON

So you had a very strong sense of what Filipinas do and what their culture is.

IBAÑEZ

Yes. And talk about identity. My non-Filipino friends who I sometimes hung around with, I was ashamed to bring them over the house because of the smell of the food. So I remember this one—because we were a navy town, this one friend of mine, who's white, was very active with a USO [United Service Organizations] for military men. That's how she dated, was going to these military hangouts. I would bring to my house and she would say "Oh, my god." But we would touch base once in a while, and I was just ashamed of bringing her over the house because of the smell of the food and the fish, and then she'll question what are we eating.

SINGSON

So would you say that you were proud of being Filipino when you were with other Filipinos?

IBAÑEZ

With other Filipinos, yes, but when I was with non-Filipinos, I hesitate to bring them over. It wasn't like I had a lot of non-Filipino friends, but the ones I did keep in touch with, I never brought them over the house.

SINGSON

Now, I guess high school, when you were starting this Third World Coalition and also you had a very strong sense of Filipinoness, when did you really start feeling like you wanted to fight for the Filipino cause or the struggle to help the community? Was it already in high school or younger years?

IBAÑEZ

No, it was in college. In high school was just more the identity, being proud, that type of thing.

SINGSON

So meaning proud of your identity?

IBAÑEZ

Of just being Filipino or understanding there's these dances that we do, there's the way we dress, that the cultural dances, the Barong Tagalogs and the Filipina outfits and that type of thing.

SINGSON

As opposed to your experience in college, how is that different?

IBAÑEZ

In college it was more learning the history in terms of, first it was the history that had impacted me, the relationship between the U.S. and the Philippines. I didn't know too much about the colonization and the war. Then the organization Samahan [Andres Bonifacio Samahan] made us aware of more of the cultural dances—we also did internship programs or it's either part of work study, and because of work study we went to the elementary school and sort of like be the big sister or big brother for a Filipino student. So we're the tutors, but we were in college and working with elementary kids.

SINGSON

So, mentoring younger Filipinos.

IBAÑEZ

That was our assignment. Samahan at San Diego State had a relationship with a nonprofit called Operation Samahan. So it's almost like here at L.A. you have the SIPA [Search to Involve Pilipino Americans] with UCLA. They kind of had that kind of relationship as well.

SINGSON

So let's go to where you went to college and talk about Samahan. Are you part of the founders of Samahan, or Samahan already existed?

IBAÑEZ

Samahan already existed.

SINGSON

Which college did you go to?

IBAÑEZ

San Diego State, right after high school. Actually, I graduated early. I graduated in January, so I didn't go to college until the following September, so I worked during that whole period.

SINGSON

This is 19—

IBAÑEZ

Seventy-two. I graduated '72, so I couldn't go to college right away. But my sister was already there, so she kind of helped me. In fact, before I went to college, that's when she told me about the group that she was involved with, Matapang. So Matapang were these women. All I remember is her and two other women that put the group together, and they said that they wanted to talk more about Filipino issues like runaways. The reason why they asked me—see, my sister didn't hang out—

SINGSON

Let me just pause quickly. [interruption]

SINGSON

Okay, we are now talking about Matapang, and this is a group that your sister helped found in San Diego State.

IBAÑEZ

Yes. So she was still in college, I was still in high school, and the only issue—I mean, the reason they wanted to do activities was more around what they consider social issues, and the focus was high school dropouts or runaways. No, it was more high school runaways, my friend ran away. [laughs] This group of women that I hung out in high school were three sisters, one was the dancer, the other one ran away, and my best friend. So anyway, they came to us because they wanted to talk about runaways and why, and so that whole discussion group also focused on how parents were disciplining us and how strict they were and how they don't understand us. So those are some of the discussions I remember having with Matapang.

SINGSON

So this group from college actually went to the high schools?

IBAÑEZ

Well, they went to individual families. They heard, of course, about my friend, and they asked us if we could come to their house near the college, kind of thing. I don't know what other issues. That's something I should have asked my sister. But that was the one I remember where we were really having a big discussion on parents and discipline, because not only was it about them, it was also about my mom and dad, mainly about my dad, my sister could relate, because my dad, our dads were very strict. They didn't understand the dances we were going to, or why we needed to go out and have fun or date.

SINGSON

Do you think this is sort of a general issue of young women with their parents, or is it a specific Filipino? Because their name is

Matapang, which means strong, and it's a group of women. So how did they think that issue translates to their racial and gender identities?

IBAÑEZ

Well, even before this, they also supported a group of other women who did the beauty contests. I forgot to mention. The whole thing of being a women, identifying with the Filipino culture, and also trying to struggle for equal rights and looking at the beauty contests as sexist. I remember one of the—I wasn't there, unfortunately, but I've heard from other people and from the woman who actually went up and opposed these beauty contests, they actually sent one, two, three, four to run as beauty contest queens, princesses.

SINGSON

So four Matapang members ran as—

IBAÑEZ

Actually, there were like maybe one Matapang and three or two from UC [University of California] San Diego. Matapang was more from San Diego State, and the UC San Diego women, I don't know what group they were. Somehow they networked and they said they were going to go to this beauty contest and expose the beauty contest, and, unfortunately, only one of them spoke out. The others didn't want to say anything. I guess they felt—

SINGSON

Got scared onstage?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, felt bad or something, I don't know. Ayda Lucero was the only one, and Matapang was part of that, a whole network of women.

SINGSON

This is, I think, so interesting, because in part they were not only challenging an institution of beauty contests, but these are their parents and their aunts and uncles.

IBAÑEZ

Right.

SINGSON

So what was the interaction like? How did they feel? How did the community feel about it?

IBAÑEZ

Oh, god. I think they felt good about it, because being in college they were exposed to all this stuff. They knew about racism, sexism, being antiwar, so they were happy about it. But in the community, of course, they talked about it for years. Ayda said her parents almost disowned her and said that her aunts and uncles still talk about it ten years later. But it wasn't till later that then they recognized her, "You really did something good."

SINGSON

So did you hear about this story or were you a participant in some ways?

IBAÑEZ

No, I heard about it maybe a couple of years or during that period, from my sister, I didn't know Ayda then until later, so it was mainly from my sister.

SINGSON

How did you feel about it? How did it influence you?

IBAÑEZ

I said, oh, that's interesting. I wasn't that aware, but I said, that's good, because some of us didn't think beauty contests should happen. It seemed like they looked out for every Filipino family that had daughters. It's like they reached out to them no matter what, because that's their way of making money, and I was always opposed.

SINGSON

You feel that there's an exploitative nature to it?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, or there's like this assumption we're going to do it, because your daughters, all the daughters do it.

SINGSON

Did you feel pressure?

IBAÑEZ

Yes. It was like everybody's doing it, you might as well do it. [laughter] Then just the thought of doing it, we would hear things like, "Oh, you've got to sell so many tickets. You've got to look good, have makeup and get your hair done," and that period, again, when people started to look more natural. [laughs]

SINGSON

Oh, so you were being affected at the same time by a larger Women's Movement?

IBAÑEZ

No, just more I think the fashion trend was also being—San Diego was very casual. I used to go barefoot a lot. I was more into the beach scene, even though I wasn't. Because in San Diego you either were a cholo or you were a "surfer."

SINGSON

What does that mean?

IBAÑEZ

Cholo means that you were a Mexican who would always have makeup on and hair done and eyelashes, and I did that sometimes in high school, because when we'd go to dances, that's how we wanted to look. But at the same time, when we want to just hang out in the street, we wanted to be surfers, you know, dress casual, shorts and barefoot and slippers, and then we were attracted to

some of the white surfers in our neighborhood. [laughs] So that was at home.

SINGSON

[unclear] sort of are aware of these racial—

IBAÑEZ

Right, cultural looks kind of thing. Or even like the music, what choice of music you want. I was more into soul and not so much the white surfer music, but I liked to dance—not dance, but look like them sometimes. I liked the beach scene, that type of thing. So there were influences by the television or people, but my music was primarily soul music, the black African American music.

SINGSON

So I guess let's go back to Matapang. Did you eventually join them, or Samahan first?

IBAÑEZ

No. I joined Samahan because Matapang, I felt, was just more of a small network, and then my sister was now getting more active with the Native Americans and Chicanos, because her best friend was into the Chicano community, and she was dating a Native American who eventually became her husband. So it wasn't something—I mean, I would go to some of their stuff. I mean, she invited me to a powwow and almost dated somebody and didn't like it.

SINGSON

I'm sorry. What's a powwow?

IBAÑEZ

Oh, the Native Americans would have like a—they actually do the drumming. That's what they call it, the powwow. So that's when they do the chanting and drumming.

SINGSON

So college students would—

IBAÑEZ

No, it would be at the reservations. The Native American students would go to their community, I got invited one time, and, of course, it's a big party too.

SINGSON

Then in Samahan, did you meet other Filipinos who were like-minded?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, Filipinos, I think first through the class. I started taking the class, because my best friend in high school was Guamanian, so she didn't do any of the classes. I started meeting other Filipinos. My high school friends didn't come to San Diego State. I don't think some of them even went to college, they may have been impacted by that counselor. [laughter] And then the runaway, my friend's sister, got married early, and the other one was still—they didn't go to college, I think they were impacted by that counselor. [laughs]

SINGSON

So among your peers, you are the only person who went to college?

IBAÑEZ

Among this small grouping of people. I mean, the younger ones all went to college, because they, I guess, heard from other people that it was good. Like my sister was the one, and our generation started to recruit more people to go to college. It was more of a peer counseling recruiting that encouraged us to go to college. It wasn't our schools.

SINGSON

I wanted also to get a sense of the number of Filipinos, young Filipinos who were going to college, because this is something that I guess minorities are having a difficult time with, especially during that time.

IBAÑEZ

Oh, yes. We had to go through EOP [Educational Opportunity Program]. In fact, the SAT test did not help me at all, and thanks to my sister, she told me about the EOP program, so I went through the EOP program, and I think that's how Sal [Flor] knew all the Filipinos who went through EOP.

SINGSON

And EOP is already established?

IBAÑEZ

Oh, yes.

SINGSON

And Sal Flor is Samahan at the same time EOP?

IBAÑEZ

EOP, yes. He may have been the founder in his last year of college, or maybe before he graduated, and was working in EOP, and then eventually after he graduated, he became a staff person and continued to work there for years.

SINGSON

Recruiting Filipinos and helping them as well?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, through, of course, Samahan. So in Samahan there was the promotion of the class and the promotion of cultural days and dancing and the promotion of helping the community, doing these summer—or not only summer, but interning and helping young people.

SINGSON

Before we get to what you did in Samahan, I thought of the direction that your sister—she really influenced you a lot, but then she went to different sort of realms of her struggle or her issues that she wanted to struggle with. So how did you feel about that? Did she continue to be an inspiration in other ways?

IBAÑEZ

Oh, yes, because her best friend in high school was involved with the Chicano Movement, and who was also involved with a Theatro group, so I always was impressed with her politics, her issues and how she talked to my sister about certain things.

SINGSON

You mean another sister?

IBAÑEZ

No, the same older sister. My older sister was more exposed to other movements besides just Filipino. She knew about the Chicano Movement. She was interacting with the Chicanos and then she was also interacting with Native Americans, and she didn't hang out with Samahan.

SINGSON

Why is that?

IBAÑEZ

Because of her friends. It had to do with her best friend in high school. Like me, my best friends were primarily Filipinos [unclear]. [laughs]

SINGSON

Now, let's talk about Samahan. What in particular did you do, you yourself, what did you participate in, and what did you guys do within the campus and outside the campus?

IBAÑEZ

Well, the main thing was the class, so that was exciting.

SINGSON

You mean you're trying to build a class?

IBAÑEZ

No, attend the class. There was a Philippine-U.S. Relations class. It wasn't Filipino-American history class, because it focused on the Philippines and the U.S. relations. It was based on that book, and I can't remember the book. All I remember, it was a red book.

SINGSON

Is it the PSR [Philippine Society and Revolution]?

IBAÑEZ

Yes. [laughs] I wish I could find my copy. But that's when I first understood the relationship between the U.S. and the Philippines. That was in '72, and then I attended my first Far West Convention in '73, because that's where I met Florante.

SINGSON

So you didn't attend the 1971 and 1972 Far West Conventions?

IBAÑEZ

No, no, because I was still in high school in '71, and '72 I just graduated.

SINGSON

How did you hear about Far West?

IBAÑEZ

Through Samahan. There were people already talking about going to this Far West Convention, and if you wanted to go, you'd meet more people. So I was more social. That always got me. "You'll meet more people from other cities, and it's a great convention," and that type of thing. Actually, I didn't know about KDP [Katipunan ng Demokratikong Pilipino] until I went to San Jose, and that was '73.

SINGSON

Now, this is such a large story, the Far West Convention, your history with it, and also your recruitment to KDP, so I kind of want to dwell first on Samahan, and, actually, this class, I think, is really

interesting, because first of all, who led it, and did you learn already about the Marcos government during this time?

IBAÑEZ

No. It was led by Paul Bagnus and Sal Flor, so that's all I remember about the class, and it was only one semester I took the class. It could have been in '73 as part of also preparing to go to the San Jose, but it was during that period. All I remember, I took that class that one time and then it made me realize all these issues were going on, and it led me to discussion groups outside of the class. It may have been after the Far West Convention, because I heard about KDP at the Far West Convention, because someone was selling the newspaper and talking about it. Then '73, was after martial law, right? Martial law was declared in '72, so people were talking about martial law and the U.S. relations, and then I got invited to go to discussion groups, to other people's houses.

SINGSON

Can you talk about these discussion groups? Who led them? Is it led by Samahan?

IBAÑEZ

Individuals. I mean Paul Bagnus and Sal were the main ones, and there were other people who were like—I think they were, like, the first founders of the KDP in San Diego, so there was like a small group of people.

SINGSON

So they're outside campus?

IBAÑEZ

Right. They're outside campus, but they were also attending San Diego State. Then besides Sal and Paul Bagnus, I started to see women who also had some leading roles, and that was like [Evelyn] Avinante and then Irene Benitez. I forgot her last name. So these were like the women that were part of these discussion groups.

SINGSON

Did you just attend or did you actually lead the discussion?

IBAÑEZ

Oh, no, I just attended and listened. They would talk about different things, more around the Philippines and why martial law was occurring.

SINGSON

The history of—

IBAÑEZ

The history, the waves of immigration, but more about martial law and why we needed to oppose it and really strong about that, because my sense of KDP was more about the anti-martial law, focusing on the U.S. anti-martial law, because there was very little discussion on racism.

SINGSON

On these discussion groups.

IBAÑEZ

On these discussion groups.

SINGSON

Actually, I'm curious about that, because especially in San Diego, it's sort of a conservative Filipino community, or at least maybe you can tell me if it is conservative, and how did they feel about these discussion groups occurring?

IBAÑEZ

Okay. Well, first of all, it's very conservative when it came to the martial law issue. We didn't go beyond anti-imperialist. It was strictly martial law. Because I guess the anti-imperialist, that was a different discussion, and I think people didn't want to talk about it that way until we talked about the Philippines and the political

situation, because it wasn't until later. But during college, it was strictly just martial law, and then that's where the conservatives really came out, because it was the whole issue of "Don't rock the boat," Give it a chance especially the first two years," "You've got to be careful. " Those were our parents' concern.

SINGSON

"You've got to be careful." What does that mean?

IBAÑEZ

Of your safety, because they hear about the problems in the Philippines, you know, you're blacklisted. They started blacklisting Americans, Filipino Americans.

SINGSON

Were you on the list?

IBAÑEZ

No, thank god. [laughs] Florante was on it. I don't know who else. I think Paul Bagnus may have been on it, and I still haven't seen a list. I'm sure someone has it. There were one or two people on the list from each area that KDP existed.

SINGSON

So these discussion groups are already led by KDP?

IBAÑEZ

Yes. I mean, they didn't tell me it was KDP until after, of course, but I know the ones who were leading were KDP activists already.

SINGSON

Now, can I ask, are they mostly youth who attended these, and then the older people who conflicted with it?

IBAÑEZ

No. The discussion groups were only us, the students. There were no community people or anything like that, or even high school students.

SINGSON

So there wasn't any direct confrontation? It was more like—

IBAÑEZ

Supporting each other. It was more educating each other, that kind of discussion group.

SINGSON

Then what did you take out of these discussion groups?

IBAÑEZ

Well, I thought it was interesting that there were people who—because in the class you only saw certain people, and then outside, there were people beyond the class that were there.

SINGSON

Class. What do you mean, class?

IBAÑEZ

I mean that class, that PSR, the Paul Bagnus class. So I go, oh, there's more people who are having these discussions outside of class, because I'd never seen some of these people. I know they went to school, and a lot of them were, like, older, meaning only one or two years older than me. They're like my sister's generation. We're only two years apart, but I call them a whole different group because they're not my immediate peers. My immediate peers, we were like into parties and socializing, and then you had this serious older group who wanted to tell us about the issues kind of thing.

SINGSON

And you think that they [KDP] really changed you from social?

IBAÑEZ

Yes. It changed me more in terms of, well, first the Far West Convention, so that helped a little bit more, and then coming back and hearing more about it, and then when Florante and I started dating, he was having a parallel situation. He was also being asked and having these discussion groups with people too. Then he was asked to join and I go, "Oh, that's funny. They've asked me too." So that's what happened.

SINGSON

I think since we've already talked about the first Far West Convention, maybe we'll talk about it now, and then later on in the next session we can talk about the subsequent Far West Convention, because it seems so pivotal, at least for 1973, and then we'll probably end just about that time in 1973. So the 1973 third Far West Convention is where?

IBAÑEZ

In San Jose.

SINGSON

And you were a delegate?

IBAÑEZ

San Diego. In fact, it was more San Diego State. We didn't even call each other, I think—I mean, we were San Diego, but most of us were from San Diego State.

SINGSON

What is your impression of the first Far West Convention? What did you do and what workshops did you attend?

IBAÑEZ

Well, I remember the general session, just to talk about how important the history of the Far West Convention, why we're in San Jose, because they want to make sure the communities knew about the Far West Convention in San Jose. The only workshops I attended were for young people, the students. So that first year I

don’t know too much other than the paper. Someone was selling the KDP paper, Ang Katipunan, and then that’s when I first heard about the KDP.

SINGSON

So it wasn’t much of a big impression for you, it seems.

IBAÑEZ

No. I mean it was in terms of at least I met people from here, San Diego and Los Angeles or Carson, and I met Florante. But other than that, it wasn’t—and then the newspaper, so those were the three things that I remember impressed me about the Far West Convention. It wasn’t until ’74, until the year later, that I got—

SINGSON

At UCLA [University of California Los Angeles].

IBAÑEZ

—to understand it more, because we were already in the KDP, and that was like one of our areas of work, to do the work and to focus on the issues at the Far West Convention.

SINGSON

Well, maybe we can end this in a good note by talking about how you’re dating with Florante.

IBAÑEZ

And then the wedding.

SINGSON

Right, being so far away from each other, and then that’ll wrap up the 1973, and then we can move on to 1974 next session. So you met in San Jose?

IBAÑEZ

San Jose, yes. See, like I said, I’m too social. They told me to go around and mingle with people.

SINGSON

I'm sorry. Who told you to do this?

IBAÑEZ

The San Diego leadership. I don't remember who was in leadership. It could have been Ben Manzon or Sal. People said, "Just go around. You guys have got to meet people. You're not just here for yourselves," and that kind of thing. I went around and mingled. "Go around and mingle." I was sarcastic, and I go, "All right, mingle, mingle, mingle." And I saw Florante. "Hi, mingle, mingle, mingle. Who are you? Where you guys are from?" And then he said, "Carson." I go, "Carson, Nevada?" I never heard of Carson, California, until I met the Carson delegates. I met these young ladies. They were high school students. I was impressed with Carson, because there were high school students. I only knew college students who were active in the community, not high school students. I met them and that's how I was impressed with San Jose, meeting high school students too.

SINGSON

So did you date right away, right after?

IBAÑEZ

No, he called me after the convention and invited me to come up here, and I was impressed because they said they had Filipino dances for just young people. I go, "What?"

SINGSON

As opposed to?

IBAÑEZ

To just a community. It was almost like the Battle of the Bands. There were all Asian bands and Filipino bands, and they played in the big halls. They rented halls, and they had maybe three or four bands playing.

SINGSON

I'm very surprised at how mobile you are. You're able to—

IBAÑEZ

Go out?

SINGSON

—travel all the way up to Los Angeles?

IBAÑEZ

Now that I was in college, my mom and dad knew that, first of all, they couldn't stop me. They did try to stop me. They kicked me out of the house one time, and they couldn't stop me. My older sister said, "Mom and Dad, you've got to realize she's in college now. She's not a baby," that type of thing. They were impressed that I was getting involved in the community. But that's when I heard concerns about martial law later, but they were impressed about the Far West Convention, and I was hanging around with Filipinos, going to this convention. Then when I got invited to come back to L.A., of course I said it was with a group, which I was honest. It's a group of us who came here.

SINGSON

And your parents sort of being impressed by this whole community thing is because they were proud of you being involved?

IBAÑEZ

Yes. I think they were also concerned because my sister was more into non-Filipino activities. In fact, she got married—god, I can't remember. I was '74. She must have gotten married in '71. Yes, maybe '72, but I was in high school. I have to recall. But she got married to a non-Filipino, so that kind of disappointed my parents, and so when they saw I was dating a Filipino, they even got more excited. When I wanted to get married they were even more excited. We thought they would say no, because we weren't finished with college, but I think my dad was afraid that I would start dating others who were not Filipino, so he wanted to make sure.

SINGSON

So it was very important for them?

IBAÑEZ

Yes.

SINGSON

Was there a lot of pressure for you and your sisters?

IBAÑEZ

No, I think I didn't realize it until after. I mean, they accepted my brother-in-law. They were happy. But I think they were even happier, I could tell, when I was dating a Filipino.

SINGSON

So what was your impression of Los Angeles Filipinos? Was there sort of a big difference between your community in San Diego and theirs?

IBAÑEZ

Yes. Well, mainly among our age group. I mean, just the whole thing about going to a dance here in L.A., I was impressed. These are like hundreds of people going to a dance, our age, whereas in San Diego you have the older and younger people going together and maybe a hundred, two hundred people. Here it was much bigger, so I was always impressed with L.A. I actually went through a cultural shock just learning how to drive the freeways or understand where I'm at. My first time here to Carson I go, "What?" At first the refineries shocked me. [laughs] "You live by the refinery?" I had no exposure to L.A. until I started dancing. "Dancing." [laughs] Started dating Florante. Sorry.

SINGSON

So do you think that there sort of an isolated feeling on the Filipino community?

IBAÑEZ

Oh, definitely, in San Diego, yes. When I was talking to my friends I'd go, "We need to do more things outside of what we're doing," I told them, because a lot of my immediate high school friends didn't get involved at all. They didn't go to college. They didn't go to college, so they didn't get involved. Some of them who were in college were more still into the party scene, what I call the party scene. There were the party people and there were the serious activist people. And then, of course, there were the academic people who didn't do either one, but I didn't know who they were. [laughs] But we heard about them later, because we'll run into them at a reunion or something.

SINGSON

So your dating with Florante has also to do with the politics of the times?

IBAÑEZ

Yes. So what was good about us is that we did both. We also attended events or parties or dances, but yet also were activists in college.

SINGSON

This leads me to the question of the wedding. This is, for the record, a people's wedding. What is a people's wedding, and why did you decide to do it as such?

IBAÑEZ

So now we're dating in '73. We're both KDP activists. When they heard we wanted to get married, both chapters agreed to help us out. In fact, because L.A., actually, L.A. had more activist couples who had people's weddings, not just Filipinos, but there were primarily Asians who had people's weddings. To me, people's weddings is when other people are involved in the wedding. It's not just your wedding; it's everybody's helping out. So for this one, it was a KDP L.A.-San Diego chapter people's wedding. So Russell Valparaiso was the head of the KDP chapter here [Los Angeles], who helped put it together and coordinate it with the San Diego

chapter. Plus Florante and I, we just did more of the family thing and coordinating. It became a potluck, and my parents were upset, a potluck. His mom was very upset. “Let me pay for the food.” I said, “No, it’s a people’s wedding, everybody contributing, participating.” It wasn’t because we couldn’t do it on our own. It’s just that was what it was. We weren’t even sure if we wanted to get married at a church. Even though we were both Catholic, it’s just that we thought being progressive was to just tie the knot informally, and Florante wanted—one of our activist friends said he’ll pose himself as a priest, and we said, “No. I don’t think—.”

SINGSON

My parents.

IBAÑEZ

Yes, if they found out. So we made a concession that we would get married at a church, and we decided to wear Filipino attire. I think now everybody does it, but back then, no one was doing it, and so people remember that. We had to "Serve the People’s" cake, and that was done by the activists who put all these different-flavored cakes, and they learned it from other Asian weddings, too, Asian activists who also had a People’s weddings. That was a cake based on a Mao Tse-Tung story [The Foolish Old Man Who Removed Mountains] about moving the mountain.

SINGSON

So there’s that political component. There’s a lot of symbols involved in the ceremony. What else can you recall?

IBAÑEZ

There was also the chapter singing the song, “The Masses.” [laughs]

SINGSON

This is during the ceremony?

IBAÑEZ

This was the exit song. I think going in, it was traditional, but going out they wanted to sing "The Masses," "The Masses" only, so some people thought it was like the Mass, the church Mass. They didn't understand it was the people. We should have printed out the song. They helped out with some of the program and even at the reception, so that was a very political reception. Not so political, but we had some of the activists who sang political songs.

SINGSON

How did your parents react to this?

IBAÑEZ

Well, I think my dad was more impressed that it was more the Filipino culture, he was proud of wearing his Barong Tagalog, that type of thing, instead of formal suit, so he was just happy about that part. He didn't understand so much about the political stuff. I think he was just more happy because, one, he had a son-in-law who's Filipino; two, we really showed our culture, projected our culture through our wedding attire. He really liked my wedding dress. I even sewed some of the beads on it. He saw that I put a lot of effort in it and that my mom was happy, too, that she could wear a Filipino outfit.

SINGSON

It's just I think that potluck was—

IBAÑEZ

It's not the norm. First of all, you never ask for potluck for a wedding or even family parties. They would still get upset, because sometimes we would say potluck even at family parties. [laughs]

SINGSON

Because it's not a Filipino thing? It's not hospitable?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, right. They feel it's the family's obligation. Whoever is hosting the party or whoever is having the wedding should take care of the food.

SINGSON

Since we're in the family and I might forget to ask it down the road, I wanted to ask how your parents reacted to your transition to becoming an activist. I mean, it could have changed later on, so how did they feel in the beginning, and then how did it change?

IBAÑEZ

Well, I think because we focused so much on the martial law issue, they were afraid. My dad, he knew dictators weren't the way to do it, but he felt the pressure of being afraid and listening to other community people saying, "Give it a chance." "The Philippines need it, so give it a chance." It wasn't until two years later, because of all the other education and the people becoming political prisoners that they understood that it's not a democratic society and it's hurting people more than anything else.

SINGSON

So by the 1970s they started supporting you.

IBAÑEZ

Yes, more like maybe after '75, '76, two years later that they started to support me. We used to do campaigns every Christmas, singing Christmas carols and some political songs, to raise funds for political prisoners in the Philippines.

SINGSON

And they really supported that?

IBAÑEZ

Yes.

SINGSON

And your sister, how does she feel about—

IBAÑEZ

Oh, yes, she was supporting it, too, but she wasn't active anymore. She had her family. She was more into the Native American thing, going to her husband's stuff, and then she barely kept in touch with a lot of her friends. She still kept in touch with her friend who was very active in the Chicano Movement. She didn't do a lot of anti-martial law work or anything after she left San Diego State.

SINGSON

Okay, let's end there. I think it's a good way to wrap up, beginning with the family and then ending with the family.

IBAÑEZ

I should say, I forgot, that also my younger brother [Pete Estepa, Jr.] and sister [Rebecca Estepa] got involved, not so much KDP, but just as Samahan because they saw me, similar to how I saw my older sister.

SINGSON

So they also joined KDP?

IBAÑEZ

No, they joined Samahan, and then through Samahan, that's when they met their spouses. [laughs] But they got involved through Samahan and the Far West Convention. They knew a little bit about KDP because their best friends were also members of KDP, but they didn't join.

SINGSON

Do you think this is sort of a thing in the Filipino families, they influence each other? The activists sort of are more of a familial connection?

IBAÑEZ

Right. Well, I think it's just more because our closeness as brothers and sisters, and there's not that many things that you hear about

outside of what's in the Filipino newspapers or whatever you hear about through the KDP, so they hear about that, or through Samahan, because some of the activists in Samahan would talk about it. That's how they got involved, and they liked the Far West Convention. The Far West Convention had an impact on them.

SINGSON

Thank you so much. [End of May 1, 2011 interview]

1.2. Session TWO
MAY 7, 2011

SINGSON

Today is May 7 [2011], and we are here at Carson [California] for our second interview session with Rose [Roselyn Ibañez]. How are you, Rose?

IBAÑEZ

I'm fine.

SINGSON

I have to say my name. The interviewer is Precious Singson. Last time in our first session we really covered a lot about your personal background, your family's background, and towards your early college years, and we talked a little bit about the Far West Convention, too, and your early awareness of these activist movements during that early period. So I want to kind of go back, because a lot of these Filipino student movements are also part of the Asian American Movement, so I'm wondering if you have that type of experience, too, with your involvement in Samahan [Pilipino].

IBAÑEZ

At San Diego State [University]?

SINGSON

Yes.

IBAÑEZ

Pretty much no. San Diego had a small or probably minor Asian American Movement at all, as far as I know. I didn't know of any Asian American classes or student organizations. It was primarily the Filipinos, the African Americans or black students, and the Chicano students, and then, of course, Native Americans because of my sister.

SINGSON

So were there not a lot of Asians and just mostly Filipinos?

IBAÑEZ

Yes. Filipinos were the largest Asian population in San Diego. I can't remember or recall having a lot of Asian friends, non-Filipino Asian friends.

SINGSON

So I guess your knowledge of the Asian American Movement in Los Angeles and also in Berkeley [California]—so Berkeley had their Third World Coalition in 1968. Did that touch you at all?

IBAÑEZ

No. The only third world any type of organizing was in high school, but that was not just Asians; it was the African Americans and Chicano or Latino students.

SINGSON

So I guess let's go back to the Far West Convention now and if you could relate again to us what your— [interruption]

SINGSON

We're back, and we just needed to pause for a little bit to take care of the doggies, so they're taking a nap soon. So I was just about to ask about the third Far West Convention, which was in San Jose [California], and this was the first Far West Convention that you attended. We talked a little bit about it on this first session, so on

this session I wanted to follow up and ask how this really helped the network of Filipinos, and how you felt about your own change after this convention.

IBAÑEZ

Well, I think the first thing that impressed me was that there were Filipino college students in the West Coast. I've never seen or got in touch with other college students, Filipino clubs, until the Far West Convention, so I was impressed by people coming from different cities on the West Coast.

SINGSON

And you were able to keep in touch with the people in L.A. [Los Angeles]?

IBAÑEZ

Mainly L.A., because they were the closest one to us. San Diego, we were mainly San Diego State. I think UCSD [University of California, San Diego], of the two colleges in San Diego, UCSD would have been the next group with us, but they didn't send a delegation, which I'm surprised. It was mainly San Diego State students.

SINGSON

So how were they networking? Is it sort of informally, or is it already through the KDP [Katipunan ng Demokratikong Pilipino] right after your experience in 19—

IBAÑEZ

In San Jose? It was primarily networking informally, mainly because we met that way. But then there were, of course, other people who were networking, because we weren't in the KDP, but were starting to network as KDP, and I believe there were also groups who were networking as anti-martial law. There wasn't just KDP; there was also the NCRCLP [National Coalition for the Restoration of Civil Liberties in the Philippines] network that was going on.

SINGSON

So you were being invited to join NCRCLP?

IBAÑEZ

No. For San Diego I went strictly to KDP. There wasn't no strong NCRCLP chapter. It was only L.A., and then they networked with other cities and national cities. I always think of San Diego as very sheltered. They're not exposed with other cities as much, except for L.A.

SINGSON

Which is sort of interesting, because I thought that San Diego has a very large Filipino population, or how do you compare during this time the population in San Diego versus L.A., and why do you think are they a little bit more isolated?

IBAÑEZ

Well, San Diego is very primarily second wave, second generation. There were probably a few Manongs, like the barbershops that we would see. But we were primarily navy families. That was the bulk, or not bulk, that was the largest Filipino population at that time. There were very few immigration patterns coming in until later we saw more families. Because growing up in elementary, middle school, and high school, we only spoke English. There was no one that was speaking Tagalog.

SINGSON

So as opposed to, for example, in L.A., where you have all the different Manongs going up and down the West Coast?

IBAÑEZ

Right. Then you have other pockets of Filipinos. You had primarily L.A. Temple Street and then Carson, so people at UCLA [University of California Los Angeles] would see the Fil-Ams [Filipino Americans] were mainly in Carson, and the immigrant communities were mainly in downtown L.A., Temple Street.

SINGSON

As opposed to San Diego, wherein it's very more centered?

IBAÑEZ

It's just National City Fil-Ams, and, of course, down in Chula Vista and Imperial Beach, all Fil-Ams.

SINGSON

That's interesting. So you didn't hear about the Agbayani Village, because there wouldn't be a lot of Manongs in San Diego?

IBAÑEZ

We heard about it through—I think it was after the KDP formed. Then they were trying to send delegates or brigades to go and volunteer. So there was a group in San Diego that went. I wasn't able to go. I'm not sure what year. It could have been the year I was in Boston that they sent a brigade, and then San Diego had a reputation of too much partying, so when that brigade went, they were in trouble. [laughs] There was a lot of partying going on. I mean, they had this bad reputation, from my understanding.

SINGSON

But you were already out of college at this point.

IBAÑEZ

Yes. While I was in Boston, I was still in college. Actually, we were already married, and I lived in Irvine and Carson when San Diego sent a brigade.

SINGSON

So that's something that we could talk about a little later on too. So let's go back to the Far West. I think I want to talk about your recruitment to KDP a little bit later, but let's stick to Far West now and talk about the next year's Far West, which is at UCLA. Were you participating on this one, and how did you get involved?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, most of my participation I was still in San Diego, because this was also the year we got married. Florante [Ibañez] was very heavily involved. He was one of the chairs or co-chair of the committee, and he was always busy, and then I mainly came up as part of the San Diego delegation. Also part of the San Diego delegation had KDP activists, so I was a part of that KDP activists that was in that delegation.

SINGSON

So you weren't involved in the organization of it?

IBAÑEZ

No, but when we were there, there was a lot of lobbying going on, a lot of caucusing going on, and I don't know if you heard about the '74 convention. That kind of split the community, especially the Fil-Ams, even Fil-Ams who only strictly wanted to do just community work versus Fil-Ams who wanted to do both community and anti-martial-law work.

SINGSON

So I have the impression that even since 1971 there were already some KDP activists who—KDP was formed a little later, but there were already anti-martial-law stirrings. So why is it that in 1974 this became a contested issue?

IBAÑEZ

Martial law wasn't till later, '72, so in '71 it was okay. The Cordovas were very active in Seattle, and I consider them the founding community. Then it wasn't until later, as KDP formed, that the community, even in Seattle, started to do more anti-martial-law work and then labor work and seeing the relationship with everything, with anti-martial law impacting everything in the community. So it split the community that way. The same thing with San Diego. It wasn't like Seattle, but—well, maybe it was. It was the older generation that wanted to make sure we didn't even talk about martial law, so it split the community based on generations versus Fil-Ams or immigrants.

SINGSON

So in this convention in 1974 at UCLA, can you remember, do you have like a very stark memory of this—

IBAÑEZ

Tension or debates? Not so much in my workshop, but more in, what do they call, preliminary, when you come back after the workshops and you present all the resolutions.

SINGSON

Maybe you could talk a little bit about that, just to be clear on what the—

IBAÑEZ

How the process is? So the Far West Convention, you come in and there's always the keynote speakers before you get into the workshops. People were given assignments, or they were saying, "This is an area that you should probably sign up for as KDP activists." I'm trying to remember if I was in the students, because most of us who were Fil-Ams primarily did student work versus some people were starting to do anti-martial-law work, and I think the Far West Convention at UCLA was the first time it went beyond your regular topics. It was always funding, youth, women, art and culture, and education and students, so those were the primary workshops until the '74 convention they wanted to go beyond that, and that's where the New Society or anti-martial law actually had its own workshop. Labor, sexism, immigration, elderly, and military started to come about, so there were people who were doing work in those areas, especially, I think the elderly, that's where like folks who did the I [International] Hotel. They were doing work with seniors, but in housing, that type of thing.

SINGSON

So these are different workshops happening at the same time.

IBAÑEZ

Right. So then afterwards they come up with resolutions.

SINGSON

So each one?

IBAÑEZ

Each one, and then they present it on the plenary again for everybody to approve.

SINGSON

So this is about three hundred, four hundred people in one big session?

IBAÑEZ

Yes. I would say about three to four hundred at the ’74 convention. So, of course, it split on the New Society.

SINGSON

So is it within the workshop? Were you in the workshop?

IBAÑEZ

I wasn’t in that workshop, but it became an issue to support the workshop, all the resolutions in the workshop, because it was saying take a position against martial law, and, of course, when it came to the floor, nobody agreed. So when there was discussion and debate, everybody looked towards KDP leadership as to how to vote, that’s why the other folks were so upset, because we were voting as a bloc. What I tell people now is like, it’s nothing different than going to any other convention. People go as a bloc of voters. You support a person based on a bloc of people. So it was very anti-, what I call anti-talk about they’re saying they’re anti-left or anti-KDP. I think they’re also anti-democratic process. [laughs] You know? For them to say we can’t do that, I mean now that I recall and think about it, I think that was wrong. It intimidated us, but we felt we were doing the right thing.

SINGSON

So what intimidated you?

IBAÑEZ

Oh, the people who were more vocal, because they were the ones who'd been doing this work since '71. I don't know if Florante told you there was like a debriefing right after the Far West Convention, and it was like a small steering committee. Some of the folks who were from the other cities, who were sort of like the main organizers who were not KDP, came and were very upset with the Steering Committee and how it was run, and then they were labeling everybody as KDP, and it was not true.

SINGSON

So this is after—

IBAÑEZ

Everything, all the plenaries, everything. Everyone's going home. There's sort of like a debriefing, and I don't know who invited who, but they showed up and was very upset with the Steering Committee. I went along because I was there with Florante, supporting him, and I was just amazed at the debate and the heated discussion that came about.

SINGSON

Can you talk a little bit more about your opinion about this? Were you surprised at why people would get into such anger?

IBAÑEZ

Yes. I think, first of all, I looked at it more politically. I didn't look at it based on personalities. I think people just didn't like the KDP, that's how I saw it, because here's a group that's now organized as a national organization, coming into this convention and having an opinion as one group, whereas in the past it's all individuals or student clubs, organizations, and most of those students belong in the student workshop. They didn't go to the other workshops and do, "As a student organization, this is our position," student organizations. Filipino community organizations, I can't recall any

either. I mean, this wasn't when they had these non-regional groups like here in Carson, the Filipino Community of Carson. There weren't organizations like that back then. It's either strictly students or regional organizations or this Far West Convention.

SINGSON

And Convention isn't really—

IBAÑEZ

Yes, it's not really an organization. It was some way to get the community together, and it wasn't like everybody in the community. It was just certain people who wanted to be part of this effort in addressing issues.

SINGSON

So having a KDP is sort of a first time.

IBAÑEZ

Yes. Right.

SINGSON

Where do you think is the anger about that in particular? Or is it the politics of KDP?

IBAÑEZ

It's the politics of KDP. They didn't, first of all, agree with anything we did. They may have agreed with—if they put it aside. I think that's the difficulty when you have an organization like the KDP. The majority of it was mainly primarily anti-martial law. I could see that, because that was the key issue of that time. I mean, if it was like the Vietnam War, what was the key issue of the broader American community? It's the Vietnam War. In the Filipino community at the time, it was anti-martial law. It wasn't till later like other issues came about, and that was because we recognized, or we were being discriminated as well, so then you hear later on the Narciso-Perez case, the immigrant-rights work. That didn't come about unless we brought it up. The community wasn't even involved in those issues.

It was like strictly just Filipino identity, too much of the cultural and heritage part, and I hate to say that some of them are still like that. [laughs] There's still people that I know, and I try to give them exposure to, "Hey, you've got to look beyond the Filipino community too. We're past just Filipino culture and identity." But anyway, that's another issue we'll talk about in terms of current Filipino politics.

SINGSON

But I think it's interesting, because the beauty contests—we talked about this on the first session—do you think this is related to that, the whole Filipino—

IBAÑEZ

Status, yes. I think it's that whole thing of the status quo, making sure nothing changes, keeping it as it is. But then you have people in Seattle that go a little bit beyond that when they go to the identity stuff, which I give them credit for, because they dealt with a new type of drill team, they dealt with culture about Filipino Americans.

SINGSON

So they're pushing for—

IBAÑEZ

For another level of community, not so much politics but awareness. Because the beauty contests, of course, just made us aware that we're Filipinos. But I think in Seattle these Far West Conventions says, "Well, we're also Filipinos, but this is why we're Filipinos. We have our history, rich history here in America. We can change the kind of Filipino American culture. It may not be the Filipino dances in the Philippines, but we have Filipino American culture. Whatever that is, we have. It's there."

SINGSON

So do you think there's a dichotomy of this Filipino culture versus the KDP anti-[Ferdinand] Marcos stance?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, because they didn't want to do anti-marshal law, and it's always like, "The Philippines is only for the Philippines. Let them deal with it. You're here in America. Deal with us as a Filipino American community in America." So they didn't see the relationship. It's similar to my parents too. "Why are you talking about the Philippines?" Then it's very hard to tell people the relationship. "Well, first of all, the U.S. [United States] is there. How can we say we can't take a position on martial law? The bases have been there. Our tax dollars are supporting this. How can you say we can't take a position against it?" So as Filipino Americans, it was trying to see that relationship. As Filipinos who just came and immigrated here, of course their whole concern is they left the country because of this problem, and we now need your support. And then for Filipino Americans, we want to support you, but at the same time we recognize there's a relationship to the U.S. government to all this too.

SINGSON

Can I kind of play devil's advocate? So your parents are immigrants and they live in the Philippines, and they're taking sort of a position of, "Oh, let's just be concerned about things here in the U.S." versus Filipino Americans who grew up here but then who were concerned for issues in the Philippines. So, what do you think of that, or how did you defend those kind of charges? You mentioned that on the first interview your cousin asking you, "You're Filipino American. Why are you so concerned about the Philippines?" So how did you feel about that?

IBAÑEZ

Well, again, it's the whole thing about what's the relationship with the U.S. government and the Marcos dictatorship. I didn't see it that clearly when I first heard about it. I looked at it more as just being anti-martial law. First of all, it's not democratic. People are being under house arrest. They're being arrested. They're political prisoners. So in any country that does that, it's not just the

Philippines, I don't think I would have just said that just because I was Filipino. I felt it was a wrong way of running the government. That wasn't right. It's a dictatorship.

SINGSON

So even if it's not the Philippines.

IBAÑEZ

Right, right. I felt the same way with any other country. In fact, besides the Philippines, there were other countries that were having the same issues, same type of dictators that were coming about.

SINGSON

Besides this very tension in 1974, is there anything else that you can remember about the UCLA convention that you think stood out, coming from the 1973 and the 1974?

IBAÑEZ

I think the other ones were just the other workshops were exciting. I think that was the first time I heard about I-Hotel, that type of thing, this elderly—I mean, now we had people coming in as part of our delegation who were seniors. We didn't have seniors coming with us before. It was just students. Then immigrant rights, I couldn't recall anybody who was doing any advocacy work around that. I think it was just more that a lot of the folks in the KDP realized that immigration, because of these other issues, also needed to be addressed, so Narciso-Perez and immigrant rights, the nurses.

SINGSON

That came later.

IBAÑEZ

Yes, that came later, but people saw that immigration patterns or immigration issues were—I think because of their exposure to hearing from other communities, that immigration was going to be

an issue with the Filipino community, they started to look and say, "Hey, that's true. It's happening in our community as well."

SINGSON

So let's move on to 1975, which is the UC [University of California] Berkeley Far West Convention. Did you participate in it or were you part of the organization?

IBAÑEZ

No. So I should tell you, every time it moved to another area, the local people organized it. We just brought delegates. So, yes, we definitely organized to try to get people to come.

SINGSON

So, for example, locally KDP would get—

IBAÑEZ

Right, involved. Berkeley people or Berkeley students or Berkeley KDP—not Berkeley, Bay Area. Berkeley was more the Bay Area folks, whereas like at UCLA it was the L.A. folks that did the work.

SINGSON

But the KDP would be involved in the organization.

IBAÑEZ

Right.

SINGSON

So, for example, it'll be occurring in Berkeley, and KDP in San Diego—were you living in San Diego still in 1975?

IBAÑEZ

Yes. I came back, but Florante got to do both. He did UCLA, then he transferred to San Diego while I went to Boston, and then I came back. But I did the last one, so we can talk about that one.

SINGSON

I'm sorry, which one?

IBAÑEZ

I did the Cal [California] State L.A. I was the chairperson or co-chair of that one.

SINGSON

In 19—

IBAÑEZ

Eighty-two.

SINGSON

Maybe we could fast forward, because it is still a Far West, and we can compare what has changed. So how did you end up organizing it?

IBAÑEZ

I think most of it were like folks that we worked closely with to try to get to be on the Steering Committee. At that time, besides KDP, the folks we were closely working with were doing immigration work or anti-martial-law work, so that's how we worked around that Far West Convention. I wish Florante put the workshops on here. [laughs] I was going to dig over some papers, but I can't remember. But it was generally the same issues that came out of the '74. One I remember was like these organizations that formed, like the National [Filipino] Immigrant Rights [Organization] or the West Coast [Student] Confed[eration], it was almost like they took hold of the workshop, and they kind of do like report backs of what has happened through the years, and how do we move forward or what other campaigns we can do. It became an organizing tool, which I really like, because instead of having your own separate West Coast Confed or your own immigrant-rights organization, you come to the Far West Convention and then do that. So it's almost like a work session and planning out your campaign and then sharing it with everybody.

SINGSON

So different groups now are able to unite and share with each other.

IBAÑEZ

Right.

SINGSON

And you as an organizer, could you share your experiences about having to get all the groups together?

IBAÑEZ

For this Far West Convention?

SINGSON

For the Far West Convention.

IBAÑEZ

I can remember it was hectic. The planning had to be tight. I mean, we pretty much learn how to organize based on areas of work. I mean, in terms of planning events there's the program, there's the outreach, there's logistics, so it's sort of like it's already a template for organizing a campaign or a template for organizing a Far West Convention. But then at the same time, there's timelines and due dates. I think we almost like, towards the end, met like almost weekly or daily, and it just picks up, kind of thing.

SINGSON

Was there any stark issue at this point that you can remember?

IBAÑEZ

No, because everybody who—after '74, they don't come to the conventions anymore. The ones who split off, there was no more interaction with people who supported the other group.

SINGSON

Right. But the Marcos issue is still central to each Far West?

IBAÑEZ

I think it was at that time. I'm not sure when martial law was sort of like now broadening, or there was a broader—

SINGSON

Well, 1981 was sort of technically taken out, but Marcos was still—

IBAÑEZ

Around. Yes. I think it wasn't as a big issue. All I remember, my main work was immigration. So after I left and finished Goddard and then finished teaching and coming back to L.A., my work primarily did immigration-rights work, and that was where I did a lot of work during the Far West Convention.

SINGSON

During that Far West Convention, okay. So I hate to kind of go back and forth—

IBAÑEZ

Oh, no problem.

SINGSON

—but we keep talking about Goddard and KDP, and we really need to talk about KDP.

IBAÑEZ

Oh, sure.

SINGSON

Your recruitment to it and your participation during the early years. So let's go back to 1973. How were you recruited?

IBAÑEZ

Well, at the Far West Convention I wasn't recruited, I was exposed to it through the newspaper [Ang Katipunan]. Then after that Far West Convention, Florante was more, I guess, being recruited, and

he kind of shared with me what was going on, and then I started then hearing it from Sal [Flor] and other folks at San Diego State, and I go, "Hey, they're doing the same thing here." So he said, "Yeah, you should participate, get involved." Then that's when the whole thing about the discussion groups outside of the classes occurred and then my recruitment into the chapter.

SINGSON

So it was through the discussion groups that you were recruited to San Diego [chapter].

IBAÑEZ

Right.

SINGSON

The other follow-up from the last interview was it seemed that there's a lot of stealth or underground operation in KDP. Was this true?

IBAÑEZ

Yes. In terms of who was actually KDP activists, they weren't out saying, "Oh, I'm KDP. Do you want to come?" They pretty much, it seemed like they approached certain people and got invited to the discussion groups. It was kind of mentioned in the classes, but you still had to be invited to the discussion group. So they had, like, people they felt would be open or interested in joining KDP.

SINGSON

Why is that?

IBAÑEZ

I don't know. I think at that time it was still part of being aware of what would a Left group be, versus I know there's these concepts in the Philippines, the Popular Front versus United Front, meaning those who are part of the United Front are more internal to your Left-leaning and you're closer to more strategically, versus a Popular Front you're more open and you don't really want to just do

your position, you have to be open to everybody else's position kind of thing. So I think we were more aware that we had to be more open to people, and then the ones we felt that we could be more strategic, then we would draw them in closer to us.

SINGSON

It sounds like a very radical group.

IBAÑEZ

Yes.

SINGSON

In your initial recruitment, did you feel like this is something that I could be, this is like-minded people? Were you feeling, like, very radical at that point?

IBAÑEZ

I think so. I think I was very radical, more in terms of wanting to—in a sense, being idealistic, at the same time wanting to change society, thinking that even if martial law was lifted, well, what kind of society do you want it to be? So it got to the whole point of socialism and communism and all that, because capitalism wasn't the answer. Imperialism wasn't the answer. What is it? Then you hear about only the few countries around at that time who had other than capitalism, it was Cuba, China, and USSR [Union of Soviet Socialist Republics] I think were the only ones that you hear about. Then, of course, after Vietnam it was Vietnam versus South Vietnam, or I mean Vietnam as a whole. So it was a society that I felt that could possibly also occur in the Philippines. There were people who wanted to change society and get into that type of economic system that, of course, as you know, things didn't work out that way, and it all had to do with the whole change in the whole world.

SINGSON

So do you think—again, we're still talking about the early years of your recruitment to the KDP—actually, was it a radical turning point

for you? How did you, perhaps, look at your friends, your family at this point after—can I actually say that you were communist at this point?

IBAÑEZ

I think I was in support of it. I think I was learning more about the system. I, at times, had difficulty understanding socialism, communism, because I think that it was taught to me, socialism was—we're not even at the communist level, because they have to be all communist, all socialist to even move forward. Socialism was something based on the countries that I saw that was occurring at that time, and then that was all debatable. But I definitely knew that capitalism and imperialism was not the way to do it. There was the whole unequality. Then on my end on how to deal with socialism, I think the lack of still knowing what that meant, I was very idealistic about it.

SINGSON

How was your parents' and your family's reaction to your joining the KDP?

IBAÑEZ

My mom and dad actually didn't know it was that kind of organization. I think they knew we were Left—not Left. They knew that we were not just any other anti-martial-law group, but they didn't know the extent of it. But they thought we were too much into it, that we neglected our—well, after we got married, we had a daughter [Gabriela Ibañez], so especially Florante's dad, because we were living here, he felt that we were spending too much going to meetings. "What about your daughter? Why are you leaving her here again while you go to meetings?" that kind of thing.

SINGSON

How involved were you? I mean, how much meetings did you go to?

IBAÑEZ

It was a lot. All I can remember—well, because we were also, as students—after we got married, we were first commuting too long, too lengthy. Our commute was too lengthy, because we were still waiting for student housing. So sometimes we would live in L.A., sometimes we would live here [Carson], back and forth, or we'd live in our van at Irvine, and we were studying, and we were doing student organizing. We were like doing Philippine Cultural Days. We were working with other students on the [Philippine] Cross Cultural Center. And then after college, then we got into campaigns, so that depends on the demands of the campaign. So the immigration work could peak whenever there was that march down Broadway, that we would work with other immigrant-rights organizations.

SINGSON

I want to be a little bit more specific on these organizing and the protests or whatever activities that you were working on. So can you think of a specific example of anti-martial-law-work that you did? Were you picketing? Can you tell the experience about it?

IBAÑEZ

Every year when martial law was declared, that was a big one. We always had—

SINGSON

So you mean in September?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, we always had a big demonstration in front of the Philippine Consulate. Or if there was an issue—

SINGSON

In L.A.?

IBAÑEZ

In L.A., yes. So I was no longer in San Diego. I did a lot of the work here in L.A., so that was our big demonstration, trying to get people to the demonstration and, of course, preparing for the

demonstration, who was going to lead the chant, who was going to sell the newspaper, what kind of posters. So it was a lot of work.

SINGSON

How many people usually attend?

IBAÑEZ

I think at first it was like for a few years, until [Benigno] Aquino [Jr.] and the broader anti-martial-law people came along, it was strictly just KDP and friends, or NCRCLP. I would say maybe a hundred to a hundred fifty at the most, or even less than that, because it wasn't just that event. Sometimes it would focus on something happening in the Philippines, like a political prisoner campaign. Oh, I forgot to tell you, we did Christmas caroling for political prisoners. We raised money, or we'd sell calendars, or we sold their pendants that they would sell, and sell it here in the U.S.

SINGSON

So you actually have connections to the Philippines too. So it wasn't sort of just like a Filipino American thing.

IBAÑEZ

Right, right. Well, because the KDP had still Filipino activists who left the Philippines that came here, so they maintained ties with the Philippines.

SINGSON

Oh, I see, okay. So were you also always fundraising and everything? Because I'm also curious about how you're funded, because you guys are contributing a lot of your time and effort.

IBAÑEZ

Yes. It's called chapter dues. We had chapter dues. So I don't remember if it was based on—of course it's based on income. You can't put 50 percent of your income. There was a certain percentage that we had to pay chapter dues, and then we did fundraisers, but not so much for KDP. A lot of it was based on campaigns. So if we

had the immigration thing, we'd fundraise for that. I mean, I remember going—we had a friend who lived up the street, and we had, like, a luau to raise money for, I think, the demonstration in Broadway, and we did a skit at that luau on Filipino nurses and that type of thing. I still see the pictures of it. And then, of course, the Philippines was ongoing. That was definitely Christmas and it just seemed to be ongoing, more so than the other campaigns.

SINGSON

So what is the reaction, especially during the 1970s, when there really is a big division between the anti-Marcos and the pro-Marcos or even those Filipinos who are sort of wishy-washy about it, so what is the reaction to you as a KDP member? Do you have a recollection of—

IBAÑEZ

Well, as anti-martial law, we didn't push so much the KDP. We pushed more the—I forgot the name. There's an anti-martial law chapter, L.A. I have to get you the name.

SINGSON

The AML [AMLC, Anti-Martial Law Coalition].

IBAÑEZ

Yes, AML, yes. And, of course, NCRCLP continued, but there was the other anti-martial-law group that we worked with. Oh, I forgot to tell you, even before Aquino, there was the June 12th celebrations, Philippine Independence Day. We changed the name to Philippine National Day, and that was controversial. In fact, after Florante moved to San Diego, we did our first Philippine National Day in San Diego, and, boy, did that cause a rift in the community. "What do you mean, Philippine National Day? June 12th is Philippine independence." Our position was, "There's no independence in the Philippines until there's no martial law, so at this time we're calling it Philippine National Day."

SINGSON

So the controversy is just on the name?

IBAÑEZ

Yes. But also the reason for the name. People didn't want to call it or change it to Philippine National Day, because then they know they're taking a position. Then the other thing, too, here in L.A., not so much San Diego, but L.A. community was sponsored by the Philippine government. They were getting money, because they knew there was a strong pro-martial law group, that they had to put a lot of money and a lot of entertainers to come out and support Philippine Independence Day.

SINGSON

So you mean the consulate would receive money from the Philippines and then—

IBAÑEZ

The Philippines. Hold these big events. I mean, McArthur Park, thousands of people. We felt like, here we are at LACC [Los Angeles Community College] or a small group, and then all of a sudden we see thousands going to McArthur Park. Then what we hear, though, is people were doing it because they were more into seeing the entertainers than to hear speeches about Marcos, kind of thing.

SINGSON

Just to make sure that we're kind of straightening out, because it seems like you're moving back and forth, maybe we can go through that sort of personal history of when did you move to Los Angeles and then back to San Diego and also to Irvine, and also what is the reason for it. Is it KDP oriented?

IBAÑEZ

Well, no. The first one, I left San Diego State after I got married, so Florante was already at [University of California] Irvine, so I transferred to Irvine and we were part of the L.A. chapter. That's why we moved back and forth, because we did student work at UC Irvine, but we also had other work in L.A.

SINGSON

Meetings and—

IBAÑEZ

Right, or other campaigns or martial law, and I think Florante had other responsibilities. I forgot what his campaigns were, but I was mainly doing student work. Then after the ’75 Far West Convention in Seattle—was it ’75? No, ’76—a few of us were selected to go to Boston, so I was one of them from L.A. There was someone from San Diego, San Francisco, and Seattle. Four of us got to go to Boston for a year, and that was one of the best experiences I’ve ever had.

SINGSON

If you don’t mind, I’ll put that in a different section, so let’s just straighten out. So 1976 you left and Florante—

IBAÑEZ

Transferred to San Diego, because there were problems going on in San Diego, and they wanted to do this Far West Convention in San Diego in ’77. So someone had to take the lead, because there was a lot of people that wanted to step down already from KDP.

SINGSON

So just to clarify, are you in the board?

IBAÑEZ

Regional?

SINGSON

Regional board?

IBAÑEZ

No, just Florante. I was more like a local leadership, so when I went to Boston, I head up the Boston group, the students there, or us, students there.

SINGSON

So in Los Angeles, you were participating and were you in the local?

IBAÑEZ

The organizational structure is there is the national leadership, regional leadership, and then the local chapter. Florante was in regional and I was in the local L.A. chapter leadership. But when I went to Boston, I was in the Boston leadership, and then came back and then moved to San Diego, and I was somewhat in the San Diego leadership, but he was still regional.

SINGSON

So now it's a perfect time, I guess, to talk about Goddard and Boston. I think you're very unique and one of the few selected to go to this program, so if you could talk about what this program is and why were you selected to go.

IBAÑEZ

Let me see. What's unique about the program is we were the third—there's a few students before us. We were maybe the third year, yes, the third grouping that went.

SINGSON

The name of the program is?

IBAÑEZ

The class was called—I forgot, sorry. But it was on the Philippine-U.S. relations, and it was focused on that because the professor was Daniel Boone Schirmer, who had a very close connection and tie with KDP, because he was part of the Friends of the Filipino People, so part of this broad anti-martial-law work was also non-Filipinos who formed this Friends of the Filipino People, and they're very, of course, non-Filipino, but they were very close in lobbying and working with us whenever we had to do some lobbying work in D.C., or how do we get more non-Filipinos involved in taking a position or speaking out. He had a very long history of anti-

imperialist work, so when he got involved with the Philippines, of course, he was heavily into it and he loved it, and so he wanted to teach a class. We were the third group of students. The plan was to get students from different cities, and it was primarily West Coast cities, because that's where a large population of students, Filipino students, were, because the plan or the suggestion was after we take this one-year program, we come back and we teach classes on Philippine-American history, Philippine-American relations, from that perspective.

SINGSON

KDP wanted to send these students, and KDP is already involved in the Filipino student course movement? I mean, there's sort of this separate—

IBAÑEZ

Yes. It was more, I think—well, I guess it was sort of like making sure Philippine American history classes continued, but was from the point of view of only Philippine-U.S. relations and anti-imperialist perspective. Because now there's much more classes than that, but that was our way of getting more people, and hopefully more people involved in KDP, too, eventually, to understand that this is a major issue and problem. Boone was in support of that, and so he had the opportunity and gave us that opportunity to do all this great research and focus on certain parts of that relationship. I can't remember the other areas that the other students did, but for our year, we focused on U.S. education as a tool of imperialism, so we focus on the education system in that period right after the Philippine-American war.

SINGSON

So you actually had materials about the Philippine education system?

IBAÑEZ

Yes. Harvard [University] has—if anybody wants to see a lot of that period, Harvard, the library has a great resource. In fact, that's

where also the class before us, Abe Ignacio, did the whole thing about the cartoons. I saw that there in Harvard, and saw all the racist cartoons and why America should go there and the colonial attitude and cartoons. It was all there at Harvard. It's amazing what's in that school. And Boone knew that, so that's where he would always take his students. "Here's Harvard. Do your research. Go here, do this. You'll find books here."

SINGSON

And you ended up writing a paper at the end of this?

IBAÑEZ

We did a collective thesis [U.S. Educational Policy in the Philippines: 1900-1913 as a Tool of U.S. Imperialism], so each one of us took a different perspective. Our book is over there. So someone did the intros—

SINGSON

If you can name them, that would be great too.

IBAÑEZ

Oh, can I see the book?

SINGSON

Sure. Well, you know what? We'll do it later. I'm sorry, it's just so we can have a flow.

IBAÑEZ

Okay. I can remember the students. So there was Maria Abadesco from San Francisco or the Bay Area, Cindy Domingo from Seattle, Felix Tuyay from San Diego, and then myself from L.A.

SINGSON

And your book is about, your thesis?

IBAÑEZ

U.S. education as a tool of imperialism in that period. I can't remember the year, but it's in that book. It's in the thesis. [laughs]

SINGSON

That's okay. We can put it on the record later on. You talk about this experience, it seems to be very meaningful for you. In what way is it very memorable?

IBAÑEZ

Well, first, Boston is a very interesting city. The campus is called Goddard Cambridge School of Social Change, so you already know it's a very political small school connected to Goddard, Vermont. In Boston there's all these independent colleges people don't know about until you get there. Besides, we lived in the middle of Harvard on one end and MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] on another, and this subway system. We see a bunch of students, but at the same time we saw a lot of progressive students because of all these independent colleges, and international students. It was my first exposure to a lot of students from Eritrea. I didn't know the struggles people were having there. Then, of course, other collectives. Vietnam, there were some students who were active from Vietnam that came over, and then the people who were doing Vietnamese solidarity work. Boone had these relationships, international relationships with some of the other people, and then his children are all very progressive, too, in their own way, and also exposed us to all this work. And his wife also was very involved in other issues, women's issues, prior to us coming, her years.

SINGSON

I'm curious how you're exposed to them. Did you take classes with other people?

IBAÑEZ

Oh, yes.

SINGSON

Or was it more like you get together, network?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, Goddard—okay, first the class itself wasn't just KDP. In fact, it's open to whoever wanted it, who heard about it. Of course we only heard about it through KDP. But he had another student there who was non-Filipino, and it was great. He's like just learning, and he had his wife, and I can't remember but it was nice interacting with someone outside of KDP, who raised a lot of questions. So that's the class. But sometimes the school would meet other classes, so they pull together like—I don't know what they were, but they were like some kind of forums, and so we would meet the other students who were taking classes at Goddard Cambridge, and that's how we inter-networked with them, attending these gatherings type of thing. Then he also made us—"made us." [laughs] Boone was cool. He didn't make us do anything. He just encouraged us to—because he did it for the other two classes. We drove to Goddard, Vermont, and that was interesting, because that school was nothing like the West Coast schools. It was very liberal, open-minded. I mean, talk about environmentalists who, I don't know, green power. I mean, it was that kind of folks that you would run into at Goddard, Vermont. There was one college, I forgot, before we went to Goddard, Vermont, where there was actually a mural by Diego Rivera, and that was my first exposure to Diego Rivera, and he even went to this and painted a mural. He's from Mexico and he came out here. And I go, wow, this is interesting and a great mural to have on this campus.

SINGSON

The other thing that I wanted to ask, you're with Cindy Domingo, and Cindy is sort of also known because of her brother [Silme Domingo], so I was hoping that maybe you could talk about your relationship with her and him, and her brother as the story, if you could relate your perspective of it.

IBAÑEZ

Yes, Cindy was—well, Silme was still around when we went to Boston. In fact, Silme and Florante both talked at the Seattle

convention and wanted to be the people to go to Boston. Why? Because as regional leadership, they couldn't go. They had leadership responsibilities, so they only let local chapters' leaders go or get nominated to go. They were upset, so they were talking at the convention saying, "God, I wish I could go." Anyway, so Cindy and I would talk about that, because she was very close to her brother, and, of course, Florante and I were married. Everything, I think, that Cindy pretty much learned was from her brother, similar to how I would have continued to learn from my sister [Remedios Estepa-Brown] if she had joined the KDP. It was that kind of a role model. In fact, she almost like acted like him in a lot of ways, because she—as they say, you do political work hard, but you also partied hard. Though she had that personality when she came to Boston, we were, like, shocked that she could still do this and also party hard, very social. But that was like Seattle. That's what the reputation for Seattle was, they knew how to party, and that doesn't mean just dancing. [laughs] Oh, now it's on tape. [laughter] Hey, we were all part of that period, so anyway. Then of course we kept close ties, and then when Silme passed away, it was very hard for everybody. We got to see Silme, I think after seventy—before he passed away, before he was murdered, that summer Florante had to go to a conference, and he was there for the labor conference and to do that resolution on the Philippines.

SINGSON

In Hawaii?

IBAÑEZ

In Hawaii. So we saw Silme and Gene [Viernes] at that time, while Florante was doing another conference. I don't think Cindy was there, but after that few months, that was the same year he was murdered, and Gene. But she pretty much picked up his legacy, and she's still doing that now. Then you'll hear about we're having our thirty-fifth anniversary of their murders coming up in July.

SINGSON

What was your reaction, I mean here at the KDP here in Los Angeles, to the deaths?

IBAÑEZ

Oh. I think we were just shocked, first of all, because how could anybody—because here we are, when we were demonstrating all this time as Filipino Americans, how can we—you know, they can't threaten us. We would take pictures of agents, and they'd take pictures of us. We go, "We're American citizens. They're not going to hurt us. " Then all of a sudden this death happens and it's like, I guess they can come over or have people hired to shoot us too. So it was a shock to us, and to realize that because of what they did with the Labor Movement, that was the threat that made him say, "No. Workers in the Philippines and workers in the U.S. cannot unite on this issue," because it could have been like Chile, where the workers took over and controlled the economy for a little bit. It would have happened that way, and that's why they felt the big threat, and Silme and Gene were a part of that major threat.

SINGSON

Did it send a lot of fear here in L.A.?

IBAÑEZ

I think initially it was fear, but then it turned into anger, and that's because the KDP was able to regroup, and we've had conferences to talk about it, and then also got other non-Filipinos to work with us and to figure out and to draw lessons from other murders that occurred. I don't know, I'm not too sure about if there was any relationship to other countries, but it helped us think about, first, the significance of this, why it happened, and then where do we go from this, and then the whole justice struggle, the courts and all that helped us as a group pull through.

SINGSON

So the KDP—because I know it's just happening in Seattle—so the KDP all throughout the West Coast was contributing to—

IBAÑEZ

Oh, yes. I mean, well, more in terms of keeping up with what's going on and then how we can help with the case and exposing the community, and then when we found the so-called smoking gun and the people involved and their connections with other community leaders, it was very interesting.

SINGSON

Let me pause for a second. [interruption]

SINGSON

Okay, we are back to recording. We just needed to pause because the video is—we ran out of tape. So I guess just to wrap things up on your experience at Goddard, so when you went back to L.A., what did you take from this experience, and how did you transition back, what did you do with the program?

IBAÑEZ

I went back to San Diego. I didn't go back to L.A., because Florante was in San Diego, and I applied at San Diego State to teach a class. The Chicanos there, Latinos there were very open to having a class on the Filipino American experience, and I was able to teach a class on what we've learned and also learning from other KDP students that taught the class before. We kind of used the same curriculum, and so I was able to teach one year, two semesters, two sets of students, on the class.

SINGSON

How did you apply your knowledge of anti-imperialism sort of besides the class, also, I guess, through the KDP work?

IBAÑEZ

It was still with the class, I mean in terms of still making sure people knew the contemporary issues were still anti-martial law, and the students were pretty open to all that. They understood the U.S. was—and the Philippine-American war, they were really

interested about that period. Then outside of the classes we promoted Philippine National Day, so that kind of helped students, and they heard more about KDP through either myself outside of the class or these events that we were holding.

SINGSON

So before, when we were on pause, you were talking about sort of your early impressions of the 1970s with the KDP, as opposed to what happened after Benigno Aquino died, so if you could sort of discuss that again. So what did you think the KDP was going through, through the 1970s?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, I felt that KDP was pretty much on its own along with anti-martial law folks or supporters. There wasn't that many organizations, maybe Friends of the Filipino People, KDP, and NCRCLP and AMLA, that's Anti-Martial Law [Alliance]. Those were only the handful of people. We would hear about some in the Philippines, but we were strictly the only groups doing these demonstrations, and I felt that it was still small. Then, of course, when Aquino was murdered, then all the groups came about. There was still another group—I forgot the other group besides Friends of the Filipino People—from the Philippines. They were like a coalition of—

SINGSON

The Movement to Free Philippines?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, right. So we would hear from them once in a while, but definitely when Aquino passed away, they were like the main supporters, because they were supporting Aquino.

SINGSON

Can I ask, if it's such a small group, I feel like it's created such a big impact in terms of spreading the word. Did you think that you were

successful during the 1970s in doing so, or how did you think was the KDP's impact, at least during these early years?

IBAÑEZ

Well, personally I thought the impact was small. But then people were doing lobbying work. There was a lot of petitions, there were a lot of congressional hearings. I didn't personally get involved with the people in [Washington] D.C. and I knew there was an impact in that sense. There were small baby steps. But then there was also people who, after Aquino died, I mean there was no hesitancy on their part, because they knew from what we were doing from before or what they were getting or reading, then you didn't need a lot of encouragement for people to just come out of the woodwork all of a sudden and just say more about us—not about us, but about the movement.

SINGSON

So speaking of what people say about you, did you have any personal recollection of saying, "I'm a KDP," and there's an impression in the community of, "Oh, you're KDP, you're communist, you're not Filipino," or that's not a good thing for a Filipino? Is that something that you felt?

IBAÑEZ

Not as much. I think it's because I didn't talk to the anti-communist folks. I pretty much ignore them. Meaning the ones we would hear about during the Philippine Independence Day, those are the folks that I pretty much left alone. It was interesting. It was only until the eighties that I started to interact with them, and they remembered me, but then they just put it behind as being—they just see me as working for Gloria Molina. They didn't see me as an anti-martial law activist [unclear]. [laughs] These are the people I run into later, but in that period, I mean, I didn't want to interact with them. Some of them lived here in Carson, and a lot of them were like another generation. A lot of them were, of course, mainly speaking Tagalog, the ones who were older what we called the professionals, who

came over as accountants or nurses or doctors, so it was hard to relate to that generation. But it was interesting, at UCLA their kids were there, and so we had some problems. Even Samahang was divided.

SINGSON

Samahang at UCLA?

IBAÑEZ

Yes. They didn't even want to hear us present about it, whereas the students who were anti-martial law said, "No, we should," and the whole division was, "We're a social educational non-political organization," so they made it clear they were not going to take up martial law issue.

SINGSON

Because there were students who were pro-Marcos?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, because I think they were part of that. Their families were involved in whatever they were doing in the Philippines. But it was interesting, there were Filipino students who had fathers, after Aquino, who were like Aquino. They were active in government. I don't know if you remember the Daza, Paul Daza. His father ran for Congress after Aquino, so he was part of that Movement for Free Philippines, we worked with them, but then there was that pro-Marcos or pro-anti-KDP, people who just didn't want to talk about it. I still see them today. [laughs] Well, I see one of them today.

SINGSON

So as far as you know, what is the people's impression of the KDP?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, it was just saying that they were young people who only took up anti-martial-law work, and it wasn't true. Because the other campaign we did was the FACLA [Filipino American Community of Los Angeles]. We wanted to take over FACLA, or not take over; we

wanted to change and reform it. I have to reword what I say. [laughs] We wanted to change it because it was old-school, and if it's a community center, it needs to address community concerns.

SINGSON

FACLA, and that's the one in downtown?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, Filipino American Community of Los Angeles. We had people run for office, what we called the progressive slate.

SINGSON

This is in what year?

IBAÑEZ

Oh, god, it should have been in the late seventies, yes. And they were threatened too.

SINGSON

So did you establish a party? Were you involved in this movement?

IBAÑEZ

Supporting the progressive slate, yes.

SINGSON

What came out of it?

IBAÑEZ

What came out of it was people were threatened again. It kind of reminded me of Seattle. There were those folks who were entrenched in the community, that didn't want to make a change. But then we also recognized there were old-time gang bangers—"gang bangers"—gangs who were also involved in all the elections, so they even threatened some of the people that were running for office, the progressive slate.

SINGSON

So did you eventually win?

IBAÑEZ

No, we didn't win. We thought it was just important to let the community know it needed to be reformed.

SINGSON

And from then on, you didn't try again?

IBAÑEZ

No. It was almost like when you're in an organization there's just so much you could do, our campaigns strictly would focus on anti-discrimination, immigrant-rights work, and anti-martial law. Reforming community work was possibly the next step, but we didn't have a lot of people to do that work, because we even thought about how do we get into neighborhoods and change and become a political force or a progressive force, like a Neighborhood Watch group. There was some of that discussion going on, and I thought, how can we do all this work? It was a lot of work already, based on what we were doing. I think if we had grown or continued to grow, it would probably have been more reforming the politics of the community in terms of like these community centers, or if we were here in Carson, The Filipino Community of Carson. You saw the community going beyond the regional groups already.

SINGSON

So that takes me to this question of the organization. I mean, you're very involved with the local leadership. L.A. is so large. How do you designate people? How do you choose—

IBAÑEZ

Where to work?

SINGSON

—what to do?

IBAÑEZ

I think a lot of it was more what was the peak or what were the major issues going on. We knew anti-martial law was going to go no matter what. It's always been half of our work. But when it came to other issues, immigrants rights was picking up—well, even before immigrant rights, there was the Filipino nurses. That was a big thing when they hit national news, and they were saying, "They didn't kill these patients. We need your help."

SINGSON

This is Narciso and Perez?

IBAÑEZ

Yes. So Chicago chapter took it up and made it a national issue with the KDP chapters. So we made it a national issue in the community because of our chapters throughout the U.S.

SINGSON

Then how did you spread the word locally?

IBAÑEZ

A lot of education, first of all. It's like Chicago taking—it's almost like the Far West Convention. The local chapter takes the lead and disseminates information and coordinates any kind of national campaign. So when they go to court, we bombard letters or petitions, that type of thing.

SINGSON

And you reach through organizations such as FACLA, the newspaper, and then what else?

IBAÑEZ

Besides FACLA and the newspaper and the Narciso-Perez? You mean like the national—

SINGSON

I guess I'm talking about like how you spread, for example, the Narciso and Perez issue. How do you let it be known?

IBAÑEZ

Oh, yes, throughout the community. The newspaper was majority of our work. There were some people here doing that campaign. Florante, I believe, was doing that campaign, so he also tried to go—they tried to reach out to nurses, so they'd try to organize with other local Filipino nurses. Then there was a conference in Chicago, so they got to go to Chicago and listen to the campaign and what was going on and bring nurses there. After the Narciso-Perez campaign, because of working with nurses, then that's how we heard about the foreign-trained nurses being discriminated, and that's how we took up the whole other immigration issue.

SINGSON

Of the 4-H?

IBAÑEZ

Yes.

SINGSON

Is it the 4-H or is this another issue?

IBAÑEZ

No, it's the same, the foreign-trained. I don't know if it was called 4-H. All I know is foreign-trained nurses. 4-H, was there a 4-H?

SINGSON

This is the agricultural one.

IBAÑEZ

Oh, that was another one. I think that was more at [University of California at] Davis. But we were doing more the Filipino nurses because of the whole thing about their licensure, not getting their license—

SINGSON

Here in L.A.?

IBAÑEZ

Or nationwide. So we took it up as an L.A., and then we linked it up with the Simpson-Mazolli Bill, because then immigration was going to even be more difficult, I mean not just for Latinos, but even Filipinos, because that policy was going to impact anybody with that status, any immigration status.

SINGSON

Was there any issue that came from L.A., emanating from L.A. and then towards the different—

IBAÑEZ

And became a national, no. There was something in Oxnard [California] that was close to L.A., another navy man who was being discriminated, but that was difficult. I can't recall what happened, but it then became part of our work in L.A. and then some of the national, other cities took it up. But, no, nothing that I can remember strictly just an L.A. that became a national issue.

SINGSON

Okay, just to wrap things up, and we're ending the KDP session about this area of 1970s, is there anything else that you can remember about any highlights of your work with the KDP?

IBAÑEZ

No, I can't remember. [laughs]

SINGSON

Well, it's a good time to end, and then next week we'll talk about, perhaps, how you left the KDP and towards the 1980s. So thanks, Rose.

IBAÑEZ

Okay, thanks, Precious. [End of May 7, 2011 interview]

1.3. Session THREE
MAY 15, 2011

SINGSON

Okay. We're starting to record. Today is May 15 [2011], and we are at Carson [California]. We are interviewing Rose Ibañez. This is Precious Singson. How are you, Rose?

IBAÑEZ

I'm fine.

SINGSON

Good. I think we're going to start this interview by looking back again in the 1970s. We're going to hopefully be able to trace your pattern, your family's movement. Part of it is because it wasn't too clear on how the chronology worked, how you were able to move from Los Angeles to Irvine to San Diego, so maybe we could start with that.

IBAÑEZ

Okay. So when I got involved with the movement in the KDP [Katipunan ng Demokratikong Pilipino], so I started in high school and then went to San Diego State [University] in '72, and then after that, got involved and then went to the San Jose Far West Convention in '73, met Florante [Ibañez], started dating, and then we got married in '74. So then I moved up to UC [University of California] Irvine, transferred to UC Irvine, and got involved in the KDP in '74. Then, let me see, '76, two years later, we were in the Seattle Far West Convention, I was one of the people that was selected to go to Boston, I was able to go to Boston '76 to '77. Then after that, Florante left L.A. and was already in San Diego, then I moved back to San Diego in '77. Maybe '76, I'm sorry. The Far West Convention was there in San Diego, and then after that we came back to L.A. [Los Angeles], after the Far West Convention. No, after that, because our daughter [Gabriela], our oldest daughter, was born there in '79.

SINGSON

In San Diego?

IBAÑEZ

In San Diego. So then we left in ’79.

SINGSON

Towards the eighties. So maybe we could also explain why you moved from San Diego. So from what I understand, your movement, or at least Florante’s move to San Diego was because he was—

IBAÑEZ

He was part of the regional leadership, and there were a lot of difficulties in San Diego. People were resigning and then there was this Far West Convention, so they needed to get people there to help put the Far West Convention together.

SINGSON

So he was asked to move to San Diego, and then you followed him.

IBAÑEZ

Actually, I was in Boston. So he moved down while I went to Boston.

SINGSON

Then after Boston you—

IBAÑEZ

Then I met him back in San Diego, because he stayed. We stayed to help with the chapter, because a lot of people resigned. I think there was only like a couple or a handful of people left.

SINGSON

So you were actually part of this—

IBAÑEZ

The San Diego chapter.

SINGSON

So, actually, that's a good question to ask, too, because I am wondering if KDP members could shift from one chapter to the other because of also political relocations, right?

IBAÑEZ

Right.

SINGSON

So maybe you could talk about political relocations.

IBAÑEZ

We call them transfers, because of the work, especially, the need of the work. That's why they asked Florante if he would like to move to San Diego, since I'm from there. That also gave me a reason to—in fact, before Florante there was another couple that moved from L.A. to there. That's Vince and Remy Reyes.

SINGSON

They're also part of KDP?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, but they were here in L.A. and then they went to San Diego. But then they moved back to San Francisco, because they're originally from San Francisco. So there's a lot of transfers going around, mainly because of the—well, for San Diego it was pretty clear it needed help to get the chapter going because of the Far West Convention.

SINGSON

So this must take a lot of effort to do it, and I'm asking your own personal feelings about these movements. You agreed to do it, obviously. Why is that?

IBAÑEZ

I saw it as more—well, for me it was personal because of family, but then at the same time, I knew that there was a need over there. In fact, I didn't want to come back to L.A., but Florante did because of his family. [interruption]

SINGSON

Okay, we're back to recording. We just had a little pause for the dogs, the puppies. So the question was how you feel about the movement or the political transfers. It must take a lot of effort to do this, but you were okay with it.

IBAÑEZ

I was okay because, first of all, Boston was great. It was a good experience. I was really happy to—but then I was sad because Florante couldn't come. We were married, and so we were, like, separated. But we got to see each other I think twice in that nine-month period, so it was hard. Then when I moved back to San Diego, I was happy because of my family, and I didn't want to leave when we got transferred back.

SINGSON

Oh, you were transferred back.

IBAÑEZ

Yes, so we got transferred back.

SINGSON

What is the reason for the transfer back?

IBAÑEZ

Well, because San Diego already had sort of like stabilized. Because Florante was more regional leadership, he needed to be in L.A.

SINGSON

So regional as in it covers—

IBAÑEZ

L.A. and San Diego, L.A. being the center of that region. But I know there were other people who moved to San Francisco. I'm sure they went through changes in that, because that's like leaving everything, your family, and moving into a new place. But like they say, when you're in an organization, you get the support and help, too, from that organization.

SINGSON

So it's not like you're moving cold, now here you are, do whatever you need to do.

IBAÑEZ

Right. Yes, there's a transition. There's a reason why people get transferred.

SINGSON

So, for example, well, because since you're moving back to San Diego, you know a lot of people and support already, but do you hear stories of other people, for example, the KDP helping the transition? How does that work for the activists?

IBAÑEZ

Helping when we moved to San Diego?

SINGSON

So, for example, an activist is transferred to somewhere without family. How does the KDP work to help out?

IBAÑEZ

Well, usually they either stay at someone's home for a while, and then, of course, they have to try to look for a job, so that's even hard. If you're not going to school, you're looking for a job. So from what I can remember, I think a lot of people weren't in jobs where they couldn't leave when they transfer, because there were certain people that they don't just pick anybody. Sometimes it's who's available or who could transfer, too.

SINGSON

Who's willing to. So it's not like—

IBAÑEZ

Right, willing, who has the flexibility, and then, of course, for me or anyone else, if your family's there, it's a benefit, because then you have a pool of people you can get even more support.

SINGSON

But the most important thing is the people have to be willing to be transferred?

IBAÑEZ

Oh, yes. They're encouraged. [laughs] Willing and encouraged.

SINGSON

I believe you're also part of sort of helping Florante stabilize San Diego, so maybe you could talk about your own perspective about why did San Diego need stabilizing, and what did you do to help stabilize.

IBAÑEZ

I think San Diego just politically didn't agree anymore with what was going on. They didn't realize that it was a lot more commitment involved. I think part of it, too, was the leadership wasn't as—I guess there was a lot of disagreement, and I know Paul Bagnus had already left and gone south, I think, too, and I don't remember a lot of the people—oh, then the [Felix] Tuyay, Tuyays were then put in that leadership. San Diego is a very close community, and once you disagree, everybody kind of like "us versus them." No matter how much you try, that's how they felt. Even though I was from San Diego, they didn't care.

SINGSON

So there's some sort of personality clash at the same time.

IBAÑEZ

Right, yes, personality, but I think politically—see, L.A. you have more political activists here. The Asian community is very strong, and so you kind of like interact with a lot of activists outside the Filipino community. San Diego, the Asian community, there's barely any Asian activists around, and I think we pretty much separated ourselves from the Latinos or black community or those activists. But when Florante and I moved down there, we were able to find or work with some outside of the Philippine, non-Filipino activists.

SINGSON

Oh, wow, in San Diego. And what were the causes for the coalitions outside?

IBAÑEZ

Oh, in San Diego? A lot of them were—well, I think when they heard that we were dealing with the military base in the Philippines, and then being in San Diego, a military town, there were certain people who were critical of the role of the military in the Philippines, and that's who we kind of got involved with.

SINGSON

So back to that thing you mentioned about people leaving KDP, is it also political reasons?

IBAÑEZ

It's primarily political, but then the summation is also ideological, meaning they weren't committed to making that change. In fact, a lot of them are now resentful of being even involved. They don't even want to say hi to us, and I know their brothers and sisters and things like that. My brothers and sisters know them. They're just resentful to the point that they think that their education and their careers were impacted because they were too involved with the KDP.

SINGSON

Is this just sort of a San Diego thing, or is this a larger—

IBAÑEZ

I think it's mainly a San Diego thing. I haven't heard other resentful feelings from other chapters, but I know for San Diego that was the majority of people, and some of them, we still keep in touch and they make jokes about it.

SINGSON

Until today?

IBAÑEZ

Even today, because that's how San Diego is. They're very into making jokes about everything. I mean, that's how we were growing up in San Diego is make—what do they say—puns, and we also get—what is it when you pick on somebody with a joke all the time, to a point where you can't stop, and so if you can't defend yourself, you kind of have to learn. But there was also another group of non-KDP when we moved there. Their mission was to kick us out of San Diego.

SINGSON

You mean you and Florante?

IBAÑEZ

They didn't like the San Diego chapter to continue once the former ones left, because they're from San Diego. Even though I'm from San Diego, they see me already as part of L.A. and part of Florante and this and that. There was anti-KDP folks who were involved in the community.

SINGSON

Is it because of their political—they're socially conservative?

IBAÑEZ

Political. They didn't agree with us.

SINGSON

In terms of?

IBAÑEZ

Anything. [laughs] I mean, they didn't even think doing antidiscrimination work—they didn't want to work with us.

SINGSON

Is it more of a personality or politics?

IBAÑEZ

Politics. It's because, well, because, first, we're more Left-leaning, so they didn't like us being there. San Diego is very conservative, so we ran into Filipinos like that. I mean, Philippine National Day, we did the first one, and the ones who didn't want to get involved said—I forgot if they told us outright or I heard it from—they told someone else that their mission was to get us out of San Diego. And we run into them now, so I won't mention names.

SINGSON

So how did you stabilize KDP, or did you eventually?

IBAÑEZ

Yes. I think eventually the few people that stayed, we started doing other work besides Philippine anti-martial-law work. We also did the Philippine National Day in San Diego. I came back and taught two classes one year at San Diego State, so those students also got involved with some of the work we were doing, mainly the Philippine National Day. Then other transfers came, but then Maria Abadesco was doing—I forgot, she moved back to Oxnard to do the Dr. Alona. We started to work with some of the students that I was working with and then meeting other community people, and we were meeting the other established Filipino community folks.

SINGSON

So it was a matter of getting people to join again, or new members to join?

IBAÑEZ

Yes. Well, new if they were open to it, but just the fact that to let them know there is still a KDP chapter, even though there were these other folks that resigned.

SINGSON

So making it stronger.

IBAÑEZ

Strong, right. Then another person did transfer down, and that's when Florante and I left, because that person then became sort of like the local leadership.

SINGSON

This is John Foz, is that right?

IBAÑEZ

Yes.

SINGSON

Now I guess we can talk about the transfer to L.A. Why were you transferred back to L.A.?

IBAÑEZ

Well, because it was just for that period, and Florante wanted to come back. I think he was told to be there for a little bit because he's part of the regional leadership, but we need him back in L.A.

SINGSON

So what's in L.A. that was necessary for a leader?

IBAÑEZ

Well, the regional leadership always had to have three people, so he was one of them, and to guide all the work for both L.A. and San Diego.

SINGSON

So how did you feel about this transition, and what did you have to do to transition back to Los Angeles?

IBAÑEZ

Gabriela was just born. Maybe she was only like eighteen months or something, so that's why I didn't want to go, because everybody—I mean, my mom and dad, that's their granddaughter, their first granddaughter. They had a grandson, two grandsons, and this was the first granddaughter. So then Florante, of course, had family here, it was like when we first got married. Moving here was—I cried after I got married, because I realized I don't have family anymore. They're not around. I felt the same way when I transferred back here to L.A. But then I got back straight into work. I was part of the local leadership, they needed me to also head up the local chapter.

SINGSON

I guess there's also that lingering question of what do you do separately as a regional leader versus the local leader. Since you're in the same area, what is covered by a larger structure than the lower structure, I guess, or smaller structure?

IBAÑEZ

So regional had to take both—they had to go L.A. and San Diego, they took care of everything, and I think eventually there was another campaign in Oxnard, so there was another campaign, the Dr. Alona case, they had to be that regional leadership, whereas, of course, local, all we did was L.A. work or San Diego work.

SINGSON

But in terms of, for example, organizing activities such as protest movements and etc., who handles what particular activities?

IBAÑEZ

Assignment, yes. So there were still the people, half the chapter that was doing more the Philippine work, and then the other half that was doing more the—which we'll go into later—Far West

Conventions or other local work versus the Philippine work. There's always that division.

SINGSON

So each member is assigned to do different particular activities?

IBAÑEZ

Right.

SINGSON

So, for example, going back to L.A., can you remember a stark memory or a highlight of your work?

IBAÑEZ

In fact, it just dawned on me. I think we did the KDP Cookbook. Did you hear about our KDP book, cookbook?

SINGSON

No.

IBAÑEZ

He didn't say anything about the cookbook?

SINGSON

No.

IBAÑEZ

Oh, my god, that was one of my major assignments, besides doing all this other stuff. We should show it to you. It was like a fundraiser for the KDP local chapter, and what was interesting—

SINGSON

Los Angeles chapter.

IBAÑEZ

Los Angeles only. So it was interesting. Everybody, of course, contributed to the dishes.

SINGSON

What is it? What's the KDP Cookbook?

IBAÑEZ

There's like Filipino dishes. So we had main dishes, side dishes, dessert. But what was bad about it was each period reflected—there was like graphics, so like when it came to chicken dishes, we put Native Americans. [laughs] When it came to pork, I think we had African Americans. And cooking for a crowd, there was the killing of the Kent State [University] massacre. We didn't look at the graphics—

SINGSON

Political correctness?

IBAÑEZ

—correctness with the topic. We just thought these were great pictures that we have to integrate in this cookbook.

SINGSON

Are they pictures or are they drawings?

IBAÑEZ

They're like graphics. That was one of the things. Then after it got printed, that's when people realized, you know, Rose and other people who were involved, "Did you guys realize what pictures you put with the menu?" "No. We just thought it was a great picture. We didn't think about the relationship with chicken and Native Americans." So it became a standing joke after that. After we did our first printing, I don't think we printed any more.

SINGSON

But it was published and it was sent out to different people?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, right.

SINGSON

Now, I'm curious, why did you make it? What was the purpose of—

IBAÑEZ

It was a fundraiser, so we always thought of different fundraisers besides the Christmas caroling for the political prisoners of Philippines. We also wanted to do local fundraisers.

SINGSON

What would it support?

IBAÑEZ

It would support KDP's other activities or publicity, besides our dues and other things. The other fundraisers I remember doing is in Echo Park, the Lotus Festival. We would also have a booth and raise money, so that took a lot of preparational work, getting the food ready and all that.

SINGSON

So you're just selling food?

IBAÑEZ

Yes.

SINGSON

Is there sort of a specific—so, for example, the funds that will be raised from this will go to a specific issue? Or is it more like—

IBAÑEZ

It just stays in the chapter.

SINGSON

I think this cookbook is so interesting. I mean, just because I think one of the things that KDP left, besides the newspaper, also this very cultural, a lot of cultural artifacts that are left by KDP, and I didn't hear about this cookbook. So how is it arranged?

IBAÑEZ

Did you hear about the album? There's a KDP album. That was national, and it's all these political songs from the Philippines, Tagalog and—oh, god. I have to show you. But it was a nice album, and we sold that too. That was distributed by all the chapters.

SINGSON

Who made this album?

IBAÑEZ

In the national. That was the national fundraiser.

SINGSON

So going back to the cookbook, so how is it arranged and what makes it a KDP cookbook? Is there sort of activism on it? What are the components of activism or the issues that you wanted to raise?

IBAÑEZ

Well, the main thing, I think in the intro we just talked briefly that we were the KDP and the work we do, and then that was pretty much how we sold it. We sold it and then we tried to make it political based on those chapters with movements and building solidarity outside of the Filipino community.

SINGSON

That's great. So besides the cookbook, is there another event that you will highlight on your activities in KDP?

IBAÑEZ

Besides the National Days and the ongoing oppositions, the anniversaries, I'm trying to think of the other activities that we did besides fundraising. Sometimes they asked us to speak at other groups, other solidarity groups.

SINGSON

So you tried to connect with other—

IBAÑEZ

Right.

SINGSON

Actually, that takes me to this question about how you mentioned that in L.A. there are a lot of other Asian American activists. How does KDP interact with them, and what are the issues that you were able to coalesce with them?

IBAÑEZ

I think locally it was mainly the leadership that worked with a lot of these groups in the earlier periods. We would do skits and stuff like that. I can't remember. That was like back in the seventies, but then there were also disagreements. People also had disagreements with how we looked at the world or what the KDP was doing and stuff, so we weren't really close to some of the Asian groups, but we knew. Oh, there was that one campaign, [Regents of the University of California v.] Bakke case, the Asians were somewhat involved, took some of the leadership, so we couldn't get involved with that movement, because there were these political differences. But yet we went to the demonstration, but we weren't seen as one of the leading coalition members.

SINGSON

Now, what are the political differences between-

IBAÑEZ

I think it had to do with that whole thing with Maoism again. KDP was trying to already divide itself and lean more towards another perspective. That's why when we go into the decline of the KDP, it was more this other broader work that starts to unfold with the leadership, and then it filters down, whereas the other Asian groups were strictly, from our perspective, we think they were still Maoists.

SINGSON

I'm sorry, so the other Asian groups were too Maoist?

IBAÑEZ

Were still Maoist, and we were trying to be outside of that. When we got into the eighties, we were getting out of that decline, our decline of Maoism, I guess. In fact, eventually, if our KDP book comes out, that's going to be in there. I wish they would hurry up. I'm sorry, I have to put my pitch in there, because that book makes it much clearer, because I heard the presentation at the AAAS [Asian American Studies Association] Conference in Hawaii. One of our leaders, former leaders [Bruce Occena] was bringing that up, and it makes sense.

SINGSON

It's a much-awaited book.

IBAÑEZ

I know. But it makes sense because then—anyway.

SINGSON

So I also want to talk about the caroling. You've mentioned it a few times. It seems such a prominent memory in your mind. What made it so memorable for you? What was its function and was it effective, or why was it something that you brought up?

IBAÑEZ

Well, it's because it was, like, every year, and then what was effective is that it went towards political prisoners, and so that was a creative way of raising and educating people about political prisoners in the Philippines. Then they started also making artifacts from the Philippines, the political prisoners, and we sold some of that during the caroling. Then the other thing, too, for Fil-Ams like myself, I learned how to sing in Tagalog, so it wasn't just singing in English. We sang both Tagalog and English songs, and so people say, "But you sing Tagalog. You can't speak?" I go, "No, but I can sing it."

SINGSON

So you sang in Filipino people's houses?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, and we would ask people, friends, and then we'd even make it more challenging, challenging meaning people that we thought we didn't know where they stood, and then they would bring people, and we don't know where they stood, so we would have, like, these discussions and stuff with folks after we sing.

SINGSON

How was the reception?

IBAÑEZ

Some of it was okay, but others are, like, because the flow didn't happen yet. They were, like, taken aback. But the hostess always knew, or host knew, and they were pretty supportive. But if they invited guests, you can kind of tell sometimes they weren't. Then there was one—oh, I forgot one. When we did it in San Diego, my cousin was in the [United States] Navy, and he actually came from the Philippines, joined the navy, and he was sort of like a few years older than me, and he pretty much, even though he was in the navy, maybe because he was in the navy, he said, "You shouldn't be doing that anymore."

SINGSON

You mean the caroling?

IBAÑEZ

Yes. "You shouldn't even be talking about what's going on in the Philippines. You're here in this country."

SINGSON

Is that something that you frequently hear?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, still ongoing then until [Benigno] Aquino [Jr.] passes away, then this whole flow happens. Everybody's like backing you up and

supporting you and buying the paper. Oh, that's the other thing too. We also sold the papers on Sundays. Did Florante tell you?

SINGSON

No. I'm sorry, Sundays? Why Sundays?

IBAÑEZ

Sundays because that's the church. There's a lot of Filipinos that come. So we targeted the high concentration of Filipino churches, Filipino—not churches. Filipino—

SINGSON

Gatherings.

IBAÑEZ

—gatherings and patrons or people who went to church, and sometimes it was a struggle. I didn't like to stand there and block, because as they drive out, people like giving me that look and, "Why are you doing that?" Because in a way I also felt insecure, because I sort of like felt like how the Black Muslims go out and sell their cakes, right? [laughs] I felt that way sometimes. I go, "Why am I standing here selling this paper?"

SINGSON

You're actually selling it, though?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, standing out there. I had to be pretty bold, but sometimes I felt so insecure. "I don't want to stand here and sell this paper, blocking this traffic and going out and talking to people," because they'll just pass you by. Some of them don't even want to talk to you, so even those you said, "Oh, look at the headlines here," you have to try to catch their attention. The support was very small. It was almost like we never assessed why sell the paper if we're going to stand there for three hours and we only sell five. We never did that kind of evaluation. It was something that we did. It wasn't just our chapter; it was nationwide. Pretty much the church, standing at

a church was our biggest sales of KDP newspapers, because we also had quotas to sell newspapers.

SINGSON

So each member had a quota?

IBAÑEZ

Not member; chapter.

SINGSON

So I think that's interesting because in a lot of ways you seem to be evaluating now which ones worked and which particular activities didn't work. So, for example, the selling newspapers didn't work. The political-prisoner caroling worked. What else do you think worked for the KDP?

IBAÑEZ

Well, I think the educational—when we had booths at festivals, I think we also had educational materials there, and definitely when we worked with students, that was a big, big, open audience who absorbed all the information. People were pretty open to that.

SINGSON

So you actually talked in front of students. You went to courses, classrooms?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, we went to their club meetings at UCLA, we were getting invited to sometimes present, or we asked if we can present. That's when we ran into some conservative UCLA students who said, "No, we're just a social group. Why are you talking about martial law?" So then it was hard to also try to talk to people sometimes, too, about [Ferdinand] Marcos. Then that was the thing. I think most of our work focused on the Philippines when we went out. We did talk about the nurses, but then those campaigns only last so many years. So when it peaked, yes, everybody liked what we were doing, because they won their case, that kind of thing, but then

once it was over, they forgot who we were, and we're still talking about the Philippines.

SINGSON

So it seems like KDP is associated with Marcos.

IBAÑEZ

Mainly, primarily.

SINGSON

Primarily, through the public.

IBAÑEZ

Right.

SINGSON

But in reality, you guys were doing—

IBAÑEZ

We're doing both, and so they were happy that we were doing the other issues as well.

SINGSON

So now I think I want to ask, this flow. You used the term a few times. What do you mean by that?

IBAÑEZ

That activity, because we called the work, after martial law was declared, we call it an ebb, meaning it was hard to get people to understand what was going on in the Philippines. We also did forums too.

SINGSON

Forums?

IBAÑEZ

We would invite, like, people to come and hear about what's going on the Philippines, based on different campaigns that were going on in the Philippines, that type of thing. The audience would be like maybe fifty people, but when the flow happens, especially like in our newspaper sales, it went up. We were standing on the—I mean, people remember us standing every Sunday at St. Philomena, but as soon as Aquino was assassinated, they wanted to buy that paper, and we had no problem selling it. They just know. I didn't have to say a word. "Let me have the paper."

SINGSON

You mentioned St. Philomena. This is here in—

IBAÑEZ

In Carson. So that was one of the main churches. There were other churches too.

SINGSON

So now we're talking about Carson and the before and after, the ebb and flow. I'm wondering sort of if you can assess Carson's Filipino community. Was there a drastic change in views of Marcos before and after Aquino?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, everywhere. It wasn't just here in Carson. We sold on Wilshire [Boulevard] at that other church, then another church by L.A. City College.

SINGSON

So you actually jumped from church to church every Sunday.

IBAÑEZ

Yes, oh, yes. We were assigned. Different members were assigned to go to different churches, and besides churches, we also dropped them off at the stores, the Filipino stores, so I'm surprised Florante didn't say that, because he used to drive. He did more of the drop-

offs than I did. [laughs] He probably blanked out. But anyway, yes, so that was a lot of work too.

SINGSON

So besides, of course, Ninoy's assassination—well, first let's probably discuss how you felt about it when you heard about it.

IBAÑEZ

Oh, I was shocked that it could happen. I'm trying to think. His assassination happened—

SINGSON

1983.

IBAÑEZ

—after Silme [Domingo] and Gene [Viernes] was killed, so in a way I was shocked that it would happen, but then at the same time, well, if it happened here, I'm sure there's a lot that happened there. But the way the news picked it up and described it, you know how it replays all the time what occurred, so, of course, there was a lot of denial, but then people aren't that stupid. They know Marcos was part of it, so the flow just came. I mean, all the groups came out. It was hard coordinating with our group. Then there was the Movement for Free Philippines. There wasn't a strong Friends for the Filipino People here, but in other cities there were, so the news went out and tried to find different groups, and then there was the demonstrations, or not demonstrations but rallies near the Philippine Consul General.

SINGSON

It became bigger.

IBAÑEZ

Became bigger and harder to organize, because it was a broader coalition.

SINGSON

Actually, I remember 1982 Marcos came here to the U.S. Was there any activity in the Los Angeles chapter?

IBAÑEZ

Did he come to L.A.? I think he must have, or Hawaii. I think Hawaii chapter did a lot of that. Yes, I think it was more Hawaii, because I can't remember if he came—

SINGSON

It was a state visit, so it could have been Washington, D.C., but I wasn't sure if you had an L.A. activity.

IBAÑEZ

Actually, there was also another activity where people were arrested. Sit-ins. There were supposed to be these sit-ins, and I think nationwide, but it was only San Francisco that they actually got arrested and were kept in prison. They called it the AMLA [Anti-Martial Law Alliance] Seven.

SINGSON

This was in 1982?

IBAÑEZ

Before Aquino. So there were all these campaigns where we wanted to up the opposition, to not just demonstrate, that we wanted to actually sit in and close it down or something like that.

SINGSON

So, stronger?

IBAÑEZ

Right, stronger opposition to a point that people wanted to do a sit-in and get arrested and were sent to prison for a few weeks, maybe.

SINGSON

And it happened all over?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, but San Francisco was the main one. L.A., I'm not sure if anybody wanted to get arrested. [laughs] I don't remember. But there was an attempt to come and close it down, but we didn't get arrested. You kind of have to volunteer, too, to be part of that sit-in and get arrested.

SINGSON

Can I ask what your relationship or KDP's relationship is with the L.A. Consulate? Do they actually know you personally?

IBAÑEZ

I think they knew people who spoke all the time. We didn't know who they were, but they knew us, because they were taking pictures. We would always note the agents taking pictures of us, and I think when people went up to the consul—see, I wasn't part of the core group, but there's always the same person that would speak on behalf of the KDP or the local opposition, and he was definitely identified.

SINGSON

Speak in front of cameras?

IBAÑEZ

The cameras and the press, and they even go up and deliver a message if we needed to give a message.

SINGSON

Then 1986 happened, of course. 1986 is when the People Power Revolution in the Philippines happened. How did you feel about it, and what is your observations of the KDP and the Filipino community?

IBAÑEZ

Well, it was, I think, a breakthrough. I felt relieved that Marcos was no longer there, and they left to go to Hawaii. Hawaii had to

continue to do the work, but at the same time, we weren't clear how the Philippines was going to be, because there were still those issues about what kind of society it was. I forgot to mention, too, besides political prisoners there was also the NPA [National People's Army]. People supported, too, the NPA work. I didn't get involved into a lot of the debate, because my work was primarily here in the U.S. or the work that we were doing, but there was still the concern about what kind of society was the Philippines going to be after Marcos left, so those debates were going on.

SINGSON

Do you have any observations on what the Filipino community felt during that time?

IBAÑEZ

Well, I think the strongest one was just to replace him, and that's when [Corazon Aquino] Cory, right?

SINGSON

Right.

IBAÑEZ

So the Laban Movement grew, and that's where the opposition went towards, the bulk of the opposition, versus what kind of questioning an alternative society, or should there be an alternative society. The Left was still Left, but the opposition against Marcos was beyond the Left. I mean, it's the whole community. People started wearing yellow and doing Laban, so we couldn't stop that from happening. [laughs]

SINGSON

So KDP also participated in distributing all these yellow—or is it more of—

IBAÑEZ

I think we still were doing our own newspaper. We were also trying to be critical of what's going on and what should be done. But I

don’t think we were heavily involved in that. I think there was another group that formed besides the AMLA, the Restoration, the National Committee to Restore—[National Coalition for the Restoration of Civil Liberties in the Philippines], NCRCLP, so it was more towards that.

SINGSON

So KDP started straying away by 1986.

IBAÑEZ

Yes.

SINGSON

So I guess this is a good time to talk about how KDP’s transformation occurred during the 1980s. This is when we talk about the decline of KDP, which is sort of ironic, because at least in the early part of the 1980s, you talk about the ebb and flow and the flow is going, but then there’s also what you call a decline of KDP.

IBAÑEZ

I’m trying to think of the timeframe. The flow of the Philippines was going. The issue of the Philippines was flowing because of the whole transfer, the whole thing of Marcos stepping down and kicked out, and then you’ve got People Power, that kind of thing. But in terms of what’s going on in the rest of the world, that’s where we started to think about, well, now that there’s these struggles in the Philippines, we’re not sure, are we going to be pro-this or pro-Aquino, you know what I mean, pro-NPA or what? So we concentrated more—well, for me, I felt that there was other broader issues to be addressed, so that I got more involved in the Line of March. So the decline was more that the leadership of KDP started to go more into the broader U.S. struggle.

SINGSON

So this is nationally or different people?

IBAÑEZ

Nationally. Nationally, some people stayed, but then it eventually—the debate in the Philippines, I think, impacted what KDP was going to do.

SINGSON

Explain further.

IBAÑEZ

As to what kind of society it was. I heard—I wasn't involved, but all I know is that there was a lot of debate as to what kind of society the Philippines should be. Some people wanted to go back, and some people did and helped there. Some people said, "No." I mean, I don't know if it's just within the KDP, but the struggle among the Left, some people went back and wanted to help. Some people said, "No, the society is still the same. We've got to keep on fighting." And then some of us said, "Well, that's the issue with the Philippines. We're going to stick to the issue here at home." That's what happened.

SINGSON

It's almost like a three-way split.

IBAÑEZ

Right.

SINGSON

Then the name KDP, when did it start really disappearing?

IBAÑEZ

Maybe in '86, '87. When Line of March then becomes—most of the leadership and some of us become part members of the Line of March. KDP, of course, wasn't recruiting anymore, and it's just mainly members who wanted to stay because they felt it was important to listen and discuss the ongoing changes in the Philippines.

SINGSON

Before we go to the Line of March, can we talk about, at least based on my interviews with Florante, there was a point when you had to withdraw from KDP. Can you talk about that? And you also rejoined, from what I understand.

IBAÑEZ

Oh, was that earlier?

SINGSON

Yes, I think it was earlier.

IBAÑEZ

That's when we were left in San Diego. That's going back earlier.

SINGSON

Right. So 1970s?

IBAÑEZ

We left San Diego. Gabriela was born in '79, so we left San Diego. There was a disagreement. Florante and I quit, pretty much, because not only did he want to come back, I think that was the primary reason why he wanted to quit, he was also very frustrated with the chapter and the lack of support he was getting. I wasn't in the leadership then. I was just going with him to leave the chapter.

SINGSON

So you're supporting him?

IBAÑEZ

I'm supporting him and I'm in agreement that I just want to leave the KDP, too, because there's so many changes going on. I want to do other things. I'm feeling burnt out, kind of thing. It was more of a personal choice. But then he wants to come back.

SINGSON

What's the amount of time?

IBAÑEZ

Time period? I would say like maybe six months or less, because I think when you're engrained in being an activist, you kind of like miss the activities and you feel politically still strong in your beliefs.

SINGSON

Did you support him?

IBAÑEZ

I supported him, yes, because I went back. I didn't want to, but I think part of that was because personally I wanted to go back to San Diego. But he wanted to personally come back here [Carson], and then we actually stayed here—well, we moved to L.A. and then we eventually moved to Carson, because his dad was getting old, too, so that kind of helped. He was going through that as well.

SINGSON

So just to clarify, when you left San Diego in 1979, that's when you actually withdrew from KDP, and then back in L.A. you rejoined KDP.

IBAÑEZ

Right.

SINGSON

Then I guess this is a good time to talk about this idea of criticism, self-criticism. At least what's been written about the activists leaving KDP and having sort of ill feelings about their time in KDP, was part of it is because of this criticism, self-criticism. So maybe if you can explain and discuss what it is.

IBAÑEZ

Okay. It's whenever we end a chapter meeting, or when we're in a chapter meeting, there's always an assessment of our campaign or what we're doing. There's like a political summation and then organizational, meaning how did we work as a team, or who the

leadership was, that type of thing. Organization sometimes can lead to the ideological, like especially if you're in leadership. You didn't do well, so why is that? It almost became almost personal, kind of thing. I think that's where the difficulty is or the resentment sometimes can fall in, when you're focusing too much on self-criticism versus the whole assessment criticism. And that's part of the training of Mao. That came from our readings from Maoism, that you try to be critical on yourself and that type of thing. So it was hard on people, and sometimes people cried about it.

SINGSON

So just to clarify, it's sort of like people actually sat down—

IBAÑEZ

As a group, as a chapter.

SINGSON

—as a group, as a chapter, and because of the word "self-criticism," do you actually sort of say, "This is what I did wrong"?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, because we're not perfect. Especially if you really did a bad thing, or like if you left a chapter, like Florante and I, if you left a chapter and then weren't accountable to the work that's still going on, you just quit and dropped out, that's a big problem. But at the same time, they cared for us. They came chasing us too. They came looking for us here, you know, "Why? Do you need to be transferred somewhere else?" There were folks coming and visiting us as well. But it was never—still not the whole thing. It was basically focused—a lot of that criticism is always focused on the work. "We need you to do this. We need you to do that. We need—." So it's always based on that.

SINGSON

Then after the decline of KDP, you talk about activists at least trying to keep in touch with each other, even if there's no KDP anymore.

How do they do that, and what is sort of the workings of the network of people, even if they're on different organizations?

IBAÑEZ

Well, that's the whole thing about people joining Line of March and the ones who stayed in KDP. That's what happened. People who stayed in the KDP continued to do Philippine support work primarily, versus people in Line of March, we were doing—that's when we started doing immigrant-rights work. Of course there was also study groups and understanding the whole issue of socialism, you know, is that the society that we need to build here in the U.S., kind of thing.

SINGSON

So KDP members still kept in touch with people in the Line of March, and there wasn't any ill feelings between them

IBAÑEZ

No.

SINGSON

Then the other question, before we go on to the Line of March, is I'm wondering, you said that there are people who stayed with the KDP, so actually, there's no decline of KDP because they still kept going?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, but it was small. It was a smaller chapter, so not so much decline. I wouldn't use that word. It's just that it was a smaller grouping that remained because of the whole uncertainty of the Philippine issue. But yet they know it still needed to be in existence, because it helped guide the other work that was still going on with this NCRCLP. I've got to be clear on what organization actually formed after Aquino.

SINGSON

It's different than NCRCLP, you think?

IBAÑEZ

I think so. I'll let you know later.

SINGSON

Okay, good. So now let's talk about Line of March. They were in existence already when you joined them?

IBAÑEZ

Yes.

SINGSON

Well, first, maybe we could talk about at least the history of Line of March, and then you can discuss how were you able to join the group.

IBAÑEZ

Well, as I stated, the national leaderships, most of them, went into the Line of March in the Bay Area. That's our national leadership.

SINGSON

So they were founders?

IBAÑEZ

Some of them were, or they were interacting already with folks to try to form the Line of March. Yes, so they formed the Line of March and then they built chapters throughout the U.S.

SINGSON

And they're not only Filipino?

IBAÑEZ

Right. It's definitely a broad grouping of people.

SINGSON

What is the function, or at least the original intentions of the founding?

IBAÑEZ

I think it was mainly to look at an alternative society here in the U.S., you know, being still leftist, but here in the U.S. what do we need to do.

SINGSON

So it's not necessarily socialist.

IBAÑEZ

Well, it could be. I mean, we studied all these issues. Then there was also the decline—did the decline of the Soviet Union happen at that time? Oh, no, that's afterwards, but that's impacting the Line of March later on, because we were focusing more on, of course, social justice and development of a new society here in America, whatever that could be. It could be socialism, because there was a lot of support for countries outside of the Soviet Union, the ones who still had socialist countries, like Cuba and Vietnam, and China we were critical of because it was the whole Maoist thing, so that's why the Asians and Line of March bumped heads—

SINGSON

Clashed?

IBAÑEZ

—clashed, kind of thing.

SINGSON

Your joining, when did you join, and why did you feel like this is a group that you wanted to join?

IBAÑEZ

I joined mainly because the KDP issue on the Philippines wasn't my priority anymore. I felt the flow occurred, the struggle, what kind of society it would be, would have to be left with the people in the Philippines, and, of course, people who want to go back to the

Philippines or Filipinos who are still interested in that issue, but that wasn't my issue anymore, or concern.

SINGSON

So what was your issue now that you joined Line of March?

IBAÑEZ

It was more here in the U.S. What I wanted to do here as an activist were the issues that I felt we still need to address, and I agreed that we needed another kind of society here in the U.S., what that meant. It could be socialism, but we know that's going to take a long time, or there was no flow going on. [laughs] There's no People Power going on in the U.S., but there was other issues. But we'll talk about that later.

SINGSON

Did you also have criticism, or are you part of the group of the people who believed that Maoism should be criticized, or did you have any feelings about that, or is it more sort of the larger—

IBAÑEZ

The national, more the national. I think it was more the national, but I agreed with them, especially because the whole thing of criticism, self-criticism was part of that thing.

SINGSON

What was your own take on it? What was it about Maoism that you personally—

IBAÑEZ

It was this whole thing about not being open to anything else. It's just something that—and it didn't seem like—because if you agree with Maoism, you also look at China, and so China was not, I thought, a country that was very inclusive of what it meant to be a socialist or communist country. Why is China and the Soviet Union having these differences? So it's the whole question of superpowers. They talk about the superpowers. I was starting to agree with, also,

the Soviet Union, but then they also had problems too. But yet there were countries like Cuba and Vietnam that I felt it was important as an issue of a country that could still maintain and change a society that benefited everybody.

SINGSON

So it's, I think, very incredible how this group could talk about these larger issues, but at the same time you have these very local U.S. concerns. So, for example, immigration rights, which is something that you were very involved in, how did they ideologically make sense of this larger thinking with these local issues, for example, immigration rights?

IBAÑEZ

Well, the first thing is, nationally, I think nationally they were reviewing immigrant rights because of all these issues that were coming about, like the Filipino-trained nurses. We saw that as a immigrant-rights issue, because there were a lot of Filipino nurses, and this was based on other chapters who also had nurses that were activists. So they interacted with these nurses that came over from the Philippines, got recruited, and as soon as they got here, they took these exams that automatically failed a lot of people, so it became an issue. That became an issue and said, "We need to question this." So that's how we got involved with the start of the immigrant-rights issue. And then the whole thing about immigrants also had to do with legislation, so these bills are starting to come out that question the quotas again and cutting off the unification of families. That's how we started to say, "Hey, this is an important issue. We need to also get involved. It's not just a Latino thing. It's even our community is impacted, or other communities are impacted."

SINGSON

So how did you yourself get involved with the immigration? Is it through Line of March?

IBAÑEZ

Line of March, yes.

SINGSON

What were the activities that you joined to participate and become active in this issue?

IBAÑEZ

It was harder to try to find people to support us, because you either had to be a nurse or someone who knew nurses. You know what I mean? It was hard to get the Filipino community to be part of the immigrant-rights issue, unless—

SINGSON

That's interesting, because isn't there a lot of nurses in the Filipino community?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, but we weren't nurses, so it was hard. And plus, we don't speak Tagalog. [laughs] So the ones who were nurses, there was actually one in our chapter who's a Filipino nurse, and she was able to get support from that. But we also tried to interact with the Filipino Nurses Association, and they didn't like us, because they said, "No, it's the nurses' fault that they can't pass these exams."

SINGSON

Oh, wow. Can I pause for a second so that we could continue the recording? [interruption]

SINGSON

Okay, we're back to recording. We were actually going to talk about the foreign-trained nurses, but while we were on pause you were discussing how there are certain groups who were more Maoist, who were against the KDP, and there's sort of a perspective about KDP, so I was hoping that we could talk about that, and then we can talk about the foreign nurses.

IBAÑEZ

I think it was more that because we had a different perspective of Maoism, they were in support of Maoism and we were kind of—not falling away from it, I guess more critical about it and didn't feel that that was the way the societies should be going. It wasn't progressive per se, or building socialism. It was Maoist type of ideology that was keeping China the way it was. I think folks like that were more thinking of KDP as reformist, because we're not revolutionary enough or that kind of thing. We're not Left enough, so we're reformist, so we're trying to reform a country instead of being a revolutionary. You know what I mean?

SINGSON

So it's sort of revolutionary is the further step from reform?

IBAÑEZ

Right.

SINGSON

I see. So it's not good enough, type of thing.

IBAÑEZ

Right. You're not part of the Left. You're almost like you're more like a progressive group, because—and then there was also the anti-Soviet stuff going on, they even saw us more as pro-Soviet Union versus—because the split was between China and the Soviet Union.

SINGSON

Now, I'm wondering, this is all very sort of—

IBAÑEZ

High level.

SINGSON

—high-level politics. Why is it that Filipinos—and kind of going back to, these are Filipino activists sort of contesting and debating these very high-level politics. What makes these Filipino activists so involved with these high—

IBAÑEZ

Levels?

SINGSON

Right.

IBAÑEZ

Well, in the Philippines, you know, it was happening there, too, so that's what's going on. I think in all countries, to tell you the truth, there's always a Left group starts thinking at the higher level. Of course, here in the U.S., outside of the Filipino community there are other Left groups thinking that way, and you interact and have these discussions with people, so you're not isolated from what's going on in the world.

SINGSON

So the Filipino issues are, for example, your work with immigration rights for Filipinos, etc., they're sort of apart from these larger political issues.

IBAÑEZ

Right, and that's what Line of March was doing. They're part of that political issues and concerns, to try to analyze what our work should be, what should we focus on, how do we lead, what is our political message in these campaigns, that type of thing. Even in immigrant rights or like the foreign-trained nurses, we try to reach out to organizations, but yet they don't agree with us.

SINGSON

So just to, again, clarify, the Line of March nationally will have these sort of larger debates that will inform—

IBAÑEZ

The local.

SINGSON

—sort of the local work.

IBAÑEZ

Right.

SINGSON

Then Line of March also has different issues besides immigration issues?

IBAÑEZ

Yes. Well, one of the big cases they were doing is the Silme Domingo. That was one of the things, the case after they were killed. They were following up with the case. There was solidarity work. There were some people working on El Salvador at that time and then Nicaragua, these other—and then L.A. there was the Palestinian Seven. They got arrested because they were doing work in Palestine or solidarity work here, but they're here in America. Why would they get arrested? They were about to deport them. Those types of things were also going on.

SINGSON

And yours was immigrant rights. Now let's talk about the foreign nurses. Before we paused, you talked about how you wanted to get the support of nurses, who are mainly immigrant Filipinas, right?

IBAÑEZ

Right.

SINGSON

And they didn't really want your help? Or maybe you could put it in a different way.

IBAÑEZ

Okay. It was hard to work with them, mainly because, first of all, we weren't Filipinos and we didn't speak Tagalog. But we were able to at least distribute the information through people we knew who were activists and Filipino nurses, so they worked with us. But when

we tried to go to the organization that represented Filipino nurses, they didn't agree with us, because our position was these nurses fail because the test was biased. And they didn't think the test was biased. They are saying the Filipino nurses fail because they don't qualify. There's a big difference. Our position was, "No, you need to review the exams or you give these nurses another opportunity. Instead of immediately giving them the exam, give them at least a year to acclimate with the culture." Because the tests were culturally biased. We didn't want them to fail and then become LVNs, which was happening, so they were getting lower-paid jobs. We wanted them to stay and be a nurse, but, in the meantime, study more and then take the exam. That was our position.

SINGSON

So what are the things that Line of March—what were your activities to—were you actually helping the nurses study?

IBAÑEZ

No, we were just trying to advocate to change the policy within the licensure organization. That's why we were trying to get all these coalitions to support us, the Filipino nurses. I don't know if we did any other outreach work, but that was the emphasis, and then later on the legislation started coming out, the Simpson-Mazzoli-Rodino [Bill]. We kind of backed off on that issue and just left a couple of the nurses to do that work, and then we started working on the Simpson Rodino and Mazzoli Bill.

SINGSON

So what were your activities regarding this bill? So maybe first explain what the bill is, and then how did you get involved in this?

IBAÑEZ

The bill was similar to all immigration, anti-immigration bill. They were questioning family reunification, they were questioning the status and how to get people to be resident or non-resident, or do we send them back to where they came from and put in quotas. It was an anti-immigrant bill. Then there was also the identification

cards too. So all that was still part of these bills that still come up. Our analysis as activists was whenever there's an economic crisis, immigrants become the scapegoat, and we see it time and time, in the turn of the century, all the waves of immigration. There's always some kind of an anti-immigrant bill when there's an economic crisis.

SINGSON

This came out—

IBAÑEZ

In the eighties, so this was during [Ronald] Reagan, so it was very conservative back then. We worked with primarily the Latino community in building the opposition and trying to get Filipinos to also understand that.

SINGSON

In your perspective as a Philippine activist, how are Filipinos affected by this kind of bill?

IBAÑEZ

It would affect a lot of their family reunification. A lot of people wouldn't be able to bring their families over. There was going to be—I forgot. It was a while. But I remember there was like all these other things that would impact their families from coming over.

SINGSON

What types of outreach did you do, or, again, is it more sort of an advocacy level of doing marches and protests?

IBAÑEZ

Right. It was more advocacy level and legislative level, so getting people to sign petitions, writing letters, and then marching down Broadway.

SINGSON

Can you talk about that?

IBAÑEZ

The march down Broadway?

SINGSON

Right. Is this something that was happening before and you guys joined it?

IBAÑEZ

Yes. I think there was maybe a couple, or maybe there was one year before we started to get involved, because the second time we got involved, the groups were already established and we would go to the meetings. So this is where I saw Antonio Villar, our now current mayor, who's now Villaraigosa, but he was Antonio Villar then, and then there was the Rodriguez brothers. There's, like, three of them, so they were very active doing immigrant-rights work. Then MALDEF [Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund] also had representatives, but MALDEF had more connection with our national group, because I only met MALDEF a couple of times, but not actively doing the march.

SINGSON

So Antonio Villar was under which group?

IBAÑEZ

I think he was part of the—I don't know. He knew people who were actively putting on it, but he was representing his union [United Teachers Los Angeles]. He was still a union activist. Then I forgot, there was another person who's non-Filipino who I got to know really well, Frank Wilkinson. He passed away. But he was also part of that Mazzoli—besides Latinos, there was also Reverend [James] Lawson, all these people that came to support the marches. But Frank Wilkinson was also a great person. I can't remember the group he represented, but his issue was more on the civil liberties, but he felt immigrant rights was important because they affected their civil liberties, so he focused on that.

SINGSON

It sounds like a hodge-podge of people. There's so many people who got involved with this. So who was doing the main—

IBAÑEZ

Organizing? The Rodriguez brothers. But even though it's a hodge-podge of people, it was a citywide representation of people who were opposed to the bill.

SINGSON

How did the Line of March join in? Why did they decide?

IBAÑEZ

Why? Mainly because of the immigrant-rights work and then participated in that march down Broadway. Almost similar to, like, folks who were doing solidarity work when there was the antiwar issues and stuff like that. In fact, that was the whole issue with Line of March as an organization, besides looking at the society, we felt the two main concerns of this country is war and racism. Those are the two issues that we would work on as a problem with this country. We worked on a lot of antiwar issues and we also did a lot of anti-racist work.

SINGSON

Now, can you tell your memories about the march itself? I mean, it's sort of a really big thing now, and back then it's starting. Can you tell your early memories of it?

IBAÑEZ

It's similar to all the marches, make our banners, make our posters, get people to do the march, and then I'm trying to think—and then speaking. I did get an opportunity to speak, but it just blanked out on me. But I have pictures of me standing with these key leaders in L.A., so I got to speak also about the issue.

SINGSON

Do you remember what you spoke of specifically?

IBAÑEZ

I think it was just mainly the whole thing about the Filipino community is also impacted by this and why we need to oppose the bill.

SINGSON

Just to sort of close off this segment, what happened eventually to your involvement with the immigration rights? Is it something that you sort of left to do something?

IBAÑEZ

I think we kind of resigned from the Line of March. [laughs] I think the whole thing about the world changing also impacted Line of March, so the whole thing of the Soviet Union falling apart, and the whole thing about what socialism is all about and impacting the Left in general in the U.S. That's why a lot of organizations don't exist, and Line of March was part of that.

SINGSON

Did you leave before they declined?

IBAÑEZ

I think it was kind of going hand in hand. I think it just happened with the flow of the change of the world. I can't remember if there was actually—I think there probably was one meeting where we basically said that it's up to people if they want to stay or go, and we just decided to go. I think there were some folks who wanted to stay, and they were mainly doing more what we call theoretical work. They wanted to do more writing, they wanted to do more research. They were still interacting with some of the Left who were thinking at that level, and I didn't want to do that.

SINGSON

So Line of March still existed even after you left?

IBAÑEZ

No, I think it also declined, or it dissolved.

SINGSON

Actually, I forgot to ask this. Were you part of the leadership?

IBAÑEZ

No, assigned to just that work.

SINGSON

Are they kind of organized also the same way that KDP was, so there were local chapters and—

IBAÑEZ

Yes.

SINGSON

I guess this is a good time to end this part, and then next time we'll talk about your involvement with politics.

IBAÑEZ

Exactly.

SINGSON

With Gloria Molina. Thank you, Rose.

IBAÑEZ

Thank you. [End of May 15, 2011 interview]

1.4. Session FOUR
MAY 22, 2011

SINGSON

So we're starting the interview. Today is May 22 [2011]. We are doing our fourth interview session with Rose Ibañez here at Carson [California]. This is Precious Singson doing the interview. Hi, Rose, how are you?

IBAÑEZ

Hi. Thank you for coming again.

SINGSON

No problem. Thanks for participating in this session. I think we do need to go back to some of the events in the 1970s and 1980s. They're really quite important, so we have to kind of insert some of these topics, and one of them is the issue of you being a woman in KDP [Katipunan ng Demokratikong Pilipino]. So let's first ask the question, what was it like to be a woman in KDP? I guess just to be more specific, how many women were there in the leadership or in the membership, and if you can describe the participation of women.

IBAÑEZ

In terms of in the national level, there was always two women that was out of the three total, so there was one man and two women.

SINGSON

Is it possible for you to name them?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, Melinda Paras and I think Trinity [Ordona]. There was either Trinity or another person I can't remember.

SINGSON

Is Geline Avila also in the national level?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, later, but during that time it was always Melinda. So Melinda was pretty young and active and so people looked up towards her, for one because she was young; two, she was a woman. Then because of that, it filtered down, not so much in terms so much of a struggle, but because of their role and what they said, that women are also part of this organization and we have to be fair and equal, and then locally there was a lot of women who had that initiative capacity, to be in local leadership and regional leadership. I think at times it may have been also conscious to make sure there was

always one in leadership, because the body is always three, so regional had three people in leadership, local was also three, so there was always a woman within that group.

SINGSON

Were you consciously trying to bring up issues for empowering women, even locally or even in the national level?

IBAÑEZ

I think it was consciously brought up, but not as much as the issue itself. It was more the whole issue of being fair and equal, so our roles were always fair and equal. When they advocated for someone to be in leadership roles, they made it clear that we should make sure that there was a woman in that position.

SINGSON

So representing. Were there at some point questions about who's doing what, what role should women play or what men should play in terms of specific activities, so women doing secretarial work, for example?

IBAÑEZ

Right. Yes. With the leadership, it's pretty clear that most of the women had responsibilities in some of the leading roles, but from the membership itself, that's where there was problems, in terms of only designating women to do childcare or logistics, but not in terms of too many of the leading roles. It's the leadership, yes, like for myself, being in the local chapter and being one of the local leaders, I would always be one of those who'd be asked to speak. But then at the same time, there were also to, I guess, help bring other women into the picture, it wasn't like that at times. It was just more out of the ones who were responsible for childcare were women, and taking care of logistics. I knew it became an issue, because some of the women who weren't in leadership roles would always question, "Why do we always have to be the same one doing childcare or logistics?"

SINGSON

So what was your response, or what was the leadership response?

IBAÑEZ

There wasn't a good response. I think it was like, "Well, you know, yeah." It was always like leaders, I mean the local leaders would be the spokesperson, so they took care of the program. But the childcare or logistics, it depended. I think it was more because they had the kids and they knew how to handle it better or something like that, but I can't remember too much about if there was anything taking care of that situation.

SINGSON

So do you remember if this was ever resolved, or did the issue just die down eventually?

IBAÑEZ

I think the issue just died down.

SINGSON

What about being a mother? Because there are so-called KDP babies. So how does motherhood affect you or your activism?

IBAÑEZ

I think in hindsight, it impacted me later, but during that time it was like, well, we always had childcare available, so that was fine.

SINGSON

Childcare through?

IBAÑEZ

Through the members. Either members would take care of them, our kids, or we would find other people who would be able to take care of our kids. But what became a problem was like when we moved here [Carson, California] with Florante [Ibañez]'s dad [Cleto Yabes Ibañez], of course he was always upset because we're always

out with the baby or our daughter [Gabriela Ibañez]. Then the other thing is that she didn't get into a lot of activities. She didn't get to play a lot of sports. She did it later, when we started to not get too active and things kind of filtered out, I mean filtered down. That's, I guess, the issue I had in hindsight as to how it impacted their growth, feeling guilty that they weren't exposed to a lot of other things that they should have at that age.

SINGSON

But there's childcare at KDP, actually, so there's some kind of a system?

IBAÑEZ

Right.

SINGSON

Because we do hear about these KDP babies. What does that mean? Is there some kind of, I guess, family support?

IBAÑEZ

It was more childcare. Gabriela grew up here in L.A. [Los Angeles] with maybe only a couple that were a couple of other kids who were somewhat her age, because we hardly knew any others who had kids. But then when she did have playmates, it wasn't like a large group of people; it was only like one or two. Why we say KDP babies, because Gabriela still remembers a lot of stuff in terms of when we'd go out and picket, and she'll pass out fliers, that type of thing, and I think she tried to write a story in the KDP book, but I don't remember what the article was about. But I know that's why we say there are KDP babies that she grew up with.

SINGSON

So you were consciously bringing her up and—

IBAÑEZ

Bringing her to too many activities. Either childcare or she comes with us to different activities.

SINGSON

What do you think are the impressions that you've given to her? Does it have an impact on her at all?

IBAÑEZ

Yes. She pretty much, as she grew older, in high school she founded the Filipino Club. She helped really establish the Filipino Club in high school [Narbonne High School]. She got Uncle Roy [Royal Morales] to come out and show them how to make a kite, that type of stuff. When she went to college, she was more into not so much the Filipino, but she was more into Asian students, that type of thing. She knows about it, but at the same time, it's not really something she's into, because her husband Hoan Vinh Nguyenphoc is now a Republican. [laughs] But she knows who we are and what we stand for still.

SINGSON

The other topic that we sort of missed, and I think this is sort of really big, because you became part of the leadership, is the West Coast Student Confederation. So how did this come about? What is this group, and why was it organized?

IBAÑEZ

It came out of the Filipino People's Far West Convention, out of the student workshop, and I'm trying to read here. I think it was in '76. It's so small I can't read it. Because it was before I went to Boston.

SINGSON

So is it after the Berkeley [Far West] Convention?

IBAÑEZ

Yes. It was a way to get students together to address both, again, this whole issue of racial and national discrimination and also take a position on the Philippines.

SINGSON

So throughout the West Coast?

IBAÑEZ

Throughout the West Coast and all the campuses on the West Coast, starting from San Diego all the way up to Seattle. So for the Southern California Region, each region had their own regional conference, and then that's where they voted for a representative. [interruption]

SINGSON

We are back, and we were just talking about the West Coast Student Confederation and what it is. It came out of the Far West Convention in 1976. What makes it different from the Far West Convention?

IBAÑEZ

Well, this one specifically addressed students. So the Far West Convention is more community-based. This one is strictly for students, working together and networking to address these two issues. Part of it was also not only these issues, but also looking at Third World Studies. We were looking at it as Third World Studies, not just Filipino American Studies. Yes, because I'm just looking at it here, as part of the fight against racial and national discrimination, and then the whole Philippines thing, that was a big thing, because even among Filipino students, not all of them agreed that that was an issue to take up.

SINGSON

So the West Coast Confederation wanted to advocate for the anti-martial law at the same time through the student network?

IBAÑEZ

Yes.

SINGSON

How did you connect to the students? Is it through smaller organizations in the universities?

IBAÑEZ

We first identified all the campuses that had a Filipino Club, and we wanted to make sure a representative attended a meeting or networked with us or were aware of us, and we held our own regional conference. So like for southern Cal, our first regional conference was in Fresno, and that's where we kind of had all the students attend and talked about the issues and what we would plan next. After we voted for regional representatives, we also met as regional representatives to kind of plan out what we want to do for the region, and all I can remember is one of the big things we planned was—it's almost like Friendship Games, but we did volleyball competition. But we held it on May Day as a political—in unity of International Workers Day, and invited Philip Vera Cruz to speak in San Diego.

SINGSON

Do you remember what year this happened?

IBAÑEZ

Okay, so if this one started in '76, we didn't have it until the following summer, so like towards the end in June, we had it in the summer so, like, volleyball competition. "Friendship first, competition last" was the slogan.

SINGSON

So before we get to that, I think that's so interesting, that whole idea of no competition in a sports competition. I wanted to ask how you got into the leadership. Were you one of the founders of West Coast Confederation?

IBAÑEZ

Actually, as KDP activists we kind of helped put the conferences together and then we had discussions on who we wanted to support to be in leadership. What was funny is they wanted this other person who was in the KDP to do it, but my friends in San Diego nominated me instead. [laughs] Because they didn't want the other

person from L.A. They didn't care who was lobbying what, but they felt that I was a better candidate for the L.A. area.

SINGSON

You represented southern California.

IBAÑEZ

Yes. Southern California was from L.A. to San Diego, so that included, of course, people in San Diego, and I forgot who the representative was in San Diego, and then myself in L.A., and I believe there was another person in either Fresno area or Long Beach. I forgot who the other representative was.

SINGSON

So Fresno is under the southern California?

IBAÑEZ

Yes. There was Bakersfield, Fresno, then everything else was northern Cal.

SINGSON

Then the other regions are northern California and then the other one is?

IBAÑEZ

The Pacific Northwest.

SINGSON

Who are the leaders for the other two?

IBAÑEZ

The only ones I can remember was Jackie Agtuca and Paulette Vinton for northern Cal, and I think Lynn Domingo was one, too, Silme's other sister.

SINGSON

So I guess now let's talk about the Friendship Games. So how did you organize them and how are they meeting together? Where did it take place again?

IBAÑEZ

It took place in San Diego, so I think it was more San Diego's idea, because everybody loved, in San Diego, to play volleyball. So they said, "Well, why don't we do a volleyball competition," or you know how you do those roundabouts or whatever. You play one team and then you move around to the next team, that type of thing. But then we took the slogan of this "Friendship first, competition last," and that was because we wanted, of course, to be networking, and it wasn't so much a competition. But at the same time we also wanted to make it political, so maybe that's why it was actually held in May, because it was International Workers Day. So it wasn't June; it was before finals that we held it in May in San Diego.

SINGSON

You had representatives coming from the different regions?

IBAÑEZ

It was only southern Cal, so this was our southern Cal event.

SINGSON

How did you make political statements during the event?

IBAÑEZ

In the program. So after we played volleyball, then Philip Vera Cruz, of course, made very good political statements, and students were, like, in awe of the way he spoke.

SINGSON

Now, that's interesting, because Philip Vera Cruz is in the Labor Movement, but then this is supposed to be a Student Movement, so how did his politics translate for the students?

IBAÑEZ

It's because of May Day. So because of International Workers Day we made it, I guess, known that we weren't just playing volleyball, but it was also important that we recognize what May Day represented for us here in the U.S. and then in the Philippines.

SINGSON

In the subsequent years, I mean after these Friendship Games, what were the other activities that the West Coast Confederation became involved with for the students themselves?

IBAÑEZ

Well, I was only in it for a year, because after that I went to Boston, so all I remember is planning this May Day celebration and then that regional conference in Fresno was the only thing, and then trying to go out and meeting students in the clubs to make sure that they were aware of the West Coast Confed. Some of it was also coordinating with other KDP activists, because they were also from other campuses, so that helped a lot, to network with the schools.

SINGSON

Did it become only mainly a Filipino organization?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, strictly just Filipino Clubs, so that's why when we hear about the other group that's in existence now, we said, "No, we were the first." I forgot that name of the group, SCPASA [Southern California Pilipino American Student Association]. There's Filipino Clubs that network together.

SINGSON

I guess the last thing that we want to talk about, too, carrying over from our last interview session, is sort of one of your activities through the Line of March, or at least what Line of March encouraged you or ushered you to do is participate in Jesse Jackson's campaign. So how did Line of March introduce you to Jesse Jackson?

IBAÑEZ

Pretty much I think it became a campaign for the [Line of March] L.A. chapter, because we knew that Jesse Jackson was not your typical candidate in this race, and other progressive and Left people were also getting involved with the Jesse Jackson campaign. So when we met locally, all I remember is there was a committee, Jesse Jackson L.A. Committee, and a lot of them were progressive and also Left people that I started to meet outside of the Line of March in this work.

SINGSON

Your own participation in this, what are the activities that you joined in?

IBAÑEZ

It was mainly like a campaign, making sure—well, there was one conference we attended in South Carolina, so it was sort of like a Jesse Jackson campaign convention, so we can understand what he stood for and what were some of the issues, and then when we came back to L.A., we worked in his campaign office, trying to get people to vote, making phone calls. That was my first ever exposure to any kind of campaigning, whereas some of the old-timers or the veterans, they were also active in the John F. Kennedy and his brother, I forgot the one who—

SINGSON

Robert [F. Kennedy].

IBAÑEZ

Robert. So they were very active in those campaigns, so they helped tell us their stories, why it's important to campaign and get people to vote.

SINGSON

I'm sorry. When you meant old-timers?

IBAÑEZ

They're not old as like in their sixties; they're like maybe ten or fifteen years older than me at the time.

SINGSON

Old-timers from the Line of March?

IBAÑEZ

No, just in this kind of work, in the political arena work, progressive people who were involved in campaigning. I wasn't always impressed, because you hear about it like in the South or Martin Luther King [Jr.], but then when you go to these events, you actually meet some of these people who were doing it in L.A., doing these other campaigns.

SINGSON

So this is where you got exposed to the different people who were working in electoral politics.

IBAÑEZ

Yes.

SINGSON

So what was it like? What is the reception in Los Angeles of the campaign? Did you do well?

IBAÑEZ

Well, I think in general it was still predominantly the African American community that kind of supported him, but then when people were listening to his speeches and if he didn't do well, then people didn't agree with him, so most of it was primarily still the African American community that supported him. I know for the Filipino community, that was where our area of work was. There was very little support for him.

SINGSON

So can you remember a very specific memory of you working in the Filipino community setting? First of all, did you actually create campaign sessions, or what was the work involved?

IBAÑEZ

I think it involved like going to Democratic Party events in the community. I'm trying to think. Besides for president, there was also Filipinos who got involved with, at that time, Browns for [Edmund R.] Brown [Jr.], governor. He ran for governor at the time, so there were, like, Filipinos, so they came up with a campaign, Browns for Brown. We would wear our rainbow buttons going to these events and promoting Jesse Jackson, and then we would talk, and they said, "Oh, he's not going to—." It was basically a lot of hesitation—"He's not going to make it. He doesn't have the support. He's not big enough." It's always based on that.

SINGSON

Is this through FACLA [Filipino American Community of Los Angeles]?

IBAÑEZ

No. I think some of them were just individuals from FACLA, but then afterwards, later the Filipino American Democrats formed, the Filipino American Los Angeles Democrats [for Reform], PALAD, started to form.

SINGSON

Did you work closely with them for the Jesse Jackson campaign, or was it separate?

IBAÑEZ

I think it was more separate. I'm trying to think if it was after Jesse Jackson campaigned that the PALAD came around, because in the Jesse Jackson campaign you would see a lot of progressive and Left activists, but then in the Democratic Party, once we interacted within the mainstream of the Democratic Party, we would see Filipinos and Asians who would support the mainstream, so that's

who we start networking. Then we see them as staff people for elected officials. It wasn't like there was a lot, but you can start seeing some of those who worked for elected officials.

SINGSON

So this is sort of the earlier years, when there started the training.

IBAÑEZ

Right. Yes, the training, but also just understanding Democratic politics, and I think you'll see a lot of Filipinos, or Fil-Ams [Filipino Americans], who are interested in it and even to a point of eventually working for a staff person or eventually wanting to run sometime in the near future.

SINGSON

For you, is this the same experience that you have through this campaign?

IBAÑEZ

No. Mine was more—I didn't want to run for office. I wanted to mainly just—I agreed with Jesse—we were looking at Jesse Jackson as an alternative to the Democratic Party. That was some of the issues that we were talking about in Line of March. We know that there's two parties here in the U.S., and those two parties will probably never become the progressive electoral politics like in other countries. In other countries that I was told that there were Labor Parties that were strong in becoming the alternate party or that type of thing. Like here it's now the Green Party or all these other independent parties. I think we were looking at Jesse Jackson to be a big force as an alternative party that will eventually outdo the Democratic Party, because the Democratic Party wasn't going to be able to do that.

SINGSON

Then maybe we can move on to Helen Brown and [Royal] Roy Morales, because at least at this time during the 1980s, your relationship really—well, I guess perhaps we can talk about first

when did you meet Roy Morales, and how did he become a big influence for you?

IBAÑEZ

Well, first of all, Florante knew him back in the seventies, so we would cross paths, that type of thing, and same thing with Helen. I think we would cross paths, but not as often, because we were so busy with the anti-martial-law work that they were more like in support but didn't want to get involved. Their whole thing was just doing Filipino American issues and not so much the Philippines, and then, of course, they were fearful of even taking a position early on, so that they kind of left that alone. It was later when this elections and people coming to run for office come. Like, for instance, Gloria Molina, she represents the Historic Filipino Town or the Philippine Town area. Any candidate that represented that area, you would hear community people wanting to meet with them to ask them what are they going to do for the Filipino community. I didn't know about the meetings, but we would hear about it afterwards. So Roy or Helen, Mrs. [Remedios] Geaga, Connie Guerrero, these were some of the community leaders, both in FACLA and the community, that would always ask these questions to elected officials when they're running for those areas.

SINGSON

So I think this is interesting, the way that at least you talked about there seems to be a growth in interest in politics in the 1980s. What do you think made this happen for Filipinos?

IBAÑEZ

I think for California in general—because PALAD didn't just form out of L.A. I think the networking also—I understand the Bay Area had strong folks who were starting to get involved in that type of work, and I think it's because the politicians started to recognize the Filipino community as a possible voting bloc or also having the financial resources. So like that one I was mentioning, all I remember is the Brown for Brown was one of the big statewide

campaigns that we've ever done as a community, because I think we were recognized as bringing a lot of money in, but also had a lot of voters. In terms of California, we're seen as a support base for a lot of the politicians. My understanding is Governor Brown now still remembers the Brown for Brown, and people that he's hired, like, on his staff, were also part of that back then, or they knew people and are being asked to—that's how the Democratic Party—you get referred by somebody else. So he's hired some Filipinos on his staff.

SINGSON

Today?

IBAÑEZ

Today.

SINGSON

In his governorship today.

IBAÑEZ

Yes.

SINGSON

So still kind of trying to understand this fruition or the formation of political life, the Filipinos, what is it that Roy Morales, or at least based on your understanding of your involvement with Roy, what took place so that you became involved in this political scene?

IBAÑEZ

It was this time Gloria Molina was campaigning in the area, because there were other politicians who represented it from the [California] State Assembly to the [California] Senate Assembly, and I think Mike Roos was the one who represented it from the State Assembly. He had a Filipino staff person, so I think the community advocated for somebody. They started to advocate to have staff working for their office, so that was what Roy was also doing with Gloria Molina. Because of my work with not just the anti-martial-law work—I did the NFIRO [National Filipino Immigrant Rights Organization], the

dropout rate, the Jesse Jackson campaign—they asked if I was interested in applying, because they heard of another person at UCLA [University of California Los Angeles], and my friend, Tony Ricasa, was also applying, and they didn't know who he was. He wasn't in the community. I mean, he's at UCLA, that's true, and he was doing good work for Filipino students, but he wasn't working in the community, so that's why they asked me if I was interested in applying.

SINGSON

What makes it so important that somebody in the community—

IBAÑEZ

Well, for them, they wanted Filipino Town as their issue. I kind of knew that a little bit. But for Roy it wasn't so much Filipino Town; it was just having representation, someone who can represent the community, Filipino community. He was beyond just Historic Filipino Town. He's always advocated the interests of the community. That's what I liked about Uncle Roy.

SINGSON

All through this period, what is it that made the support groups, so not just Uncle Roy—maybe if you can explain who are the other people involved, or what their activities are besides looking for people who can work as staff for the politicians. So are there fundraisings or other activities?

IBAÑEZ

All I remember is, again, Mrs. Geaga and Connie Guerrero are the veterans in this area, because before Browns for Brown, I think they've done other political campaigns, but their interest was always for the Filipino community, but also their projects, so that's meaning the Filipino Town project. That's been, like, their vision as a family, to develop that area and bring money into that area, bring political resources to the area. That's part of the so-called lobbying work, or making sure that when there is an elected official, if you want our vote, what are you going to do for us, kind of thing.

SINGSON

I guess the biggest question in my mind now is that—because if you think of Historic Filipino Town, it's sort of a little empty now. Back then, I guess you said that they started working even on the late seventies. Maybe you can talk about who is there, they're advocating for resources for who, and how did this support group help each other out, at least in that area? Because, again, Filipinos are sort of spread out in different areas in Los Angeles.

IBAÑEZ

It had to do with the vision of the Geaga family, because I didn't know about it until after I worked for Gloria. Of course, I kind of understood where they were coming from afterwards. But it was Mrs. Geaga, Jocelyn [Geaga], and at that time her husband, who's now her ex-husband, Edgar Yap, and Connie. I think they had all these major investments that they wanted to put into Historic Filipino Town, so they even had, like, ideas of developing a highrise hotel and having all these businesses in that Temple Street area.

SINGSON

So mainly they wanted businesses.

IBAÑEZ

Businesses. They wanted similar to San Francisco, also senior housing, you know, the highrise senior housing. They wanted it all centralized just there in Historic Filipino Town, because if it's happening in San Francisco, if it's happening in Seattle, why can't it be here in L.A.? So that's how they saw it. It's time for L.A. to do something just like that.

SINGSON

Were there a lot of residents in the area?

IBAÑEZ

See, that was the thing with working with Molina. The other half, I hear and say, "Well, this is what the community wants," and then to

her, she represents outside of the Filipino community. The demographics in that area isn't primarily Filipino. Then they said, well, they can be like businesses like in Korea Town. I said, "But then if you look at our businesses, we're not that big. These aren't big Filipino businesses that can invest." Her position was—and that's when I stopped getting the support from Connie and Mrs. Geaga, was that her position is, "If you could get the community to agree that this is the Filipino Town that you want, yes, you can have it as a Filipino Town. You can have my support if you can get the rest of the community to agree."

SINGSON

The rest of the community meaning?

IBAÑEZ

Meaning non-Filipinos, so the Hispanic and non-Filipinos that are in that geographic area that they identified.

SINGSON

Can we talk about this geographic area? What are the basic—

IBAÑEZ

Boundaries? Well, from what I remember, all it was was like Temple Street and then the Temple-Beaudry [Street] area, all the way from Beaudry to almost Hoover [Street] and then maybe three or four blocks on each side of Temple.

SINGSON

Is that the same Historic Filipino Town we have now?

IBAÑEZ

No. No, I think it was different. But they strictly looked at Temple Street as the designation.

SINGSON

Then on Temple Street, what is it that makes that area the prime area for this boundary?

IBAÑEZ

Well, again, it would have been good if they said historical, because Temple Street historically was very significant, but at that time, they only saw it as Filipino Town. So they understood the historic part because of FACLA and the other stores and restaurants that used to be there, or ongoing that are struggling to maintain there, but they wanted to get those political resources to build it. In fact, some of the businesses got Community Redevelopment [Agency] [CRA] money. In fact, that was one of my conflicts I had with one of the businesses that was Filipino-owned, because she got CRA money, but then she started getting mad because she couldn't continue because she wasn't paying prevailing wages. So I had to tell her, "You're getting this public money. You have to pay prevailing wages." She tried to use that whole thing about, "in the Philippines…" that kind of thing. "If you're supporting Filipinos, you're supposed to help Filipinos." I go, "But you're not doing what's right." It's like one of those old-time—

SINGSON

Customs?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, that they were trying to guilt-trip me to do, and I didn't want to do it.

SINGSON

Because you were also Filipino? Community Redevelopment

IBAÑEZ

But I understood the laws. I talked to the staff people and said, "Rose, do you know what she's trying to say?" I go, "Okay, please explain." So she was trying to claim less than minimum wage instead of regular wages that's required to get this money. I had to tell her that, and she got a little upset and tried to do shortcuts. Just because you have a Filipino staff person there, you can't do these shortcuts. Just because you have a Filipino staff there, you

can’t get Gloria Molina to agree with you in providing funding for the project.

SINGSON

Just to clarify, because I think this is such a great time of your life also, kind of situating it in the history of Historic Filipino Town, when did you work for Molina? You mentioned to me sort of off the record that you actually didn’t work for her campaign, so maybe if you can take me through, starting from the time when Roy Morales nominated you. So what year was that? And then if you can narrate.

IBAÑEZ

It was probably 1987, because I started with her in ’87, so it was only like a few months before she won the election. Because one of the things Roy and other folks, when they met with her was, which I wasn’t a part to, saying that, “If you win the election, if you want our votes, would you hire a Filipino staff?” And she said, “Yes.” They followed up with it right after she won. Right after she won, they pulled a community meeting together, and they looked around for possible candidates, and they said, “I think Rose is the one,” because they didn’t want to have this Tony Ricasa, because they heard he was applying. They didn’t know Tony Ricasa. Then soon after that, they put my name in. I turned in my résumé, got interviewed, and I had no idea what politics or being in this work was. They gave me certain scenarios, you know, how would you handle—they’re basically quality-of-life issues that I never knew anything about. I didn’t know what street cleaning or trash pickup or none of that, because all I knew was Jesse Jackson campaign running for president. [laughs] And, of course, I knew community issues, the Filipino community issues, and I had relationships with these Filipino community. That was my strength in the interview. Then, of course, soon after I got into it, the first two years was the hardest I’ve ever worked in any office, because it was, first, very challenging. It was new. It was a lot of learning. Plus it was a challenging area. She assigned me to one of the most difficult areas in her district.

SINGSON

Which is?

IBAÑEZ

Which is the Temple-Beaudry-Westlake-Pico Union. People are amazed that I learned a lot, and I was seen as one of her main staff people that's done well through the two years. Of course I had good training with some of the veterans who were working, or one lady who used to work with Art Snyder. Before Gloria Molina, Art Snyder was the councilmember. She taught us well in terms of how to deal with constituency and handling these issues.

SINGSON

Just for the record, what is her name?

IBAÑEZ

Rosemary Lopez.

SINGSON

She's not Filipino, Lopez.

IBAÑEZ

No, she's Latina. I was the only Filipino on her staff, and then she hired an Asian-American, Victor Huey, after that, to represent Chinatown.

SINGSON

Now, what made the work really difficult besides being—you said this area is a difficult area, so it's not just the newness of it.

IBAÑEZ

Right.

SINGSON

So what made it difficult?

IBAÑEZ

As I told people, it's one of the poorest part of her district, the most disenfranchised, and, of course, there was a lot of language barriers, because I didn't speak Spanish. But just because of that community, it was very hard. As you work in this kind of field, you kind of have to build trust, and as I tell a lot of people, you don't build that trust right away. It takes work, working and following up on their issues, and caring about what—because they can tell the way you talk, the way you behave, whether or not you care about the community. They learned right away that I was taking care of a district that needed a lot of help.

SINGSON

So you're actually facing or coming face to face with your constituents. So what kind of issues did you—I mean, do you have any specific memories of this kind of difficulty, to exemplify this kind of difficulty?

IBAÑEZ

Yes. The first thing Gloria did was, she was so upset, that she called us all out in the field and she said, "If I had to run a campaign against Gloria Molina, this is where I'll stand and do a press conference." It was in the district I represented, which was like I think Third [Street] or Sixth [Street] and Bonnie Brae [Street] or something. It was like trash all over the place and drug dealers, and things like that. She was right, it was the worst part. But we didn't know how to handle the field. It wasn't until later that—maybe a couple—of course we had to work right away to clean up. Her main priority was cleaning up the district, street—

SINGSON

As in trash?

IBAÑEZ

Trash. It was trash, it was street cleaning, and we noticed street sweepers weren't cleaning the streets when the sign was posted on certain days. She made us follow the street sweepers. If you don't know if they're cleaning or not, and, of course, they'll give you the

BS if you call, so she said, "No, I want you sitting there and following the street sweepers." We got to know how to clean a vacant lot. We knew how to clean an alley. We know how to get graffiti—well, actually, graffiti cleanup with community support. She actually created an organization among the neighborhoods. Instead of Neighborhood Watches, we created the More Advocates for Safe Homes [MASH] Los Angeles. We formed organizations, these neighborhood associations throughout the different areas, and we had our own cleanup campaigns. We did community cleanups almost once a month in the area that I represented, because it was so filthy.

SINGSON

This is different, so instead of having these neighborhood—what do you think made that successful?

IBAÑEZ

Well, I think what made it successful is there was an organization. If there wasn't an organization, these neighborhoods wouldn't know what to do. With that organization it also helped build leadership, because we also had meetings and conferences where once a year she said, "This is what we need to do for the community," and what kind of got them to those meetings is she also provided them grants. With those grants, they could use it for cleaning up the neighborhood, painting graffiti, or holding their own community cleanups. My groups were spread out in those areas, and I'd try to get the Filipino community also involved in the Temple-Beaudry area, so there were some Filipinos that were getting involved, but, of course, not the FACLA or the main organizations, because they're just concerned about their issues. I was trying to tell them, "You've got to be aware that you can't have a good community if your community's not clean. A lot of community pride has to go into it."

SINGSON

These other people who were helping out, are they different organizations, or are you talking about individuals?

IBAÑEZ

They're individuals that joined the MASH. We called them MASH Los Angeles.

SINGSON

Now let's go back to FACLA. Again, you keep referring to their issue. Is it still the Historic Filipino Town? Is that what you mean?

IBAÑEZ

Well, FACLA was separate. FACLA was mainly just trying to survive. FACLA was trying to also get money for themselves, to help renovate their building. They used to have money. My understanding, they used to have money from a rental unit, and that's how they got money to survive as FACLA. But there was so much corruption that you don't know who's the leadership or who's who. In general, it was just corrupt, because you don't see anything positive. Then they would have these elections where people were vote buying and busing people in, and then there were the gang bangers, or there were gang members, old-timers who, from my understanding, always represented someone in that leadership and threatened to—because even when we ran as a political slate before I worked for Gloria, there was gang bangers who threatened and hit one of the people in the KDP.

SINGSON

Oh, wow. In Los Angeles?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, for being part of a progressive slate.

SINGSON

This is during that time when you were running?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, when KDP ran a progressive slate after Mrs. Geaga stepped down, because I think there's term limits. We wanted to continue

her leadership, to being more open and not as corrupt as the others.

SINGSON

Okay, I'm sorry, just to clarify, you were supporting Mrs. Geaga to continue becoming a leader?

IBAÑEZ

Well, she wanted to step down, or she was retiring. I think there were term limits or she didn't want to continue to be the president of FACLA, so as KDP activists, we wanted to start and put together what we called a progressive slate. Three members were KDP, and the other three or four were just good community people that we were able to find to be part of the progressive slate, and they were threatened. One of them, who was a KDP person, was threatened physically by one of the gang bangers or the gang members within FACLA, because they have two gangs that's been there for years, Satanas and the Diablos, or something like that. I forgot. All I remember is Satanas. I forgot what the other group was.

SINGSON

Well, this is kind of important, too, because Filipino gangs, especially during the 1980s—I mean you're talking about still the 1970s, the late 1970s when the progressive slate ran, but towards 1980s the Satanas and, I'm sorry, the other one is—

IBAÑEZ

Diablos? I think it was them.

SINGSON

—Diablos, still existed, right?

IBAÑEZ

Yes.

SINGSON

Did you have any problems with these gangs, or was there any gang problem in that area during the 1980s?

IBAÑEZ

With Filipinos? The younger—those were sort of like the old veteranos, because they were already our age, in our thirties or maybe older. The younger ones, I'm pretty sure there was, but it wasn't as visible as the Latino gangs, because they were the ones who were making more of the trouble. But we didn't hear a lot about the Filipino gangs until later, but by that time I was already in the County of Los Angeles. I wasn't doing City of L.A. work, because I was with Molina a total of eight years, four in the city and four in the county.

SINGSON

So from 1987 until—

IBAÑEZ

To '91, I think. Is that four years? Then I moved to the county after that.

SINGSON

So I hate to jump around, but let's go back again to FACLA and Mrs. Geaga's relationship with them and towards the formation of the Historic Filipino Town. I'm glad that you sort of clarified that. It seems to me, at least from your narration, that Mrs. Geaga is the one only pushing for the Historic Filipino Town, and FACLA isn't involved?

IBAÑEZ

Yes. It was the Geagas who were outside of FACLA. I think by that time she stepped out of FACLA, and this was her project. It became like a family project.

SINGSON

So it's just the family and no other organizational support?

IBAÑEZ

Well, close friends, that thing, but she took the lead with the family.

SINGSON

So she was working through you to start this project going, is that right?

IBAÑEZ

Well, their agenda was to get me hired and then hopefully through me being in Molina's staff, I can help advocate for their issue or Filipino Town. At that time it was called just Filipino Town. It wasn't the Historic. That's why they didn't like me, because I wasn't there to advocate for them, because I had to agree with my boss. How were you going to get the support if you don't have the community behind you?

SINGSON

Do you know what happened as to why the Geagas weren't able to get the community support?

IBAÑEZ

I think they just didn't do the outreach. Their network was very narrow. Their support was only the Filipino community, and that's what they relied on, just the Filipino community, and to this day I think they still do that, unfortunately, in terms of their network. They're now involved in the Neighborhood Councils, but I don't know if they network. [interruption]

SINGSON

We are back and the puppy is now very quiet. So we were talking again about Mrs. Geaga and her move, her position about creating the Filipino Town, and you were starting to talk about why there wasn't a lot of energy behind this. So can you discuss that?

IBAÑEZ

Yes. Well, the first one is there was a lack of community support, meaning the community that's there, the non-Filipinos. I didn't see any. Then the other one is also lack of economic resources. So if you're trying to develop a town, where are the businesses that you want to bring in or the economic base that you want to bring into this area?

SINGSON

Why is it that the FACLA wasn't enough support for the Filipino Town?

IBAÑEZ

I think FACLA was also very—they didn't work well with the community as well. If you're talking about people coming to vote, a lot of them came from other areas. They're not from that community. And plus, in reality, the Filipino community is very small relative to the whole area. I mean, it's always been a transient community, so Filipinos would come there first, but then they move on to Eagle Rock or Highland Park or other areas, or even go down to Carson or the other communities outside of L.A.

SINGSON

Just to kind of clarify this whole transience, you're talking about coming from the Philippines?

IBAÑEZ

Yes. More of the immigrants would come here, especially if they have relatives here in L.A. They would stay in Temple Street for a little bit, but then they would move out. But there are still families, my understanding, there still are families that still continue and have continued to live there since the thirties or forties, but not that much.

SINGSON

Why is it that they move in there?

IBAÑEZ

I think it's because of family, more family or friends. It's just a place that people heard about or know about. The rent could be cheaper, I'm not sure, and then they hear about the other areas.

SINGSON

Just to sort of continue what happened to the movement, the campaign to build the Historic Filipino Town, I know you left already the city work, but at least as far as you know and so that we can get this on record, did it die, at least this part of it, and then what happened to it?

IBAÑEZ

I think it pretty much died because they didn't have the political or economic support. Because I saw renderings of the buildings, but then the banks didn't support them, and I think a lot of the banks or economic support that they could have gotten also relied on—or they were hoping that they got the political support, when they really didn't. That's my understanding. It could be something different. But when you work with banks and you're investing only as a family, that's all you rely on. Because they've done other projects before. I think they've done other projects, and I can't remember what projects they were utilizing. [interruption]

SINGSON

So we were just talking about how the banks probably didn't support it, and Mrs. Geaga having other projects. Did you say that this also didn't work out?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, I think they've always had other little projects, and I know they try to help with the library and make it more established, and I think that's what led to also Jocelyn to run for office. I don't know if know Jocelyn tried to run for State Assembly at that time.

SINGSON

This is during the 1980s?

IBAÑEZ

During the eighties, and then she, I believe, came in third.

SINGSON

In the same—

IBAÑEZ

For State Assembly. She was close, but she was running, I think, against Mike Woo. He was a councilmember. Then he was going to run for State Assembly. My memory is going blank. But, again they saw the connection with political empowerment with their economic goals or vision to help the community, and this is because they networked throughout California, and that's how people got involved, but then they don't understand, like, in Seattle, the reason why they got that Senior Building wasn't because of that. They actually got people who understood, I guess, the policies, and understood the ins and outs, and actually worked in government, to help make that change and build coalitions. They built outside of the Filipino community.

SINGSON

Just for the record, what is the Seattle senior—

IBAÑEZ

All I know is, isn't it Mr. Santos? I don't know if you've heard his name. He helped develop that senior housing in Seattle. Was it International District? He knows how to get money, because he worked in the HUD [Department of Housing and Urban Development] and helped, but at the same time he also worked outside of the Filipino community. It's my understanding, and I haven't heard his lecture, but I know he was well known in the HUD circles and understood that.

SINGSON

So I guess what I'm getting from you is that the Filipinos, or at least just we're talking about Mrs. Geaga, weren't able to create

coalitions outside, and that's why at least this particular campaign died.

IBAÑEZ

Right. And it's pretty evident that they didn't build it outside of the Filipino community. I mean, they didn't build it outside of their family. It was always seen as a family thing. Whenever I hear about Historic Filipino Town or these other issues, it's the family, Mrs. Geaga, their son, and Jocelyn would talk about it.

SINGSON

Did you ever see the plans? I'm curious about what it is.

IBAÑEZ

Yes, I did see a rendering from Edgar Yap, and it looked like a nice facility, but there was a highrise. It was almost like a hotel type. I believe it was a hotel, not so much a senior housing.

SINGSON

That's going to be the center, but what are the other plans for it, around it?

IBAÑEZ

Well, like businesses and restaurants and that type of thing. Similar to the beginnings of a Koreatown or the beginnings of Little Tokyo. Everybody wanted to have a town, so the Filipinos said, "It's about time we have one too."

SINGSON

Just to kind of connect the Historic Filipino Town that we have now, what happened throughout the course after this time?

IBAÑEZ

Oh, so after Molina, Mike Hernandez—he was the next councilmember—had the same position. Gerald Gubatan, I recommended Gerald Gubatan get hired, so he got hired, and then after Mike Hernandez was another councilmember. Eric Garcetti?

Oh, no, Jackie Goldberg. She kind of had this similar position that you need to—but after Molina left, actually, financially the Geaga and the Yap didn't have the financial resources anymore, and Edgar Yap actually moved out of L.A. and there was a divorce that happened, and then Mrs. Geaga, I think, later on passed away.

SINGSON

The new Historic Filipino Town—

IBAÑEZ

Was done by, basically, Garcetti's office, with community leaders. I'm pretty sure SIPA [Search to Involve Pilipino Americans] was part of it. I don't know who else was part of it. I don't know too much about the development of the Historic Filipino Town.

SINGSON

This is already in the nineties or the 2000?

IBAÑEZ

I think it was in 2000 when Garcetti—because it was mainly through Garcetti's work and his staff people at that time that developed it, or reinvented it.

SINGSON

I guess it's a good time to end. Then next week we'll talk a little bit more about Helen and Roy Morales. Thank you very much.

IBAÑEZ

Thank you. [End of May 22, 2011 interview]

1.5. Session FIVE
MAY 26, 2011

SINGSON

Today is May 26 [2011], and we're here at Carson [California] for a fifth interview session with Rose Ibañez. This is Precious Singson doing the interview. Hi, Rose. How are you?

IBAÑEZ

Hi, Precious. The fifth interview.

SINGSON

Yes, probably to wrap things up. We've talked a lot about your activism already in the 1980s, and you've introduced [Royal] Roy Morales, who was very critical in introducing you to Gloria Molina. But I think I want to talk about him once again and ask you, how did Roy Morales change or shifted your work, your activist work, during your work with Gloria Molina?

IBAÑEZ

I think with Roy he kind of made me understand the community much more than I knew, because, well, first, being a student activist you work with students and yourself and trying to get people to be really active. Then you step out of that student role and now into the community, and we got more into more broad Left politics and Rainbow Coalition and immigrant rights, not just Filipinos, but how Filipino community is impacted. Roy was really good about understanding the community besides the issues of anti-martial law or what we always addressed. He also went beyond that to address issues about what are their needs? Then he also talked about some of the gang issues, the community concerns, and providing resources for the community.

SINGSON

So resources in terms of financial resources?

IBAÑEZ

Or to help the nonprofits like SIPA [Search to Involve Pilipino Americans]. How do you address the gang problems if you don't have a lot of nonprofits or funding to address that so that you can have more staff or have more programs to deal with the issue?

SINGSON

I kind of want to explore a little bit more, too, because I think it's through activists such as you that we could learn a little bit more about sort of these forerunner activists such as Roy Morales and Helen Brown. So maybe if you could talk specifically about how he worked with you, or, for example, if you have any memory of how he worked with other people that would exemplify how he's very effective, how he's successful.

IBAÑEZ

I think Uncle Roy was like a coalition-builder. Even though he wasn't strong on the anti-martial-law work when we were doing it, he at least listened and understood. But at the same time, he worked with the pro-[Ferdinand] Marcos people, so he was able to work with both groups, and the reason why is because he always kept his focus on community, you know, how do we just deal with the community, we're a part of the community. Then later on, of course, he became more critical, but yet to a point of addressing more the—I don't know too much about his books, the Makibaka I and II, but I think he then started to see more beyond establishing the politics of the community, the development of the Democratic Party participation of the community, because he also networked with other cities. He brought what he learned from those other cities to Los Angeles.

SINGSON

So you think it's through the people that he interacts with, he brings it to—is it FACLA [Filipino American Community of Los Angeles] that he would be more involved with, when you talk about community?

IBAÑEZ

Well, he actually was a director of a nonprofit, Pilipino American Network and Advocacy, PANA? No, that was the coalition he built. But I think it was a drug-abuse—I forgot, I'm sorry. We'll probably get it later. But he developed a network of Filipino nonprofits, so he developed that, PANA, and then through that monthly meetings he

was able to do that networking, and then after that he helped establish the PALAD, the Pilipino American Los Angeles Democrats.

SINGSON

And your work particularly, do you go to him when you have issues with the community and sort of a liaison between Gloria Molina and the community, or how does that relationship work?

IBAÑEZ

Oh, yes, especially during my work with Gloria. He was close to Gloria. Gloria saw him as one of the key leaders, so she would always—besides just asking how he felt, it was pretty clear his activities and what he's done was always ongoing. Then he started building projects with Auntie Helen [Brown], so he was the one who helped Auntie Helen establish the reading room at the Filipino Christian Church. He was also very active in the Filipino Christian Church, which has a historical relationship that he was able to continue from his father [Royal Morales Sr.].

SINGSON

So just to clarify, his father was—

IBAÑEZ

Was the founder or one of the founders of the Filipino Christian Church.

SINGSON

Did he continue as a leader of that church?

IBAÑEZ

Yes, Uncle Roy continued. I'm not sure if he was a pastor, but he continued the church. That church actually is more—I consider that community-based, because they were in touch with the community, besides the spiritual and religious, they also dealt with community issues.

SINGSON

So would consider that church as a little more progressive than FACLA?

IBAÑEZ

Oh, yes, yes, because they were, of course, religious and honest and good, whereas FACLA, there was still some corruption going on and a lot of patronizing and the old-style politics.

SINGSON

How did they interact with each other? Because they're very close together.

IBAÑEZ

Next door, yes.

SINGSON

Right. So would the same people from FACLA go to—

IBAÑEZ

The Christian Church?

SINGSON

Right.

IBAÑEZ

I think maybe some of the people, because I don't think they were that close. I mean, in terms of networking, they knew who the different leaders are, but I think the church had its own members, but they weren't members of FACLA, at least from what I understand, from the Filipino Christian Church. The church has a longstanding relationship with some of their members, but they also now have new people, and some of them are not from the area. They're coming from other areas.

SINGSON

So sort of a new demographic. They're serving a new demographic. So you mentioned Helen Brown, so I guess it's a good time to talk

about her. I guess if we could talk about her a little bit, a short background about her, and how did you meet her.

IBAÑEZ

I met Helen through—because she was always an educator. I think I met her after she retired from L.A. [Los Angeles] Unified School District, so she networked with some of the KDP [Katipunan ng Demokratikong Pilipino] activists when we were in San Diego, because some of the Filipino activists were also pursuing education through those Filipino American classes, so they kind of networked with her. I think Uncle Roy, too, recognized how important it was to have Filipino American history in the colleges, so they networked. Then she was talking about a collection and the establishment of this [Pilipino American] Reading Room and Library [PARRAL], so I actually met her prior to the establishment, but then lost contact because the activist that had that earlier contact moved back to San Francisco and then I was doing other things, so I didn't really catch up with her again until I was asked to be part of Molina's staff. Because of my role and responsibility in Molina's staff was also touching base with key community leaders, and I always saw her as one of those key community leaders. She also asked me to be part of a support for a Filipino staff person to do regional work of the school district. It was sort of like a community liaison with the school district that she pushed for. She also addressed the whole issue of the high school dropout rate, especially at Belmont High School, so I kind of got involved first with some of that, too, with her.

SINGSON

Before—

IBAÑEZ

Before I actually got more into the board of the library.

SINGSON

Just to sort of clarify the dates, the chronology of this, when did she start, or right around what time did she start the idea of the library,

and when did it actually come into fruition, and when did you go to the board?

IBAÑEZ

I think it actually started back in ’84 or ’85 and then I came in maybe at ’86, before Gloria Molina. I was on the board of the Filipino American Library, but more as a treasurer. I didn’t play too much of a leading role, but I was on the board, because Helen asked me to be on the board. I have to take that back, because I can’t remember the years. I’m sorry. I think it may have also happened after I left Gloria, but I don’t think so. I think it was before I went into Gloria’s office, because one of Gloria Molina’s policy is if you’re going to support an organization, you’ve got to make sure you’re not part of the board, because of the possible conflict.

SINGSON

So just to kind of explore a little bit more about Helen Brown as the community leader, you mentioned that you recognized her already as a community leader while working for Gloria. How did she become a prominent person in the community?

IBAÑEZ

She was always there, her and Uncle Roy. Then just so that you know, both of them are social workers. That’s their background and that’s why they network, and I’m pretty sure they’ve known each other longer than most of us know.

SINGSON

She was participating in a lot of the different organizations, FACLA?

IBAÑEZ

I think it was her own projects, especially when I mentioned trying to promote Filipino staff person in the school district. We’ve heard her talk about doing training in the school district for people to know—sort of like promoting multiculturalism, and she would be the expert on Filipino culture and history for the school district, and

then the whole dropout-rate issue that came about at Belmont High School.

SINGSON

What is her position in the school district?

IBAÑEZ

Well, she first was a teacher, to a counselor, and then I believe she retired after that. Then afterwards, that's when she started to promote those other activities.

SINGSON

So she'd sort of establish a nonprofit that would advocate within the school district?

IBAÑEZ

I think she just advocated on her own, and then she would bring the community. Then what was good about Helen, she knew, of course, some of the school board members. But the only one I remember her talking strongly with or advocating for issues was when Jackie Goldberg was a school board member, so you've got to look up the year that she was there. I can't remember.

SINGSON

So do you have a position name when you were working with Helen Brown in the school district? I guess what were your duties, and what, in particular, were you trying to do or trying to change within the school district?

IBAÑEZ

When I was working with Auntie Helen?

SINGSON

Right.

IBAÑEZ

She invited community people to meet with different members of the school district. The only one I can remember right now is with Jackie Goldberg. But she would prepare us to try to say, "We need this person because they will address the issue and avoid more students from dropping out, and this person can also work with the parents and be the liaison between the school, the parents, and the students." It was mainly in districts that had large concentrations of Filipino students, there were only two regions that she advocated for this person to be on the staff. I mean, they're already working in the school district, but she wanted them to be specifically working in this region and the role within that region. I believe there may have been others in terms of liaisons with, like, the Latino or African American community, but she wanted to also make sure that this person got hired, similarly, to do the same job, but within the Filipino American community.

SINGSON

As far as you know, or as far as you can remember, what were the issues for Philippine American students?

IBAÑEZ

Why there was a high dropout rate?

SINGSON

Right.

IBAÑEZ

Well, in Belmont High School it could have been mainly around the lack of—again, as immigrants come into this country, the lack of assimilation and identity. There was a lack of understanding what the process was all about, and I think a lot of parents, of course, being immigrants, don't know what the whole school system is all about or where to go ask questions, so it was that kind of thing. It's similar to, like, the foreign-trained nurses. You come in and there's no way of getting any assistance. A lot of the students sometimes may get misplaced in the wrong class, and so if they don't know

that, they drop out or they can't relate to anybody, they don't know where to ask questions.

SINGSON

Also as far as you can remember, was there a lot of gang issue also in the high schools for Filipinos, Filipino gangs?

IBAÑEZ

In the Temple [Street]-Beaudry [Street] area, we would always hear about that, even when we were doing student work. We worked with some of the—besides the old-time gangs or longstanding gangs in FACLA, there were like these young—some were in community college, some were not in some kind of, like—I don't want to call them gangs, but wannabe types. Maybe some of them were in gangs, but not as much as— [interruption]

SINGSON

So we're back to recording. So Helen Brown is very known for the library. So maybe you can talk a little bit about the history of PARRAL and how you got involved.

IBAÑEZ

The first exposure I had with PARRAL was when it was at the Filipino Christian Church. I was working with Gloria Molina at that time, and she kind of like showed me all these books that she'd collected, because, you know, I had to recognize her as one of the leading members, I got invited to see her books and see her collection, and she would help me find things for my daughter, saying "This is something your daughter should read," and it was about the history of the yoyo. Then later there was the move. It's like a mini-mall on Bonnie Brae [Street] and Temple. They moved over there under Cecile Romos' business, I mean [Cecile] Romos had a business over there, so she was able to establish the library on the second floor, and that's when I became a board member, it was after Gloria Molina. In there, that's when they had actually staff and volunteers, and they had a youth program, a children's program in the summer, so that was through thanks to Cisa Payuyo

at that time, to try to do something for the children at the library. We did some fundraisers, but not so much in terms of these big galas that came in later, because the board members were more grassroots-oriented in trying to get the community to support them. That's when Helen also got a lot of students coming in from UCLA [University of California Los Angeles]. They were excited about the resources and they left a lot of their papers and theses.

SINGSON

Is it through Samahang [Pilipino]?

IBAÑEZ

Samahang and just word of mouth. I'm not sure if Roy was teaching classes then. I think it was more just word of mouth that the students started to get excited about this library.

SINGSON

Just to kind of clarify, before it moved to Bonnie Brae, was it open to the public already?

IBAÑEZ

Oh, yes. It was open to the public even when it was at the [Filipino] Christian Church, but there were, of course, different hours that she had available. At that time, as a reading room and library, it wasn't like a library where you can check it out and bring it back. It mainly had to stay there. But she did lend out stuff. She just knew certain people would bring it back.

SINGSON

Why did you join as a board?

IBAÑEZ

Well, I was kind of honored that she asked me, for Helen to ask me to be on the board, she felt that she needed my service to help. I wasn't looking more for trying to fundraise, because even though she asked me to be the treasurer, it was mainly to account for the books. I barely got to know the board members as much, because

the board members did more of the activities, and I was still busy doing other stuff, so I was trying to deal with the books and the bank accounts and all that. Then I kind of helped Helen commute back and forth, because by that time she also needed help carpooling, because she could barely drive sometimes. I remember participating in one fundraiser to try to get the community to come out, and it was sort of like a luncheon type of fundraiser.

SINGSON

So I guess that leads me to the challenges of the library, so the first question being, why did it move, and afterwards, as a board member, what were your observations or the biggest challenges of the library?

IBAÑEZ

It moved a couple of times, the Christian Church, and then it moved to Temple and Bonnie Brae, and then it went to SIPA, and then it went to FASGI [Filipino American Service Group Incorporated], and now we're in transition. Going back to the Christian Church, they moved to Third and Bonnie Brae because it was a bigger facility, and so their goal was to really expand it into a library, and I think that's where the businesses came in, meaning Jocelyn [Geaga] and her family, to try to infuse the area, the whole economic development. It could have been the continuation, too, of Historic Filipino Town, but, of course, there was a lot of financial challenges just to maintain it and to keep it open and to hire staff, if they were going to hire staff, and hold these activities. Then after that, I wasn't around when it moved to SIPA. My understanding, SIPA provided the service for free, rent for free, and it was a great location because of the work with the young people that they were having, why not have the library there. Then that's when Helen was having, I think, health problems, and her sons weren't as active. I wasn't around when it transitioned into SIPA. I came back after SIPA and after they started to have these big gala fundraisers. I tried to help in that sense, because people didn't want to.

SINGSON

So just a clarification, so after you moved to SIPA—

IBAÑEZ

SIPA, yes, there must have been—I wasn't at the board at that time, so I'm sure there was some kind of rent. I'm not sure. But it was very minimal, from what I understood when I did join the board, and then after that there was an increase, so we had to look for another location. Plus the books were also not stored correctly because of the whole issue of having rare books, so there was also the proposal of moving some of those books to UCLA.

SINGSON

Which some of it are right now?

IBAÑEZ

It is still in storage. The problem is it's in storage, but there's no money to get it out of storage and to help it go through UCLA's system. What UCLA Asian Studies decided to do is not keep it under a legal agreement. They gave the paperwork back, so it's just in storage, and so the library still owns it, because the deed to give it to Asian American Studies was returned. They couldn't financially handle the books. We can't financially handle it, they can't financially, so it's in storage.

SINGSON

Let me just pause for a moment. [interruption]

SINGSON

Okay, so we're back.

IBAÑEZ

I guess in terms of the challenge, what gets me upset is when we wanted to move to another location, even before I came on the Board, people found a location in Eagle Rock for, like, one of those situations where the City Council said, "You can have this place for a dollar a year," But the community said no. I wasn't on the board, but this is what I was told by people who offered this site in Eagle

Rock. The community said no because they wanted to keep in Historic Filipino Town. So we stayed. Then the whole issue again came about when we wanted to move out of Historic Filipino Town and move the books to UCLA, the debate came up again. "Why are you moving out of Historic Filipino Town?" "We don't have no money. The community is not supporting us. Where are we going other than what's offered and available for free?" In this case, UCLA wasn't charging us to give them the books. It was going to be deeded to them to hopefully take care of the rare collection. Now we're in the situation where we moved to FASGI. They actually gave us a room in kind. There was no rent. We didn't have to pay, but we were able to move, but I understand there was a verbal agreement with another board member to stay there as long as possible, but with the understanding things can change. Things have changed. They got a bigger grant. They moved their administrative office to another location, they needed that whole building for the program to house their clients, so they couldn't give us that community room anymore. Now everything is in storage. The books at UCLA are still in storage, and now the ones that were not given to UCLA or were planned to be given to UCLA is now in storage as well. It's boxed and not being used.

SINGSON

That's a little sad—

IBAÑEZ

It is.

SINGSON

—because it's not available for a lot of people to see.

IBAÑEZ

I know.

SINGSON

But I wanted to get your own view. You came onboard for the library, and you kind of understood what it was, back in the 1980s,

what it was. What made it important for the community or for Filipinos? I mean, I guess right now we can access books about Filipinos at UCLA, so what made it different? What was your vision?

IBAÑEZ

Well, what made it different is Helen's collection included some of her father's collection, but what was interesting, she had a children's section, so she grew that children's section. I mean, that's not at UCLA. Then a lot of people started donating, and when she went to the Philippines, she brought back books, so a lot of it is actually her personal collection. Again, the whole thing of financial resources, that's the whole thing about our community. Economically, we don't develop, similar to, like, Historic Filipino Town. Our community doesn't invest. We don't have large businesses, and we can't really rely on grants all the time, as we see now. There were also problems of getting someone to even write grants or look for grants, because you also have to pay this person to do it. And then the ones who do want to volunteer, we don't get it. We had people who wanted to do pro bono work, but we didn't get the grant.

SINGSON

Wow. That's sort of a very sad situation. I want to move on to Gloria Molina, and this is already towards the nineties when you started working for her at the L.A. County.

IBAÑEZ

L.A. City first.

SINGSON

Right. So we talked about that in our last session. Then you moved on to help her in San Gabriel Valley in the L.A. County, as an L.A. County supervisor. So can you talk about that? So how did you transition from the earlier work to—

IBAÑEZ

To the new work?

SINGSON

Right.

IBAÑEZ

It was also very difficult. As I said, L.A. City, our assignments geographically was smaller compared to L.A. County, and we had the same number of staff. She gave me everything east of East L.A. to, like, Pomona, to parts of—not Monrovia. I forgot that area over there north, sort of like Arcadia, but in the county, all the way south to South El Monte, so mainly along the [Interstate] 10 and 60 Freeway, that part of San Gabriel Valley.

SINGSON

What was your work? How was it different from—

IBAÑEZ

First we had to deal with what was a county issue, the cities in those areas were their own government. They had their own local elected officials that they deal with in terms of local issues. But when the county comes in is when the county overlaps with some of the cities, like health services, social services, or if they contract with the county for law enforcement or public health, that's when we kind of intervene. But the primary areas we focused on was the unincorporated, meaning she is their so-called mayor, because they're not a city; they're unincorporated area for the county.

SINGSON

Well, as we know now, San Gabriel Valley, we think of it as an Asian American suburban area. So was it true at that point when you started working in this area? Or how did you observe the Asian American community?

IBAÑEZ

I noticed in San Gabriel Valley, of course, there were the large cities, I mean the cities that had large concentrations, like for Gloria Molina it was Monterey Park, Rosemead, and El Monte, and then the

unincorporated areas near there, and then it went further east, part of Valinda unincorporated, but not much. That's where the Filipinos were, in the Valinda area, which is near Rowland Heights and Hacienda Heights, that area. I would run into some of the Filipinos in those areas.

SINGSON

Did they have special concerns? And as part of your duties, did you have any special relationships with the Asian American community or Filipino community?

IBAÑEZ

Well, with the Asian American community, the nonprofits, of course, asked for a lot of resources, what were some of the county resources or funding that were available, we'd try to give them that exposure. I was able to network with some of the nonprofits. In terms of the community itself, there was very little interaction, because they had, again, their own elected officials to deal with. But I got exposed to the issues of that area, like they also had problems with gangs and high schools and the whole issue of language and the billboards. I don't know if you remember, in Monterey Park there was the issue, why so many Chinese language billboards? Why can't you just be all in English? So there was a lot of anti-immigrant issues.

SINGSON

Where is this coming from?

IBAÑEZ

From the more—of course, the ones that don't realize their community is changing and that they think it should remain as it was. Similar to, like, "It's not in my neighborhood. Why are we changing these rules when it's been like this forever." So they don't understand that their community demographically is also changing.

SINGSON

So are the county signs also changing?

IBAÑEZ

No, this was just within the city. At that time Judy Chu was a City Councilmember, she would sometimes ask for support from the Board of Supervisors. She would ask Gloria Molina if she would support the anti-immigrants positions that she was taking up in her city. Oh, and there was also the whole thing about casinos too. I remember casinos were a big thing, no casinos in any area.

SINGSON

Is that sort of an Asian American issue at that point?

IBAÑEZ

Well, it was kind of, more in terms of because it also provided jobs or resources, but at the same time, it's what kind of job or resources are we looking at. But Judy took a good position and said she also didn't support it. And a lot of these casinos were run by people that were pretty shaky. In the beginning, some of the things they tried to do to get community support was pretty shaky.

SINGSON

I think we should wrap this whole interview, five sessions, with your thoughts about the changing activism. So you've been through a lot of your activism in 1970s and then sort of there's a decline in the 1980s during the [Ronald] Reagan area, not just in KDP but sort of your observations from generally the different activist organizations. So if you could sort of give us your final thoughts about activism today, then how you're involved with the young people, young activists.

IBAÑEZ

The activism today obviously is not like what it was in the seventies. The seventies was like what I consider like a nonstop flow. There were a lot of issues and it kept on going. There was a lot of organizing, there was a lot of demonstrations, there were a lot of just people out in the streets, and that was because the times was like that. Almost everything was very controversial. There was, like,

the Watts Riots, there was Antiwar Movement, there was a lot of some killings of people who were activists, so that peaked in the sixties and seventies. Then the eighties was a backlash. Reagonomics kind of cut everything. People took it for granted, a lot of people quit doing anything. They didn't know where to go, what to do, and also the younger generation, it was hard to build that continuity with the next generation, because I consider it the "me" generation. It's all about me and my survival. Then what I see now, another new generation, is that we're seeing young people again looking at issues and being critical and not being part of this me generation and only think of myself. So I think there's a lot of activism in a way of still caring about what's out there or being aware of what's out there, or thinking of what the future will be for their kids. The whole environmental issue is out there, and then there's now other wars we're involved with. After Vietnam, there was not really any wars that the U.S. was involved with, but there were other wars going on in other parts of the world, but we didn't—so there, like, solidarity movements that were built. But now the U.S. again is being active in a war kind of situation, I think people, young people are interacting with those issues. I always consider activism based on issues. It's not based on, because I feel like I want to become an activist. You don't become an activist by just feeling like you should. It's based on the issue that makes you an activist. You're either for it or against it, or you're advocating for that issue. I think that's what I want to try to inform the young people, that you do need to be concerned about some of these issues and have a position, because it will either impact you directly or indirectly, and it may impact you or your children in the future. I remember some of the young activists were saying, "But you used to do this all the time, Rose. Why aren't you active anymore?" [laughs] It's not due to age. I think we have a different way of doing things. As I tell people about politics, there's different levels of politics. You vote, you get involved in a campaign, you work for somebody, so there's different levels of politics. You don't have to just be a staff person to be in politics. When you vote, you're actually involved in politics. So if, minimally, you're going to vote,

fine. Minimally, you're going to read an article on that person or that issue, fine. You're involved in that level of politics. It's not that I don't forget, but I also set other priorities or other issues and other concerns that I'm doing. So, like, here in Carson, I'm now involved in developing a Civic Engagement Board that will address how the community can address issues citywide.

SINGSON

So community as in what kind, Filipino community?

IBAÑEZ

No, the general community of Carson. It's almost like empowering the community outside of just their neighborhood. So as for the City of Carson, do you know the process of making a complaint? Do you know the process of how City Councils meet and the decisions they make? Do you know the role of the mayor? So sort of like a Civics 101, which we never get in school. It's only until you get out there that you hear about, "Oh, I didn't know I could do this," or, "I didn't know that's what the role of the mayor is, or City Council."

SINGSON

So do you think that your activism has translated in a lot of ways so what you're doing now? Or I guess the question is, how did it translate?

IBAÑEZ

Well, anytime you're volunteering now, I consider that being activist. Any type of community service, I now call that also being activist. I did a speech on P-Grad, and Florante [Ibañez] noted that we used to call it Serve the People, but now today it's called community service. Even [Barack] Obama said, "Do community service." That's a good thing. I mean, it may not change society, but it's changing something to hopefully a better situation.

SINGSON

That's a good way to end. Thank you, Rose.

IBAÑEZ

You’re welcome. [End of May 26, 2011 interview]

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