

Interview with

**Joan Brodovsky**

conducted by Michael Kahan

for the “Understanding the History of Housing in Mountain View: Stories of Racism, Anti-Discrimination, and Movement towards Inclusion” project by the City of Mountain View’s Human Relations Commission,

in collaboration with Senior Lecturer Michael Kahan and team from Stanford University.

Mountain View Historical Society  
Mountain View Public Library

June 30, 2022

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of “Understanding the History of Housing in Mountain View: Stories of Racism, Anti-Discrimination, and Movement towards Inclusion” is to document the history of discrimination and efforts to fight discrimination in housing in the city of Mountain View, California. Some of the information collected was shared with the public at an event sponsored by the Mountain View Human Relations Commission, held on July 26, 2022. In order to make the interviews available to researchers and members of the public, they will be added to the historical collection of the Mountain View Historical Association (MVHA) and/or the Mountain View Public Library (MVPL) and made available for public use. They may also be shared with other libraries and collections, including those at Stanford University.

## BIO

Michael Kahan is the co-director of the Program on Urban Studies at Stanford University, and a senior lecturer in Sociology. His interest in the historical transformation of urban space has led to publications on topics including the integration of streetcars in the 1850s, sanitation reform in the 1890s, the geography of prostitution in the 1910s, and redevelopment in California in the 1990s. His teaching includes courses on gentrification and on the history of San Francisco. He holds a B.A. from Yale and a Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania, both in history. He has been a resident of Mountain View since 1999.

## ABSTRACT



Joan Brodovsky is an 85-year-old Mountain View resident. She has been living in Sunset Estates, a manufactured (or mobile) home site since 2013. In this interview, she describes how throughout this time, she has been involved in mobile home affordability and rent control, due to growing crisis in Mountain View's and the Bay Area's housing market, especially for renters. Two days before this interview took place, Joan was involved in a discussion with city staff and manufactured home renters on whether or not to pass an MOU, or an exemption from the ordinance.

Date of Interview: June 30, 2022

Interviewer: Michael Kahan

Interviewee: Joan Brodovsky

**Michael Kahan:**

Hello, my name is Michael Kahan and I'm an interviewer working with the City of Mountain View's Human Relations Commission in partnership with the Mountain View Historical Association on a project entitled "Understanding the History of Housing in Mountain View: Stories of Racism, Antidiscrimination, and Movement Toward Inclusion'. The purpose of this project is to document the history of discrimination and efforts to fight discrimination in housing in the city of Mountain View, California. Some of the information that we collect will be shared with the public at an event sponsored by the Mountain View Human Relations Commission, scheduled for July 26, 2022. Today is June 30th, 2022, and I am interviewing Joan Brodovsky. Joan Brodovsky is a resident of a Mountain View mobile home park, and an advocate for affordable housing. For safety reasons during the ongoing COVID 19 pandemic, we are conducting this interview by Zoom teleconferencing technology from our respective residences in Mountain View, California. And we are joined by the research assistant for this project, Kamilah Arteaga. And I will, I'll let her introduce herself.

**Kamilah Arteaga:**

Hello, I'm Kamilah Arteaga. I am a Stanford undergraduate who is the research assistant for this project. This is seeing both Michael Kahan and the City of Mountain View in these interviews. Happy to be here. Thank you, Joan, for being here.

**Michael Kahan:**

Thank you so much, Kamilah. And let me echo that sentiment. Thank you Joan, for joining us. Just for the sake of accuracy, could we start by my asking you to just say your name to make sure we get it right?

**Joan Brodovsky:**

My name is Joan Brodovsky.

**Michael Kahan:**

Thank you. And you mentioned that you currently live here in Mountain View in a Mobile Home Park; is that the preferred term? I know there are different terms.

**Joan Brodovsky:**

It's not the preferred term, but it is the legal term because there's a whole lot of legal structure involved with mobile homes run by the state of California. And so we are mobile home parks even though we live in manufactured homes.

**Michael Kahan:**

Manufactured homes. Okay. Thank you. And how long have you lived here in Mountain View?

**Joan Brodovsky:**

I moved in in 2013, so that makes it almost nine years.

**Michael Kahan:**

Okay. could you start maybe by saying how you came to Mountain View and what brought you to Mountain View in 2013?

**Joan Brodovsky:**

In 2013, the year before, I'd been living in San Jose. My husband had died in 2011, and we had lived in Mountain View just across the fence where I'm living now. And I had enjoyed living in San Jose before and wanted to move back. So after he died I retired and moved to San Jose for city life, and I didn't like it. I found that my life was really up here on the Peninsula, and so I was looking for a way to get back and I was able, I could afford, I figured with a mortgage and so on, I could afford a small condominium. Two, maybe two bedrooms and probably one bath. And this was at the beginning of 2012. So I spent some time figuring out I'd never had a mortgage before, so how do you do it? I lived in Mexico City for 40 years<sup>1</sup> and had only been here at that time for less than 10 years. So by the time I got everything sort of organized it was the summer of 2012 and I realized that there was no way I was going to be able to continue renting and I had to do something fast. And then the market for housing started to creep up. So when I saw what I could buy with my measly income I remembered that this mobile home park was here. 'Cause we'd lived essentially next door. So I came over and talked to the manager who was the same manager who'd been handling the duplex, Bruno, that I had rented. And so she and the owner told me how the system worked. So it took a while to organize and I found a place. What I found was a very old mobile home. It was one of the original ones. And the price was very low. It was so low that I could afford to buy it, and throw it away. Which I originally thought, well, I'll buy it and live in it while they make me a new one, and then I'll change.

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<sup>1</sup> From Joan: "While I was at Stanford, from 1961-1965, I married a Mexican I met in the Chemistry Department. After a year in Philadelphia, where he worked for large chemical company, we moved to Mexico with my two children, then 7 and 9. I found work there in the and around the pharmaceutical industry, including ten years in the Mexican National Science and Technology Council, providing Mexican companies with technical and technological information. The last 25 years before I moved back to the US, in 2003, I had my own consulting company. My clients were pharmaceutical and chemical firms. In 1994, I also started a record storage company (like Iron Mountain), developed it, and finally sold it at a profit seven years later. I returned to the US in 2003 to take a job with a market research company that needed my skills for its healthcare division."

But you can't do that because the setup for a new mobile home is about six to eight weeks after it's built. So anyway, that's how it finally happened. And I moved in November of 2013. And it turns out that economics are about, you know, now I paid less. I paid a ridiculously small amount for the mobile home. I designed it myself. I had all kinds of things in it that I wanted that were special, including high countertops, which nobody wanted to build. But I found one company that was willing to, so they were the ones I stepped into. And so it finally got in and so the whole thing with the mortgage and everything turned out to be about what it would have been if I had bought a small condominium. And now I'm mortgage free and it's just fine. End of story.

**Michael Kahan:**

And how did you first get involved with housing as a political issue as opposed to just a personal search for a shelter?

**Joan Brodovsky:**

Well, in the personal search for a shelter, the thing that scared me about a mobile home park is what if they close it? And, so I talked to - at that time, Lenny Siegel was, I don't remember, he wasn't on the city council, but he was a big advocate for housing. And I knew him because I'd been involved in the fight 20 years, almost 20 years ago to save Hangar One at Moffett Field. To me, this is our Empire State Building, and they couldn't tear it down and they were going to, the Navy was going to just chuck it. And so Lenny had been leading that, and that's how I knew him. So I went and I said, what kinds of laws are there that could protect me? And, he said, well, mobile home parks are an important part of our affordable housing stock, and we get federal money for the city if we have affordable housing. And he said it would be very difficult. He said not only that, but the mobile homes are zoned for mobile homes. So nothing else can be built there. This is prime property. It could be developed for condominiums or anything like that. And the property is worth, I don't know what it's worth. I know what the taxes would be for it if the owner weren't under Prop 13<sup>2</sup>. But, anyway, it's very, very valuable. And so anyway, with the assurance that we were protected, he said a city council would have a very difficult time overturning the zoning laws. So with that, I went ahead, but then I was still on alert to protect my investment. And I was worried from the beginning that the owner might sell to somebody else. I mean, he could do that and then the new owner wouldn't be as nice and all of us worry about that. We just had a huge fight with the city council about something concerned with that; we won the night before last. So anyway, that's how I got involved in the housing issue. And then I also was very conscious of the fact that the Latino population had been diminishing because of the way that the housing prices were going up. So one thing led to another, and here I am.

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<sup>2</sup> From Santa Clara County website (SCC.org): "Under Prop 13, all real property has established base year values, a restricted rate of increase on assessments of no greater than 2% each year, and a limit on property taxes to 1% of the assessed value (plus additional voter-approved taxes)."

**Michael Kahan: [00:10:00]**

Well, tell me a little about how you've gone about advocating for, let's say for the mobile home park to remain, you know, as a source of affordable housing; and what does that look like? In other words tell me a little more about the sort of specific actions that you've taken, or times when you spoke out or, yeah, how did it actually look on a day to day or week to week basis to be advocating for the preservation of mobile home parks?

**Joan Brodovsky:**

Well, early on we had somebody in the park say, "You might be interested in a group of women who get together once a month called wine and whine. And so I joined them and one of the things I brought up, I mean, it's just we get together, we bring a glass of wine and something to eat and we gossip. That's all it is. But I brought it up one day. I said we really ought to organize, to make sure that we're always able to stay here because Frank might sell, and so on. And they said, oh no. They said, "Frank won't allow any organized anything here, and we don't wanna do anything that might make him decide he wants to sell. And so we're not rocking the boat". And I thought, oh, shit.

**Michael Kahan:**

And just, sorry, just to be clear, who is Frank?

**Joan Brodovsky:**

Frank Kalcic is one of three members of an LLC that owns the park. His father, it might have been his grandfather, but I'm pretty sure his father Leo, who is still alive -he's in his mid nineties - and his mother had an apricot orchard here. And so when everybody was selling and the land was getting valuable enough that an apricot orchard didn't make any sense. They decided to build a nice mobile home park. And the reason it's called Sunset Estates is not that it's for old people, which was what I thought. It's because it's named after Sunset Magazine, which at the time was the magazine that made, was an elite magazine. You read Sunset if you had a nice home in Los Altos. And so that was the thing. And they made it nice and they've kept it nice. If you, if I go to any other mobile home park, they're all clean. Even that one in Palo Alto that there was a lot of controversy over, it was clean, it was poor. And it was, some things were in shambles, but they were clean. There wasn't garbage turned around, there wasn't junk, it was clean and orderly. And that's true of all of the mobile home parks. The management makes sure that they are. But this one, each lot has about six feet as much dirt in front of each one, where you can plant a few things. And that really makes a huge difference. it makes a difference in the way it looks and, and so on. So we all think it's very elite and it's actually, except for those six feet, it's no different from any other. but the owner, the Kalcic family and the particular Frank is the son of Leo who built it. And the other people in the LLC are Leo and Frank. And, and then a cousin, also a Celtic I don't know him, but he's, those are the three. So Leo's going to die pretty soon. And that leaves

two. And if the two don't have the same idea about the park, we're a little bit vulnerable. So anyway, with this feeling in the park, Frank doesn't want us to have a homeowner's association. We do have one, but it's limited to social things. The homeowner's association may only plan for parties. We are not allowed to, in quote, to advocate for any policy or anything like that. And the people who are on this board are completely on board with that policy because they don't wanna rock the boat. So, there was no reason to rock the boat here, so I didn't. And so I got active in it, I got worried about people who were being forced out by rents and so on. And every time something would come up in council that meant that somebody was going to tear down affordable housing, I'd be there advocating for something else. That's how I got into it. And I really didn't worry about the park until the issue of rent control came up about five years ago. And then I kind of knew about it. I knew some of the people who were involved but it wasn't a big issue for me. We never had -Frank's policy was to raise the rent every year by CPI plus about 1.2, 1.3%, 1.3 points. So if CPI was two and a half, then we would get a raise of 3.8% and the same letter went out to everybody with just a percentage. So whatever your base rent was, whatever your rent had been last year, it would go up that much. So anyway, they finally got in rent control, actually, in a charter amendment. It's an amendment to the city charter. And so that means the city council can't overturn it. It's permanent. So we thought, oh, wonderful, because if you read the text, definitely mobile homes are included. Not specifically, but the text says "Any housing not mentioned here specifically and not excluded is included". So right away at one of the other parks where they've been having really real difficulties with their owner for years and years, somebody who arbitrarily will raise rent so much that people will have to move out. Somebody took it to the rental housing committee, which at the very beginning had been stacked with people who were against rent control in principle. So, you probably know all this story, do you?

**Michael Kahan: [00:18:00]**

I do know some of it, but who knows who will be listening to this interview 50 or a hundred years from now? So I encourage you to share the details as much as you can and as much as you care to.

**Joan Brodovsky:**

So, the rental housing committee denied the petition of this person, they said, it's not covered by our new law. And all of us said, what?! So anyway, it was taken to court and the court agreed with the rental housing committee because they said the council appointed the rental housing committee to do this, and that's its job. And it decided, and so therefore it's valid. So of course then back to the drawing board for mobile homes. And that's what we've been doing for the past five years that they formed a Mountain View Mobile... no yeah, Mountain View Mobile Home Alliance. And we've been having meetings, especially the past two or three years, to get through an ordinance. Now, this isn't a charter amendment. This is an ordinance. And it finally went through a year ago and the city council approved it. And so there, in order to get it through, there



were two very conservative members of the council. And they wanted a possibility for exemption, which meant if an owner were able to get, to make a, to have an accord with its - a legal accord, an agreement - signed between him and the residents. And it was approved. And then there was negotiation about what percentage would have to approve. What they finally got through was 80% of the park would have to approve it, which is a huge lift. Then the park would be exempt from rent control. [laughs] And of course, Frank, immediately, he was just devastated by the idea of rent control. He's very "property rights". He's decent and very, very helpful to anybody who has difficulties in the park. He'll help, but he usually helps by finding a solution for the person. He's not losing money, that I know of. Anyway he just proposed an MOU, memorandum of understanding<sup>3</sup>. Well, the city council had set down rules that said it had to be, if there were going to be one, it would be in the Sunnyvale style, which is one MOU that any part can use. But it's just one. And that has to be approved by city council.

And so Frank made his own and he came to me early on because he knew that I was worried about park closure. And I thought that he had a case 'cause I was worried about the fact that he wouldn't be able to raise rents 'cause I knew that he kept rents pretty stable. I knew that he was able to keep up with, let's say, the market situation by being able to raise rents when there's a change of ownership. That means if I sell my house, then the new owner doesn't pay what the rent I pay, which is now about \$1,100. He would pay probably about, in those days when we were talking, it probably would've gone up to about \$1,700 - \$1,600 or \$1,700. That's a big, big lift. I never sat down with a paper and pencil and figured out what his income was or anything like that. So I was pretty sure that he was in deep trouble and I sympathized. But when we talked about it, I said, Frank, I just can't, I can't approve this. I wouldn't do it. I wouldn't sign it for myself because I'd have to go to a, if there were a problem with this, I'd have to go find a lawyer and go to court. And if you sold the park and it was somebody else, it would, that would really be necessary. And he said, no, no, the city would take care of it. I said, no, it's very clear. If you're exempt, you don't get to use the city's rent control, rent control, rental housing committee, which is what, which is where under rent control you take your problems. And so anyway, he tried to prove to me that we would be legally the contract would be between the park and the city, not between the park and us. We would sign and we would be bound to the contract, but the contract is actually between the city and the landowner. Anyway as you know, I thought, well if Frank wants it, that's fine. And I read through it, but I don't understand contract language. And one of my friends here is a lawyer and we were talking and she said, "Joan, did you see Clause X ? Do you know what that means?" And I said, no, what does it mean? And she says, "it means that if Frank sells the property, or even if the LLC changes, he's no longer protected by Proposition 13, and we have to pay all the tax that's increased. Hundred percent." And she said "nobody would ask for that. He's not even saying he'd share it". And I said, what? Well, this friend and I had a number of conversations and we, and I realized that this was really, the MOU

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<sup>3</sup> A memorandum of understanding is an agreement between two or more parties outlined formally through a document; while it is not legally binding, it can be a first step towards a contract.

was really punishing for the people who live here. And just like me, nobody else understood what that meant. And I started to ask, talk to people and oh boy, nobody wanted to talk about it. They said Frank's been good to us. We don't want any change and we are going to support him.

This was my feeling was 90% of the park. It wasn't, it was about probably about 10%. Let me think. We have about 200 people. Yeah, probably about 15 or 10. 8 to 10% of the people are hide-bound behind it. And the few who have talked to me about their reasons have either said or it's clear because of what they're saying. They haven't read or understood either the ordinance or the MOU. And so, I'm sort of, I'm not very confrontational. I don't like to fight with people. I don't like to argue with people because I always forget the arguments and it gets worse as I get older. And so I start, I have a mailing list of about 50 people in the park who at least haven't thrown me out when I send emails saying I think you should know about this. And I try to put a balanced take on whatever it is that I think is the issue. So when City Council would come down with something about this, I would send out an email, a city council approved, blah, blah, blah last night, and this is what it means, 1, 2, 3. And I tried to keep it neutral so people wouldn't know, and apparently I was successful because, in the last run up, people think that I'm on the side of Frank and I'm not.

Anyway, it came down to, finally, a meeting two nights ago, Tuesday night, in which the city staff, which had tried to arrange for a city MOU and couldn't get, was not able to get the park owners to agree on anything. And clearly Frank's MOU wouldn't pass City Council, but that wasn't really the issue cuz if it didn't pass City Council- it was null and void anyway. But they saw what a cost it was going to be to the city just to make sure that people were protected because there was no provision for it. And so they recommended to the city that the city remove the possibility of an exemption from the ordinance. And of course the F of F, Friends of Frank, they mobilized and sent in emails. And I was, anything that went to the council in general, I was able to read. There was not one that had a reason why his MOU was better than the ordinance for them. They didn't understand really, all they knew is that they've been very happy with the Kalcics all along and, and they have good reason to be. I'm very, very happy too. I didn't, I wasn't interested in making any changes, but, I found, oh, probably 10 or 15 people who understood what was going on and who were able to zero in on specific things. And we wrote to the council and said, this is the reason the clause such and such will cost cause us to pay a hundred percent. And that'll, and by now I know how much the tax would go up . And it was really pretty much, it would've added about \$300 a month to our rent. From one day to the next. So anyway there was quite a discussion Tuesday night, but the council voted five to two to abrogate the possibility of an exemption.

So the fight is over. I think that, I think there was no way Frank could get his 80% anyway. But anyway, that was the way it came down. So I'm pleased with that. I'm a little worried about what might come. I know that Frank took the whole issue personally. And so that worries some of us.

A whole lot of people didn't wanna speak out because they were, they're afraid of repercussions and I am too. But, what can they do to me? Can't kick me out. He could make things unpleasant for me, but I'm too old to worry about it. It depends on how unpleasant. [Laughs]

**Michael Kahan: [00:31:02]**

I was wondering about that, they don't have the ability to evict from the park, do they? or...?

**Joan Brodovsky:**

Very, very difficult. You have to - it's a court procedure. You have to -yeah. It's part of the protections - actually that's part of the protections of the state of California. This, all of this, when you buy a house in Palo Alto or Mountain View, all of the paperwork is done with the county or the city. You find all of that stuff in the county records. For mobile homes, it's done with the state. It's done under the housing and human development, Housing Human Development Commission, I think it's called. And so if I, for instance, I put in an electric stove and I had to get permission from the HC, Housing and Community Development. I had to get permission from that. And so all of the, anything regulatory goes through the state from mobile homes, and that's why they're still called mobile homes because the original statutes were all written for homes that were then mobile. They could be moved.

**Michael Kahan:**

So as you were working toward this goal, it sounds like you've achieved, which, congratulations, on this victory on Tuesday night. Were you working together with the mobile home alliance or...?

**Joan Brodovsky:**

Yeah, I'm really close with some of the people there and they've had meetings. I mean, for them this was not an issue because their owner wasn't proposing anything serious. He did propose something, but it was a rant. It wasn't a possible contract, but Frank had a real contract to offer. So these people who mostly live at Santiago Villa over by Moffitt Field, they were every Saturday if we had something we wanted to talk about. And we mostly being me. Who would they have a meeting for an hour and a half... and one of the people, the person who runs it, Alex Brown<sup>4</sup>. He's a 30-something, computer, sort of something, but I don't know. He should be a

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<sup>4</sup> From Joan: "Alex is one of those people who can multi-task about ten things at once, remember everything he does, and be aware of his surroundings at the same time. He was one of the organizers of the MVMobile Home Alliance. He is well versed on just about any issue that would come up, as we worked through the different parts of the proffered MOU and as we talked about our options. The F-of-F felt that Alex and the entire Santiago Villa members of the Alliance were prejudiced against Frank, so fairly early on, they stopped coming to the weekly meetings. For most of the period, just 3 or 4 of us from Sunset Estates would participate in the meetings." From 2021 article in [Mid-Peninsula Post](#): he has worked "with the Mountain View Mobile Home Alliance, Santiago Neighborhood Association, Mountain View Housing Justice Coalition, Silicon Valley Democratic Socialists of America, Mountain View Tenants Coalition, Mountain View YIMBY, Mountain View Coalition for Police Reform

lawyer. He really, he catches everything. He reads everything. I don't have the bandwidth to do that. And he was the one, essentially, he was. If I had a business, he'd be my secretary because he did everything, all of this stuff essentially for me. I didn't have to digest it. And then finally at the very end, my lawyer friend came in on these. She had also wanted to maintain a low profile because she didn't want Frank to know that she was involved in this. But finally she had some really open conversations with Frank about it. And one of them was at a meeting with Sunset Estate people at an open meeting. And she really nailed them, but people, a lot of, most people didn't understand. So anyway, that was the alliance, [it] has been immensely useful. And the people from Sunset Estates, unfortunately, at the very beginning of these meetings, there was one person in the group from Santiago Villa who would assume that we were all against Frank. And so the conversation was very aggressive against Frank. From her point of view, and people got sick of that. So a lot of people who would've listened just stopped coming. And so we, it got down to maybe oh, three or four people from Sunset States who would get on the call on Saturday. So, it was helpful anyway because for me, I could interpret it and then I could send out something neutral in a blog so that people would know what happened or what was thought about or what we should be thinking about or something.

**Michael Kahan:**

Were there other groups or individuals who supported the work of the Mobile Home Alliance and the work that you were doing on this issue?

**Joan Brodovsky:**

No other groups that I know of. I have to think. No, because it really is so specific to mobile homes. And then it came down to specifically this park, nobody else cared. What I did notice, 'cause I went through all of the correspondence that was sent into the city council before the meeting on Tuesday. And I noticed that there were people from other parks who'd written in support of eliminating the possibility of an MOU. And I was surprised because they've never come onto these Saturday conversations cuz there are six mobile home parks in Mountain View. And as far as I know, only three have been represented in the Saturday meetings. But maybe other people were getting on I didn't know about, or maybe other people were smart. But there were four or five letters from, from the other mobile home parks that hadn't been involved.

**Michael Kahan:**

Do you know about how many people live in mobile homes in Mountain View?

**Joan Brodovsky:**

I don't remember if it's 2,000 or 3,000. We have, let me think. It's probably about 2,000. Santiago Villa, I think is the largest with about 300. And Sahara Village probably has close to

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and Accountability, Mountain View Coalition for Sustainable Planning, Balanced Mountain View and Alphabet Workers Union.”

300. So that's 300, 600. So that's probably about a thousand there. And then a thousand probably among the other parks, which are smaller. I think here we have about 250 people living. 'Cause we have 144 houses.

**Michael Kahan:**

And can you tell me anything about who lives in mobile home parks in Mountain View. What kind of folks?

**Joan Brodovsky:**

Every kind. In this park, I know we have three lawyers, and by the way, I know that all three of them would have voted no on MOU. When I moved in, we had two physicists with PhDs. We have a whole lot, a number of women who were executive assistants to [inaudible] CEOs of things in the high tech companies in Silicon Valley. These are very intelligent women. Many of them didn't go to college because they're my age. And you didn't all, you didn't unless you were, unless you had the money. And so, we have people who've worked in factories. We have people who, generally, in this park, because there's a high bar, Frank won't sign a contract with anyone who can't prove that he can pay the rent for at least a year. And so here you have to show that you have some, you have plenty of money before you can get in. I don't think that's the case so much for the other parks, but in any case obviously we have plenty of very educated people living in different parts and plenty of people who work in low class jobs. Well, there are only two senior parks, so when I say have worked, I'm thinking about seniors, but the other four parks have kids. So there are people doing all kinds of things. They're taxi drivers and they're high tech people out of Santiago Villa Village. I think it's called Santiago. I don't remember Santiago Villa out by Moffitt Field. I think about half of the residents now are Google people who work at Google. It might be half, might be too many, but I think probably 30% wouldn't be too high. Because little by little the owner has been buying up; his tactic was to raise rents, not across the board, but to pick somebody and then raise the rent so much the person had to move out and then when he tried to sell his place, he couldn't sell it because the rent was too high. And then the owner would say, oh, well I'll buy it for you at nothing. And then he would put the house up for rent and rent it to Google people for about three or four times what he rents the other spaces for. So this is what prompted the whole issue about rent control. 'Cause people there got fed up with it, they were scared to death, they were gonna move out. And he tended to do this with older people who didn't have the smarts or the funds to fight it. So anyway, that was, that's how that works.

**Michael Kahan: [00:41:45]**

Who were, we talked a little about who supported this effort, who opposed the work that you've been doing? Have there been organizations or individuals or politicians who have been the kind of obstacles to achieving this, you know goal of having rent control and rent control without the sort of loophole of the MOU?

**Joan Brodovsky:**

Well, the first person to oppose it was Frank. And then what I call the Friends of Frank. And these are - I mean, I would say at the beginning, before we knew anything, probably everybody would've opposed it because we're also, most people here feel that Frank's been very, very fair and we're happy here. But, when it came down to the hardcore, it was the people who felt safe with Frank being the owner and feel that they would be unsafe if he weren't. And they didn't realize that the MOU was set up so that the park could be sold. And now it can't be sold as easily because it's under the rent control restrictions. But certainly it would've been a catnip for any one of these corporate buyers of mobile home parks that are devastating your mobile home situation to offer Frank something, and he would've said, "boy, that's nice", and we would've had a terrible situation. So anyway, it's people who -and I have to admit that I'm one of them. When you're older, you don't wanna waste any time figuring out a four page document. And I didn't. And it was the lawyer who shook my page and...So these are the ones who wanted to go along to preserve what they understand is something safe, and that's their experience. And that's valid. I agree. I think they should listen to me. But they weren't doing that.

**Michael Kahan:**

Were there people or organizations sort of on the city level? So beyond the Sunset Estates, what about trying to get this through the council, for example.

**Joan Brodovsky:**

There was nothing organized to support the MOU. Even the park owners weren't backing Frank. At least they weren't putting out any effort to do it. Then there are two members of the city council now who are conservative, very "property rights are important". And they did feel, and I think... one is a friend of Frank's. So she knew what all this history was and she actually proposed that a vote be taken on allowing just Sunset Estates to have its own MOU. And she put down, she actually, she'd done her homework and she put down the various things that we should put up for, that they shouldn't put up and consider in the council. So she lost that four to three. Then after she lost that, then they voted for removing the amendment, removing the exemption, and that won, five to two. So one of the people who wanted to allow her to have her say, came over to the other side afterwards. She's very politically astute. She's young and she's ambitious. [Laughs]

**Michael kahan:**

And do you feel that this victory is secure or are you concerned because it's as you said, it's an ordinance rather than a charter amendment?

**Joan Brodovsky:**

Yes. It can be undone in the future by a different city council. It's not secure, but it would be a big lift to try to completely undo it in the future by a city council. There would be a hue and cry. But completely safe, no, I don't feel, but I'm very happy with the way it came out.

**Michael Kahan:**

I think you'd mentioned earlier that in addition to advocating for the mobile home park and the mobile home rent control, you've also spoken out about affordable housing in other contexts. about the demolition of low rent apartments, for example, and other issues in the city relating to affordable housing. Can you say a little bit more about that, about the issues that have brought you to, let's say, speak before the city council?

**Joan Brodovsky:**

Well, it's probably, I mean, it's nothing where I'd have to look into a contract. It's just when I hear they're going to tear down some housing or they have a possibility to put housing or an office building on a particular plot I just pile in and say, look, we don't need anymore jobs here. We need housing, and so on. And that's really the extent of what I do. I just add my voice and if there's something that I think is important to say that I can figure out how to say the three minutes or two minutes they might allow, then I'll write it down and say it. I spoke the other night, but I spoke off the cuff just because nobody in Sunset State - Oh, that's interesting. I meant to tell you, there were a lot of people in the time where citizens were allowed to speak. There were a lot of people who spoke either for or against, and Frank was one of them. Nobody from Sunset Estates spoke. And finally at the very end, as they were going to close it, I'd raise my hand. I said, I'm speaking only because I'm speaking for Sunset Estates, and I see nobody is speaking. And the reason is we're all intimidated. We're worried about repercussions from Frank and of course it wasn't well said or anything. I felt stupid, but at least I got it out and I was the only one.

**Michael Kahan:**

So, and I guess I have to ask, are you concerned about repercussions?

**Joan Brodovsky:**

Not particularly, probably because I don't think about what could happen. Just I, or maybe, I don't know. I can't imagine something, so I don't, as long as I can't imagine it, I don't worry about it. When I imagine it, then I worry about it. So I imagine that Frank could sell the park, so that kept me up at night and, and kept me fighting. But I don't have an idea in my head of what might come as a repercussion, so I'm not worried about it yet. If I get a notice in the mail that I should sell my place and get off his land, that might be another thing to worry about.

**Michael Kahan:**

How do you learn about the other issues that you speak about? So you'd mentioned if they're building offices or housing or tearing down housing, you'll speak at the city council. I'm just curious, how do you get your information that an issue like that is coming up in front of the council?

**Joan Brodovsky:**

Well, I mentioned Lenny Siegel at the beginning, and he's been on the city council. He's been a mayor. And I don't know what he does for a living. I think he lives off of some money that he must have had from his family because he devotes himself a hundred percent to civic issues.

And so he keeps an eye on everything that happens, and he has a list and I'm on his list. So that's really from the very beginning because my first contact was with Lenny. He's the one who keeps me informed of what's coming up that might be of interest. And a lot of the things he sends out are not my interest; he's interested in bicycle lanes, and things like that. I'm happy to go on a bicycle trip every once in a while, but I'm not, it's not my burning passion. And so that's a big way. Another way, now I'm on the city council, the city administration list for things to do with housing. So they also send me a notice when something's coming up. Those are the two ways, and I get the *Mountain View Voice* and that also will have information.

**Michael Kahan:**

Right. When we spoke earlier, you had also mentioned an issue of age discrimination that you've faced or that you've certainly thought about. Did you wanna speak about your experience with that?

**Joan Brodovsky:**

Well it's not specific to Mountain View, but I'll tell you about it. It's this subtle thing, just like, what you run into, if you are Black or Mexican and you want to rent an apartment and you go and say you wanna see an apartment, they say, we've already rented it when they see you. And so I took a job. I told you I was living in Mexico City. I took a job in a company in San Jose in 2003. I was so lucky. I was 68 years old. I was so lucky to find a job. I had done a couple of consulting jobs for the company and they were doing what I was doing. So that was how I got in. So I was pushing 70 and all of the people I was working with were in their twenties and thirties, early thirties. so at first, I was kind of like a strange animal. They appreciated me but they weren't letting me into, let's say, the possibilities for advancement. My boss was 21 years old - 22, which would've been fine if he had been smart and able, but he was neither. So I just wanted to keep my job. I needed a salary and it was the only way I was going to get out of Mexico and be able to establish myself in the United States. And so I kept a low profile, but finally, he wasn't my boss anymore, but somebody else who was crueller was, and then somebody else was. But then age began to be, clearly, a problem. There was no way that I was going to advance, I wasn't going to get raises anymore than the very minimum. There was no way I could articulate how it



came about. It may be because I was not as fast. It may be because they felt threatened. I mean, it could be one or the other. It could be that I was too dumb or that I was too smart. And that was the way it was. But even before I came here, what happened to all consultants? You begin probably in your thirties or forties, and you develop a clientele they're about your age plus or minus 20 years. And then as time goes along, some of them begin to die or they retire. And as time goes along, more than half of them have, and you don't get more clients from the younger set. They're interested in people their age. And I don't know how that can ever become battered. It's just something that's there. So that's how I found it. And of course, if you look at it from the point of view of age discrimination, when they have mobile home parks that are for seniors, that's the other side of the coin. I mean, why? Why should the park be able to discriminate by age? That's not, it's not allowed. So it's not a fight I wanna get into.

**Michael Kahan: [00:57:22]**

I see. Have you, has age ever posed a barrier in housing for you, or was it more in the field of employment?

**Joan Brodovsky:**

No, it was really in employment. And the other part of that, what I didn't say is I worked for the company that I started with in 2003 for nine years, and for the entire nine years, after eight years, I was looking for other employment in other companies. Because of my background and my experience and so on, I could have made quite a bit more money and I was unhappy with some things about this company. It was really clear that because of my curriculum, it was obvious that I was older, I was older than 50. And how do you cut down your curriculum without lying and making it look like you're younger? You know you're not supposed to be, you shouldn't have to put your age on. So I didn't. But there's no way to cover up the fact that, well, if you've done this, this, this, and this, you have to be. And so I had a colleague who was about 30 and she and I had a similar background. We both had studied chemistry and biochemistry and medical sciences, and we would sometimes apply for the same job. They'd be back to her like this [snaps]. For an interview. And not to me. And so that was clear when there wasn't a photograph involved. And there was no other, it was just the same ad and we just put it in on the email and, and she would get an interview and I wouldn't get an answer. So that was how and one day I was ranting to my son about it and, and saying, I'm going to bring a suit or something. And he said, do you wanna spend your time with a suit or do you want a job? And I thought, oh, so I dropped it.

**Michael Kahan:**

Well, I sense this may be a topic for another human relations commission event. But I wanna bring us back to housing though and I guess ask you just to reflect, what do you see as the impact that your work has had in advocating for mobile home parks and for stability and affordability for housing?

**Joan Brodovsky:**

Well, probably not much for affordability, but I hope that I've, that the result of this is that we are secure here at Sunset Estates, even if the park were to be sold, we're still under the ordinance. And so we're protected in many ways. That we wouldn't have been if the park had been examined. So, I hope I was able to make a difference. And it wasn't just me. It had, I couldn't have done it alone. There were lots of people who were important in this.

**Michael Kahan:**

Can you say a little bit more about why is that security important? What, does that mean to you, for example, to have a sense of security, in the park and in the mobile home there?

**Joan Brodovsky:**

Well, what am I going to do if I don't live here? I will find a studio or a one bedroom maybe, but to rent? I couldn't hold out for more than a couple of years renting. I can't buy anything. And I specifically came back to the Bay Area, which is where I grew up, because I like it. And so I don't like the idea of moving to Arizona or any place where I don't know people. I don't wanna, I can't move, I don't wanna move back to Mexico because I wouldn't have the medical protection I have here. I did have it, but I gave it up because it was private insurance and I don't know if I'd be able to afford it now. I don't think I could, but you can't, I can't go back there as an old lady and get insurance now. So that door is closed, so that's what it means is that it would be an enormous upheaval that I have tried to avoid by moving here and setting up a whole lot of other ways so that if I'm disabled, I can stay here and so on and so forth.

**Michael Kahan:**

Are there goals in this issue that you haven't been able to achieve or that you still would want to achieve in the future? Any sort of, I don't know, disappointments or frustrations or things that that you would still like to see happen in the future?

**Joan Brodovsky:**

I would like to see a homeowner's association here, one that really works like it should. but I probably isn't important enough today for me to bother drumming that up. I don't want to be, I don't wanna be a pariah where I live, and I would be for probably about 15 women if I start stirring things up. I've so far been able to keep relations civil and cordial. Nobody's come after me to say what an evil person I am. But they could. And so I would hope that could happen. And I don't wanna be the one to start, but if there comes an issue, I will be the one to start. I mean, if something comes up that I think is terrible, well then I'll think, oh, at my age, what do I care about? I'll make a fuss.

**Michael Kahan:**

Do you feel that you've seen Mountain View change in the time that you've known the city? And if so, how do you think it's changed?

**Joan Brodovsky:**

It's lost an awful lot of Latinos, that's for sure. Also I think it's become a little more liberal. There seems to be at least a streak of people who will write in with ideas similar to what I think should be said and not so much a property rights point of view. What else can I say? Well, the downtown has also changed. Love it beautifully, because now we can eat outside year round with heaters, and I love that. And, we'll have a whole new downtown with planning because of the shifts have COVID. So, what else has changed? There are more trains, surprisingly, and I'm having to take the train. I can't drive at night anymore, so if I wanna go to the City or up the Peninsula, then I have to take the train and then take an Uber. So that's a little easier now than it was when I moved here. A little easier on weekdays. On weekends, it's a real drag because they're only once an hour.

**Michael Kahan:**

What do you think all of us could do to make Mountain View a more inclusive community?

**Joan Brodovsky:**

Oh my, I'm terrible. I'm terrible at inventing ideas. Other people are better at being more inclusive. Because it really is a pretty inclusive town. If, somehow we could, I mean, if the state of California could suddenly build enough housing that the price would be attainable for everyone, including workers who work in the service industries, that would probably be the best way to make it inclusive. I spend a lot of time - Michael, do you live in Mountain View? 'Cause you said here in Mountain View.

**Michael Kahan:**

Oh, I do, yeah.

**Joan Brodovsky:**

You know where Olympus is?

**Michael Kahan:**

Oh, the cafe? The one on Castro Street?

**Joan Brodovsky:**

Exactly.

**Michael Kahan:**

Yeah.

**Joan Brodovsky:**

I spend a lot of time there because it's outside and under the trees and I just think it's wonderful. The waiters there usually are working two or three full-time jobs. They're either working at an, also at another restaurant at a different hour. They work at Safeway also. I think this, and I know that a lot of the Latinos are doing two jobs. I think this is awful. I am just that, it's a problem with our society. It's not a problem with Mountain View. So what I think has to change is that.

**Michael Kahan:**

Are there other people that you think that we should speak to about the issue of housing and the issues that you've been involved with?

**Joan Brodovsky:**

Well, certainly you should be speaking to Latinos, but Kamilah, you picked up a lot of them at the meeting the other night, didn't you?

**Kamilah Arteaga:**

[nods]

**Joan Brodovsky**

Yeah. And did you get names? Did you get people you can interview? Okay. what could, are you going to interview any, I'm trying to think, West Asians, Indians, and Pakistanis who live here?

**Michael Kahan:**

That's a great question. I don't know if we have any currently on our interview list.

**Joan Brodovsky:**

I have no idea if they're, they have a problem. Some of them live in this area around Sylvan [Avenue], They're a good proportion of the makeup of the Peninsula. And I can imagine that a lot of them, if they show up, especially one with a turban, would get, "oh we've already rented the apartment, or you can't buy here".

**Michael Kahan:**

Yeah. And thank you. We have received several recommendations from you, which we are following up on people that you've referred us to already and we really appreciate that.

**Joan Brodovsky:**

Okay. I don't know if they've had any particular experience. I just know in those cases they're both Koreans, so. They might have.

**Michael Kahan:**

Yeah. Thank you. Do you have any materials, scrapbooks or I don't know, newspaper clippings or other things that you've saved from this, from this work?

**Joan Brodovsky:**

No. No, I was just thinking about that. No, I haven't been, I haven't done anything.

**Michael Kahan:**

Okay. let me, let me pause here and, and see if Kamilah has any questions for you.

**Kamilah Arteaga:**

I do not have any questions. I think you've told us a lot in these few questions that we've asked. So thank you very much, Joan, for your time and your wisdom. .

**Joan Brodovsky:**

Thank you for listening.

**Michael Kahan:**

Joan, is there, is there anything that we haven't asked you that we should have asked or anything else that you would like to share?

**Joan Brodovsky:**

Well, I'm pretty bad at off-the-cuff ideas. So I will let you know if there's something if I'm thinking, oh my God, I should've told you, blah, blah, blah. I'll send it in an email.

**Michael Kahan:**

Okay. That would be fine. Let me, if you don't mind, I have a few short demographic questions for us too. Oh yeah, the usual ones. So what would you say is your racial or ethnic identity?

**Joan Brodovsky:**

Caucasian. Is there a space for Jewish? I'm half Jewish.

**Michael Kahan:**

Fine. Thank you. What is your gender?

**Joan Brodovsky:**

I'm female.

**Michael Kahan:**

And do you mind telling us your age?

**Joan Brodovsky:**

I'm 85.

**Michael Kahan:**

Thank you so much. All right. That is all we have, Joan.

**Joan Brodovsky:**

I won't have to tell you that I'm heterosexual. [laughs]

**Michael Kahan:**

[laughs] That's quite all right. I really appreciate your taking the time to speak with us today. It's been such a pleasure hearing your experience. And as we've said, some of this might be shared on July 26th. We'd love to have you join us if you're available and able to come to the event, it'll be at the Rainier Community Center on July 26th at 6:30pm, I believe...?

**Joan Brodovsky:**

Yeah. I've already put it on my calendar.

**Michael Kahan:**

Terrific. Thank you. And this will also become property of the city and will be deposited with the Mountain View History Center, and I will send you the release form by mail so that you can return that as well.

**Joan Brodovsky:**

All right.

**Michael Kahan:**

All right. Well, thank you so much again and have a wonderful afternoon and a happy 4th of July.

**Joan Brodovsky:**

Well, thank you for being interested and for asking the questions that you did. I'm glad to have the history down.

**Michael Kahan:**

Yeah. Yeah. I think this will be very valuable. Alright. And I hope our paths will cross soon, maybe at the Olympus Cafe.

**Joan Brodovsky:**

Wonderful.

**Michael Kahan:**

All right. Take care. Bye bye.

**Kamilah Arteaga:**

Bye, thank you.

**Joan Brodovsky:**

Bye Kamilah.