

Oral History Collection

Ms. Elida Tomez

Interviewer: Lewis Perry

Date: Fall, 2015

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Ms. Tomez: Well, I've lived in Denton since 1978, and for a long time I think I lived here with my eyes closed. And my eyes have finally been opened. They were opened because of HB40. And I realized that if I didn't do something personally, then shame on me, because nobody else--it really, really takes a big group of people for change. [Break].

Ms. Tomez: I'm Elida Tomez and I'm a mother and a grandmother, an activist, an ovarian cancer survivor, a lover of music, a lover of nature, and an environmentalist. [Break]

Ms. Tomez: Essentially, I came to the fracking movement late. Initially, of course, I wanted to be involved, but my illness prevented me from doing

so when the fracking ban was being voted on. However, I did vote, and so we were active in that way. Essentially, I was able to use my time a little bit better when the fracking ban--when HB40 came along and the fracking ban was repealed. At that time, what I was able to do is devote more of my time to it, because essentially, my illness--I was able to have 17 good days and four bad days. The 17 good days allowed me to be a lot more active. We grew up always thinking that the greatest thing about living in our country was the democratic process. My mom and my dad became citizens, and it was the proudest moment in our family's history. My mom and dad instilled in us very early that voting was our way to have a voice in our country. We've always been active and always been informed because we know that it's a privilege. [Break]

Ms. Tomez: Number one, I believe that fracking hurts our most vulnerable people. And when I say vulnerable, I mean at the bottom of the socio-economic rungs. And so, as a Chicana, I really expect that more of my people are hurt by fracking, because unfortunately, they have to

live in the neighborhoods that are fracked the worst. We really need to do a better job about getting everyone involved and also supporting them in their issues. The other issues in our communities, not just expecting everyone to--if we have a call to arms, not expecting them to drop everything that they're doing, because they have struggles in their daily lives, and we need to be more supportive of all of our struggles. In our town, the historical perspective is that we really didn't know what hit us till it hit us. Because fracking just sort of moved in, and nobody really was aware of all of the terrible side effects of fracking. We were forced into a reactionary mode, that's never a good place to be. Historically, what has happened with the ban, of course, is something that we can rally around, and build strength from that. I know that there are many, many voices in our movement and one in particular, Adam Briggie, who is a philosopher, has an ideology, as many of us do, that anything that will harm the environment is not good for us. And that we really need to ban all fossil fuels. That ideology is certainly a big theme in

what we're doing. One thing that being a survivor for as long as I have been does for you, is it kind of tears you down to the core. You don't have any more layers. And so, what it's done for me is it's--I've been able to really, really focus and know exactly what it is that needs to be accomplished. Without ego, or without concern for what others think or without concern for maybe even the consequences. Because I really don't have anything to lose. I don't know how long I'll be around, I think I've been really lucky to be around as long as I have. But I think it does give me a different perspective and it helps me to really, really keep focused and keep my eyes on the prize. One of the things that is really amazing to me is that even though we're doing this at the civic level, it has spread nationally and internationally. Everyone's eyes are on Denton now, because they want to know how a town was able to ban fracking. They look at us as the leaders. So even though you may think that you are only affecting something at a very small level, you're really affecting it at a much larger level. So I would say, get involved, find

out what your passions are, and use those
passions to effect change.

[End of interview]