

**Texas After Violence Project
Interview with Sue Gabriel**

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Place: Texas After Violence Project Office
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Interviewer: Celeste Henery

Videographer: Jane Field

Transcriber: Jennifer Pumphrey

Auditor: Erin Bajema

CELESTE HENERY: So, it is April fifth, I am Celeste Henery, I am conducting the interview and I am here with Ms. Sue Gabriel. It's about midday, and Jane Field is doing the videography. Thank you for being here, Ms. Gabriel.

SUE GABRIEL : Thank you, thank you for having me.

HENERY: We are happy to have you. I wanted to begin by asking you where you grew up.

GABRIEL: I grew up in Port Arthur, Texas, southeast Texas.

HENERY: Ok, and we are currently in Austin, Texas for the record, and do you mind saying how long you've lived in Austin?

GABRIEL: I've been here since 2006. [Ms. Gabriel has lived in Austin since 2007.]

HENERY: Ok, and one of the things— one of the ways we have connected is around an event that happened in your life and I wondered if we could just jump into that story and have you share.

GABRIEL: Ok, in July of 1982 I was living in Houston, Texas, I think northeast Houston. I was about to move from this apartment complex to another apartment complex. I went to the office to give her my new address and turn in my thirty days' notice. So that I would make sure I would get my money, my deposit. But for some reason this lady was not cooperative and she— there was a telephone right here at the desk that she could've used; but she stepped into a back office and evidently made a telephone call to the police for whatever reason. But she made up some story. I don't know what. When she came back to me, she still did not correspond with me. So, I continued standing. As I stood for several minutes, here comes two police through the back door, or the front door. Then she made a face like, "You know who that is, don't you?" I turned and I saw these two police, and I said, "I am not afraid of the police. I haven't done anything wrong." The largest policeman was about 6'5 and 250 pounds. He said, "What is the problem here?" I started telling them why I was there. I was there to give them my new address and turn in my thirty-day notice. I said, "She is not being cooperative with me." He listened to me for just a short while and then he said, "Is there some place we could talk in private?"

Evidently, there was something that they discussed on the telephone. They said, "We can go into the manager's office." So, I went into the manager's office, and the door was closed. I started telling the same story again, and this time the police just handcuffed my right arm. I had never been arrested. I did not know that the more you move, the tighter and tighter that handcuff gets. My skin was broken by that thing being so tight. Then he handcuffed me from the back and put me

down on the floor, kneeled in my back for what seemed like fifteen minutes; and I am screaming and screaming on the floor. The manager of that apartment complex came and put his feet right in my face. My face was down on the floor. He put his feet right next to my face and said something like, "I am an Italian." I didn't know what that meant; but I was quiet for a second; but I started screaming again. Shucks. And after that—him kneeling in my back, he picked me up off the floor. They took me outside to the police car, rolled all of the windows up. It was like July fifth, rolled all the windows up and went back into the office. I could have suffocated in that car. I evidently dropped my purse when he handcuffed me. The largest policeman came out with my purse in his hand and my ID card. I had the fact that I have— what my medical issues are on the back of my ID card.

He made a joke to the other policeman, "Oh, she has epilepsy." He turned to me in the back seat and said, "She has epilepsy. Why don't you hit your head against the back window? I like to see crazy people act a fool." That didn't bother me because it showed me how stupid he was. I still did not know why I was being arrested. We drove for miles before I heard my Miranda Rights. When I got to the police station, as soon as I got inside, here comes six policemen toward me, attacking me, hitting my head against a stone wall, over and over; and for what? I do not know. Later on that evening, I was standing in this block to have a mugshot taken. Here comes I don't know how many— four, five, six policemen at me while I am taking this mugshot. I know I spent about two days— the rest of that day, plus another day in Harris County— no, in the City of Houston Jail. The next day that I was there I had the opportunity to make a telephone call to someone for whatever reason. I reached for the phone. I dialed a number but then there was no answer. So, I felt I had the right to make another call until I got to someone I could talk to. So when I reached for the phone a second time, here comes another group of policemen toward me, because I reached for the phone a second time. I can remember two of those police being a black woman and a white woman also; and I still don't know why all of this is happening.

During those three days, I was transferred to the county jail. Why? I don't know, at least at that time I did not know why I was transferred to the county jail. So, I spent hours in the county jail. All day long, there was a— whatever he was, an official that would call people's names, called on women's names, "Judson, you're going home. So-and-so, you're going home." So, about 8:30 that night, he said, "Gabriel". I thought I was going home, but I was not going home. When he called my name, I was handcuffed again and he did not talk to me either. I was handcuffed. I was put in a City of Houston van; and then I realized that I am going back to that city jail. I was just frantic.

I just cried and cried, "I DON'T WANT TO GO BACK TO THAT CITY JAIL! I DON'T WANT TO GO BACK TO THAT CITY JAIL! I WANT TO DIE! I WANT TO DIE!" I would rather die instead of going back to that city jail. I could not stand it. In that three and a half days, I was brutalized four times by a total of seventeen policemen, not knowing why I had been arrested in the first place. When I got out of jail is when I found out why I was arrested. I was arrested for trespassing in the apartment complex that I was paying rent in, that I was living in. That was unlawful, and I also found out that I was charged with assault on that 6'5 policeman that kneeled on my back. Assault on a police officer. I went to court for the trespassing— went to the county court for the trespass. Each time that I went, there was so many people waiting to be seen by the judge. It would take several weeks before I would even be called to the judge. So, I would have to pay that lawyer \$1500 just for showing up with me each time. I went two times and I still was not called. So, I told him I can't keep paying for this.

HENERY: It was some other option?

GABRIEL: Yeah, he gave me another option, [The other option was to "plead no contest"] But anyway, whatever this option was, I would just take that option instead of continuing to go to court. If I took that option, that meant that I was guilty of that crime. [TAPE CUTS]

GABRIEL: I went to city court for the assault on the police officer; and that was not a jury. That was just talking with the judge. The police officer was called first. He just lied, and lied, and lied. He couldn't even keep up with his lies; and he didn't even realize other people were keeping up with his lies. So, when I was called to testify, all I had to do was tell the truth. The judge saw the difference. So, I don't know whether that case—I feel like that case was dropped but—I don't feel like that's on my record. But I know that a Class B misdemeanor is still on my record from that trespass, or "so-called" trespass. I wrote down everything that had happened to me in a pencil, because that's what I had at the time. It was pages and pages. I called a lawyer, telling him that I would like to file charges against these city policemen. I said, "I have my papers written in pencil." The thing is, I was not able to rewrite all of that stuff with a pen. I could not stand reading all of it. So I told this lawyer, "I'll give you my pencil-written papers; and if you do not want to take my case, I will come to your office and pick up my hand-written papers." So, I called him after three weeks of not hearing from him; and he said he did not want to take the case. Well, I said, "I'll come get my papers." He said, "I mailed them to you. They must have been lost in the mail." I feel like that was a lie, because I told him that I would come and get them. I feel he did that purposely. And

what I see of this system, it's not just one situation. It's not just the police. It's not just the courts. It's this whole governmental system that is against us. There is no democracy.

I was able to go back to work at—I was working at Harris County Courthouse. I was able to go back to work. But I saw the attitudes of the higher-ups, and they did things to me to keep me upset. So I worked for another two years there. Since I left that job, I feel like the misdemeanor on my record kept me from getting a good job. Until the day that I got my Social Security, I worked part-time minimum wage jobs, needing food stamps, needing housing assistance. Sometimes not working at all. And I feel like that is a part of this system of oppression. Since that arrest and those beatings, I still have medical issues. I have an injury on the back of my head from my head being hit against a stone wall over and over. I have two areas of spinal stenosis from that policeman kneeling in my back. Spinal stenosis is a narrowing of the spinal canal. PTSD, arthritis, oh, so many issues that I have. That I've had to live with because of the police brutality. I became—well, I didn't become an advocate, because I had been an advocate before that. But since I've seen all of the things happening here in Houston—I mean in Austin; and hearing more and more about things on the internet, about police brutality and murders, I've become more vocal. And it needs to change.

So, help me out what else can I tell you?

HENERY: Can I ask you, Ms. Gabriel, how old were you at the time?

GABRIEL: I was thirty-two.

HENERY: And how old are you now?

GABRIEL: Sixty-eight.

HENERY: So there's been at least thirty years that you've lived with this.

GABRIEL: Yes.

HENERY: Did you speak about this to people?

GABRIEL: I have been speaking about it recently; but when it happened there was no one to talk to, even my family. That's why I don't want to talk about my family history. They were not there for me. I asked my mother to come and be with me at court. She said she had other things to do. So, that's why I don't want to talk about my family history. There was no one to address it to. If I learned then that the system was not working, if this lawyer was not able to, or willing to take it further for me, if there was not avenues such as the NAACP or other groups that I could talk to, there was no way to take it further, not thirty-six years ago.

HENERY: Can you talk a little bit about how you viewed the criminal justice system and police before this event?

GABRIEL: Well, I had never been a part of that— I never needed to know about the police before then. But, like I said earlier, when the lady in the office made that face, like "You know who that is, don't you?", I mean, she said it as if I was supposed to have fear. I had no fear of them because I had never done anything wrong. I've never been involved in any way with the police, so there was nothing to really think about before then.

HENERY: And what was it like to live with this story and have more or less no one asking you about it, others not interested in hearing about it, and no outlet like there is today, with the media and whatnot to speak about it?

GABRIEL: I know that after those three days I was angry at God. For months and months, I was thinking, "Why did you let all of this happen to me?! What have I done?!" I was blaming myself for the situations, but I came to find realize that He [God] was all I have. He was with me even in all those situations, because I could be dead today. He was with me and He still is. And He's been with me, the only one, always.

HENERY: And when did you make the decision— or the decision to share your story? When did you do that, and when did you start speaking about it?

GABRIEL: Well, Larry Jackson Jr. was the cousin of my sister-in-law.

HENERY: Can you say who he is?

GABRIEL: Larry Jackson was killed by detective Charles Kleinert in 2012, I think. And that made me really come out, and it made me realize I need to open up about my own situation. I started because I got involved going to events around Larry Jackson's death. Then I became more involved by getting into other groups, or involved with people I met at these protests. And when Michael Brown was killed in Ferguson, Missouri, that just really set me off more. That is when I felt like I needed to tell my story, and I did begin telling my story.

HENERY: And what was the first time— was there a person or an outlet that was the first time you shared this story, and were you sharing the stories with other activists in that process?

GABRIEL: I was telling my story to other activists. I went to the State Capitol for a vigil for Michael Brown, and while there— (and I was the oldest one there). I was the oldest one there so it seemed like I was a person of interest. A group from Houston was hearing my voice as I spoke, as I listened and spoke. This group from Houston asked me if I would tell my story. I did not necessarily tell my story. That is when I wrote that article— I started writing that article about

the situations, not my story. But I did tell my story to a group at a park on the anniversary of Michael Brown's death, the first anniversary of his death. I've spoken at the University of Texas, and that's what it is.

HENERY: And what does it feel like to tell your story at various times?

GABRIEL: It's been helpful to me, although it's hurtful to tell it, but it's been helpful and it's been helpful to the people who listen. When I told it at this park, there was a lot of young people around sitting and listening. When I finished talking, everybody was quiet. I asked, "What are you all thinking about?" One young man says, "A minute of quiet reflection." It's like they had nothing to say; it's like they just did not believe it. I told my story at this art gallery. This one young lady that listened said she goes to school at UT, and she's never met an actual victim of police brutality. For whatever reasons, my telling the story is like an insight or like an opening to others, whatever it is.

HENERY: And at this time it strikes me that a lot of the major cases are around men. There was the case of Sandra Bland here in Texas, some that are women. It's not often that women come forward, the assumption is that they don't have these experiences.

GABRIEL: That's right.

HENERY: We don't hear a lot of women's voices.

GABRIEL: The media makes it black men and brown men, that's what the media—that's something that I thought about before I started speaking. I was telling my sister-in-law that I am still alive, in another words, these people are dying, but I am still alive. She said, "You need to tell your story, let them see the evidence of what you are going through, and what others go through who are victims of police brutality, because the ones who are murdered don't even have a voice."

HENERY: So, I wanted to go to the article you mentioned, because that was an opportunity with the Challenger. It's entitled, "A System of Terror Against Blacks, Latinos and Native Americans" that you published in June of 2015. And in this piece you really speak to what you think is some of the major issues. I wondered if you could talk about that, too.

GABRIEL: The system is against us, and it has been since the beginning of this nation. The word democracy is garbage. This is tyranny. And it's been against us since the beginning, and genocide has been here since the beginning. I call it a slow genocide. No, they just don't blow all of us up at the same time, but they've taken us away one at a time. And when I say us, I mean blacks, I mean the Native Americans, and the Mexicans who have been here for centuries before

the white man. I didn't ask to come here. My ancestors didn't ask to come here. We came here in slave ships. Beaten and raped on those slave ships. Died jumping off of slave ships; but now, it's like we don't belong here. Well, I'm here; and if you can't change your system you need to work on yourself. There is nothing that I have to do to help you out. You need to help us out. I can't leave, and I am not going to leave. So you change your system of government.

HENERY: As you followed the events and the ongoing shootings, yes, there's another one in Sacramento that are right now at this time— in April. I believe it happened in March, no, in April of 2018— what have been your observations over these last years of not only the shooting deaths, and police violence that doesn't necessarily even get documented because it doesn't end in death, but cases like yours that don't get as much attention because the media gravitates towards is to deaths, in particular?

GABRIEL: I want to make it known, yes they sensationalize the deaths, but then they don't do anything about it. And one thing that needs to stop is the excuses that the police make and— "Oh, I thought he had a gun," or "just because he's black", he's— whatever the assumptions are. Those excuses need to stop. And I've been wanting to find in the Constitution, what is it in their Constitution that gives them the right to do what they do to us? I just, I don't know where to start, but I'd want to find out where in the Constitution does it allow this to continue happening? I do want to make my voice— I feel like I have to be the one to open up about the police brutality, because in the article, I say that the— if I could read it.

HENERY: Sure.

GABRIEL: You might have to read it for me.

HENERY: If there's a part you'd like me to, or if you want to get your glasses there's time, too.

GABRIEL: "The avenue of inequality in this system is the automatic criminalization of Americans based upon race and color", and I say "guilty until proven innocent", but a lot of people are not "guilty until proven [Ms. Gabriel intended to use the word "innocent" here.] guilty". They are guilty just by looking at their color. And they are not even given the chance to be proven innocent, which is what happened with me. I was not able to be proven innocent. Not in the assault on a police officer and not in the trespass case. I have that on my record, still. "Incidences of police brutality and murder should be criminal misconduct", which evidently is not with this system, and "police should not be above the law", but evidently they are. Only a few of them are charged. If I leave a job, or if I am fired from a job, I am going to have a hard time. But if police are fired, all

they have to do is go to the next county or the next city; and they can be hired right away. There's nothing on their record that stops them from doing what they do to us. "Americans of all colors pay for the salaries of terrorist police- men. We also pay for the retirement pensions, the administrative leave, the defense attorneys when criminal and civil lawsuits are filed. So why then are we being continuously murdered and victimized by a governmental system that we pay for? There is no need for grand juries, and the justice department to investigate potential criminal activity." I am a criminal as soon as they see my color, so why does it take three or four months, or even years before a policeman is even investigated? There is no need for investigations if the person is dead. What investigation is necessary? What investigation, if I am already innocent? At least I KNOW I am innocent. The system is rigged.

HENERY: And how do you think about justice at this point, that's one of the words that gets used to think about the criminal justice system, but I wondered what justice means to you?

GABRIEL: All I can tell you, the way I've seen, it's "just us", not justice, "just us". There is no justice.

HENERY: Can you say more of what you mean by that, with the us part of it?

GABRIEL: For us, I mean, just for the whites, just for those with power, just for those with money. There is no justice for the lower income. There is no justice for the homeless. There is no justice for LGBTQ's. No justice for the handicapped. If you have a stigma, as far as a white person is concerned, there is no justice for you.

HENERY: And along with justice, I have to think about dignity, and I wondered if you had something to say about that?

GABRIEL: My own?

HENERY: About your dignity and the process of having this experience, and in general about human dignity, when you have such levels of violence and brutality.

GABRIEL: Well I have dignity, but it wasn't given to me by anybody in this system. It was given to me by myself. I had to make my own self. Create who I am. And it's not going to be taken away no matter what happens. My dignity cannot be taken away from me by anyone. You make your own dignity.

HENERY: You've gone on to do— to be an advocate, that's correct?

GABRIEL: Yes.

HENERY: I wondered if you could speak about your advocacy and how you have taken this experience, not only in sharing it, but how, just like in your article where you're talking about the issues, the broader issues beyond your personal story, how you've gone to the world with it.

GABRIEL: Well, it was embedded in me through my parents. They were activists years and years ago. My daddy started the NAACP in my hometown in the 1930's. He's also fought for civil rights for Blacks as I was growing up. He was a supervisor at the City of Port Arthur. He fought to get "equal pay for equal work" for the Black men of the city of Port Arthur. When he won his case, he was fired and blacklisted for the rest of his life. That's one reason why I know the system is against us, but that never did stop him. I feel like the activism is in my blood, although I did not start right away with it; but I did speak up. I have spoken at City Halls. When I got out of the jail in Houston, Texas, I did go to the City Hall and tell them my story, by myself. And I have spoken at a meeting that was about the State of Texas taking away food stamps, cutting the food stamps. I spoke at that meeting. There are several meeting that I have opened my mouth to— the City Council. I have opened my mouth before these situations here. I have been open.

HENERY: And you have— you are a part of, I'm not sure if it's exactly a membership, but part of the Texas Advocates for Justice.

GABRIEL: Yes.

HENERY: And when did you join, and can you speak about how that happened and what the experience has been like?

GABRIEL: Yes, about four months ago I saw on Facebook, "If you are a formerly incarcerated person, if you have had issues with police or with the system, would you like to come and take this training, this Texas Advocates for Justice training?" I had not been a criminal. I had never spent a lot of time. I just spent those three and a half days in jail; but I know that my experience with police brutality— I needed to join. And since I have joined, I am still learning my way, but I am glad I am a part of that. It is helping me to get farther and farther, instead of just being by myself.

HENERY: And what was the nature of the training?

GABRIEL: It was telling us about Texas Advocates for Justice and we had different groups where we would discuss inequality in the schooling. What could we do better? What can be done better? Inequality with healthcare. What can be done better? And then we also talk about— in just groups of two, talked about our own experiences of being arrested or being in

prison. And they told us, "Whatever you want to do, you can do it in this Texas Advocates for Justice." I am still learning, learning my way.

HENERY: Are there— this could be both about your experience there or in general— are there stories of people you have met that have really stayed with you over the years? When you've had conversations about police brutality, or the nature of the criminal justice system, are there stories— just like your story has touched others, are there stories that have touched you?

GABRIEL: Oh, there's been lots of stories. The women that I have talked to, or some of them, have been arrested for things that are unnecessary. Some women are arrested for—like, one woman called the police for domestic violence and she was the one arrested. Another lady called for domestic violence, and she was arrested because she was "negligent to her child". It's so many stories, that could be different, the outcomes could've been different; but a lot of them I can't talk about because they have to do with prison ministry.

HENERY: Speaking of prison ministry, can you share about your involvement with the prison ministry?

GABRIEL: Yes, I got involved- I started being involved with prison ministry in 2005.

HENERY: And how did that happen?

GABRIEL: Well, I was a part of this Walk to Emmaus community, and it's a group of already committed Christians to help you become better leaders. When I became a part of the Walk to Emmaus community, the minister who invited me to be a part of it was also a part of the prison ministry. He said, "Let's go to the prison." So, I started doing a Christian-based ministry that showed them more about God. But soon after that I was introduced to another ministry, called Bridges to Life, which is a fourteen-week ministry that helps them more with their inner selves, helping them see the other side of their crime. A lot of them don't feel like they did anything wrong. But it helps them to see the other side of their crimes. It helps them see things differently and more to be different from what they were.

HENERY: And do you work with women and men both, or—?

GABRIEL: I have worked with men, but I prefer working more with women because I can relate to them more than I can with men.

HENERY: And are there, without having to go into specifics to respect privacy, are there— what are some of the conversations that you have, or some of the insights that you might be able to share about that experience?

GABRIEL: They become, as weeks go by, they become more open. They can express—they feel like they have an avenue to express themselves. They are afraid of showing their real selves to their cellmates because it might get heard or they might be called sissy, whatever, but they are able to open up in the Bridges to Life. Crying when they need to cry, as much as they need to cry. Speaking about their lives, just like I have spoken. They can open up about their lives, what they have been through. To show, well, "Maybe I am here because of what my experiences were in the past". And they are really thankful for that class and it's really helpful.

HENERY: And are there a lot of women of color or is it pretty—?

GABRIEL: From what I— in the prison that I work with, it's not a lot of women of color. I have seen more white women than I've seen blacks and browns.

HENERY: And what is the experience with race in the midst of that?

GABRIEL: There is none.

HENERY: And can you say what you mean?

GABRIEL: Because they become like sisters. Even if they didn't like each other before that class, they become close and they know that they can rely on each other from now on. So, there's no race at least not after the class.

HENERY: And what about working with you, are they younger women too?

GABRIEL: Oh, some of them are as old as I am.

HENERY: Ok, it ranges.

GABRIEL: It ranges. I can be tough with them, but I can also be quiet and sweet. It just depends on the situation.

HENERY: Do racial issues come up though, with you, or—?

GABRIEL: Oh, no, no. Some of them, I would say all of them, but I know that some of them begin to see that I am just like them. They've been hurt and I've been hurt, and they can relate. They can drop that toughness that they have, and just talk to me the way they want to talk to me. And I can listen and learn from them, so there's no— it has nothing to do with race and almost nothing to do with age.

HENERY: And what are some of the things you have learned from working with these women?

GABRIEL: Well, when I started, I needed help. I needed somebody to talk to, and they were able to be that group that I could talk to, and that I could cry to also. I don't have to be tough all the time. I can cry also. And I've shown them that instead of crying I have spent my time with

arts. I've spent my time sewing. And if I felt like I was angry, I can go out and take a walk instead of thinking of something bad to do. And sometimes I have taken photographs of my artwork and crafts and show them, "This is what I do when I am angry. This is what I do when I am sad. I don't have to take the drugs, or alcohol, or crime."

HENERY: And that you said you started in 2005?

GABRIEL: Yeah.

HENERY: Did that help—did you share your story with women at that point?

GABRIEL: Oh my, yes.

HENERY: Yes, ok.

GABRIEL: Yes. A few times and, boy, it never—the story of my whole life, it has never gotten any easier to tell; and every time I would tell it I would just clam up and it's too tough to talk about; and even now, it's too tough to talk about. The Bridges to Life ministry is a victim impact ministry. There are crime victims that come in and tell their stories to the group, and I've been asked to do that. I did tell my story once to a large group, but it was too much. It was seven days before I got it all out of me. I can see these other men and women telling their stories over and over. There's one man that I work with, who's told his story every time for seven years; and then he tells his story to other prisons. I don't know how he does it, but I cannot tell my story over and over.

HENERY: Is there something—I think sometimes when we tell our story, ideally we want to be heard, and with these types of stories, I was wondering what your thoughts over the years about what helps people to be heard? What stories that are really heavy and that are hard to carry by yourself?

GABRIEL: Well, they need an audience, an audience that is willing to listen and not judge, and a lot of time that's difficult. You can't just find that audience just anywhere. They need to feel that they are worthy. It takes a while, but they need to feel like they are worth something. And when they tell their story, it takes opening up to drop off some of those rocks off your shoulder, and it's— what did you say? What was that question?

HENERY: It was just about how people might feel heard, because it is an exchange in which somebody is telling you their story and somebody's listening.

GABRIEL: Yeah, it takes the right audience and you can't just walk up on that audience all the time. So some of these women— like I said, some of them are as old as I am— are just telling their stories for the first time, and I guess it's in God's time, for it to happen.

HENERY: And thinking about that at a national level, not just the personal level, is there a way nationally that people need to be— or these stories, these issues need to be heard.

GABRIEL: Oh, nationally—If there was the right avenue with the right type of media, they could be heard. Not by the capitalist media, but by the right types of media, they could be heard. [TAPE CUTS] But if the right types of media would open up and become available, without looking for money, or a lot of money, they could be heard. Their voices could be heard, from the prison, from the streets.

HENERY: I think, yeah, what I'm getting at with being heard is probably better said as listening.

GABRIEL: Yeah.

HENERY: It strikes me that listening plays a really important role in these types of conversations, and it's not happening.

GABRIEL: That's right, that's right. It is not happening, and it seems like the ones who have that power to listen, do not have the guts to listen. They are afraid of the truth, and they don't want things to change, so they don't want to listen. Let it stay like it is. And with people like me speaking up, that's a threat to them. And the way you deal with a threat is to shut us up.

HENERY: So, at this point, Ms. Gabriel, where are you—you're working for, or participating in Texas Advocates for Justice and you're telling your story. One question about telling your story that I wanted to ask was, how do you decide where and to whom to tell your story?

GABRIEL: Well, I know that—sometimes it just happens.

HENERY: It comes out.

GABRIEL: I went to the—I don't know if I should call out their name, but I went to this gallery that had artwork on display that pertained to race, and police brutality, and the inequality. And if you wanted to, you can just sit at one of these pieces of artwork and talk to an audience. So I talked to the audience there. So far, I have talked with groups that are willing to listen and learn. And people that I feel like I could have a space, too, that would listen to me without prejudice. When I did that video, the young lady that helped me with the video said, "You need to go to a group of white men." Oh, are you crazy?! I would be afraid to go to just a group of white professionals and tell this story, although it needs to be heard by them. But I need to go there, but I cannot do it by myself.

HENERY: Can I ask what you're afraid of?

GABRIEL: Ignorance, ignorance. And would they be willing to help me go farther with it; or would they, like I said, just stomp on me because of who I am, or what they see as being my past. I don't feel like I would have the avenue to go farther if I just talked to a group of white professional men. Maybe with Texas Advocates for Justice, they could help me find an avenue to go there. Because I had wanted to, I thought I could go straight to the national level; but this is mostly Texas and Austin area that they deal with.

HENERY: So it sounds like you want to take your work and your message to a bigger audience?

GABRIEL: Yes, yes.

HENERY: What appeals to you about that, or what's the fire that you feel around that?

GABRIEL: There's things that I want to get out— There's messages that I want to get out there. Like getting rid of the grand jury, changing this— not just changing, but transforming this system. And most people, all they want to do is "vote". The "voting" is not going to change it. The grand jury is a farce. Oh my, the courts are a farce; but nobody's willing, or knows how to get these things changed. I just need help to go further, but nobody's wanting to do anything but "vote". And voting for one issue or voting for one politician, it does not change it. So I do want to go further but I need more help to get the system, not changed, but transformed.

HENERY: One of the things you said in your own experience was that you didn't know much about the criminal justice system before you encountered it, and it seems that that's what could be one of the larger issues, out of sight out of mind.

GABRIEL: Yes.

HENERY: So I wondered, you know, do you have thoughts on just like voting, other ways to kind of engage people in this, with the not-so-savory topic unless it comes into your life or your loved ones.

GABRIEL: To engage others?

HENERY: Yeah, or some of the other challenges you've seen besides voting, being a major one, but getting people engaged in a subject that is just— people don't want to talk about because it triggers a lot of feelings, because it's not happy. It's hard, as we've been talking about the whole time, to have these types of conversations.

GABRIEL: Well, people need to come out of their comfort zones, and to see the real problems. Come out of those little boxes and work with others. See others in a different manner, in a different way and see this system in a different way. I see a lot of people marching, but that's

not going to change it. And even though there are thousands of people marching now for gun control, but yet that's not stopping the politicians from thinking the way that they are thinking. That's not making the politicians change the rules. [TAPE CUTS]

HENERY: So what's in store for the next year in terms of your activism, voice, things you would like to do more of, or new?

GABRIEL: Well, if I could get rid of some of these things like the grand jury, if I could say— since these police have body cameras, they should be looked at right away, and see that they started the violence. They hurt this person. They should be arrested right away and not just put aside. They should be held accountable, without us having to pay for them. If they kill somebody, let them pay for the law suits with their own monies, not from tax monies. The investigations, there's no need for investigations of police brutality. There's no need for investigations, especially of police murders. There it is right there on YouTube. There it is right there on camera. This man with his hands up, or this man being beaten while he's down in handcuffs. Those police should be held accountable right away and arrested just like I was, or like anyone else, instead of letting them walk free. That's one thing that I want, it's one thing that I would like to change. And it's not just a police thing, like I said. It's the system, but at least I can start there. Let police be held accountable without us paying our tax monies to help them out. Or even a family filing a lawsuit, we pay the millions of dollars in those lawsuits. It's, wow! The police still walking in his blue uniform. That is one thing I would like to work with or on.

HENERY: One question, this is sort of going back earlier, it's apropos. Do you watch when there's been the videos, there's social media and so there's video of these shooting deaths, do you watch them?

GABRIEL: Not any more. Not any more. It's too hard, and when I do see it, what I see is— what I just said the other day. The police do not listen. And what is the police? Being the cause of the problem. If you stop me in my car, instead of just talking to me like a human being, you're looking for a fight. You're looking for violence. If I'm reaching for my purse, "boom!", I'm shot, that's— I can't stand it anymore. The police don't listen. They're not there to listen. At least when it comes to, whatever, certain groups, they do not. They're not there for us. I cannot stand it any more, looking at it any more.

HENERY: Is there anything else you would like to share, Ms. Gabriel? Because if we think of ourselves as an archive, and really this is about capturing your testimony, is there anything else you'd like to share for viewers about your life, or reflections, or mission?

GABRIEL: Well, I have grown and learned from what I have experienced; and it made me stronger. It didn't tear me down, it's made me stronger. I want to make change and we have to get together and work on those changes and put differences aside. And we need to work together as a small group, as a community, as a nation. We need to work together and get the— not just change but get the transformation that is needed to make things better for everyone. All right?

HENERY: Thank you so much, Ms. Gabriel, for telling your story today. I appreciate it.

GABRIEL: Ok, ok.