**Transcription of Interview with Tita**

Place: Cafeteria in Santo Domingo, on Llave Street

Date and time: December 17, 2022, starting at 13:20 hrs

Duration: 48:25 mins

Additional observation notes: I had tried to have the interview with Tita before but we had not been able to coincide. This day is Saturday, and I am in Santo Domingo because first I did an interview with Elsa. After that I went to an activity of the Committee together with Elsa, and Manuel and Tita arrived there as well. After the activity, Manuel tells me that I should take the opportunity to interview Tita, as we still haven't been able to have an interview. We go to a café across the street from where the activity took place. This worked out well, because I was finally able to have the interview with Tita. We sat down in the café and ordered something to drink, and while we had our coffees, we had the interview. She proposed this pseudonym.

Participants: Interviewer [A], Tita [T]

TRANSCRIPTION

A: To begin with, can you tell me your name and information about yourself

T: Good morning. My name is Tita, I am 63 years old, originally from the state of Hidalgo. I arrived at the end of '71, the year of the invasion of the neighbourhood here. But I arrived in December.

A: What has the struggle for water been like for you here in El Pedregal? I don't know if you want to tell me about your experience of the struggle for water.

T: Well, I remember when we arrived at the end of '71. I arrived in December, at the end of 71. In that year, in 71, the neighbourhood was invaded. I had to watch from that time how they carried the water from far away. And we see that, despite what has been achieved since then, it happens again. We are once again suffering from water shortages, and it is a setback that we are seeing because of what has been achieved in this area. Those who are taking the vital liquid are the real estate companies. We know that here in El Pedregal we have water. It is the pure water that many covet. Because our water comes down from the Xitle volcano, from Los Dinamos, from Contreras. This water is what reaches Iztapalapa, it is what feeds the wells here in the neighbourhood, Xotepingo, Nahuatlacas, La lupita, all of them.

We here in Pedregal de Santo Domingo have suffered water shortages. As I repeat, the big consortiums are the ones that are taking the liquid and we as a people are having our ration reduced. What are we seeing with this? That the first thing that is going to happen with the water shortage is that we are being pushed aside, they are squeezing us, as we say. We have always said it, they are choking us, because the government knows how we are going to be displaced little by little. It is forced displacement that we are experiencing, because in the face of this scarcity we have to look elsewhere. It is very sad because the ones who are going to take our territory are the foreigners. The government takes care of the businessmen. And the government is not going to look after us as a people. We as a people have to be united.

Faced with this shortage, in 2014 we saw that a real estate company owned by José and Salomón Chabot, excavated a plot of land at 215 Aztecas Avenue. Why do we say that it is illegal? Because when they began to excavate the site, to make foundations and everything, water sprang up. There were two leaks. From then on, we saw with pain and sadness how much water was going into the drainage system. And we in El Pedregal with the shortage. From 2014, when we detected this illegal construction work, from then on we demanded that it be stopped. And we asked "Why are we suffering from water shortages in Santo Domingo and they are pouring it into the drainage system?" When we know that the water is clean, because the Institute of Geology of the UNAM university studied the water and the water is clean. I don't know what is missing, something is missing for it to be drinkable, but it is clean. I don't remember what it is at the moment, but the water is clean.

So from then on, we began to demand that the government, we made the authorities walk with us and with the neighbours and see the scarcity of the vital liquid. That was when we went to the houses, and only air came out of the taps. The cisterns were dry and even cracked because there was no water. We forced them to see the problem for themselves.

We didn't take to the streets for fun, we took to the streets out of a need to demand from the government that we wanted water in the main water network. We are not satisfied with just getting water trucks. In an emergency, there is nothing else but water trucks, but we wanted water in the network. So we started the struggle to demand a well from the government. How old is the neighbourhood? 51 years. And they haven't built a well in the neighbourhood.

So it was time to demand from the government that we have a well in the neighbourhood. Thanks to the pressure from the neighbours and us as a committee, the well was built. And the well is almost finished, but not because the government was good. This was because of the pressure from the neighbours who went to demand that a well be built for us. Now other political groups have told us, "you are making the well, but for the real estate companies". Of course not. Because even though the well is about to be finished, our fight is not going to end. Our fight is not going to end there. From then on, we as neighbours are going to be vigilant. We are going to be the guardians of that well, of that water, so that the real estate developers don't take it away. Because that is what some politicians have tried to tell people, that the water is for the real estate companies. But we know that now any politician is going to want to stick their neck out, any group is going to want to stick their neck out and say, "look what we did, look at this, look at that". Because we seem to be seeing that already.

And we remember the time when Mauricio Toledo governed here in the neighbourhood. At that time he gave out water trucks, but he conditioned the people. He only gave them to those closest to him. They even shamelessly passed by the houses with people from citizen participation, deceiving the neighbours, asking them for their credentials. They told them, "if you join the PRD party, we will send you water trucks". This water truck thing was a political booty, because as I repeat, there were politicians, there were workers from the delegation who sold the water trucks. They gave them out for 1,500. That is why when we forced the authorities of the delegation to take to the streets, the same neighbours pointed the finger at them. Telling them to their face, "you sold us the water trucks, you told us that if we joined the PRD they would send us the water truck".

That's why when the COVID pandemic broke out, we said, "well, we're going to keep an eye on things and make demands of the government". Because Santo Domingo was a hotspot in COVID, and we said, "how can it not be a hotspot if we don't have water?" So we made Negrete, who was the mayor at the time, responsible, and we told him that if the neighbourhood was like this, it was because of their inefficient work. With the COVID, they told us, "there has to be some cleaning, you have to wash your hands". But what were we going to wash with if we didn't have the vital liquid?

A: You say that you were on some of the walks with the authorities.

T: Yes, with the authorities, we went to the city water system (SACMEX), we went to the mayor's office. Because during election time they were giving them water tanks. And why were they giving them the water tanks? Well, to cover people's mouths. And what did we do? We went to complain, "How is it possible that they give them water tanks if there is no water? So we, those same water tanks that they gave to the people, there were neighbours who took their water tanks to the delegation to see. At that time it was Negrete, and Maldonado, we went to Maldonado's house. But we were assaulted by the police station's violent group, because we know that Toledo's violent group is there, we have seen them, and now they are government workers.

A: And in those visits you made here in the streets, how did you show the authorities that there was no water?

T: Because the neighbours themselves did it. We coordinated with the same neighbours who had no water, and they themselves demanded that the authorities see, that the authorities enter their homes and verify that there was no water. The taps were dry, only air was coming out of the taps, the cisterns were already cracked.

A: Did you go knocking on neighbours' doors?

T: Yes, we went knocking on doors because the neighbours were with us. At that time they began to approach us. We denounced Aztecas 215 and the neighbours approached us. That's when the assemblies began to take place. After that, we went to the streets, we went on marches to the police station, we went to SACMEX, well, everywhere we went and knocked on doors so that they would listen to us.

The well was not achieved overnight. It took years of struggle, years of waiting, of going to the authorities. The bureaucratic procedures take a long time, and they kept us there for hours and hours, at a standstill. Then they would tell us "so-and-so didn't come", and we would go back. They would call us back another day, and so on and so forth. That's why it didn't happen overnight, it was years of struggle for that well, but now, thank God, we are on the eve of the inauguration of the well, and there is very little left to do.

A: How did the initiative to build the well come about?

T: Because we have the same problem as happened here in La Ajusco when the La Lupita well was built. There, too, it was pressure from the neighbours that led to the authorisation of the well.

So we saw that there was a water shortage in the neighbourhood. Especially in the central area, which is where water is scarcer. And we realised that the tap in Atl never lacked water. That tap never lacks water, it has water day and night. So we said, "this is where we want the well".

A: And how did you convince the authorities to build the well?

T: Well, it was very difficult, they gave us long, long delays. We presented the project, and first they told us, "we want a plot of land because to build a well you need a 400-metre plot of land". There was even a neighbour who used to live here on Llave Street, and she is now dead, but she had told us that she would donate the land. So she even donated her house so that the well could be built there.

The land was already there, but they told us, "there is no budget". And we said, "How can there be no budget? That's when we started pushing and pushing a lot. So we said "we want the well there on the corner of the street Atl and the street Árbol". And they didn't want to, they started to put obstacles in our way. They told us that 400 metres were needed for a well. That's what the wells need. So a colleague made a mapping of the wells that are on the peripheral ring road, and the wells that we have in the neighbourhood. And we saw that 400 metres is not what is needed for a well. We presented the proposal, and the maps of where the wells were. And we demonstrated that it is not 400 metres. And we got the well there, because the same neighbours of the neighbourhood are the ones who also pressured the authorities to build the well there.

A: And now the well is almost finished, isn't it?

T: Yes, it's almost finished, it's already 98% finished. We are very happy because we say that it is thanks to the neighbours. Thanks to the pressure of the neighbours and their need, it was achieved. As we have always said, the simple fact that we already have the well is not all. Our fight is not going to end here, we are going to continue fighting. Because more than anything else I say that what is important is the territory. We have to continue fighting for our territory, because as I repeat, what is happening? Well, we see with sadness that in the neighbourhood many real estate projects are being built and they are taking our vital liquid. And we say that this is forced displacement.

A: And for you, now that the well is done, what will be the next steps for the organisation?

T: Well, the next step for the organisation is that we are not going to sit back and do nothing. We have to keep an eye on the well, and make sure that they don't take the water out, that they don't divert it somewhere else. That is what the neighbours should also be aware of, that they are going to be the guardians. We are going to continue to be the guardians of that well, we are not going to stand idly by, and as I said there are many things that we have to continue to fight for.

A: Do you see a relationship between Aztecas 215 and now this defence of water here?

T: Yes, from Aztecas 215 comes the issue of the well. And we know that in Aztecas 215 the problem is not over yet, the central government still has something there that it has not fulfilled in the agreements we had made. Because there were agreements, but the government does not fulfil the agreements, they break agreements. So Aztecas 215 is still not finished with that problem. So after Aztecas, the problem of the well came up. Because, as I repeat, we saw with pain the water that was being dumped there. We saw how much water was going down the drain and we in the neighbourhood had no water.

A: Have you suffered from water shortages?

T: Yes, since my childhood we have suffered there where I was born. I come from the countryside, and in the countryside we had to go to the wells to fetch water. And after that, when the mines started to work, water became scarce and we had to go further and further away to fetch it. So that's why our struggle for water has always been. I remember from my childhood that we suffered a lot for water, and now in times of drought we suffer a lot for water.

A: What state do you come from?

T: From here in the state of Hidalgo. From the mining area.

A: Do you identify with any indigenous group?

T: No, because as I said, I came from there when I was very young. I came when I was 10, 11 years old. I came to work, with an aunt who brought me. That's why I tell you that I saw the neighbourhood when it was just starting. My aunt brought me to work.

A: Did you have the opportunity to go to school?

T: Yes, up to sixth grade, I tell my children with pride, I show them my 9.5 certificate. And there was hunger, there was poverty, we suffered in clothing, in shoes, in food. We were 13 siblings, of the 13 there were 4 of us, but my sister and I were the oldest, we were the ones who carried the burden of all the others. So that's why you had to go out to work.

A: And you struggled for water living in Hidalgo then?

T: Yes, from there. And when I arrived here in '71, I saw how my uncles were going to bring water. Because they brought me to work in a house, but on Saturdays when I arrived in the afternoon, and on Sundays, I helped them carry the water.

A: So when you came here, you came with your uncles, and where did they carry the water from?

T: They carried the water from there, from Ajusco. There was a well and a tank over there. They brought it from there, and you brought it on a wooden stick that we called a donkey, and here they called it a water holder.

A: And did you also ever carry water or did you have to carry water as well?

T: Here, yes, and back home, yes, also. At first it was with a pitcher, and then the pitchers broke and we had to carry water with a jar on our heads. But we still brought water from very far away because, as I said, when they opened a mine, they started to work that mine and the water became scarce in those wells, so we brought it even further away.

A: So you're telling me that the issue of water is connected to the issue of territory?

T: Yes, because look, more than anything else they know that we have water here in El Pedregal. We don't want them to tell us that the water comes from the Cutzamala system, we know that we have water here in Pedregal de Santo Domingo. That is why we say that foreigners have their eye on the Pedregal, on these neighbourhoods, because we have water here, because it is a porous area due to the volcanic rock.

A: And why do you think that despite having water, there is no water in the houses?

T: Because the government is giving water to these big constructions they are building. They are taking away our water and we as a people are being rationed.

A: What does water mean to you?

T: Well, water is life and life must be defended. If there is no water there is no life, water is a vital liquid. If there is no water, we can't do anything, not even bathe, wash, or anything. [In the background you can hear some Christmas carols playing in the café.]

Even now we've been suffering water shortages, I mean, down there in the Los Reyes neighbourhood I never lacked water, but now I do. It's been weeks that we've been like this with just a drop of water. With two, three cans of water that one can collect and that's it, but yes, we have also been suffering from water shortages right now. Let's hope that now that the well is inaugurated, that they put it to work, that the water will come back to normal again. But as I repeat, it is the developments that are taking away the water. These big buildings that are there. We see here in the neighbourhood a very large construction site, they also dumped the water into the drainage system, but the neighbours didn't organise themselves.

A: When did the water shortage start here in Santo Domingo?

T: Well, the shortage has been going on for years. But now, recently, from 2016 onwards, that's when we got into it more deeply. It was when the people from here who came to see us in the Aztecas said "oh, so much water in the drainage system, and we don't have any water". Yes, because it was a river that went into the drainage system.

A: How did you come to join the problem in Aztecas?

T: No, our struggle has been going on for years. Our struggle has been going on since the ZODES, when in 2013 Mancera donated the land of the asphalt plant to Simón Levy, where the ZODES, the economic and social development zones, were going to be. We got involved in the fight for the ZODES, why? Because we saw that by doing that, it wasn't just going to be that space, it was going to take up several. You could see in the model how the ZODES were being shaped, and we said "no, we have to unite because they are foreigners". And how Mancera donates land to a foreigner when we know that the people don't even have a place to live. We know how many people stay on the streets, how many people are renting. Just here in Santo Domingo, how many people are renting. And not just here in Santo Domingo, in the periphery. Our struggle here in El Pedregal has been going on for years. Because then came the ZODES, then came the natural gas, then came Aztecas. That's why we say that the foreigners have their eye on the Pedregales. We are also in the fight for electricity, because we don't agree with the illegal decree of the government. And we know that it is private companies that want to destroy the Federal Electricity Commission (CFE).

A: So before the opposition to the ZODES, you were already in the struggle.

T: Yes, I was already involved in this before. I was part of Atenco, and before that we were here with the housing issue. We left here from the popular community centre in 1987, yes, the last movement that the organisation made. From there we got into the Campamentos Unidos movement. When you go around asking for housing, they bring you from one place to another. Campamentos Unidos was in the neighbourhood Guerrero.

A: So first there was the housing movement.

T: First, first there was the housing movement.

A: Here in Santo Domingo too.

T: Here in Santo Domingo, yes, because that's where the popular community centre comes from and where our work is.

A: You were then in the union of settlers in Santo Domingo.

T: Yes, even later when the organisation split, I was still part of it.

A: Of what?

T: We were four comrades, four stayed on this side and four stayed on the other side.

A: Which are the two sides?

T: Look, our organisation was the Centro de Artes y Oficios Escuelita Emiliano Zapata and that register is ours. And theirs is the Unión de Colonos de Pedregal de Santo Domingo. I started out as an applicant for housing and then I joined the organisation.

A: The organisation that was in the popular community centre?

T: Uh-huh.

A: So you were involved when the popular community centre was built?

T: Uh-huh.

A: What was that like?

T: That's where the organisations that went and supported the construction at that time came in. And with the labour of the neighbours as well. Because the neighbours also gave a lot of support to that. It was a programme promoted by the government. At that time, it was the son of Lázaro Cárdenas, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. With that project. We were also involved in PRONASOL, those were other times. So my work began there with the popular community centre.

A: So you have been involved in the struggle for many years.

T: Yes, since 1987, I came out of the popular community centre. All these years.

A: In 87 you joined the community centre project then.

T: Aha, our work is there, there are even testimonies and photographs of when we were working. The first stone of the foundation of the building of the popular community centre is from down there, below the land where I am now. Because the stone for the foundations was brought from there.

There were some small rooms, an office, and all that was thrown away. It was the movement of housing applicants. There are even testimonies and photographs of that. It's a pity I don't have them right now. But I have photos of the Huayamilpas rescue. I was at the Huayamilpas rescue, which was 27, 28 years ago.

A: How was that?

T: The rescue of Huayamilpas was to clean up the lake. Because there in Huayamilpas part of the landfill that came out after the 1985 earthquake went there, part of it was distributed, part of it went there, and part of it went here, closer to here. But the rescue of Huayamilpas was to clean the lake, to clean it, to remove all the rubbish, all the lirio that was there. That was the so-called rescue. That was about 27 or 28 years ago. I was pregnant with my daughter, the one who is 28. Yes, that rescue, the rescue of Huayamilpas, is 28 years old. It's the bad thing, I tell you, that later you don't write about it, but I remember that.

And after that there was the rescue of the area that is there by the Flores Park, and also the cleaning of the lirio. That was later, in 87, or 90. And that was the same, it was the cleaning of the lakes below. And yes, it was also the work of the neighbours. I have photographs of that. The lily, and the beautiful, beautiful stones that you could see. Yes, I'm telling you, that was our work. When you're looking for a house, you're brought from one place to another.

But it's nice, because it teaches you that with hard work you deserve what you have. Because having a house means that you suffer, you even take the tortilla out of your mouth, or you stop buying clothes, or going out for walks, because you have to invest in a house. Yes, and it was my turn at that time to go and look after that land. Between 87 and 90, to look after that land. And the school organisation bought it, they bought it.

A: Look after the land that is now the popular community centre?

T: No, to look after my house, what is now my house. And I tell you that we suffered there. We exposed our children to the weather, to danger, more than anything else. Because we went to take care of that land without water, without drainage, without any services.

A: Is that a different piece of land to the one you came to when you arrived with your uncles and aunts?

T: Yes, but it was also made of stone, because the stone was also thrown there. The stone hill was still there.

A: And then you took care of that land and how did you go about building the house?

T: That was when I was already participating in the group. So that land was bought, and we had the group of housing applicants. Then they saw the priorities, who was going to look after the land, and so they chose me, so that I would look after the land. But then, you have to deal with the consequences, because there was no electricity, no water, no drainage. And exposing one's children to danger, to inclement weather, heat, cold.

A: And then you were able to build your house.

T: Little by little we built our own houses. But we also struggled, we struggled to build. We also struggled a lot with the title deeds, but it was done as a group.

A: And how was the introduction of water in what is now your house?

T: First of all, thank God at that time there was a worker who is now working in the local government. At that time he was the sub-delegate. And they were PRI supporters and we were the opposition, but we had the door open for everything. So they gave us a provisional tap at that time. And after that, the land was regularised, the lots were subdivided, the deeds were deeded, and the network was put in, so that everyone could put in their own water. But at the beginning, the water connection was provisional.

A: And what you tell me about Huayamilpas and the other place, what did you have to do?

T: Well, as I say again, at that time we were applicants for housing and wherever they took us we went. It was like in Campamentos Unidos, we.... [they interrupt us to take the coffee order, and we order our coffees] I tell you that as applicants, they took us from here to there, from here to here. They took us to Guerrero to support the Campamentos Unidos comrades. From there they took us to Huayamilpas, to the rescue of the park. The work was from 8am to 8pm, Saturday and Sunday.

We were applicants for housing. Then from there we went to a piece of land in San Luis that the organisation also had. It was our turn, it was our turn to go and clear the land, to go and plant. There were hectares, and they had that land there in San Luis. But when it was time to go to harvest, they no longer took us, they took others. They didn't take us, they took us to the hardest part, to clear, to clear, to sow and to dig. Yes, but they had hectares of land there. I didn't really know what they did to them, because the activist teacher from the organisation sold it, but I didn't really know, that's when the organisation split up. They split up after that.

A: And how was the other park? Is it what is now the quarry and Flores Park?

T: Yes, there, those of us who were the applicants for housing also went in. My daughters were older and there's a photograph around where one of my daughters is. Yes, but as I keep telling you, wherever they took us, we had to go. That's what having a home implies, that's what it implies, that they bring us from one place to another.

But well, I'm not saying that I didn't benefit from it. Thanks to that, life taught me to fight, to fight for housing. I say I have my home, but I also suffered, but having a home doesn't mean that I was going to sit back and do nothing, no. We had to keep fighting. We had to keep fighting.

And I am sad to see my neighbours, that they left once they had what they wanted. I was saying that we are united by a cause, which is housing, but now it's like everyone has had what they wanted and they've kind of forgotten about it.

Because then I invite them, I tell them "let's go to such and such a place". And they say "oh no, oh no". So they stayed there, they just stayed in their house, it was just what they wanted. And that's why I'm reflecting now and I say that if we have already had housing, I'm not going to sit back and do nothing, I have to keep fighting. So now we are saying, the well is already there, we are not going to stand idly by, we have to continue organising ourselves. That's what I've been thinking, reflecting on all this. You see the results.

And last night I was even very happy because I saw that the neighbours were very happy [the night before, it was announced at the meeting of the Water Defence Committee that the well is already very advanced and almost finished]. Because this is their effort. And we know that the neighbourhood came about because they built the neighbourhood themselves, they opened streets, put in services and everything. That's how Santo Domingo began. So it's like the process is repeating itself and we have to tell them not to sit back and do nothing. That we are going to have the well but we are going to continue united and organised.

A: You also told me a moment ago that there is a setback in the water issue, you say that you see this as a setback.

T: Yes, because I'm telling you that when we arrived, we were carrying water. I'm telling you that we did go around because when I arrived with my aunt, on Saturdays and Sundays, I helped them carry the water. And now we see all this again. Everything that was achieved in previous years, that we were already winning, and now we are back to the same thing. We say "no, as a people we have to be united and organised". That's why the slogan is very clear: the people united will never be defeated. Because if we leave, I repeat, the ones who are going to keep the water are the foreigners.

A: And so this setback refers to the fact that you had already managed to get water and now you've gone back to...

T: And now this is happening again. We have to continue to organise and keep up the pressure. We have the well, but we are not going to allow them to take the water somewhere else, no. That's why we are going to be the guardians of the water. That's why we are going to be the guardians of that well, the neighbours.

A: What have been the results of all these years of struggle, the things that have left you, the results that you think all this struggle has left for you?

T: Well, with the ZODES we saw that it bore results because it wasn't donated to the businessman. Also with the natural gas, there were streets where the neighbours didn't agree. And we confronted the government, because it was the group that was in the government's pay. We confronted them and it was partly successful. Because some of the neighbours agreed to have natural gas and others did not. Those results give great satisfaction because you say "I did something". As a housing applicant, I did and I achieved what I wanted, which was a roof over my head. A safe roof over my children's heads. And from Huayamilpas I know that, well, something was also achieved. This struggle has borne fruit, yes, I don't see a struggle like this that has remained as if we didn't achieve anything. I feel that our struggle has been fruitful. And as I say again, something is still pending with Aztecas. We know that they left a part, they gave a part, well, that was used there in the popular community centre, but we know that it is going to be for part of the community. But well, we did something, although a study is still pending that they still have to deliver.

A: When there was the COVID-19 pandemic, did not having water affect you?

T: Well, yes, we had a hard time. Because not having water meant that we had to be very clean and wash all the time. We had to wash our hands all the time, and that really made it difficult. To tell you the truth, I would go to where there was a tap in Los Reyes. And there were whole days when there was no water. And to wash, I really didn't go there on those days. I was even afraid to go to the washing places in La Candelaria to wash. Because I said, "with someone who is going to have COVID-19 and in the same washing place I'll catch it". And these days I have gone two, three days to wash in La Candelaria with my daughter. They drop us off and then in the afternoon, with the small wagon, we bring the clothes back. But yes, it has happened to us, in the middle of the pandemic, yes, we suffered, yes, the neighbours, we even had a sanitary blockade where I live, at the back. The whole family that lived there was infected, there was one death and everyone was infected. And after that, two others died at the very entrance, a married couple, a man and a woman. There was a lot of contagion there with us, and that was the fear, my son-in-law also got infected, but thank God my son-in-law was spared from dying.

A: And at that time there was already a Water Defence Committee.

T: Yes, it was already there, the committee was already there, that's why I tell you that we demanded that the government, that we made them guilty. Because they said "Santo Domingo, red hot spot". Well, how could we not have a hot spot if there was no water? We fought for water in those days when COVID was in full swing.

A: How did the committee support the people back then?

T: Well, at that time we did demand water trucks from the government.

And it is a great commitment that one has with the neighbours, with the committee. That's why I first say, "no, first the neighbours", and I have never dared to ask for a water truck. Even if I need it. Because I say that it is a commitment that one has with the people. And it's a very big commitment that you make, not just to say "I'm on the committee as a leader", it's about me having my water first, no. No, I've always said that the neighbours come first, it's a commitment that you have with the people.

A: Commitment to support the neighbours?

T: That's right.

A: What motivates you to make that commitment?

T: Well, I am fully satisfied that I say that our neighbours come first and I do not. Because I say that I am satisfied that I supported, I did what I had to do. That is, I am satisfied that I would even do it again, fulfil that commitment.

A: Do you feel that you have made that commitment for many years now?

T: Well, I still have a long way to go. Then you get involved in other things and you neglect the house, the children. But well, that's another thing.

A: And in terms of being together as neighbours, have you been able to get to know your neighbours, have you been able to create bonds with them by being in this movement?

T: Yes, yes, because that's the beautiful thing that we learn from each movement. From each movement I learn more and get to know more people. And it's nice, because then you walk down the street and they greet you warmly. They say "Oh, Mrs Tita, oh, how good to see you". In other words, you get that satisfaction, because I'm telling you that you get to know more people.

A: Have you met people here because you were on the Committee?

T: Uh-huh, yes. I met my comrades like Manuel and Pedro during the 99-2000 strike. And from then on I met the other comrades along the journey, on our journey. Comrades we met in Aztecas 215, comrades we met here in the Water Defence Committee. That's why I tell you that the well arose from Aztecas, that's where the Committee was formed.

A: And not standing idly by, as you said, as neighbours, do you think that this is something that has been lost in the neighbourhood or something that is still alive?

T: You see, it so happens that many of them have grown up, or many of them have sold up and left - and then other people arrive who don't know what the struggle was like, how they managed to get a house here in Santo Domingo. Because Santo Domingo is very coveted, we have the university around the corner, we have the metro around the corner. That's why I say that Santo Domingo is very coveted, and to continue defending our territory is important.

A: And being united as neighbours, do you think that gives you strength?

T: Yes, because I have always said that unity is strength. And we always say that united and organised we will not be fooled, we will not be defeated.

A: Is there anything else you would like to add, anything else you would like to say, what do you hope for the future of the community?

T: Well, what makes me happy about the struggles we have gone through is that we have seen the results. We have seen that our journey with our neighbours, and that the struggle with our neighbours, have not been things that have come to nothing. It has produced results.

And we are more than happy to know that these experiences are of some use to you, as they are to you who are going to do your thesis, that they are of some use to you. And the testimonies that you are collecting from the neighbours make us happy. And that this is of some use to you, this little that we provide you with.

A: Well, thank you very much for taking the time to share this experience of so many years.

T: Well, very little, we have done very little. But we have seen results, and we are very happy to have met you, and to know that our testimonies are not just for nothing, we know that it will be of some use to you.

A: What do you think of all these new people who have joined?

T: Well, the people who have been joining us have to be moved by the same need. The new people who have arrived here in the neighbourhood, we know that the same need for water, and not just water, but also electricity, well, they have to get closer to all of that.

A: Thank you very much for giving me the interview, I'm going to stop the recording, but I would like to know if there is anything you would like to say to finish.

T: Well yes, I'm very happy that you invited us to give a little of our testimony, and I hope this is useful to you, and to other generations. Let the other generations know and realise how the neighbourhood has been built, based on struggle and effort. Because the neighbourhood was made by children, women and children. It was not the government, it was not the politicians who made the neighbourhood. Nor the well, it was not the politicians who made it. It was the pressure of the people, the need of the people. So I am very happy and thank you very much.