



Oral History Interview of Virginia Vogel Zanger (OH-005)

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Interview Summary

Virginia Vogel Zanger, a member of the Jamaica Plain Committee on Central America [JPCOCA] discusses Congressman John Joseph Moakley's involvement with his constituents and explains how she became involved in Central American issues in the early 1980s; how the JPCOCA brought awareness to local residents regarding Salvadoran immigration; their meeting with Congressman Moakley; how Congressman Moakley's aide Jim McGovern worked with the JPCOCA; and what kinds of organizations were contacted to bring greater support for immigration reform. She reflects on Congressman Moakley's impact on Salvadoran history and the impact of constituents on their representatives.

Subject Headings

El Salvador

Extended Voluntary Departure

Jamaica Plain Committee on Central America

McGovern, James P.

Moakley, John Joseph, 1927-2001

Zanger, Virginia Vogel

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Interview Transcript

LAURA FOUNTAINE: This interview was taken on April 19, 2003, at 11:00 A.M. at Virginia Zanger's home at number 10 Myrtle Street, Jamaica Plain, by Laura Fontaine.

What is your full name?

VIRGINIA ZANGER: Virginia Vogel Zanger.

FOUNTAINE: And where are you originally from?

ZANGER: New York, New York.

FOUNTAINE: And where did you go to school?

ZANGER: I did my undergraduate work at Harvard and my graduate work at Boston University that I have a doctorate in education.

FOUNTAINE: And how did you first become involved in the El Salvadoran refugee problem?

ZANGER: I had some close friends from El Salvador whom I met in 1971 when we were still involved in the anti-war movement during the Vietnam War. I speak Spanish fluently. I was an exchange student in Argentina in high school. So when we were doing anti-war organizing and other political organizing in 1970 and '71 we met two Salvadoran immigrant refugees. They were probably economic refugees at that point who worked with us on the anti-war movement and said to me, You know, our country is next. I just never really knew what to think of that but had a hard time believing it. Sure enough, ten years later that was the case. A number of us, as we watched the violence escalate in El Salvador, and the United States playing a similar role as we had seen them play in Vietnam of supporting oppressive right-wing regimes and becoming

involved through advisors, which is how the Vietnam involvement had started. Instead, they wouldn't call them troops, they would call them advisors, but they were soldiers.

A number of us who had been active in the anti-war movement were appalled and wanted to do something about it but felt that at a personal level we were not students anymore and our memories of being activists was that it consumed your life. We really wanted to do what we could to stop the war but were not in the position, making a living, that we had as students, to devote our lives to it.

So we had a meeting, I believe in this living room; a number of neighbors and friends—actually most of them were not friends of mine, I forget how we kind of found each other, met each other. I'm sure others in the group who you interview will be able to tell you that. And we decided to do what we could about the issue in Jamaica Plain in our neighborhood. We felt like we were veterans of the anti-war movement and gave ourselves and each other permission not to let it become an all-consuming thing in our lives. We just felt we would do what we could and hook up with other groups that were active. So we began using the same kind of approach that had worked in the anti-Vietnam movement so well, which was just reaching out to people on the street, our friends and neighbors, and decided to start with a table on Centre Street and just talk to people about it.

Then we realized well, you can't just talk to people about it, you need some tool for talking with them. So we got in touch with Oxfam America, that was circulating a petition. I have here a copy of the petition that we would hand out on Centre Street. There was an entire campaign and I have here the poster of the Campaign for Peace and Justice in Central America, so we used their literature to talk to our friends and neighbors. We also had some events in Jamaica Plain. We had a speaker from the [Harvard] Kennedy School who was from El Salvador who came and did a public forum at the Agassiz School. I don't, unfortunately, have the brochures for that, but it was fairly well attended.

FOUNTAIN: Were people aware of this? I mean was a lot of—

ZANGER: Yes, good question, the response was very encouraging. People—we really felt that people had learned the lessons of the Vietnam War. That it was not a good idea to involve ourselves in this sort of situation and we were very successful in gathering signatures. We hooked up with, and I know I went and probably several of us went to a conference that was sponsored by the Justice For All Campaign which was run out of Oxfam America. It was an organizing conference about this issue and basically at the bottom of the Justice For All petition, it says, “Use ball point pen, mail top sheet to member of your congressional delegation.” Well our group had not really—we had never really worked through our congressional delegation when we were doing political organizing. We did demonstrations and other means, so we didn’t even know who our congressman was.

So we went to this conference and they said, Go see your congressman, and they didn’t really—nobody there had ever actually done this. It was at the bottom of the petition but nobody actually had much experience. So we decided that we would pursue this route. We called upon two contacts that we had. One was a Jamaica Plain resident named Dale Mitchell, who’s a political consultant and worked on anti-poverty issues in the state legislature. He met with us and gave us some advice about how to approach our congressman, once we found out who it was, which was John Joseph Moakley, and of course nobody knew anything about him. The other was my brother, Tom Vogel, who had served as a congressional aide to Lester Wolff, the congressman from Long Island for a year or two.

So I called him up and said, “So how do you do this, what do you do?” He gave me some advice and I have my notes from that conversation. He said, “They are expecting a couple of things when you go to see them, that will make your visit most effective.” He said, “First of all, you have to pat them on the back and tell them what a good job they’re doing. Then you have to get your camera out and have a picture taken of citizens meeting with them, and promise to get it published in the local paper,” and we did that. Then they said, Research, know what their voting record is, and then he said, “Make sure you know that they expect you to ask for something.” So we went back and then there were some post-visit things; you have to keep in touch, you have to establish a link and say that you’d be willing to help in whatever effort you’re asking them to do.

So I went back to the group and reported on this and we started researching Joseph Moakley's record and I have the documentations here. We worked with CASA, which was the Central American Solidarity Association, I think is what the acronym stands for. I have here a letter that says, "From John Joseph Moakley to CASA, October 11, 1982." (Reads from letter) "Dear friends, please find enclosed the questionnaire you sent me. If you would like additional information please do not hesitate to contact me. With warm wishes, I am sincerely, John Joseph Moakley."

Here's the CASA questionnaire campaign '82 in which he has basically a terrific record. Then unfortunately—not unfortunately—but I was surprised as I was reviewing these files July 28, 1982, which again was prior to our contacting him, I have the Congressional Record report in July of Moakley's testimony to express his outrage at the Reagan administration certification of El Salvador. (Reads from page) "Which never in my recollection has any previous administration so dangerously combined an ignorance of history with a total misreading of current reality as have President Reagan and his advisors and their policy towards El Salvador." So this is interesting to me because I obviously must have read it but my memory was that our take on Moakley was that he really wasn't—that he had a good voting record but wasn't particularly involved in the issue, but this reveals that he—

FOUNTAIN: He tells the story that—

ZANGER: Right.

FOUNTAIN: It was after this time period.

ZANGER: Right, but it's interesting that this is on the Congressional Record. So he had his own explanation for that, but anyway, we began the process of trying to get an appointment. Now the other thing that we had been told was that we needed to put together a delegation that was not too many people and yet was diverse enough to represent various constituencies and organizations. People said, Make sure that there is at least one member, one nun or one member of the religious Catholic organizations. At that time, the Catholic and Protestant groups were

really leading a lot of work in this area so it wasn't hard to interest them in coming together. So we sent a letter—I guess you have a copy of that letter—requesting that we meet with him. I recall at that time I was working from home. I was consulting and had a lot of time and spent—I recall spending about a month just hassling getting this appointment. Here's my letter to Mr. Roger Kineavy¹ of December 14, asking him, saying, "Please pay attention to this letter to Moakley, we've been given his name." I remember having endless conversations with him. He was not particularly helpful or forthcoming so we finally did get in to see, and here's a copy of—we had given some background information on the Jamaica Plain Committee on Central America, otherwise known as COCA and—

FOUNTAIN: How did you get the meeting? Who set it up for you?

ZANGER: It was eventually Roger Kineavy, who was the district office manager, but again I had to keep calling, and it was supposed to be the beginning of January and we said we really wanted it soon because of some important votes concerning Central America which will be coming up for vote in January. We suggested meeting with the congressman in early January when we understood he would be in the district.

Then I have a copy of something that we sent, so we put together a delegation which I think you had the list out that included two people from our group; two Latino leaders, one Puerto Rican, one Cuban American, both who were also friends of mine; somebody from CPPAX [Citizens for Participation in Political Action]; and two people from the church, Father Goudet as well as Sister Cappelli and they both—everybody came except Dina Matthews who was from the Comicasa Americanos, I think she didn't come.

So then I have a copy here of a memo that I wrote to the delegates to see Moakley that goes (reads from memo): "The good news is Congressman Moakley has agreed to meet with us about U.S. policy in Central America; the bad news is that this office will not be able to let us know the date of the appointment until two days beforehand. They expect it will be either mid-January"—anyways, it goes on.

¹ Roger Kineavy served as Congressman Moakley's district director from 1973 to 1994.

What's interesting about this is we had organized ourselves around, Okay, what are we going to ask him?, because we basically read his voting record and when it came down to the three or four demands on the Oxfam petition, he seemed to be on the right side of everything. So what we said is what—the four things we'd like to accomplish are to make him aware of the extended concern about Central America, by introducing the members of our delegation representing some of the diverse constituencies and groups presenting the Justice For All petitions—which we knew he was going to be in favor of—to let him know that we were aware of his strong voting record. Except for his vote for monies to construct an airfield in Honduras near the Nicaraguan border, we support his progressive position to reiterate our support of the four points on the Justice For All petition. Then we are supposed to ask for something and to urge Congressman Moakley to be more active and outspoken in his opposition to current policy, including pressing House Speaker O'Neill² to also take a stronger public stand on this issue. One of the things I recall which doesn't seem to be in my notes is that we finally did find out that on number three here, calling for the initiation of unconditional talks in El Salvador, I think it was number three or number two, one of the items there was a vote coming up that we were supposed to ask him about. So that was basically what we went in for, and the big day finally came and we had done our research and we went to see him.

FOUNTAIN: What date was it?

ZANGER: The date of the meeting—I don't know. Somebody will know. It was mid-January. I'm sure it's well documented elsewhere. So we did all the things we were supposed to do, we congratulated, we introduced ourselves. I remember Miguel Satut³ stood up and said—we didn't—we had heard he was progressive, but just to cover our bases, Miguel got up and said,

² Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill (1912-1994), a Democrat, represented Massachusetts' Eleventh and, after redistricting, Eighth Congressional Districts in the United States House of Representatives from 1953 to 1987. He served as Speaker of the House of Representatives from 1977 to 1987.

³ Miguel Satut is program director for the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, an organization whose "programming is guided by an organizational framework that focuses our priorities on place, integrating key approaches, and emphasizing key elements to impact the success of children, their families, and their communities," specifically in the United States, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Southern Africa. (See <http://www.wkkf.org/>) He formerly served as president of Oficina Hispana, an organization that provides basic educational services, through the Boston's JFYNetWorks, for adults for whom English is not their first language. (See <http://www.jfyboston.org/>)

“As a Cuban American, this country welcomed me with open arms and I would hope that we could do the same for Central America.” So we congratulated him [Moakley] on his great voting record and he said to us, “Folks, I’m a meat and potatoes guy from Southie. I don’t really know much about this issue. I vote the way Gerry Studds⁴ tells me to vote, he’s the one who’s the leader on this issue”—who was a congressman at the time from the Cape, and he was the leader on this issue and so [Moakley said], “I just go along with what Gerry tells me to do.” So we said, Oh, and I mean that was our understanding of the issue as well, so we said, What about this number three, are you going to press for whatever it was, and he says, “Oh, don’t worry about it, we’ve already arranged that meeting, that’s already taken care of.”

So then we kind of looked at each other and said, So what are we going to ask for? And then we go, Oh, well, what about this number four, requesting that the president grant Extended Voluntary Departure Status⁵ to Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugees until they can safely return to their homes? That really had not been what we had planned to do, but it was sort of the default because he reassured us that the thing we had asked for was already done. We knew you had to ask for something, so he turned to us and said, “Do you mean to tell me that our government is sending back to El Salvador people who are fleeing for political reasons? Are you sure our government would do that? Wait a minute, I’m going to call my aide and find out if this is true.” He picked up the phone and he calls Jim McGovern⁶ and he said, “Jim, is this true?” I mean, I can’t remember if he called him or said he was going to call him but he was shocked. We looked at each other and we said, Is this for real? He said, “Well, I’m going to do some research on this; I’m going to get to Jim and I’m going to call you back Monday morning and

⁴ Gerald R. Studds (1937-2006), a Democrat, represented Massachusetts’ Tenth Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1973 to 1997.

⁵ Starting in 1983, Congressman Moakley introduced legislation to protect Salvadorans in the U.S. using the “Extended Voluntary Departure” provision that allowed a temporary stay of deportation and work authorization. Moakley was finally able to pass legislation that granted Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to Salvadorans in the Immigration Act of 1990 (PL. 101-649). TPS grants temporary legal residency and work authorization to immigrants fleeing civil wars, natural disasters or other conditions in their home country for a set period of time. In El Salvador’s case, TPS has been extended several times since 1990. The TPS designation has been used by other countries experiencing civil unrest and is administered by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). (See <http://www.uscis.gov>.)

⁶ James P. McGovern (1959-), a Democrat, has represented Massachusetts’ Third Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives since 1997. He was a member of Moakley’s congressional staff from 1982 to 1996. OH-013 in the Moakley Oral History Project is an interview with Congressman McGovern.

we're going to do something about this; if this is true, that's terrible," he said. So then we took his picture and we thanked him and we shook his hand, and we left.

I remember standing at that elevator, it was in the World Trade Center I think, and looking at each other and saying, "Is he putting us on?" I mean because here we were, kind of dyed-in-the-wool, old-school activists who really didn't think the government was the way to get much accomplished, or certainly the Congress. So we were pretty cynical and before we knew it, Jim McGovern was on the phone explaining to us that Congressman Moakley was going to file what's called a "Dear Colleague" letter. That was—he was going to take on this issue and test the waters, is the way Jim described it. Which was—he wanted to find out what kind of support there would be for this issue. So here is a letter that—

FOUNTAIN: What was the current immigration like? How long were they allowed in the country at this time?

ZANGER: Well, if you were illegal, you were not allowed in the country.

FOUNTAIN: So they were sent right back?

ZANGER: Sent right back if they were caught. So I have a letter somewhere—anyway, so the real story is that Jim McGovern was a young, progressive, activist aide who had been to Cuba—and we're talking in the seventies—and was really—couldn't do much around this issue without pressure from constituents. That was us, so it was really a very happy meeting and we were really glad for him and he was really glad for us. But he was the one who, I think, was delighted to take this on. Delighted that we had provided the political pressure to make it legit with his boss, but he was the one who really did the work. He was amazing, so he got right on it and stayed in touch with us.

I have here a letter, dated March second, which is the letter from Joe Moakley. It says, "Dear Colleague," and this was to his colleagues in the legislature in the House. (Reads from letter) "Attached is a letter to Secretary of State, George Schultz and Attorney General William French

Smith requesting that Extended Voluntary Departure Status be granted to Salvadoran refugees. Over the course of the past two years, the Immigration and Naturalization Services actually deported 6,312 Salvadorans seeking refuge in the United States. I believe that the Salvadorans should be afforded the same temporary refuge that was given to the Nicaraguans, Ethiopians, Polish, Ugandans, and Lebanese during the periods of civil strife in those countries. The Department of Justice, in consultation with the Department of State, has the authority to temporarily halt deportation and exclusion of refugees in special circumstances. The attached letter requests that this protection be afforded Salvadoran refugees as a humanitarian response to the desperate conditions in El Salvador until such time as it is safe for them to return. If you would like to co-sign the letter to Secretary of State George Shultz and Attorney General Smith, please contact Jim McGovern.”

Here is the letter we wrote to express our concern about continued civil strife in El Salvador, et cetera, and this is for your files, and I don't know if you want this to transcribe it—do you want this?

FOUNTAIN: She'll pick it up.

ZANGER: She'll pick it up, okay. But again, Jim was very honest with us and said, “This is political and we have to see whether there is going to be support for this.” We had remembered from our notes from the conferences, or from my brother, or from Dale Mitchell, that one of the things that we wanted to be able—that you were supposed to offer, is to be willing to help in the effort with national PR, networks, media, write a column, local, however we could help the effort. So at this point, we were in pretty good touch with Jim about mobilizing to get people to sign this letter. I have a file that includes from the Jamaica Plain Committee on Central America: (Reads from letter) “Thank you for joining our legislative action phone tree. It is not every week that we have an opportunity to influence decisions on life or death issues. This week, several key committees will be voting on increasing military aid to Central America.” No, this is not about—I take that back—this is not directly about that, but I have other documentation.

This is a list of media contacts that I made from the New York—from Fox Butterfield of the *New York Times*; Susan Asoyan, AP; my husband who's a journalist at the time; somebody at the *Herald*; Mike Rezandez at the *Phoenix*; Joe Conason at the *Village Voice*. I have my little chart of who's been contacted, who's interested, who will call back. Then we spent a lot of time working through the networks of religious organizations mostly as well as the solidarity network. So this little memo is the campaign to build congressional support for Representative Moakley's "Dear Colleague" letter urging the department of state to grant Voluntary Departure status notes.

Then we have Angela Berryman of AFSC [American Friends Service Committee] included in a mailing, and she referred us to Pat Tiernan of Church World Services, and there's a note about Pat Tiernan. It's indicated that refugee work was a priority item this year for them and referred us to their lobbyist in Washington, Michael Myers, who I remember speaking with quite a bit. Then Michael Myers suggested including Guatemalans' three week extendable deadlines, press conferences after one month; this was all political advice. Then we spoke to Reggie Norton at the Washington Office on Latin America, another lobbying group; he recommended beginning with the following congressmen: David Bonior [D-MI], [Gerry] Studds, [Michael] Barnes [D-MD], [Peter] Kostmayer [D-PA], [Edward] Feighan [D-OH], [Wyche] Fowler [D-GA]; and concentrating on the reps. Then we talked to Cathy Crumbley, the CISPES [Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador] New England rep, and she was very enthusiastic and said she would contact New England groups about it and talk it up with the National CISPES and referred us to Mary Anne in D.C. So Mary Anne at CISPES in D.C. wanted to check the wording before agreeing to help, but she said if it sounded good, we would include it in the national mailing. Then this was—we had notes for conversations with Rick Swartz at the National Immigration Citizenship forum and Seth Keen of the Inter-Religious Task Force. Here's another list of organizations that we contacted. So we did our part in supporting what Jim was working behind the scenes in Congress.

FOUNTAIN: You did a lot of work.

ZANGER: We did a lot of work. These are all my notes from that time and then this is a copy of the signatures that he was able to get, which were extensive. So with that success he went

on—this is a letter from Moakley to my husband of May of that year who had obviously asked—this was about, again, commitment to the issues and this, I have a list of basically our notes of signers as of March sixteenth, '83—and they were up to forty- three and who they were, and this was again evidence of how closely we followed things at this stage of the campaign.

This is a letter I have from Tsongas⁷ because we were trying to get Senate support, I guess, but I can't remember whether that letter was just the House or not. Then things started to heat up in Nicaragua at that point; I have a letter from Joe [Moakley] responding to our request that—I guess I had written him a letter opposing U.S. covert activities in Nicaragua. This is documentation of February twenty-eighth, a letter that we circulated to get support from Moakley's letter, and then this is the nice thank you letter from Joe Moakley to me, saying, "Dear Virginia, thank you," and this was again, April twenty-ninth, we had seen him in January and this letter dated April twenty-ninth says, "Thank you very much for all your work in promoting my letter on Salvadoran refugees. As you may know, we gained the support of eighty-eight members from both sides of the aisle and succeeded in increasing public awareness on the plight of the Salvadoran refugees here in Congress and throughout the country. You and the Jamaica Plain Committee on Central America deserve praise for your involvement with this cause. With warm regards, I am sincerely, John Joseph Moakley."

FOUNTAIN: There's a story that he first—

ZANGER: He thinks he met with the nuns in the post office.

FOUNTAIN: Yeah, can you tell us what you know about that? (laughter)

ZANGER: I don't know what that is about, I don't know, I have no idea. We talked to him about this. He says he probably did, I don't know, and he always attributed it to that meeting with the nuns at the post office.

⁷ Paul E. Tsongas (1941-1997), a Democrat, represented Massachusetts' Fifth Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1975 to 1979, then represented Massachusetts in the U.S. Senate from 1979 to 1995.

FOUNTAIN: Right.

ZANGER: And that's okay; if that's the way he remembered it, that's the way he remembered it. I think politically it was more convenient for him to have been swayed by nuns in the Post Office than from—by a pile of old lefties going in to talk to him at his office, but it's okay. I just want to check when it was finally passed, the bill?

FOUNTAIN: Not until '89.

ZANGER: Right, and this was the thing that was so amazing because I have here a letter from January 25, 1988, from CPPAX saying this is the fifth anniversary of the Moakley-DeConcini bill,⁸ and it says “In January '83, Congressman Moakley spoke with seven constituents concerning U.S. policy in Central America. As a result of that meeting, the Congressman offered to champion the cause,” et cetera. So I mean we were just amazed not only by the tenacity of Jim [McGovern] and Congressman Moakley, but to watch Moakley really change and take on this issue and become so passionate about this issue from what he had told us, which is, I really don't know much about it, but I'll look—well, one of the things that happened was Gerry Studds left office and didn't run again, I mean he left the House so there was this vacuum in leadership around the issue, so he couldn't just, “I vote the way Gerry Studds tells me to vote” anymore. His decision to pick it up, I believe, was, and this is confirmed, I mean this is really what I got from Jim because I didn't really know him, was that as they brought Salvadorans in to testify at these hearings, he became so moved by their stories that he really changed as a person.

FOUNTAIN: Because he credits—he says that this was his most important work.

ZANGER: I know.

FOUNTAIN: Joe Moakley.

⁸ The Moakley-DeConcini bill refers to the Extended Voluntary Departure legislation that Moakley co-sponsored with Senator Dennis DeConcini (1937-), who represented Arizona in the U.S. Senate from 1977 to 1995.

ZANGER: I know, and it's amazing. It still gives me goose bumps because it's not something that I ever thought we would be able to effect that kind of change through those kinds of channels and through a politician like him.

FOUNTAIN: Yeah.

ZANGER: But it really, it was just amazing. I also feel that it was one of the most important things I've done in my lifetime and again, it was something we just felt like we got together and we have to do something and we didn't think we'd be able to do much, but it was just sort of out of a moral decision that you just couldn't stand by while this was happening. We knew it was so wrong but we didn't have much confidence that we could actually effect change. So we did, just to follow up, I dug up—we did honor him at a—I have this picture from July '89, yeah, I guess it was once we were all so excited when it finally passed.

FOUNTAIN: How did you think it wasn't going to pass? Because it was like six years.

ZANGER: I didn't know, but I had some—

FOUNTAIN: You had confidence.

ZANGER: I had some confidence. I didn't know. But I mean just the fact that it had come that far and then when it finally did pass, we had a little award ceremony and this is a picture of Felix Arroyo⁹ presenting an award to Joe, and that's me, I think. I think we did it at the center, Centro Presente, which was the Central America group. Then this is just a picture of—in our local paper last June when Congressman Moakley died—we decided to have a gathering in the living room where the JPCOCA started [attachment A], which was here, to just—it was just the idea to sort of mark—I'm sure my colleagues will express it better—but we just wanted to come together and mourn him and celebrate his achievements and accomplishments and how much he has done and meant to us.

⁹ Felix D. Arroyo is a Boston native who has worked for the City in several capacities related to education, violence prevention, and human rights. He served as an at-large councilor on the Boston City Council from 2003 to 2008.

Jim McGovern came and we reconvened many of the people who had originally gone and there were about fifty people who filled the living room. Jim was eloquent and articulate and we were, he had flown in from Washington and his wife was about to have a baby. He just stayed for hours talking about how much it had meant to him and how much it had meant to Joe, and we were just trying to fathom what had gone on, and what an amazing thing, this whole thing was so—

FOUNTAIN: Because he does credit you in that article as being the reason that everything went forward.

ZANGER: Well, see, we credit him (laughter), but it wasn't actually—I mean politically you can understand that it was because—

FOUNTAIN: You needed both sides.

ZANGER: You needed both. You needed a person on the inside to really do the work and have the commitment and you needed the pressure from the outside, to give him the excuse to move forward with it.

FOUNTAIN: Did you stay in touch with Joe Moakley and Jim McGovern this whole period, up until—

ZANGER: Um—

FOUNTAIN: Off and on.

ZANGER: We stayed in touch with Jim every couple of years about this or that. I'm so pleased to see him as a congressman from Massachusetts. And even beginning to assume more leadership and that his politics are more progressive than ever, given it's so hard in the current climate, and he is really great. I support him and send him some money now and then. He's

always been very responsive if I've asked him for things. He's not my congressman, but—with Joe Moakley, did I stay in touch with him? Not really, I wouldn't have reason to necessarily, I may have seen him a couple of times later, but I'm an admirer. So I don't know if you have any more questions?

FONTAINE: Do you have anything you want to say that you haven't already said?

ZANGER: Let's hear questions.

FONTAINE: Did you ever go to El Salvador?

ZANGER: I never have, and I do have close—I continue to have close friends from El Salvador, and now it's safe and everything and I just haven't been, and probably will someday.

FONTAINE: And you are an author?

ZANGER: I am an author, yes.

FONTAINE: What did your book have to do with anything?

ZANGER: I wrote about cross-cultural communications.

FONTAINE: How did you feel about the Jesuit murders?

ZANGER: Well, terrible, but I have to say I wasn't shocked. I mean I was—I had very low expectations. I knew, though, from what I had read, what I knew from my Salvadoran friends about just how corrupt and violent the right wing was there.

FONTAINE: When you first began, I had read that I think in '80 or '81, there was four churchwomen, U.S. churchwomen, murdered there. Is that—did that have anything to do with your beginning or was it the refugees that prompted—

ZANGER: No, what prompted our involvement was seeing that we were going to be in another Vietnam. It was just another case of the United States trying to, you know—El Salvador is classic; there was a small oligarchy of—I think there was fourteen families who were tremendously wealthy, who ran everything. It's a very overpopulated country, and the peasants have nothing and the land is not owned by the people who work it. All the government and the laws were geared to maintain that kind of control. It was the fourteen families also happened to be good friends of the United States in various ways. So it was just so clear that when the people started fighting back against this kind of system, the United States was going to do everything they could to keep them in the brutal regime that they had. We felt it was wrong and we had the experience of being able to mobilize U.S. public support against the war in Vietnam to stop it. We felt that we could do it again and we sort of did.

FOUNTAIN: You did.

ZANGER: Because we did not send in troops. We won't talk about the current situation, which is so depressing because we've come so far backwards, but anyways, so do I think Moakley changed the course of history? I do. I do feel that we would have—Reagan would have happily, unencumbered, unimpeded, would have happily sent in troops to make sure that the right wing stayed in power. So it was amazing to be part of that history.

FOUNTAIN: Well, thank you very much.

ZANGER: Thank you, Laura.

END OF INTERVIEW

OH-005 Attachments

Attachment A JPCOCA event honoring Moakley in Jamaica Plain, MA. Back row (left to right): Felix Arroyo, Anne Wheelock, Ginny Zanger, Representative James McGovern, Neal Orleans and Ed Crotty. Front row (left to right): Carol Crouse(?) Betty Steinmueller, Carol Pryor, and unidentified woman, color photo, 6/8/2001, photograph, JP-0003, MS 103, Suffolk University Archives, Suffolk University; Boston, MA.

Note: Original photograph is available for in-archive use only. Call 617-305-6277 to make an appointment.

Attachment A

