

## **Susan Cervantes on 348 Precita art studio: "This was s a real fight for me."**

*Interview and Video by Yenia Jimenez, August 2020, in front of 348 Precita Ave.*

Susan Cervantes: We got this place in 1980 and we still have it. And it's really a miracle that we still continue to have it because it was threatened about, about three or four years ago. It was on the market and it was to know that it was put on the market by the, the original owners.

We were trying to gather resources and community to help save the space. Not only for Precita Eyes, but for all of our tenants. There are three other tenants here, three other units besides our storefront that were threatened as well and their homes that they've been in for 30 years or more were threatened to be displaced as well.

So we all came together to fight the eviction. We got community people, our family and friends to donate money to. give loans. We got people from the community as well who helped us to put down the down payment, but it was a long process because we had to struggle even to get considered. There was a threat of many other buyers in front of us.

Like we were the seventh that the owner would even consider. And they really didn't know what it meant to have community buy property . So it was a real struggle at the beginning. We did a lot of community action in front of the center to let potential buyers know that this is a real space, with real people. We don't want them to buy this building because it would displace all of us who've been here for 30, 40 years. To make a long story short, in the struggle, we succeeded. It was a miracle that we were able to raise enough money to put a down payment on this building. That's what our responsibility was.

And then, many of it was done in loans. We did a fundraiser at One AM. The First Amendment Gallery did a big, huge fundraiser for us. Many of our many other fundraisers to collect money for this purpose. Our family and friends donated money as well and, in the process, they were paid back with a 5% interest at the end of the year, which was really great.

Everyone got paid back for the contributions they made. By that time, the city subsidies kicked in, it was a, I have to give some credit to Mission Economic Development Association who was the one that helped us to strategize and make this all happen, who told us what we had to do to make it happen.

And we just followed their direction and it all came out to benefit us and to keep our home and be affordable. Our rent was very small and didn't increased hardly at all. That was the whole purpose -- to keep us in place and keep it affordable as well as the other tenants in the building.

This is so important to us. I was really happy that we could do that because I was evicted from my home 15 years ago -- one block down the street from here. And I didn't have any help at all to save our space at that time. So this was something, a real fight for me, because I didn't want to see us evicted again from our place on Precita.

And now we are celebrating, our claim of this cultural space. The owners agreed to have a mural on the whole building that celebrates our legacy and celebrates our community.