

**Nancy Pili Hernandez: "We won by collectively not giving up."**

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

**Nancy Pili Hernandez** "This space is precious and I'm very, very honored to, tell you the story of how we kept it.

We're standing in front of 348 Precita, on Precita Park. Scaffolding's gone up on this building now. A mural's going to be painted here in next weekend.

The intention of the mural is to document some of the history of Precita Park and of this neighborhood.

And specifically to call attention to the win that is this building.

A lot of people consider this building to be a spiritual home or an artistic home for our community.

This building has taught so many people art. So many young people, so many toddlers, so many teenagers, so many people have come into this building to take art classes. In a city where we all live in really cramped places, this has been a place where we can get paint on the floor and let our kids go crazy with glitter without having to permanently damage our own apartments and jeopardize our lease. So this space has allowed generations of young people since the 1970s to have a creative space.

This mural is going to document some of the struggles to maintain this building and to keep it.

The building was almost sold on the market.

I showed up one night to teach a class and there was a "For Sale" sign in the building in. My heart exploded.

I've already been evicted from my own family's home. So many of us have been evicted from where we live. And this building has been almost like a home to the community.

Seeing a "For Sale" sign on it was like the last straw. There's as no way I was going to allow this building to be lost after so much has been lost on this park.

The original families who lived here have all been evicted, not one original family is left on this Park since gentrification. Gentrification has taken every single house here and flipped it and sent families to different parts of the Bay Area or outside.

So the real estate agents asked us to open the building for their open house to allow them to come in with the speculators to appraise the space and try to find a buyer.

But instead of just lying down and taking it, we mobilized the biggest asset we have, which is our youth. We had young people invited for free to come to our classes here, inside the space during the open houses where the real estate agents intended to visit and take measurements in order to purchase it. I

talked to most of them. I tried to be nice and say, you know, this is what value this space has to us right now and ask them what they intended to do with the space.

And, two of them told me they wanted to put coffee shops here. A couple of them said that they were interested in putting up a high end restaurant. And I communicated to them that this community already has two coffee shops on either corner of this park, but we don't have spaces for young people to make art.

And so I advocated for us to be able to keep this building and, or maybe be the tenants of if they bought it, if they would continue to allow us to lease the space at a discount or at a low rate.

And all of them said that that would not be possible because they intended to flip it and make a profit. And this art organization would not necessarily bring them the profit that would, have them. investing in buying a multi-million or a million dollar building.

Seven of them made a bid on the space and, luckily, they all fell away for one reason or another and are no longer here in the running.

Precita Eyes was able to purchase the building that they had been a tenant and for 40 years. The building will remain in the hands of the community.

I think this is one of the wins that we've made in gentrification, among thousands of losses. There's no way that I can document every single family that has been evicted. But I'm very honored to be able to tell you the story today of one place that we won.

And the way that we won was by collectively not giving up."