

I am Maria Salinas, I am a community organizer in the City of Detroit. So the community I grew up with was very Catholic, back in the '60s and the '70s, churches were the anchors of this community. I think that's where I started to recognize my own leadership. I was always like, the one that volunteered and helped people. And I really believed that that kind of started my activism and advocacy of helping other people.

I was a rule breaker and a risk taker, which kind of made me categorized as that problem child in a way. And I got into a little bit of trouble. However, I think what helped me beat the barriers of the inner city and the barrio. What really helped me to achieve success was that I had an internal core in my home. We don't really understand that we got... especially in the immigrant population – people that come from other countries, that come with their own mindsets and they're instilled in the US. The US doesn't have a good system to incorporate. And so they tried to adapt, but most of the time they just stay under the radar. I've been very blessed to be able to represent Southwest Detroit, the whole City of Detroit, but mainly Southwest Detroit, to be able to start dismantling a lot of that and also being a champion... my colleagues and other decision makers in the City of Detroit say how do we get better as a society, to build things that other people from other countries could adapt to and be a little bit more involved. And I continue with my youth council that I'm very proud of, where I have the only Latino only youth council in the metro area. And I turn over 15 kids every year and we're in year eight. And now we have kids coming out of Harvard, Stanford and Princeton. I feel like I have a lot of children, and I've made impact to a lot of young people. And I hope that they know, that I know, that I am fulfilled in my life. I feel so rich and so gratified and very, very happy, not just because of everything that I have, but everything that I've done.