

## **Interview Descriptions: Leticia Hernandez Oral History, August 21, 1992**

### **Record Information**

<b>Collection</b>	The Virtual Oral/Aural History Archive
<b>Subcollection</b>	Women's History
<b>Series</b>	Chicana Feminists
<b>Interviewer</b>	Maylei Blackwell
<b>Interviewee</b>	Leticia Hernandez
<b>Date</b>	08/21/1992
<b>Collecting Institution</b>	California State University, Long Beach

### **Original Interview Description**

This is the third of three interviews with Leticia Hernandez conducted as part of a project on Hijas de Cuauhtemoc. Hernandez was very forthcoming and helpful in the interview, which was recorded in her office at the CSU headquarters.

### **Original Audio Segment Descriptions**

#### **File: Leticia Hernandez Oral History (8/21/1992) - Part 1**

- (0:00 - 4:14) Leticia Hernandez's father worked in a number of jobs, including truck driving, sheet metal, and other little jobs before returning to school full-time. Her parents felt school was important, and Hernandez was encouraged to go to college. She took college preparation courses while in high school.
- (4:14 - 6:02) While Hernandez anticipated going to college, most of her friends were more interested in finding a husband. None of her school friends graduated from college, despite being in college prep courses. One of her friends dropped out of school at age 17; others went to work after finishing high school. They did not work to support their families, but to earn extra money.
- (6:02 - 11:07) Before entering college, Hernandez was not aware of discrimination based on race or sex. She was more complacent and did not question the status quo. After going to college, hearing about discrimination, and then

experiencing it firsthand, she became aligned with student activist groups. Joining UMAS helped her feel better and less alone at college.

- (11:07 - 15:24) In addition to the name Hijas, the Chicanas at CSULB were also called Las Mujeres de Longo - the Women of Long Beach. Even before forming Hijas, within MEChA, Hernandez and the other women members would help educate each other on political issues. The MEChA women discovered they had similar positions and problems and decided to form a women's movement within the Chicano movement. They did not want to be relegated to a support role for men.
- (15:24 - 20:39) Hernandez felt that the formation of a separate group was a significant advancement for women. The women's group served as a support network, but also helped women become more politically involved. Chicano students faced great pressures in the new environment at school, and many dropped out. Cultural differences between Chicano and Anglo communities made it difficult to adjust to college life.
- (20:39 - 25:44) While in college, Hernandez witnessed many MEChA men and Hijas women form relationships. She felt it undermined Hijas because it allowed men to evaluate women by their bodies rather than their minds. Some women developed rivalries over male attention. Other women were naïve and fell in love with men who did not love them in return. Many women felt used sexually and politically.
- (25:44 - 30:44) After forming Hijas, Hernandez and other women felt empowered. Throughout the early issues of Hijas, the group was supportive, but soon experienced infighting. Many women became involved in larger community groups like La Comision, which drew away from Hijas. Women in MEChA who did not join Hijas usually had relationships with MEChA men and therefore felt they were already partners with men.

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## **File: Leticia Hernandez Oral History (8/21/1992) - Part 2**

- (0:00 - 4:08) Leticia Hernandez felt that many problems facing women while she was in college still exist, some twenty years later in the 1990s. Nevertheless, she thinks that Hijas influenced the women, and even some men, who were involved. Hijas improved awareness among women about education and political activity. Although the group was shut down, it served as a model for future women's groups.
- (4:08 - 6:32) Hernandez believed that if Hijas had developed further, they would have reached out more to the greater community, specifically in high schools,

where they could encourage young women to be educated and to assert themselves. Unfortunately, there were internal and external pressures that led to the disintegration of the group. Their main leaders, especially Anna NietoGomez, left campus, further weakening Hijas.

- (6:32 - 11:05) During her participation in Hijas, Hernandez did not deal much with the issue of abortion. The group focused more on birth control and educating women about their bodies and the consequences of sex. While a counselor with Upward Bound, Hernandez suggested starting a program to educate men and women about sex, causing controversy. The women in Upward Bound felt insulted and boycotted the classes.
- (11:05 - 14:35) As Hernandez grew less active in Hijas, she became more involved with the Ballet Folklorico. By 1970, there were Ballet Folklorico programs in many schools around Southern California. At the same time as one dance presentation in 1970, Anglo students organized a protest against ROTC and the Vietnam War. The protest turned into a riot and the police began arresting people.
- (14:35 - 17:32) In September 1970, Hernandez and another student were able to organize the Ballet at CSULB. They were not allowed to dance on the wooden floors, so they practiced outside on the cement and later in an old bungalow on campus. The group traveled to other schools and events to perform. Hernandez was involved until 1973.
- (17:32 - 19:52) While with the Ballet Folklorico, Hernandez had little contact with MEChA, which had become inactive. During the 1980s, MEChA had largely faded away, although it began to resurface in more recent times.
- (19:52 - 23:14) In 1973, Hernandez left school because she felt it was a waste of time. She began working part-time at the census bureau. Later, she was able to work in a variety of full-time jobs. In 1979, she married to her long-time boyfriend, Rafael Magallon who was the director of Upward Bound. They moved to Washington D.C. and in 1982, she began working as a receptionist.
- (23:14 - 27:29) In 1983, Hernandez began working for Congressman Esteban Torres as a receptionist, and later his personal secretary. Her husband Rafael became a director at the Tomas Rivera Center. She applied to be the field deputy for Torres in California and worked as a liaison between the community and Congress. The job helped her self-esteem and she was able to interact with many people and manage her district.
- (27:29 - 30:40) Torres promoted Hernandez from field deputy to district director. She served in that role for a year and half, but decided to quit because she was so busy, she could not maintain her personal life. After realizing the lies, corruption, and manipulation involved in politics, she decided it was not the career for her.

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**File: Leticia Hernandez Oral History (8/21/1992) - Part 3**

- (0:00 - 3:07) In 1986, Hernandez was divorced and moved back home to her parents at age 36. She found it difficult to adjust to life back in her parents' home and bought her own house. Although her father retired, her mother worked to help pay for their house. None of her siblings graduated from high school, but two later earned their G.E.D. Her sisters became pregnant in high school. Her brother Michael was killed at 25 in a drive-by shooting.
- (3:07 - 7:55) Hernandez's brother Michael married at 19, and was divorced shortly after. His parents were supportive of him and encouraged him to go to college. Although he started to get his life back on track, he was shot while making a phone call in Boyle Heights. Hernandez never found out if there was a reason he was killed. His death deeply affected the family.
- (7:55 - 11:57) Hernandez's great grandmother died in 1973 at age 85 from a cerebral hemorrhage during a trip to Mexico. After her great grandmother's death, Hernandez's grandmother moved in with her family. Although she helped care for the house and family, there was conflict between her and Hernandez's father, especially after he retired.
- (11:57 - 15:37) After leaving Congressman Torres's office, Hernandez moved to Atlanta, Georgia, to live with her boyfriend. They moved back to California in August 1991 and bought a house in Lawndale. Hernandez began working for the Chancellor's Office in April 1992.
- (15:37 - 19:57) In the Chancellor's Office, Hernandez was able to get educational fee waivers, so she decided to finish her degree at California State University, Dominguez Hills in political science or English. Her experiences after leaving school showed her the importance of a degree, especially in terms of career opportunities.
- (19:57 - 21:54) Hernandez felt that many of the issues she faced earlier in her life still faced women. day. Chicanas still had many problems to deal with, and their struggles were compounded by the threat of gangs and drugs. She still felt that education was the key to advancement.

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