

## **Interview Descriptions: Leticia Hernandez Oral History, July 28, 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>	07/28/1992
<b>Collecting Institution</b>	California State University, Long Beach

### **Original Interview Description**

This is the first 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 (7/28/1992) – Part 1**

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| (0:00 - 4:30)  | Leticia Hernandez was born in Los Angeles to a mother from Mexico and a father from El Paso, Texas. Her family lived with her great grandmother until Hernandez turned five. Her grandmother became a strong, hard-working role model for Hernandez. Her family of five was very poor, and could barely afford a one-bedroom house.  |
| (4:30 - 8:30)  | Hernandez's grandmother helped her family during hard times, bringing clothes and food. Her grandmother was stigmatized because she had Hernandez's mother "out of wedlock." Both her grandmother and great grandmother encouraged the children to go to school. Her father agreed, but did not know how to express encouragement. He supported the family in other ways, and they were able to buy a house in East Los Angeles. |
| (8:30 - 12:38) | While Hernandez's family was in East Los Angeles, they were on welfare and her father went to school. At this time, her mother had six children.   |

Hernandez was bilingual in Spanish and English, and decided to study French in high school and hoped to become a translator. She hoped to one day attend California State University, San Francisco, but changed between many junior and high schools and felt that she had fallen through the cracks. She felt the schools were not challenging and inadequate.

- (12:38 - 17:12) In twelfth grade, Hernandez was recruited by the Educational Outreach Program at California State University, Long Beach, which was created in Fall 1969. She joined the second group of EOP students, and received full financial aid and lived in the dorms. This independence was new to her since her parents were quite strict and conservative. Like her parents, Hernandez was not inclined to become involved with political issues.
- (17:12 - 20:22) When she first began college, Hernandez learned of the emerging Chicano movement, but she wanted to focus on her studies rather than get involved. Her life on campus introduced her to a new world, with different people and ideas. She and twelve other Black and Chicano EOP students lived in off-campus dorms. She didn't feel prepared for college and felt that she wouldn't do well.
- (20:22 - 25:55) Hernandez's parents were conflicted about wanting her to get an education but being away from the family. Raised in a traditional family, Hernandez was naïve about sexuality and her own womanhood. Hernandez's mother as a young girl was never told about reproductive health, and became afraid when she started menses. Hernandez was told very little about her body and thought she could not get pregnant unless she was married.
- (25:55 - 30:52) After a few days at college, Hernandez was approached by United Mexican American Students (UMAS), which was recruit activists to raise students awareness of political issues. After experiencing segregation in her dorms, Hernandez became more interested in fighting discrimination and was more receptive to UMAS.

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**File: Leticia Hernandez Oral History (7/28/1992) - Part 2**

- (0:00 - 4:01) In college, Leticia Hernandez became more aware of discrimination and joined UMAS as an active member. Her activism detracted from her studies, and at one point she was placed on academic probation. Although she was able to improve her GPA, she did not have a clear vision of what she wanted in life. Stressed by all the pressures of school and activism, she decided to just go to work without getting her degree.

- (4:01 - 8:35) While at CSULB, Hernandez was involved with numerous events, marching in protests, organizing Folklorico dances, fundraising for projects, and traveling to different schools. Yet she and other women involved in UMAS and MEChA felt that male students would not give them credit for their work. Many female minorities wanted to join these activists groups, however, because they experienced blatant racism.
- (8:35- 12:40) During Hernandez's activity in UMAS the group focused on recruiting new students to fight for community issues and the grape boycott. Hernandez names a number of students who were involved in UMAS. One student activists later became a Republican who worked for the Reagan Administration.
- (12:40 - 15:24) When Hernandez joined EOP, it focused on Blacks and Chicanos. Prior to EOP, only a few individual Chicanos came to CSULB, but EOP recruited larger groups of minorities. Many UMAS members were from EOP. The various UMAS leaders were still in contact with each other at the time of the interview.
- (15:24 - 19:26) While in UMAS and MEChA, Hernandez and other students established links with the greater Long Beach Community. Many students worked part-time at the Long Beach Neighborhood Center and organized thrift stores, food drives, and dances. After one semester in the dorms, Hernandez and a few other women rented an apartment. EOP and grants helped fund tuition and housing costs.
- (19:26 - 24:36) The Chicano Studies Department was established during Hernandez's time at CSULB. She took many courses in Chicano Studies with friends in EOP. She felt these were some of her best classes.
- (24:36 - 27:01) Hernandez's parents felt she had changed dramatically as a result of her college experience and had become associated with Communists. Hernandez became more rebellious, and chose to live on her own rather than return to her family's house. After she quit school, she decided not to go back to school unless she was properly prepared.
- (27:01 - 30:44) During her time in college, Hernandez, like many of her fellow students, had to adjust to her new freedom. Many women felt that college was an opportunity to meet an educated man who would become a future husband. Parents had difficulty as well, and thought that if their daughters danced or lived alone, they were "loose." Hernandez struggled with not having a particular goal in life and feeling like she had no direction.

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**File: Leticia Hernandez Oral History (7/28/1992) - Part 3**

- (0:00 - 4:30) Leticia Hernandez focused on the problems facing farm workers, which included financial instability, child labor, and exposure to dangerous chemicals. Hernandez went to grocery stores to destroy grapes during the boycott. Student groups would organize store picketing, but she did more grunt work rather than play a leadership role. She was more interested in the Ballet Folklórico, but was drawn to the United Farm Workers activities after participating in a march at Delano.
- (4:30 - 9:18) Seeing the living and working conditions of the farm workers firsthand reinforced Hernandez's dedication to the cause. She felt that change was still necessary because even activists groups can grow stagnant or dissolve after achieving some short-term goals. Hernandez described a cyclical pattern in which people become disillusioned with their movement and expect their children to take up the fight.
- (9:18 - 13:55) Hernandez felt that the Chicano Movement lost momentum during the Reagan Era because greed and individualism eclipsed community identity. She criticized the Democrats for not having Chicano representation within the Party. At the time of the interview, she felt that the Chicano community was eclipsed by Black issues, especially after the Los Angeles Riots. The Chicano Movement had faded away as individualist goals took priority.

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