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Interview no. 1545

Rosa Martha Zarate

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THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

Interviewee: Rosa Martha Zarate

Interviewer: Mireya Loza

Project: Bracero Oral History Project

Location: Colton, California

Date of Interview: August 8, 2011

Terms of Use: Unrestricted

Transcript No.: 1545

Transcriber / Summary: Mayra L. Avila

Rosa Martha Zarate was born in Guadalajara, Mexico; at an early age, she learned about activism, social justice, and worker rights from her father; she recalls constantly moving because of her father's job with the train; her education was private and ended in primary school. At a young age she lived with her maternal grandmother who taught her about the Cristero War. At the age of nineteen she joined the convent; she taught grade school in Mecca and San Ysidro, California; she educated wealthy Mexican children, attended the private University in San Diego, she struggled with English. She recalls crossing the border twice in Tijuana; she details her two distinct experiences with border agents. She details the racial discrimination she felt in the convent from priest and other nuns; her push for Spanish Catechism and more Spanish masses. She remembers meeting Cesar Chavez; details her first protest with him, her revolutionary idealistic music, and her involvement with the Agriculture Movement, as well as the role of chicano priest and nuns in creating a better connection with the people; she recalls being seen as the evangelical voice of the Latin American Church Movement. Rosa's activism and music labeled her a possible communist; the church questioned her and served her expulsion papers. She continued her work aiding undocumented people with their Amnesty papers in 1985 that eventually lead her to work with braceros; she rallied braceros in Mexico and the United States, aided in forming organizations, protest, and rallies; additionally, she recalls in detail the corruption and fraud that occurred against braceros from organizers, lawyers, and the Mexican government.

Length of interview 206 minutes

Length of Transcript n/a