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## Interview no. 1753

Sanchez

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## THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

Interviewee: Sanchez

Interviewer: N/A

Project: Farah

Location: El Paso, Texas

Date of Interview: N/A

Terms of Use: Unrestricted

Transcript No.: 1753

Transcriber: Andrea Santos

### Summary of Interview:

Sanchez began working at Farah on April of 1969. Everyone at Farah hated their job and at first, she didn't know why but 2 months after entering she realize what was right and what was wrong. As many others Farah workers on Paisano were tired of the unjust treatment and bad wage, Sanchez felt the exact same way in just a week of getting hired.

At first, she thought that it was so easy the hiring process and that Farah hired anyone who was willing to work. Soon after Sanchez realized that Farah hired many people, because of the amount that were quitting so, they had to keep the number of workers balanced. After that realization she understood why she got hired with zero experience.

The managers at Farah were the worst aspect of the organization, with their lack of retail experience and inability to lead. Sanchez claimed that her bosses were disrespectful and unconcerned if you were cut or burned by the machines. Because the workers were not given any training prior to utilizing the devices, accidents were common. Sanchez knew how to operate some of the machines, but not all, which caused her being injured several times.

After being at Farah for 3 long years and having no representation by the Union, the Farah workers decided to begin a strike that lasted two years. Sanchez first new about the strike because some of her female coworkers were talking about joining. After listening to what they told her about the strike, Sanchez decided to join to fight for the right to be represented by a union. The strike also began because the Farah company paid low wages, pressured its employees to work faster and faster, consistently ignored health and safety conditions, and swiftly fired all those who complained.

As the strike began Sanchez noticed that about 85% of the strikers were Chicana women. Soon after the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America quickly moved to support the Farah

workers; the strike was declared an unfair labor practice strike. One month later a national boycott of Farah products was begun, endorsed by the AFL-CIO. In El Paso the strikers began to picket the Farah plants and local stores that carried Farah products.

Sanchez mentioned that one of the times she went out to the streets to strike, an elder lady started hitting her with her bag saying that the Farah was a great man. At that moment she realized that many people saw him as a hero, when in reality he was a horrible man who treated his workers in a very unjust way. Everybody thought that Farah was a god or something. At this point she realized that the only group of people being affected by Farah were Chicano women who everyone saw as troublemakers, and only made Sanchez want to fight for her rights even more. The union coordinated a national boycott of Farah trousers shortly after the strike began, which proved to be a key element in the strike's victory. By January 1974, forty union officials had organized boycott campaigns in more than sixty cities. To implement the boycott, the ACWA distributed pamphlets, posters, and public relations kits, and collaborated with other unions, churches, and student groups. To urge the boycott, many Farah employees went on speaking tours. All of these activities managed to bring the Farah strike from a small-town conflict into a nationwide movement with widespread support.

After two long years of strike Farah company rehire employees who had been fired, including Sanchez. The company also negotiate a contract to improve the working conditions in the company. As Sanchez mentioned, the Farah strike will always be an inspirayion for Chicana women.

Length of interview 1:55:51

Length of Transcript N/A