

2-1-2023

Interview no. 1756

Eva Valdez

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.utep.edu/interviews>



Part of the [Oral History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Interview with Eva Valdez by Institute of Oral History, 2023, "Interview no. 1756," Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Institute of Oral History at ScholarWorks@UTEP. It has been accepted for inclusion in Combined Interviews by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UTEP. For more information, please contact lweber@utep.edu.



THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

Interviewee: Eva Valdez

Interviewer: IOH

Project: Farah

Location: El Paso, Texas

Date of Interview: N/A

Terms of Use: Unrestricted

Transcript No.: 1756

Transcriber: Andrea Santos

Summary of Interview:

Eva was offered to join the strike during her time working at Farah Manufacturing Company, she first felt kind of scared because she didn't want to be part of a strike. Eva didn't understand what the union strike was about but she would later find out.

Eva's first days at the Farah Manufacturing Company were filled with patches and jeans. She mentioned that she had to put patches in clothing items all day for long periods of time. For her work she would get pay less than \$1.60 an hour. Some of her women coworkers had been working there for more than five years and had never gotten a raise or any sort of benefits.

As Eva began to hear all of the stories about what it was like working for Farah as a woman, she realized the strike mission and why it was invented. Eva described the biggest problem of the company was lies. Women would get promised raises if they did more work or stayed more hours. But the raise never happened. Another very common problem is that women were using machines that they never received any type of lessons on how to use and that led to many accidents happening every single day. Eva would tell her supervisors about this problem, but they didn't care and would just tell her to keep working. Other huge accident that used to happen was getting your fingers stuck in a machine or even your hand. Eva mentioned that one of his men coworkers got his finger stuck in a machine and he actually received medical attention, but when her women coworkers got their hand stuck, they would not even get band aid.

During that time, Eva's brother also started to work for Farah Company. He also experiences many unjust things such as, job security, lack of benefits, discrimination, safety and unrealistic standards. Eva and her brother had a talk about their horrible working conditions and that was when they decided to join the strike.

As the strike began the Farah Company started to get worried because the Union decided to get involved and help out the workers. In response Farah gave a raise to all of their employees. The raise was from 25 to 80 cents an hour. Eva actually got a really great raise of a dollar in comparison to coworkers. But later on, she got that raise terminated. She then decided to quit, but she couldn't find a job so she decided to go back to sewing patches.

Eva decided to go back to her work and she had a supervisor who promised her a 10 cent raise if she did 180 jackets, instead of 150 every 2 weeks. She felt very sad and used by the company. They then got a Christmas break and when she came back, she had a new supervisor. Eva asked him if his past supervisor had signed the paper for her raise and the new supervisor told her that the old supervisor didn't even put up the order for her raise. At that time Eva felt defeated and helpless.

After a couple of months Eva was working at the cotton and her supervisor at the time told her that since the Union gave her back her raise, she had to also raise the amount of work she did. Which wasn't true because if the raise was given by the Union you could do the same amount of work, which was a lot of work. Her supervisor didn't feel like she was reaching her standards for the amount of pants she was making, so Eva got fired.

Eva decided to go to the Union to try to file a report about her unexcused termination from the company. A couple of months passed and the Union called her saying that they didn't have enough information to file a complaint of open her case. That not only happened to Eva, but also to a lot of her coworkers. At that time, she realized that the Union was in some way affiliated to Farah Company and that was why the Union stopped helping the workers. Eva felt very sad that the Union became like one of those companies that takes advantage of their workers and mistreat them in many ways.

During that year the Farah Company also terminated all the workers who were part of the strike. Employees who were also part of the company for more than 20 years were also terminated. This happened because since they had a long time working for the company, they obviously wanted a raise, so the company preferred to fire them than to give them a raise. The company then would hire younger employees who would work for whatever amount of money even if it was a very little pay with long working hours.

After being fired once again, Eva joined a community of employees who were very unhappy about their past working experiences. The community tried to take the problems to the Union, but once again the Union was not what it was before. After many months of trying to get the Union to listen to them, finally a woman listened to her and tried to improve their working conditions in the plant. Another thing that the community tried to do was help the new employees of Farah to read their contracts and really understand it, so that they would not have problems later in the year. Some pregnant women would get fired, instead of getting a pregnancy leave and the Union didn't do much about it.

At this point in time most of the people who went out on the strike were women. This woman had so much on their plates such as, caring for their children, feeding their families, paying for bills and even with all of that responsibility they would still go out and fight for their rights as an employee. Eva also went out and out during the strike and his father was very worried that something bad would happen to her, but luckily, she was never hurt or anything worse. Many other women who were part of the strike were single women who were just trying to have a better life.

During Eva's teen years she attended Thomas Jefferson High School and soon after she graduated, she started to work and that is when she found the Farah Company because it was hiring many employees and it was easy to get into. That was not always the plan, she wanted to go to college and become a teacher. Eva realized college was expensive and decided that getting a job was her best option at that point in her life. After all of her experiences at Farah she regretted her decision of not going to college.

Eva later on in life met a guy who her family didn't approve of. She got into a lot of fights with her parents because of him. After months of dating Eva found out he had another girlfriend and had two children. Eva broke up with him and he tried to contact her many times, but he never succeeded. After that experience Eva was felt confused because most of her friends were

getting married and were too young and she felt as if she was getting left behind of missing out on that type of life. Eva mentioned that most of the girls in town only got married to have someone which they can hang out with or get money from. After all of the things she has experienced in her life, Eva is bored of El Paso and thinks that there is nothing to do in this town.

Length of interview 1:47:19

Length of Transcript N/A