

## Ana Hernandez Oral History Transcript

Narrator Name: Ana Hernandez

Interviewer: Sonia Valadez

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**Interviewer:** Alrighty my name is Sonia Valadez. I'm a student here at UC San Diego. I work with our oral history class right now- we're working on a project. I'm going to be interviewing Anna Hernandez. She is an alum from the BLCI, the Barrio Logan College Institute. We'll be hearing about what she's up to now as well as how the program has benefited her and how we can also improve the program. Anna, how are you doing today?

**Interviewee (Anna Hernandez):** I'm doing good. Thank you.

**Interviewer:** Awesome. So, I'm going to ask, Are you currently enrolled in college?

**Interviewee (Anna Hernandez):** Yes, so I just finished my last semester at the San Diego community colleges, City and Mesa College, and I'm transferring to San Diego State this fall.

**Interviewer:** What degree are you pursuing?

**Interviewee (Anna Hernandez):** I am pursuing a Chicano studies program as well as communication studies minor.

**Interviewer:** Have you always wanted to go that route or did you kind of just recently go into it? Or how did you decide to major in that?

**Interviewee (Anna Hernandez):** I started off as a as a biology major and I thought I wanted to be a doctor, to study medicine, and then I took a Chicano studies class and it completely changed my entire life.

**Interviewer:** How?

**Interviewee (Anna Hernandez):** I'm just learning the history of my people in my community and just how resilient we are when we work together just like changed how I viewed history and how I viewed myself it was a complete identity change and it just really helped form my dreams and goals and now I want to be a professor in that subject.

**Interviewer:** That's awesome. So looking back here at the BLCI, so the Barrio Logan College Institute... how was it? Do you feel like its really prepared you for college?

**Interviewee (Anna Hernandez):** I definitely do I started BLCI in the fourth grade. I have two sisters. We all were in the the program. My older sister started when she was in Middle School, and my younger sister started in third grade, so I not only live in my own experience to myself, I also see it as my whole family's experience, and it's really shaped my outcome.

But, going back to the question about my experience. It really has helped me prepare for college you know, like especially the 3rd grade, we do like mock Trials of like, applying to universities, and we do like them students in the third grade they get like letters of acceptance has to like pretend it's still like really cool to know everything that you can apply and go to college, and then in the middle school program it's more of like extracurricular activities and preparation and then finally high schools really preparing for the application process, the interview process, scholarships, it really does become eye opening, not only to us, but to the parents and involves everyone in the whole process.

**Interviewer:** Wow, I didn't know that. That's really cool, so by the time you're in high school it's just like something that's super easy.

**Interviewee (Anna Hernandez):** yeah not easy, but like especially if you have older siblings, your parents kind of already know the drill. I was like applying to colleges and doing the whole like financial aid packages so it's not as scary but also just like having coordinators who can help you cuz there's a lot of questions, even now that I'm transferring in a few, and I know I can come here to the coordinator and ask her questions about like financial aid about like transferring and its just its a really nice safety net and it's really nice communities that I know I can always come back to you.

**Interviewer:** What ways do you remember do they get the parents involved and how?

**Interviewee (Anna Hernandez):** For me specifically, my mom was a really big part of blci, not really it depends actually you know this cultural barrier with like the dads coming to BLCI, it's supposed to be like the moms doing the work. Specifically, my mom served on the board of directors for almost 10 years or 10 years exactly. So she did her part. She would help develop new ideas. For example, for the fundraisers

and she would also be like doing behind-the-scenes work where we would have open houses here in BLCI. It was a lot of work from food preparation, to actually like making sure the place is nice and clean for the guests to come in. So it's a lot of work that was not necessarily like accounted for but it was there. All the parents know about it. Bringing good snack is another way.

**Interviewer:** Yeah I know that like my group comes in every Tuesday and every time we come in like I'll smell food or I'll smell like pozole, and I'm like okay.

**Interviewee (Anna Hernandez):** There's always some type of dinner made for the kids that my mom usually has done and I still like them clean and pick up too.

**Interviewer:** It's super awesome around here. Cuz I understand like how hard it is like I know when I was graduating and I was like okay like I need help with financial aid, and my dad was like "I don't know mija", so the fact that the program like does that I think is really beneficial for both, like just a family as a whole it makes the transition so much easier.

So, what were the hardships you faced? Like, the hardships on you or your family... like whether it be like the transition from home or like sense of belonging, homesickness, financial aid..

**Interviewee (Anna Hernandez):** My senior year I applied to a lot of colleges and universities that actually got accepted to a lot of them, but due to lack of financial aid issues and being in like the middle-income I sector, I didn't receive a lot of financial aid. I had a few scholarships but it wasn't enough to cover all the expenses. So based on recommendation of my older sister who had gone to a four-year at was in a lot of debt because of it she told me he should just stay here where do your two years at Community College and transfer, It's going to be smoother transition for your last two years or whichever School you pick. Ya no actually I did that because I know maybe had I chosen to go a different route I probably would have been very very stressed financially I feel like this is really like it helped me open why I still like the value of Education. Literally just really think about my options before I really do something.

**Interviewee (Anna Hernandez):** Actually that's really great advice. I wish I would have gotten that when I apply because I literally tell everyone younger than me. Like, don't rush it. Like, I went straight from high-school to avoid staying home. I went straight to UC San Diego and it was such a big transition, it was scary, like, to this day, I still struggle financially, so I tell everyone I wish I would have, if I could go back and do time again I wish I would have waited and did my general Eds at a community college and make sure that they were like transferable and then like you could transfer anywhere. You know? And it just makes so much more sense that you save so much more money, but you know when your don't know and no one

else, no one in your family or your friends, nobody went to college so then you just like I got to go, I need to get out right now, you know? And so that's kind of like happened on my end.

What were some different looking back, and thinking, like, what's something positive that happened to you during your college experience?

**Interviewee (Anna Hernandez):** I've had a lot of them. Really good classes and professors. But, I think meeting one professor particularly like altered and enforced my idea - my idea and passion for education and my professor I took three classes with her actually because I really loved her teaching style and just everything I learned in that class, in those classes, I think what I think of like college education and experience to this day. A lot of the good stuff, I constantly think of her just because of the way that she's helped transform myself. A lot of the classes I took with her were like Social Studies classes and poli-sci as well as like gender studies and I just finished piece said he's with her and the reason I like to bring her up is because she's really like taught me and enforced the value of Education. You know it was already of course by my family and my peers. I kind of thought that the community college in a way, not that it failed students, but sometimes I wouldn't see my peers transferring at the rate that I thought they should be, and that kind of made me question the whole educational system. But she definitely changed the way I thought of that- in the sense, that you know everyone has their own pace, but more importantly everyone has different goals and its okay to transfer and to and take different classes at different paces.

**Interviewer:** Absolutely. -Cuz I mean, I know as a college student you can get down in the dumps. Sometimes you know it could just be super like "why am I doing this?? Doesn't make any sense. Literally, I should have just stayed home. I should have you know, I shouldn't transfer, I should have stayed, actually you know all those different like insecurities kind of creep up in your head, and so it really does help when you find like a favorite Professor or like a friend, or like a community that you feel comfortable with, that is there to support you- cuz that's definitely where like you - that's what keeps you going. Cuz I know sometimes it's been like so easy to want to just quit as far as like you're different challenges or I know at first, I know you said that you wanted to stay in the same as city, San Diego, did you ever consider leaving?

**Interviewee (Anna Hernandez):** I wanted to leave. I actually wanted to leave to Ohio, but I didn't. I wanted to go to Ohio Wesleyan University because at the time I was very religious and so I wanted to go to a religious school, but that's only changed. That's why I'm far from wanting to do that now and because of my work and the Community I've built here and the network as well. I don't see myself anywhere else but in San Diego, so to me it doesn't make sense to leave now that I feel this way. Everyone was like "Please leave. It opens so many doors, and it's vital to your formation", and like, no I'm not going to leave.

Like, I would say yeah and one of the biggest challenges was having to tell myself “you’re going to stay here and then after that then you could decide”, because I would see people leaving their parents going to colleges- and you know, everything you see is just like the fun and the party and it was hard at first, but then I think Community College helped me refocus on my goal of getting school done.

**Interviewer:** Absolutely, I think I did for it as well, like I feel it it's kind of like the way of like I know how you said in the beginning you were scared that like some people were transferring out around & it's like “what's going on ever? You ever going to finish?”. You know, it's the fear of becoming like comfortable or like complacent but when you move somewhere else and you're there like somewhere new, it's different I know for me I got to love San Diego. I love the lifestyle, it's completely different from Fresno so I do understand like, that feeling like “okay”, especially all the things you see online of your other friends that are doing stuff and then you're just like “what the heck” like “how do they have this money” and “how are they doing all of this?”, you know, like everyone has their own journey. I know in the beginning when I first started going to college and my roommates at the time were just random roommates that I needed to find and I never got to live on campus, because I got in off the waitlist, and so when I moved out here I just randomly got with some people, and like all their parents paid their rents, but I had to get like two jobs in order to pay rent. I was frustrated cuz their grades were better than mine and I was like finding out that you know what, focusing on them, it's like, it's tearing me apart when I'm comparing myself to other people. I think every college student probably goes through that.

Did you or any of your siblings like go anywhere?

**Interviewee (Anna Hernandez):** My sister, my older sister Dulce at whos also alumni, she moved out and went to CSU Channel Islands Ventura County near Oxnard - Ventura County. I don't know when really she got there she finished she came back she did her Masters at State and now she's here at San Diego forever cuz she just bought a house but also shes finishing her first year. So she just graduated. and she decided to take the same route as me and you know it's exciting place.

Interviewer: Are you guys still at the house? Or did you like move out with roommates?

**Interviewee (Anna Hernandez):** So me and my younger sister, we still live at home. As soon as she left, she lived on campus and then like the first year that she moved out with friends and when she came back to San Diego, she lived with us.

**Interviewer:** That's the way to do it honestly say this so I can have some friends that are from here that go to UCSD and stuff and they still live like what their families and I'm like dude absolutely I just rack it up

as much as you can right now. Save, save, save, and that way you don't have to worry about it. College itself is such a big transition, but then we like move out and have to start paying rent and you're like "oh my goodness, what are utilities? like groceries?..." all that stuff at least you got to stay. Like, you know the area and you got to grow as well but got to be around what you've always been around, so that's pretty awesome.

How could be BLCI be better? How do you feel or do you feel that BLCI could have better prepared you for that challenge or any of the challenges?

**Interviewee (Anna Hernandez):** BLCI is a program that is focused on sending students to four year universities and as much as I appreciate that because at the end, that is so cool, I felt discouraged at first when I went and chose to go to Community College- just cuz Community College everywhere has a negative stigma and it's something that I'm trying to help correct, especially at this program just because I feel like Community College for me has been one of the greatest things I've ever experienced actually and I want other students, who are in similar spots with me, to also know that this is a very good option for them and not be discouraged by it.

**Interviewer:** I feel like students are slowly starting to learn that this is good, BLCI focuses on sending all their students to four years. We have just definitely like taking that into consideration, as far as like, letting everyone know that it's okay not to go to a four year in the beginning and even when you speak with people like me and you who like, me, I know if I could go back I would definitely go to a community college. It's not expensive expensive, and it just makes sense to do it. You can rack up your money if you stay home and go to Community College, and then finish your GED and go anywhere.. You can transfer anywhere, and you have all this money saved up because you were not stressing. You are comfortable, like you were comfortable in your own home, you know? So I definitely agree that that's something that we can know in like just like ways we can always improve the program and because we know we never want anyone to feel discouraged. Like, I feel like any college is better than nothing, even if you're at a trade school- like, anything you know? It's better than stopping completely.

How did you end up working where you do?

**Interviewee (Anna Hernandez):** I am an instructional assistant in the ESL program. I help with English as a second language program and I've been working there literally said since summer of my senior year, and I love what I do there. It's part of the reason why I value education and just teaching the students. We literally have very elderly students who come by work in the evening so I work from 6 to 9 and we have elderly students who take the bus and they come to class 6 to 9 and they're super dedicated to

learning English cuz they feel they have to fit into this box, I guess. I don't know that it's a cultural barrier for that a language barrier, but I feel like the more they feel the need to have to fit it they have to assimilate to the English language, and as much as I appreciate that, it keeps me going. It's still what kind of goes against my whole like ideology, really I don't even know how to say this, it blows my mind when I see students come from after their nine-to-five job to come and sit in a classroom and listen to what the teacher has to say it. It really is like heartwarming- the dedication.

**Interviewer:** Yes, yes that's awesome. That's really cool. I can imagine that's a super fulfilling job to have. You know to be able to help students who want to- who want to like try to learn you know, the language. I think that's kind of like all the questions that I have for. Do you have any questions for me or anything or like anything else you would like to say? Any word of advice besides going to a 2-year and then a 4 year?

**Interviewee (Anna Hernandez):** No, I think I said it.

**Interviewer:** That is exciting too- cuz are still pending. Your starting in August and then another two years. That's awesome.

Well yeah, thank you so much. Thank you for your time. I really appreciate it. I'm really excited to be able to share your responses with everyone and just kind of compare exactly like what everyone else is saying, that way we can see how we can improve the program, and it's great knowing how much the BLCI has benefited you. We've heard different stories of people going on to do amazing things and so that's really exciting. Thank you. Thank you so much.

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