

SCHECHTER, ESPERANZA ACOSTA MENDOZA, (“HOPE”) (1921–)

Born, in the copper-mining town of Miami, Arizona, on July 10, 1921, Schechter learned responsibility early in life caring for her mother and siblings. At seventeen years of age, she worked in the Los Angeles, California, garment industry, and later at Lockheed Aircraft on the assembly line. A member of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, Schechter organized Mexican women. In 1948 she successfully completed the Harvard University Trade Union Fellows Program. That same year the union hired her as an organizer and business agent in the sportswear division. In 1949, she ran for public office becoming the first Mexican American member of the Los Angeles City Council and helped found the Community Service Organization (CSO). As chair of the CSO Labor Relations Committee, Schechter supervised educational, strike support, fund-raising, and lobbying activities, and later added expertise on immigration to her impressive portfolio. Liaison with Congressman Chet Holifield's congressional office, she also served as a delegate to the national Democratic Party conventions during the Johnson administration. Schechter worked with the Peace Corps and Project Head Start but equally important accomplishments took place after her retirement. In 1995 she earned a baccalaureate degree in history from California State University, Northridge, graduating magna cum laude.