

Located 18 miles northwest of California State Long Beach resides a culture that is unique and exhibit's the trend of increasingly populated scene. Once what was known as a major commercial district is now known as the unofficial capital of Hispanics in America. With 95% being latino/Hispanic and less than 3% being white. Please join us as we explore Huntington Park.

The story begins with our two eldest interviewees. Melvin Kern and Shirley Toby.

What brought you the Huntington Park?

Well, my mom had barniclasmid she couldn't live back east anymore.

A marriage in America?

Oh yeah, he was stationed over there. That's where I met him. I was frightened.

Frightened?

Yeah, because see I guess back over there you hear that American's have guns and things like that. So naturally when I first came over I was kind of nervous. I got a big homesick and I wanted to go back, but, once I had a child then it was OK, you know?

What was the quality of the neighborhood when you first moved here.

There was no crime that I can remember (no) there was no graffiti (no, no) the streets were always clean (yeah) you walked down the boulevard, there was no papers and gum and stuff all over the sidewalk like there is now. It just wasn't there. (Yes, its gone bad)

And what about the people of the neighborhood

Like 100% (% 100 different) different than it is now (yeah)

I think it was I'm the only white person on the street, ooh, sorry, tell a lie, Ron.

Oh yeah, that makes four white people I know in this city.

It was all white people, everybody was white, everybody. All of the nighbors were white. Well I think majority of the people who live in Huntington park are all Hispanic people, all Hispanic people.

Which is probably 99%, more than 99% now.

Well I don't know why it changed, they just all moved in, and the white people moved out. We welcomed them though, you see my husband passed away so I got stuck here. 'Cause I couldn't move anywhere, my house thank God, got paid off, so that's the only reason I've kind of more or less stayed.

How's the change in tehneighborhood affected your family.

You go uptown, if you don't speak Spanish you probably don't get nothing (yeah) The grocery stores changed.

My daughter when she was sixteen she wanted to get a job after school but because she couldn't speak Spanish they didn't hire her.

The same way with my daughter they didn't hire her because she didn't speak Spanish.

Have you ever had any problems with gang violence?

I don't think there's a lot.

They got gunshots, but I don't think nothing of it now.

I only know of one drive by shooting here. And that was the one last year down by the post office.

There was the one down in Mayward about a month or so ago. A cop shot the wrong guy.

Oh yeah, but that wasn't a drive by shooting.

Oh no, it wasn't a drive by. I used to have a kid live across the street there and he used to come over and he knew I was always by myself and stuff and he would "We take care of our homies, you have any problems you come with anything. Now they, they were gang boys but they were okay, they were always ok. We knew they were in gangs. But most of them, I shouldn't say most of them some of them are. But they were ok.

Tell us about Pacific boulevard.

Well, I've said it was it used to be like little Beverly hills here. It was the place to go shopping.

It was the place if you were from LA you either went to LA or you went to Huntington Park.

That was it. They send the busses out to the outlying communities and bring the people in free so they could go shopping.

There were lots of nice stores, nice clothes stores down there. (but it looks like crap compared to when we) There were big nice big stores with big windows, but little bitty stores with iron bars all around the windows and all the clothing outside and closing.

Actually it reminds you of going down the streets of Tijuana sometimes.

Yeah, Tijuana up here. Yeah, but they love it. It's there life and that's the way they do things, you know.

Could you tell us about the parades that occurred on Pacific Boulevard?

Oh, that was really super, the Christmas Day parades.

We had three big parades in this, LA county. The Rose Bowl, The Hollywood parade and the Huntington Park parade. This was one of the biggest parades there was. It used to outdo the Hollywood. The Huntington Park parade was first, all the movie stars would come and then they'd go to the Hollywood parade and then the Rose Bowl. But its nothing like was bag then. I wouldn't go to it now.

Just saying, just saying. I don't like going down there, its depressing (it is) I don't go down there.

So we don't go down there. Where now they celebrate the Mexican holidays more than they do the fourth of July or anything. (Cinco de Mayo) Cinco, that's a big day here. Bigger than the Fourth of July is. Well, I don't know if they have the fireworks, but I mean (it's down at the park) Its down at the park there

It goes on all weekend. Friday night to Sunday night and the Fourth of July is just one day. Yeah, that's the one they really do big. (They have a big deal of it)

What are your feelings regarding the Mexican holidays celebrated here?

I'd, I'd think of it this way. You live in America, you're an American you do it the America way. If I go to their country they're not going to change for me. (No) So I figure if they are going to live here then they should speak English, they should do what this country is.

They come to America to live, not Mexico.

That's right. They came from Mexico here to live so they should learn our language.

Yeah, I mean, speak their language if they want to, that's you know, their right

Well, if they are going to the stores and stuff.

That's the only thing that irritates me is when everything is written in Spanish. I know what it means anyway, but its just the point that its out there in Spanish, nothing's in English.

Now lets move on to our second generation resident and here her thoughts on Huntington Park.

Can you tell us your name and how long you've lived in Huntington Park.

Debbie Ann Kern. I was born in Huntington Park in 1970 and I've lived here my whole life.

What are your thoughts regarding Huntington Park.

I just think its there are lot nicer cities, taken care of better. And, uh, with a lot more um, stores and places to go that the stores are taken care of better because you know what the problem is? If I just want to go to the grocery store I can't just go to the grocery store around here because the grocery stores around here don't have a lot of things. Don't have a lot of variety, you know, its pretty much kept to one ethnic group. The scenery is bad, in some areas its very bad. In some areas its not so bad.

What are you thoughts regarding the celebrations that take place in the neighborhood?

I don't really have an opinion except that I get a little annoyed because and you would get this way no matter where you live and no matter what celebration is going on if you had to live in the middle of some celebration that you're not a part of. Because you know, it's a different culture.

Do you feel the Mexican culture being imposed upon you?

You know, to be honest with you, I don't know much else because by the time I was born and old enough to know anything, you know better, know anything, this is how its been for me so, to me its normal. Oh God! Every Saturday morning! Every Saturday morning about 8:30 in the morning, 9 o'clock. TAMALES! TAMALES! <Spanish words> I don't know what, I don't know what they say. And who goes and buy those tamales I don't know. You don't know what their kitchen looks like but I know what their van looks like but its nasty. They come in this brown, ugly, gross, disgusting van.

They have a license?

On their van?

They have a license from the city to sell them now.

I don't believe it. I don't believe it.

I've seen the police check them. The license.

Wow! Wow! Welcome to Huntington park.