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2018

### Featured Speaker: "Hermila "Mily" Treviño-Sauceda (Campesinas and Global Human Rights)"

CSUSB - Latino Education and Advocacy Days (LEAD)

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## LEAD Original Programming

### "Hermila "Mily" Treviño-Sauceda (Campesinas and Global Human Rights)" (2018)

START – 00:00:00

[ Music ]

[ Howling ]

>> Bienvenidos, and welcome to the next installment of LEAD Media Programming from Studio 54, campus of California State University, San Bernardino, the digital media platform for inspired educators, leaders, and community activists and advocates taking our message directly to the people, to the gente. Thank you for sharing our common interests in the analysis, discussion critique, dissemination, and commitment to the educational issues that impact Latinos. I'm your host, Dr. Enrique Murillo, Jr. And this episode is a syndicated replay from Season 9 of LEAD Summit, 2018. The theme that year was Viva La Mujer, and the strands and design of the summit that year were all planned and led by the Mujeres of LEAD. At the time, Latina girls and women made up one in five females in the United States. And it was predicted by that 2060 are to form nearly one-third of the total female population. As a fast growing and intellectual constituency, Latinos have made significant strides and progress in a number of areas. Yet this progress has been extremely slow. And there is a long way to go to fully close gender, class, educational, and racial, ethnic disparities. Hermila "Mily" Treviño-Sauceda was a featured speaker that year. As Vice President and Co-founder of Alianza Nacional de Campesinas, Inc., a national farmworkers women's alliance representing 15 farmworker organizations and groups, she has sat on numerous state and national boards, state and national advisory councils, and task force representing Latinas, the farmworker community, and immigrant women in general on health, violence against women, labor and women's rights, education, environmental and gender issues. Continue and enjoy the full value and complexity of this episode. We extend our appreciation to all our lead sponsors and partners, planners, volunteers, speakers, and panelists, production team, affiliates, and townhall chapters and commend them all for lifting their voice and uplifting the plight of Latinos in education. Thank you. Gracias. [foreign language]

>> How are we doing? Lunch was good. Yes. Okay. I recently I've loved starting with the unity clap. Who knows about the unity clap? Okay. So I'm going to -- I'm going to show it at the beginning. And then I'm going to say everybody knows about saying, si, se puede, se puede, something like that, verdad? And then in English, [foreign language]? Can we do it? Yes, we can. All right? And then towards the end, if I don't do the clap, you remind me. Esta bien? Okay. And then, you can clap me if you want me to

finish. All right? Okay. Okay. My conversation. Okay. Let's do the clap. Let me -- let me show it first, okay? You go.

[ Clapping ]

And then you go slower.

[ Clapping ]

Slower and slower and slower and slower and slower and slower and slower and slower and slower and slower. Se puede?

>> [Audience] Si, se puede.

>> Se puede?

>> [Audience] Si, se puede.

>> [Inaudible] I don't think you ate enough.

>> Se puede?

>> [Audience] Si, se puede.

>> Se puede?

>> [Audience] Si, se puede.

>> Can we do it?

>> [Audience] Yes, we can.

>> Can we do it?

>> [Audience] Yes, we can.

>> All right.

[ Clapping ]

All right. Thank you very much. Thank you, Francis. [assumed spelling] Thank you, Dr. Enrique. [assumed spelling] Thank you, all the people, wonderful people that are very, very supportive, and the people that, you know, altogether made this happen. This is a success. It's great. I love it. Ever since, you know, as we've walked in. I do have my mom here with me. And I thank everybody that greeted us, my mom and my sister, Veronica at one of our -- one of the 10 children, I'm the second, you know, and my

nephew Adrian. [assumed spelling] They wanted to accompany me. So muchas gracias por estar aqui. My mom has a long history also, and this is why I am who I am, Chingona. Okay. Gracias. They asked me if I could share a little bit about my history. I'm a good organizer, but I don't know anything about technology. So sorry about this. Can you hear me? Yeah. Okay, good. Good. And I'm used to -- I'm like, I'm a migrant. I was born as a migrant, and I will continue being a migrant. So I'm everywhere all the time. So bear with me if I'm walking around. I'm so used to it. I'm serious. I'm so used to it. Because if I don't then yo me aburro a sola. Yeah. Yeah. So as I was introduced by Francis, I do come from a migrant farmworker family. It was hard. It was a hard life for all of us, the children that lived migrating from one area to another. Yes, we're 10 children. Some of us were born in the State of Washington. Others were born in the State of Idaho. Others were born in Mexico, and we ended up in California. So we ended up traveling, migrating to find jobs. And there were times that we did live in our cars because it was very hard to get a place for 12 people. And then the places that we would find were places were in really bad substandard conditions. So all of that together, it was very, very hard. And then, as we all know, farmworkers because we were not under The Fair Labor Standards Act in the '60s, '70s. And we still are not nationwide. Since 1938, the Fair Labor Standards Act is in effect for all industries, except for some, which includes the domestic workers, farmworkers, and farmworkers -- California, because of the United Farmworkers Movement, we do have regulations. And we are included because there also exists, the same way there's the National Labor Relations Board for all other industries, the Agricultural Labor Relations Board exists in California. So during the time when Cesar, Dolores Huerta, and Gilbert Padilla [assumed spelling] organized in the '60s and in the '70s came to California in the '70s. And when we learned about the importance of organizing, and we didn't understand as farmworkers the importance of organizing at the beginning. It was more because we didn't work in the grapes, and the union was organizing more in the grapes. And I want to tell this real quick, just because my familia is organizadora, we're all organizers. And [foreign language], I'm the one that's everywhere, no? Este [phonetic] -- But we do -- we ended up learning a lot from the United Farmworkers. There were certain flaws that did happen because the union was not ready for many things during the '70s. And this is the time when -- that we were around. And I will always say we learned from the union organizing. I learned to be an organizer through that. I learned to be an organizer through the youth groups that were organized. And I want to give credit to Rosa Marta Zarate. Whomever knows, she's around here. And this is because, during the time that I was a youth, she was organizing youth groups with Father Patricio. [phonetic] And we were very strong Catholics. Well, we still are. But we were, during that time. And she helped us understand the importance of organizing within the church. And that was very important for us to the point that I was one of 10 youth that were taken, with the support of them, taken to Columbia for two months. Never in my life I had been away from my family. And then being away for two months in another country was like, ooh, but I loved it. I loved it. And I said, you know, this and -- but it was on leadership development. And it was a lot of things that, at the time, I didn't know I was going to use all those -- everything that I learned, and I've been using it. So it's very, very good. So what I -- I wanted to mention that because she's around. At least I want her to know that we really appreciate all the hard work that she did during those years. I also wanted to share that,

for example, yes, I, as a campesina, because we call ourselves campesinos, campesinas, verdad? As a campesina, I didn't see myself as like, oh, you're so una [phonetic] campsina. You know, I saw myself as a worker, hard labor. We loved to work. We were working -- I worked more picking lemons. Who has worked in the fields? Raise your hands. Good. Some of you are going to understand what I'm going to say. Working in the agricultural fields, especially working picking lemons, you had these long sacks. Sacos, as we call them in Spanish. And you're getting on ladders. You have to carry the ladder around the tree. And then you have to put it in a certain way. So if not, you fall. And I fell many times, you know. So filling the sack, it weighed 70 pounds. You have to fill 17, 16, 17 sacks to fill the vin. [phonetic] And the first year, I could only -- every day, I could only fill two vins during the day. And I was exhausted. By the fifth year, I was competing with my brothers, filling five, six vins and in less than eight hours. But I loved my work, but it was very bad paid. But when we learned about the United Farmworkers, we didn't want to join the union because grape workers were earning very little. It was by the hour, so it was less. We were earning more. But what really pushed us to get organized was the pesticides. We were being sprayed when we were working. It's my -- I know my mother, during her -- in the '60s in Idaho and then us in the '70s had -- we were sprayed. And I know my mother has a lot of health issues because of that. And because she worked plenty of years and it -- and I think she lost some pregnancies. You would say, well, she already had 10 children. Yeah. But that, you know, her reproductive system was damaged and other health issues. And we have several of our sisters who also have health issues because of that. And that's not just it. We also didn't have any sanitary, los baños, as we call them. So for men, it's much easier, but for women, you know what it has to happen. Then we would go and hide behind the trees. And then we would find out someone else was watching. It's like, give me a break. But sometimes, it was not intentional. But you know, for us that, and then we were not paid our wages. There was a lot of wage -- and still, many of the things I'm talking about are still happening. This is why we're still organizing. And so we decided to join the union. And that's how I learned. Not because women were taking the leadership during those years. It was my father was very adamant in terms of convincing the other señoras about the importance of getting organized. But he didn't have that much school. Actually, he did -- he had very little school because he also was a farmworker from Behath. [phonetic] And so he would always ask me to help him out in terms of writing information or talking for him or with him to talk to the rest of the workers. And because he was a negotiator, he was hired by the union because people had a lot of support, you know, supported my dad because [foreign language] we call them, no? Well, where I'm getting at here is that I tagged along my dad, and I see the majority were men. And it was -- that's not bad. They were all very respectful with me. But I didn't see other women, much less other teenagers like me or young adults. But I learned to organize, and I learned that organizing with a familia is one of the best things you can do. So I learned with time that there's a lot of power if you are working as a collective. My mom showed us, the elders in my family, my siblings, and I to do everything together. Of course, when we would go to Mexico, she would say, no [foreign language] because, you know, it's not seen right that the boys are washing dishes or things like that. But when we were here in the United States, which we spent more time here, it was very different. I want to concentrate on several things, and maybe it's this. Because of all the

things that were happening to us, migrating from one place to another, we would migrate from the Coachella Valley to the Palo Verde, which is Plath, [phonetic] whomever knows those areas to Borrego Springs and then come back to in the Riverside area because it was all citrus, not just lemons. It was grapefruit, oranges. We did all that work. And then we, when we would go to the Central Valley, it was the almendra, the almonds, and some of the grape work. We would do that kind of work. We would see many other workers go through some hard times. We never had the issue of immigration because most of us were either born here or we had our permanent residency. But we saw many people, and we ended up housing a lot of them. [Foreign language]. And they also, you know, we -- my parents would also say, you know, we want to protect them. You know, in different ways, they would do that. And so, I ended up getting a lot of those principles. But what really caught me was organizing. When you organize, if you organize by yourself, you can make a difference. But when you organize with many, you change the world. And when you organize, then I learned that when you organize with mujeres, oh man, [foreign language]. It's like that. So there's different things that happened in my life that really resonates every time I'm talking with people. And this is that you all, you all, people that I'm talking with, you all have your own experience. You all have gone through so much obstacles, hardship, and things that it's a matter of how hard it hits you and how quick you get up from that. And it makes you stronger if you learn from that. So I want to thank every single one of you for being here because there's -- you have your own purposes in life. And if you're here, it's because you're interested in education, you're interested in health, you're interested in the wellbeing. You're interested in the security of your community and because you want others to also learn from that. So gracias. Muchas gracias. Okay, [foreign language] Okay, [foreign language]. Okay. So the -- what I love also to share is this. When I worked for California Rural Legal Assistance, it's a legal services agency for 10 years. They hired me from the fields because we were organizing in the fields, of course, that organizing whomever knows how to, you know, what organizing takes in a company, you might get fired, verdad? Well, I was fired several times. It was not an easy thing, especially when they say [foreign language] and they, you know, pick at, you know, they belittle you, they're -- different things happen, no? At the same time, as a teenager and a young adult as an organizer and a worker, especially a worker, I was -- I learned about my rights. But during that time, this is why I'm saying that the union and many other people were not prepared, I was being sexually harassed. I am lucky. I was not raped. I was being sexually harassed by the crew leader, who was very close friends with my dad. So you all can know, it was very hard for me to say something. And when I did try to say something, my dad [foreign language] he didn't know how to deal with it. So he started asking me but in a form of questioning. You know what happens when you question people. You start feeling like you're at fault. And I remember only crying and crying and not wanting to say any more. And when all this was happening, I didn't know other women were going through the same thing. So I silenced myself for the rest of the years that I worked in the fields. So what do you think happened? I was harassed in other places because I became very vulnerable, knowing that maybe I was not going to be believed. Or maybe I was -- people were going to shame me. Or maybe people were going to [foreign language], you know. I was going to be at fault. All these myths that I didn't understand, I just knew that's the way that were some of the

traditions. And then the other is the taboo. You don't talk about sexuality. You don't talk about sex. You don't talk about anything related to that. So it kept me from sharing. So it kept me more inhibited. So it was much easier for the abusers because there were different companies. It wasn't just one company, different companies. What we have found out through all the research that we've done since 1988 through now, that nine out of 10 women in the fields have been sexually harassed at least once in their lifetime at work. Count, nine out of 10 women, 99 out of a hundred women. So what does that mean? Or 90 actually [foreign language]. But it's too many. How many of you have seen the film Rape in the Fields? Raise your hand. You need to see that. You need to see it. Our organization helped this researcher, done by PBS. It was presented on PBS [foreign language]. They helped bring out to light this kind of issue. This is just one out of many other issues that women go through, the discrimination. When I was pregnant, I was fired. Well, I'm lucky I was just pregnant once, you know? So I was fired. I was fired, and I had to do something else because we needed to support, you know, the family. But then, in a certain point in time, I started to understand, que mejor, that I didn't have to do that kind of work, verdad, because of the chemicals. Well, anyway, where I'm getting at right now is when, with time, because I was hired, because I was an organizer, and there were many different -- There's many different stories that I along other women and men at the beginning went through about abuse, exploitation, minimization about who we are, all that went by. When I started understanding that it wasn't just happening to me, oh, that angered me very much because I really [foreign language] I really started understanding [foreign language], if you keep shut, what's going to happen? The continuum of abuse, the cycle of abuse, keeps happening. If the abuser is abusing one person, you will always find out they're abusing many other women. We have helped many women that have not just been assaulted like me, they've been raped in the fields. Not so far from here Rivera Company. Too bad it's a Latino company. It was a Latino company. Several women complained, and after they complained, there was a lawsuit. And the discovery in all that is that not only the [foreign language], not only the supervisors, not only the general supervisors, the owner, and some workers were raping women in the fields. That is very sad. It's a culture that has been created as easy as that? That's not fair. That's not fair. So when we started talking, it was very, very hard for us. We could talk among ourselves. But we were not willing to talk somewhere else. So let me real quick say this. I was working, yes, for that legal services agency. [Foreign language]. I felt that. I already knew what to give people because I'm from that community. I was giving information. I was telling people this is what you can do. This is -- these are all your rights. And then I started questioning why don't do people do anything? [Foreign language]. You know, I started questioning. And then it was a slap in my face when I learned, Mily, you're not the savior. Give the information, and people will decide when. And you know how that came about? It's when we did this needs assessment -- this needs assessment about and because your students are here, in faculty. Look this up. It's the Farmworker Women Needs Assessment by Maria Elena Lopez, [foreign language]. And she did this master's thesis with farmworker -- about farmworker women. And some of us helped in terms of putting together the questionnaire. I'm going to say it real quick because [foreign language]. I wanted to say many other things. Okay. It was about finding out all the issues that farmworker women were going through, their families, education, their immigration not

necessarily about immigration status, about immigrating to the United States. In terms of violence against women, we didn't use those terms because we knew it was going to be kind of hard. And actually, that thesis got an award at Cal State Long Beach because she was doing her thesis over there. And without having -- I didn't go to high school, okay, to start with. And I was already helping with that. I learned about not having limits after organizing and doing many other things. So when we did this assessment, what helped me really understand that wanting to do something in the community is not just taking something to people and saying, here it is. I have the information for you. I know what you need. Ay contrario. Get them involved. Get them engaged. Get them to learn more. Help them understand that they have the power of deciding what is going to happen with their life. That changed my life. The women were not saying that when we were interviewing them. They were saying all the issues, all the problems. But then there was a question towards the end or several questions toward the end that were helping us understand what is it that they think needs to be done to do change in all these issues that they were sharing. Some of them [foreign language] all the service providers, okay, that the bad, whatever, different things, verdad? Well, what helped me really understand that the work I was doing is just service. It wasn't changing. It was giving information to people, yes, but getting them involved to see themselves as [foreign language]. I'm not going to wait for anybody to come and save me. So the women started saying if there are any groups for women or is there any support for us or [foreign language] I mean their own words, they were saying all this. So the women that were interviewing, the interviewers, we would get together, as an organizer, I would get them together [foreign language] you know, what I'm learning from them is that they're not expecting us to go and save them. They're not expecting us to just give them what services exist. They want a space so that they can also learn and do something for themselves, for their families, for the community. And the ripple effect goes on and on. It was very hard for me to take that. This is why I'm saying it was a slap in my face because I learned I am not the savior. And then, from there on, we started inviting women in the different areas. And I can only tell you that some of the women that work with us, that are still in the movement, were the women that helped us start organizing with Mujeres Mexicanas and then Líderes Campesinas. And then we now have a national organization of farmworker women. And [foreign language]. It's about, yes, determination. It's about yena. [phonetic] And I see Dr. Enrique very close to me. That means that I need to stop that. So does this make sense with everybody? Yes? Is it just because I'm up here? They're you're saying yes. [Foreign language]. So if anything, what we have learned is I was making a lot of difference on my own. But organizing with more people and learning that everybody has something to offer or many things to offer makes a lot of difference. So I completely believe in the power of the collective. For me, that's it. So in California, we organized 11 chapters of farmworker women, Chingonas. I'm serious, Chingonas. And what is it that we -- we don't only do information to distribute. We go to the councils. We go to the commissions. And some of them are wanting to become commissioners. And some of them want to be part of the city councils. And we're going as far as that. It's not -- nothing is stopping us. It's not about convincing only the public officials. It's becoming one, verdad, and learning from that. So this and many other things we have learned. Of course, we have gone to China. We have gone to South Africa. We have gone to Europe. We have gone to Latin America,



to many places where the women are talking our issues, but are saying, this is what we're doing to create change because it's us that are going to be able as we learn and we work together is we're going to make the changes in our communities. And the last thing is, who has heard about Time's Up and what's going on in the entertainment industry with sexual harassment in the workplace, the actresses? Raise your hand. Yo sé que todo saben. Okay. Our organization Alianza Nacional de Campesinas with Lideres Campesinas, which is the organization here, help put together that open letter for the women and men in the entertainment industry saying, we understand what you're going through. We are not surprised, but we're with you, and we believe you. And we will stand right next to you because the only way this culture of violence against women is going to change is that all of us join and work together. So [foreign language]?

[ Clapping ]

*END – 00:35:52*