

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Aileen Clarke Hernandez

PERSON

Hernandez, Aileen C.

Alternative Names: Aileen Clarke Hernandez;

Life Dates: May 23, 1926-February 13, 2017

Place of Birth: New York, New York, USA

Residence: San Francisco, CA

Work: San Francisco, CA

Occupations: Labor Activist; Foundation Executive

Biographical Note

Civil rights, union and women's rights activist Aileen Clarke Hernandez was born Aileen Clarke on May 23, 1926, in Brooklyn, New York. Her Jamaican-born parents, theatrical seamstress Ethel Louise Hall Clarke and Garveyite brushmaker Charles Henry Clarke,

named their daughter for Aileen Pringle, a film actress. Hernandez, who grew up in the ethnically-mixed Bay Ridge neighborhood of New York City, attended elementary school at P.S. 176 and graduated in 1943 as school newspaper editor, vice president, and salutatorian of Bay Ridge High School. At Howard University, she was taught by E. Franklin Frazier, Ralph Bunche, Sterling Brown, Alain Locke, Howard Thurman, Emmet Dorsey, Charles Hamilton Houston, James Nabrit, and Thurgood Marshall. Hernandez was a member of the Howard Players, edited *The Hilltop*, and was active in the NAACP with her friend Pauli Murray. Hernandez graduated magna cum laude from Howard University with her B.A. degree in political science in 1947.

Returning briefly for graduate studies at New York University, Hernandez moved to Los Angeles to take an internship with the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) and later went on to earn her M.S. degree in government from California State University at Los Angeles in 1961.

Hernandez worked for the IGLWU from 1951 to 1960; eventually she backed the efforts of the Federation of Union Representatives to obtain benefits from the IGLWU. In 1960, Hernandez resigned from the IGLWU to join the successful re-election campaign of California State Comptroller and future United States Senator Allan Cranston. In 1962, Hernandez was appointed by California Governor Pat Brown to be assistant chief of the California Division of Fair Employment Practices and began enforcing the state's 1959 anti-discrimination law. In 1965, Hernandez was appointed a commissioner of the newly-formed United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) by President Lyndon B. Johnson. As the first female and second minority appointed to the EEOC Commission, Hernandez paid particular attention to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In 1966, Hernandez co-founded the activist group, National Organization for Women (NOW), with her friend and

Episcopal priest, Pauli Murray, author Betty Friedan, and others. From 1970 to 1971, Hernandez served as the second national president of NOW, following Friedan. In 1971, Hernandez helped found the National Women's Political Caucus, and in 1972 helped create NOW's Minority Women's Task Force. That same year, Hernandez formed Sapphire Publishing Company with nine other black women. Leaving NOW in 1979, Hernandez served on the board of the Ms. Foundation from 1976 to 1985. Hernandez toured China in 1978, and after touring South Africa in 1981, released the book, *South Africa: Time Running Out*.

Hernandez served as the president of Hernandez and Associates, which she founded in 1967; she has taught at San Francisco State University and the University of California at Berkeley. Hernandez was a Regents Scholar in Residence at the University of California at Santa Barbara in 1996. Hernandez has been honored by the National Urban Coalition, the Northern California American Civil Liberties Foundation, Howard University and many other organizations. In 2005, Hernandez was one of 1,000 women from 150 nations who were collectively nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize for their work in social justice and civil rights.

Hernandez passed away on February 13, 2017.

Related Entries

Howard University [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

M.S.

New York University [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

M.S. in government

P.S. 176 The Ovington School [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Bay Ridge High School [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Howard University [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

B.A.

University of California, San Francisco [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

Tish Sommers Lecturer, Institute for health and Aging

Ladies Garment Workers Union [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1951 to 1960]

Assistant/Assistant Education Director/Public Relations Director

Alan Cranston State Comptroller Campaign

[EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1960 to ?]

California Division of Fair Employment Practices

[EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1962 to 1965]

Assistant Chief Librarian

United States Equal Employment Opportunity

Commission [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1965 to 1966]

Commissioner

Hernandez & Associates [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1967 to ?]

Founder/President

San Francisco State University [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1968 to 1969]

Lecturer

University of California, Berkeley [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1978 to ?]

Instructor

National Organization for Women [MEMBEROF]
[from 1967 to 1970]

Western Vice President

National Organization for Women [MEMBEROF]
[from 1970 to ?]

President

National Women's Political Caucus [MEMBEROF]
[from 1971 to ?]

Co-founder

National Organization for Women [MEMBEROF]
[from 1972 to ?]

Founder, Minority Women's Task Force

Ms. Foundation for Women [MEMBEROF]
[from 1976 to ?]

Board Member