

Basic Detail Report

Title Interview with Judge Carmen E. Espinosa

Date 2016 November 9

Primary Maker Carmen E. Espinosa

Description Oral history interview with Judge Carmen E. Espinosa who was interviewed by Judge Peter T. Zarella on November 9, 2016 for the Connecticut Bar Foundation's History of Connecticut Women in the Legal Profession Project.

Topics Discussed: - Early Life: Carmen was born in Puerto Rico and moved to Connecticut in 1952. Her father was a laborer, and her mother worked in a factory in New Britain. She grew up in New Britain and attended New Britain Senior High. - Higher Education: After graduating high school in 1967, Carmen Espinosa attended Southern Connecticut State University from 1967 to 1968, then transferred to Central Connecticut State University from 1968 to 1971, graduating with honors and a degree in Education, majoring in Spanish and French. She initially planned to be a teacher and was awarded a fellowship to Brown University's PhD program, intending to become a college professor. - Early Career: After five years of schooling, she took a leave from Brown and taught seventh grade in Southington, Connecticut. She realized she disliked teaching and, in 1973, decided to pursue law school after a chance encounter with a friend applying to law school. - Law School: Carmen attended George Washington University Law School, starting in 1973, amidst the Watergate hearings. She felt that she and other Hispanic students were sometimes treated differently as a "novelty." She participated in the "Law Students in Court"

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program, a civil clinic representing indigent defendants in civil and housing

courts. - Jobs: During her summers in law school, she worked at the Equal

Employment Opportunity Commission and the Department of Agriculture Office

of Legal Counsel. - Bar Exam: She took the bar exam in 1976 for Washington, D.

C., focusing her coursework on subjects likely to be on the bar exam for New

York, Connecticut, and D.C. - FBI Career : In 1976, after graduating law school,

Carmen Espinosa was recruited by the FBI as a special agent. Her fluency in

Spanish, legal background, and status as a woman and minority were factors in

her recruitment. She officially entered on duty on October 4, 1976. She

graduated and became proficient in shooting firearms. Her first assignment was

in Newark, New Jersey, where she worked on white-collar crime. She spent

three and a half years with the FBI. - State's Attorney's Office : After her FBI

career, Carmen decided she wanted to practice law, specifically as a trial lawyer.

She visited the UConn Law School's placement office and found an

announcement for a position at the State's Attorney's Office. She applied for the

position and became a prosecutor. - Judicial Career: Carmen was the presiding

judge in Hartford in 1997, handling pre-trials and assigning cases for trial. She

presided over cases like murder, sexual assault, and armed robbery cases, as

well as a complex death penalty case. - Appellate Court: Governor Dannel Malloy

appointed her. She recognized the position's importance to the Puerto Rican

/Hispanic community. She served on the Appellate Court for two years. -

Supreme Court: Governor Dannel Malloy also appointed her to the Connecticut

Supreme Court in March 2013. Espinosa describes being an Associate Justice on

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the Supreme Court as her most challenging assignment. The cases are difficult

and important. - Work-Life Balance: Carmen Espinosa has three children. She

acknowledges that balancing motherhood with a legal and judicial career is

challenging. She has been active in community speaking and visiting schools.

Dimensions Duration: 8 Minutes, 52 Seconds