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Mujeres en Arquitectura

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Mujeres en Arquitectura

By Elizabeth L. Rubio

I remember taking the school bus in high school. The ride would take several freeways, and over an hour each way. And I remember feeling the difference between South Central (or South Los Angeles, as it's known now) and the place where my school was. I wondered what it must be like to live in one of these beautiful houses with palm trees and grass in the yard. . . No bars on the windows. . . No run-down buildings or vacant lots.

I could see the difference, but I could feel it, too.



I took college prep courses that the schools in LA didn't offer. We had film classes and digital imaging and architecture. I learned to design on computer software, we had the technology right there in the classroom. The absence of these things in the South Central schools spoke LOUD AND CLEAR: "You're not worth it".

That's what the school district was saying to us. So we organized. We did our research. We involved our community.

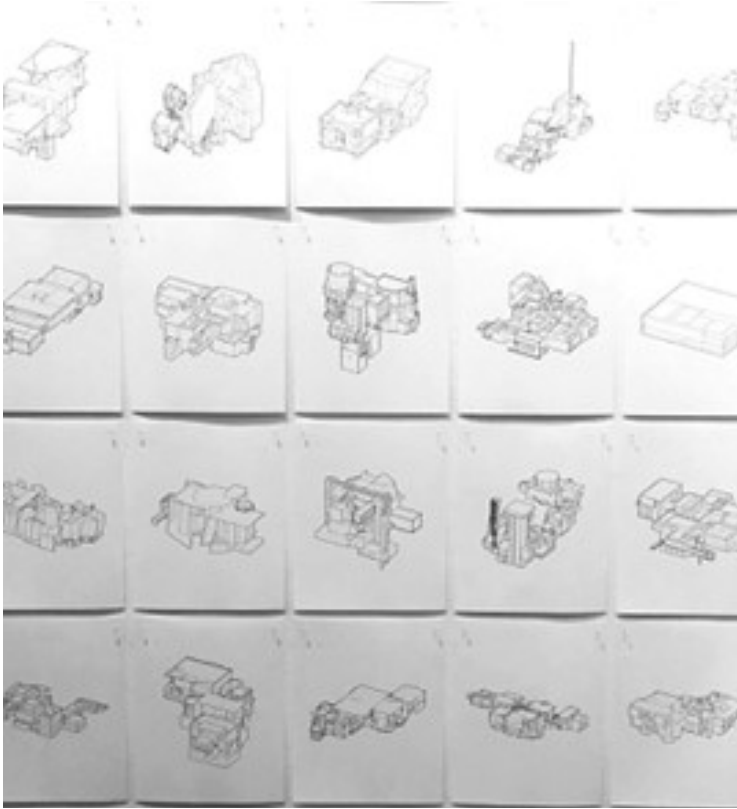
We eventually sued LAUSD.
We created change.



I didn't think I wanted to pursue architecture. I did well in class, but I wanted to be an astronaut, not an architect.

But there was this competition for high school students from all over California. The other students should have had the advantage. Their parents probably went to college. They had their own bedrooms, houses with yards. They didn't have bars on their windows.

But. . . They didn't win. I did.



That was the moment that I realized the potential impact I could make with my designs. Fast forward some years and I have been involved (and taken the lead role!) in so many meaningful projects. Like renovating the community center. OR renovating abandoned buildings into permanent supportive housing.

We invite community members to tell us: “How can this building best serve you?” We hold meetings. We print our drawings and hand out markers. Show us what you need. Draw it. Write it down.



Once, we built models that people could touch, a kitchen, a conference room, the different parts of the building, and asked, “how would you construct this?”

We design, but our community inspires.

Today, with each new project, we still reach out and ask. How will this building serve you? What will it mean to you? How can this building feel more like home?



Did You Know?

There are 116,000 licensed architects in the USA. 1.8% are Latinas.

0.9% are Latinos.

On average, it takes 12.3 years to complete the path to licensure.

This story is based on Catherine Hernandez. You can see more of her projects on Instagram @hoodarchitect