

Sabbatical Report for Professor Susan Kinkella

History Department

Moorpark College

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My sabbatical leave was devoted to conducting original research and writing for publication on a local historical figure named Maria "Espiritu" Chijulla Leonis Espiritu Leonis was a Chumash woman who lived during times of great transition and upheaval in 19th century Calabasas, California. Her unique and fascinating story illustrates the difficulties that Native American women experienced as they negotiated within and beyond the "appropriate" roles of race and gender in California during the last years of Mexican rule and early American statehood. A comprehensive work on Espiritu Leonis has never been published before; historians and writers have focused instead on the history of her infamous husband Miguel Leonis, namesake of the Leonis Adobe Museum (The Leonis Adobe Museum was designated Los Angeles Historical Cultural Monument #1 in 1962).

Feeling that Espiritu deserved to have a "voice" of her own, I set out to produce a work that could bring her exceptional story to the public. To this end, I have already given three public talks about my work on Espiritu Leonis. My book on Espiritu Leonis will be carried at the Leonis Adobe Museum and may also serve as a supplemental

reading assignment for the classes I teach at Moorpark College. These classes include American History, Women in American History and Native American History.

Writing the story of Espiritu Leonis presented many difficulties as she was not literate and therefore left first hand written primary source accounts of her life or perspectives. Reconstructing her life has been immensely challenging and immensely rewarding. My sabbatical leave offered me the opportunity to spend hundreds of hours doing research with the holdings of the Leonis Adobe Museum's archives, utilizing records written by Espiritu Leonis's friends and relatives, legal documents, historic newspaper articles and numerous secondary sources in California History.

In addition to my historical research at Leonis Adobe Museum's holdings I worked with several primary source collections related to my project. For example, I applied for and was granted approval to do research with rare documents, historical court cases and manuscripts at the Huntington Library in San Marino, CA. Using the collections at the Huntington Library was a true privilege which provided me with valuable insights about Espiritu's legal battles during the 19th century. Other collections that I found to be of great value were explored at the Los Angeles County Archives where I utilized birth, death, and marriage records as well as crucial census records for Los Angeles in the 19th and early 20th century (a list of locations where I conducted historical research is on the last page of this report). Additionally, I conducted oral history interviews with in

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that I have recent experience working with archival collections at exclusive locations such as the Huntington Library and they were extremely interested in my research project on Espirtu Leonis I believe it is important for our students to see that their professors at Moorpark College are committed to intellectual inquiry outside of the classroom and that they stay current in their discipline in a variety of ways.

While working on this research project during my sabbatical, I have made valuable connections within the community. These connections have not only been beneficial for me but also reflect positively on Moorpark College and the Ventura County Community College District. For example, while I was doing research the fall at the Santa Monica Mountains National Park Service, I met Sheila B. the director of public programs

would not have been possible for me if I hadn't been given the opportunity to do this research during a sabbatical leave. ~~this~~ through these kinds of programs and opportunities that Moorpark College continues to distinguish itself from other community colleges as a leader in teaching and learning.

