

## 'The Mother of Henry' documents what Hollywood ignores

**Evelina Fernández wrote this play to record the contributions of Mexican Americans in the wars of the country**

by Victoria Infante  
(translated from Spanish)

The family of Evelina Fernández has lived in this country for several generations. So she does not understand why in Hollywood movies and television series that touch on historical moments in the United States, Mexicans and Mexican Americans do not appear anywhere.

"In the Great Depression, the Second World War [...] If you see that you will realize that it seems that we do not participate," said the actress and screenwriter. "In 1968, in Vietnam, there was a disproportionate number of Mexican Americans and Chicanos who died in that war."

So, to document what happened at that time, Fernandez wrote "The Mother of Henry", a play that begins this week at the Los Angeles Theater Center with the Latino Theater Company.

The work takes place during the late sixties, and is slightly inspired by the life of Fernandez's mother, who worked for a long time in the iconic Sears Tower in Boyle Heights. At that time, the author's brother was recruited to go to Vietnam.

The story recounts the experience of Connie, a single Latina mother who worked in the store's returns department and whose son is sent to war. At the beginning of the play, this woman is convinced of her patriotism, but as she looks at what happens in that conflict and other turbulent events in the nation, her perspective and feelings towards the United States change radically.



'The Mother of Henry' is inspired by the life of Evelina Fernández's mother.  
Photo: Andrew Vásquez



Entrance of the Sears Tower, in Boyle Heights.  
Photo: Herman J. Schultheis Collection,  
Los Angeles Public Library

Connie finds comfort in the devotion she had for the Virgin of Guadalupe, another of the influences Fernandez received from her family.

"My grandmother was Guadalupan," she said; "And in the work the virgin appears in a more real role, as a woman and as a friend, because the virgin knows what it is to be worried about a child".

This time, Fernández does not appear as an actress, which she has previously done in all the works she has written; However, her husband, José Luis Valenzuela, does act as director, something that is a tradition in the artistic life of this couple.

In addition to showing the contributions of Mexican Americans to the wars of this country, Fernandez's wants to demonstrate that this group has contributed to the development of the United States for several generations.

"So that people know that we are a part of this country, that we love it and that we have worked on its behalf too much to be treated like rapists and drug dealers," she said.