

VIVA LA MUJER: ROOTS OF CHICANA FEMINISM

by

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The focus of this thesis is the Mexican and Chicana feminist movements during the contemporary period (1910-1990). I examine women's involvement in Mexican and Chicano/a liberation struggles, the roots of Chicana feminism, and the connections between feminist activity in Mexico and the United States.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE.....	vi
POEM: SURGE!, by SARA ESTELA RAMIREZ.....	vii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
<i>Periodization of Mexican and Chicano/a History and Historical Explanation of Population and Terminology.....</i>	4
<i>Outline of Thesis Organization.....</i>	6
Notes.....	7
CHAPTER 1: OUTSTANDING MEXICAN WOMEN.....	8
The Colonial Period (1519-1821).....	8
<i>Forgotten Women and Heroines.....</i>	8
The Nineteenth Century Period (1821-1910).....	11
<i>Women, Education and Feminism.....</i>	11
Notes.....	14
CHAPTER 2: FEMINISM AND THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION.....	15
The Contemporary Period (1910-1990).....	15
<i>Mexican Life Under Porfirio Díaz.....</i>	15
<i>Precursors of the Revolution (1900-1910).....</i>	16
<i>Women and the Revolution (1910-1920).....</i>	18
Notes.....	29
CHAPTER 3: THE EARLY CHICANO/A CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT AND FEMINIST CONSCIOUSNESS.....	31
The Contemporary Period (1910-1990).....	31
<i>Bridges Between Mexico and the Southwestern United States (1910-1920).....</i>	31
<i>A Review of Feminism in Mexico and the United States (1900-1920).....</i>	37
<i>A Brief Overview of the Chicana Struggles (1920-1960).....</i>	38

Notes.....	44
CHAPTER 4: THE CHICANO/A MOVEMENT AND THE GROWTH OF CHICANA FEMINISM.....	45
The Contemporary Period (1910-1990).....	45
<i>Women's Participation in the Chicano Movement</i> (1960-1970).....	45
<i>Chicana Feminism and the Euro-American</i> <i>Women's Movement</i>	51
<i>Specific Concerns of Chicana Feminists</i>	53
<i>Chicanas Organize</i>	51
<i>An Overview of the Chicana Feminist Movement</i> (1960-1980).....	60
Notes.....	62
CONCLUSION.....	64
Notes.....	71
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	72

PREFACE

This paper focuses on the roots of Chicana feminism in Mexico and the United States. There are many possible routes by which to examine Chicana feminism. One could approach it from an historical, literary or socialist perspective, or concentrate on women's involvement in labor movements in Mexico and the United States. I have chosen to discuss Chicana feminism from an historical perspective in order to illustrate the similarities and differences between the Mexican and Chicana feminist movements and to illuminate the connections between Mexican and Chicana feminist activity in Mexico and the United States in the contemporary period (1910-1990). While I cover a great deal of material there are additional topics relating to Chicana feminism which deserve more attention than I am able to give them in the format of a senior thesis; these topics include socialism, women and labor and lesbianism.

This paper does provide an examination of the Mexican and Chicana feminist movements which evolved from the Mexican Revolution of 1910, the early Chicano/a civil rights movement (1910-1920), and the Chicano/a movement of the 1960s. The bibliography includes sources for further study on this topic.

Surge!

By Sara Estela Ramírez
Mexican Feminist (1881-1910)

Surge! Surge to life to liveliness, to the beauty of truly living;
but surge radiantly and powerfully, beautiful in your qualities,
resplendent in your virtues, full in your energies.

You, queen of the world, Goddess of universal adoration; you,
the sovereign to whom servitude is rendered, do not lock yourself in
your temple of God or in your triumphant courtesan's boudoir.

A true woman is more than a Goddess or a Queen. Do not let the
incense of the altar or the applause of the stage intoxicate you; there
is something greater and more noble than all that,

Gods are cast from temples, kings are thrust from their
thrones; but woman is always woman.

Gods live what their believers desire, kings live as long as they
are not dethroned; woman always lives, and this is the secret of
her happiness, to live.

Only action is life; to feel that one lives, that is the loveliest
sensation.

Surge, then, to life; but surge beautifully in your
qualities, resplendent in your virtues, full in your energies.¹

Surge!

¡Surge! Surge a la vida, a la actividad, a la
belleza de vivir realmente; pero surge radiante
y poderosa, bella de cualidades, esplendente
de virtudes, fuerte de energías.

Tú, la reina mundo, Diosa de la adoración
universal; tú, la soberana a quien se rinde
vasallaje, no te encierres así en tu templo de
Dios, ni en tu camarín de cortesana triunfadora.

Eso es indigno de tí, antes que Diosa y Reina,
se madre, se mujer.

Una mujer que lo es verdaderamente, es más
que diosa y reina. No te embriague el inci-
enso en el altar, ni el aplauso en el escenario,
hay algo más noble y más grande que todo eso.

Los dioses son arrojados de los templos; los
reyes son echados de sus tronos, la mujer es
siempre la mujer.

Los Dioses viven lo que sus creyentes quieren.
Los reyes viven mientras no son destronados;
la mujer vive siempre y este es el secreto de
su dicha, vivir.

Solo la acción es vida; sentir que se vive es
la más hermosa sensación.

Surge, pues, a las bellezas de la vida; pero
surge así, bella de cualidades, esplendente de
virtudes, fuerte de energías.

INTRODUCTION

Academic education in the United States has been male- dominated and male-oriented. While there has been an emphasis on Anglo-Saxon Protestant male heroes, people of color have been ignored in all fields and at all levels of education. Although Euro-American women's experiences and contributions have also been overlooked, it is important to acknowledge that the oppression of people of color is different from that of women of the dominant culture. Where people of color and Euro-American women have been present in text books, the information about them has often been distorted by racial and sexual stereotypes. Activists in the Civil Rights movement and the Women's Liberation movement of the 1960s demanded the development of Ethnic Studies and Women's Studies programs at universities, and the participants in these movements influenced elementary, high school, and university teachers to be more sensitive to the importance of incorporating accurate information about people of color and Euro-American women into their curricula.

Like many women of color, the history of Mexican women and their Chicana sisters in the United States has often been misrepresented and misconstrued. Racial and sexual stereotypes of Mexican and Chicano/a culture and the women in these cultures have dominated many fields of study despite the efforts of Mexican and Chicano/a scholars to eradicate myths and misperceptions. Among the myths that exist today are that Mexican and Chicana women are overwhelmingly dominated by their "macho" relatives, lovers and/or husbands and that they have very little power or control in the domestic, social or political spheres. Although this may be true of some women, it certainly does not characterize the lives of all Mexican women or

Chicanas. Mexican and Chicano/a culture has a long and rich feminist heritage, and women in these cultures have been fighting in the struggle for their people's liberation and for women's liberation for over a century. This paper examines Mexican women's involvement in the the Mexican War of Independence and the Mexican Revolution, and demonstrates the ways in which Mexican women and Chicanas participated in the early Chicano/a civil rights movement (1910-1920) and the Chicano/a movement of the 1960s. The primary focus of this paper, however, is the Mexican and Chicana feminist movements which grew out of these wars and liberation movements.

A second myth about Mexican women and Chicanas is that Chicana feminism has its roots in the European and the Euro-American Women's Liberation movements. This view is ethnocentric and inaccurate. In fact, in the United States, both the Suffrage movement of the 1840s and the Women's Liberation movement of the 1960s were Euro-American, middle-class movements which largely ignored the concerns of women of color and poor Euro-American women. Although the early Suffrage movement grew out of the abolition movement, suffragists eventually separated themselves from the struggle of Afro-American people, and focused primarily on gaining the vote for themselves; in the 1960s Euro-American women organized around their own oppression and struggled to establish legal, economic and sexual equality with Euro-American men, without considering the racial and economic oppression of women of color or the concerns of women from different ethnic groups.

Mexican women and Chicanas have had their own history of oppression. They did not need a feminist movement abroad or Euro-American women to inspire them. Alfredo Mirandé and Evangelina Enríquez discuss this in their book, La Chicana:

Just as it is commonly assumed that Mexican feminism derived directly from the suffrage

movements in the U.S. and Europe, it is assumed that Chicana feminism is a by-product of Anglo feminism. But a firm basis for the emergence of the contemporary Chicana feminist movement was laid during the early part of the century by Chicanas themselves.²

In the Chicana Feminist, Marta Cotera expresses her view on the subject even more strongly:

Our cultural patterns and tradition of strong women prove that we have a long, beautiful history of Mexicana/Chicana feminism which is not Anglo inspired, imposed or oriented...the entire community should be proud of the feminists in our history...a rich legacy of heroines and activists in social movements and armed rebellions.³

The focus of this paper is the roots of Chicana feminism in the period which spans from the Mexican Revolution of 1910 to the present; these roots are: 1) the Mexican Revolution of 1910, 2) the Chicano/a civil rights movement in the United States in the early 1900s, and 3) the Chicano/a movement of the 1960s. These three roots are connected and have very distinct parallels. The women involved in these movements were fighting alongside men for the liberation of all Mexican and Chicano/a people, as well as autonomously for their own liberation as women. Many Mexican and Chicana feminists lived before the revolution; however there was not a feminist movement, per se, until the revolution took place. I will discuss a few of the women in the colonial period and nineteenth century who had an impact on Mexican and United States history and on contemporary Chicana feminist consciousness so that the reader may have a more complete historical understanding of Mexican and Chicana feminism.

The intention of this paper is to educate all people about the history and concerns of the Chicana feminist movement. Once there is an understanding

of the roots and struggles of Chicana feminism then people will be more able to support the Chicana feminist movement. In order to have a multi-racial, more powerful, feminist movement which works to liberate all women it is vital that women learn about the histories and concerns of those from different ethnic, religious and class backgrounds. Women must understand each other in order to work together and they must all work together if they are going to be free from oppression. As long as any group of women is oppressed than none of them are free. Barbara Smith, an Afro-American scholar at the University of California at Berkeley, writes:

Feminism is the political theory and practice to free *all* women: women of color, working class women, poor women, physically challenged women, lesbians, old women, as well as white economically privileged heterosexual women. Anything less than this is not feminism, but merely female self-aggrandizement.⁴

A feminist movement which respects diversity and attends to the concerns of all women , also works to liberate the men and children who are oppressed by the dominant culture.

*Periodization of Mexican and Chicano/a History and
Historical Explanation of Population and Terminology*

Before focusing specifically on the roots of Chicana feminism it is important to have an understanding of Chicana history, and of the terms I will be using. The historical definition and periodization is taken from an article by Judith Sweeney entitled, "Chicana History : A Review of the Literature" and is created from the literature available on the Chicana. Chicana history includes Mexican history and the history of the Southwestern United States and can be separated into three major periods: colonial (1519-1821), nineteenth century (1821-1910) and contemporary (1910-present).

During the colonial period the Spanish, led by Hernán Cortés, invaded and colonized Mexico and a new ethnic group and culture was formed from the Spanish and indigenous miscegenation. This new group is called *mestizo*.

The *mestizo* population expanded north into the regions of New Mexico in the late 16th century, into Texas in the late 17th century, and into California in the 18th century. Euro-Americans migrated into these Northern Mexican territories (currently the Southwestern U.S.) in the early 1800s. In 1830 the Mexican government tried to prohibit further Euro-American migration, and tension between Euro-Americans and Mexicans increased because Euro-Americans refused to obey Mexican laws. In 1835 war broke out between Texas and Mexico as the U.S. tried to take Texas into the Union, and Mexico fought to keep Texas as its own territory. A year later conflicts ended, in the battle of San Jacinto, but the status of Texas remained unsettled. In 1845 Texas was admitted into the union and in 1846 a full scale war, called the Mexican War, broke out between Mexico and the United States because the U.S. wanted to take over Northern Mexico. In 1848 the Mexican War ended when the Mexican government signed and ratified the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, which ceded more than half of Mexico's territory to the U.S. (including the present day states of Arizona, California, New Mexico, Utah, Nevada, and parts of Colorado and Wyoming) in exchange for \$15 million. The Mexicans living in Northern Mexican territories became a colonized and conquered people who were politically and economically powerless and had a foreign culture and language forcefully imposed on them. These people are now called Mexican-Americans or Chicanos/as. Chicanos/as may also be people whose parents or ancestors are from Mexico, but who have themselves been raised in the United States.

The origins and the use of the word "Chicano" have been debated for a long time. One theory is that Mexican Indians used to pronounce "Mexicano" as "Me-chee-cano" and then shortened the word to "Chicano".⁵ During the

early part of the twentieth century *criollos* (Spanish-Mexicans), Spanish-Americans, and members of the upper classes used the word "Chicano" pejoratively to refer to *mestizos* and people in the lower classes. Although in the past the word has been used to degrade *mestizos*, in the 1960s it was embraced by many people of Mexican descent in the United States to identify themselves proudly with their cultural heritage, and to define themselves as a political class. The word has come to have radical political connotations.⁶ Due to the nature of my thesis and the use of the word "Chicano" in almost all of the literature I have read, I am choosing to use the word "Chicano" as well to refer to people of Mexican descent in the U.S. During the early 1900s people of Mexican descent in the United States called themselves either Mexicans or Mexican-Americans. In order to be clear and consistent I am choosing to use the word "Chicano" throughout this paper, regardless of the time-period about which I am writing. The Spanish language often uses the masculine form to include both men and women, however, when I discuss both sexes I will write "Chicano/a", in order to create a more feminist language which includes women. "Chicana" is the feminine form of "Chicano". I will use the word "Mexicana" to refer to women from Mexico.

Outline of Thesis Organization

This paper is organized chronologically, beginning with a discussion of a few outstanding Mexican women in the colonial and nineteenth century periods. The rest of the paper is devoted to the three roots of Chicana feminism within the contemporary period. I will begin my examination of this period by focusing on the Mexican Revolution, the early Chicano/a civil rights movement and the feminist activities in Mexico and the United States during the early 1900s. I will briefly discuss Chicano/a activities between 1920-1960 second; last I will focus on the Chicano/a movement of the 1960s, and the emergence of the Chicana feminist movement in the 1970s.

Notes

- 1 Alfredo Mirandé and Evangelina Enríquez, La Chicana (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 252.
- 2 Mirandé and Enríquez, p. 122.
- 3 Marta Cotera, The Chicana Feminist (Austin, Information Systems and Development, 1977), p. 9.
- 4 Speech by Barbara Smith given at the closing session of NWSA, May, 1979 in This Bridge Called My Back. Writings by Radical Women of Color, Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa eds. (Watertown, Mass. : Persephone Press, 1981), p. 61.
- 5 David F. Gomez, Somos Chicanos. Strangers in Our Own Land. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), p. xii.
- 6 Alfredo Mirandé, The Chicano Experience. An Alternative Perspective (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), p. 165-181.

CHAPTER 1
OUTSTANDING MEXICAN WOMEN
The Colonial Period (1519-1821)
Forgotten Women and Heroines

During the first half of the colonial period many great women were involved in the growth and change of Mexico and had a significant impact on Mexican life. However it is important to acknowledge two women in particular: Doña Marina (La Malinche) (c1505-c1527) and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1652-1695).

Doña Marina was a noble Aztec woman who was given by her mother to traders who eventually sold her to the ruling chief of Tabasco, where she lived until Hernán Cortés arrived in 1519. Due to her history, she spoke Nahuatl (language of the Aztecs) as well as the Mayan dialect of the people in Tabasco. After Cortés conquered Tabasco, the chief gave him a gift of 20 women; Doña Marina was one of them. She acted as a liason between Cortés and the indigenous people of Mexico because she was able to speak so many languages, and she acted as his collaborator and translator. She also became his mistress. Mexican people often blame her for the Spanish conquest and therefore see her as a traitor to her country. Doña Marina symbolizes the violated mother who assisted in the conquest and downfall of the Aztec empire and she symbolizes female negativity for Mexican culture.¹ Historian Adelaida R. Del Castillo attributes this view of Doña Marina to two factors: "1) misinterpretation of her role in the conquest of Mexico and 2) an unconscious, if not intentional, misogynistic attitude toward women in general, especially toward self-assertive women, on the part of western society as a whole."² Even today a Mexican who betrays her/his people, who is

embarrassed about her/his culture and who advocates Mexico's opening itself to foreigners is called a "malinchista", a derogatory word derived from the name "La Malinche", the name derived from Malinal, Doña Marina's birth name.³ Many Chicana feminists are accused of having gone "a la Malinche", meaning that they are perceived as traitors to the Chicano/a movement.⁴ For these reasons many contemporary Chicana feminists have focused on changing the distorted view of La Malinche, and instead want her to be seen as a great Mexican woman and as the "prototypical Chicana feminist." In her article, "La Malinche, Feminist Prototype", Cordelia Candelaria writes, "La Malinche embodies those personal characteristics such as intelligence, initiative, adaptability and leadership which are most often associated with Mexican women....by adapting to the historical circumstances thrust upon her, she defied traditional social expectations of a woman's role."⁵

Like Doña Marina, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz also defied traditional social expectations of women, which were to serve in the home as procreators, housekeepers, wives and mothers. She is often referred to as the first Mexican feminist. She was born in 1625 to an Indian father and Spanish mother. It is said that Sor Juana was a child prodigy and learned how to read and write at the age of five. As a young woman she began to write poetry and later in life was known as "La Decima Musa", the tenth muse. When she was ten years old she went to live with her grandfather in Mexico city where he instructed her in Spanish grammar and in Latin and in her teenage years she was brought to meet the Marqués of Mancera. He assembled a group of forty scholars in theology, mathematics, history and the humanities to test her knowledge, and she succeeded in answering all of their questions correctly. Soon afterwards she decided to join a convent, became a nun and continued her education and writing. It is possible that she chose to live in a nunnery as a form of marriage resistance, in order to remain autonomous and continue her intellectual pursuits. In the convent, she was

outspoken about women's condition in society, called for the advancement of the rights of women in educational and intellectual opportunities, and, in her writings, cited women writers and thinkers in the church. She often addressed sexism in her poems, which caused them to be censured, and eventually, the church prohibited her from writing. Sor Juana Inés de La Cruz is the first well known Mexican woman to speak out for the rights of women and is therefore an important part of Mexican and Chicana feminist history.⁶

The second half of the colonial period was also a turbulent time in Mexican history as Mexico fought to gain independence from Spain. Women were an integral part of Mexico's war for independence, and risked their lives for the liberation of Mexican people. As Mexican historian, Luís Gonzalez Obregón states, "During the war of insurrection, Mexican women overran our cities and battlefields like protective Goddesses, now announcing the beginning of independence...their unexpected heroic feats now touched on the mythical; now, finally, they spilled their own blood, not content with having offered the blood of their sons."⁷ Two women in particular became well known for their devotion to the fight for freedom. These women are Doña María Josefa Ortíz de Dominguez, also called "La Corregidora", and Leona Vicario. Doña Josefa belonged to a group of wealthy *criollos* (Spanish-Mexicans) who recognized King Ferdinand but opposed the government of the Spanish elite in Mexico. The group worked to gain support from other *criollos* and proposed to make a public declaration of independence at a local fair. However, their plans were discovered and most of the conspirators were arrested. Fortunately, Doña Josefa was not captured until later and was able to send a message to Father Hidalgo about the arrests before she was put in jail. When he received the message, he decided to lead an armed rebellion against the Spanish. If she had not been a conspirator or had not sent a message to Hidalgo, the Mexican War of Independence might have taken a very different course. She continued in the struggle for liberation

while she was in jail by corresponding with other rebels and dedicated the rest of her life to Mexico's independence.

Leona Vicario was also a *criolla*. Her participation began just after the inception of the War of Independence when she openly attacked the church and the clergy, because they condemned the insurrection and threatened to excommunicate those involved in the struggle for independence. Later she became a correspondent between Hidalgo, Allende and the junta (governing power) of Zitacuaro. She became known as the "channel through which Mexican patriots communicated with insurgents." ⁸ She also financed the building and operation of a cannon factory which produced some of the best firearms and cannons used in the war.

Thousands of other women gave money and services to the War of Independence and many lost their lives in battle, like Manuela Medina, who organized a company of rebels and fought in seven battles for Mexico's independence. Many other women were executed for their activities in the war but have gone unrecognized for their efforts to liberate the Mexican people.

The Nineteenth Century Period (1821-1910)

Women, Education and Feminism

In this period of less than one hundred years Mexico gained independence from Spain, suffered an invasion and occupation by the French and lost its Northern territory to the United States. Women's involvement in the Mexican War of Independence, the French invasion, and the Mexican War had a great impact on society, and as women's roles changed in the nineteenth century, feminist consciousness grew. Feminist activity during this period mostly involved middle class, educated women who were concerned with social and economic problems throughout Mexico.

During the nineteenth century, the education of women became an important focus of the government, society and women of the middle and

upper classes. Several new women's schools were established throughout Mexico and many women were accepted into schools of medicine, law and commerce. Teaching, nursing and government work all became popular professions for women; however, at the same time, hundreds of poor women worked in the factories, producing clothing, shoes, food, drinks, pottery and glass. Many women in the lower classes also worked as domestic servants or prostitutes.

In 1870, Rita Cetina Gutiérrez, a poet and teacher who lived in Mérida, formed a feminist society called "La Siempreviva". The focus of the society was to advocate secular, vocational and academic education for all socio-economic classes of women. The organization raised funds for a girls school and established a newspaper also called "La Siempreviva". Once the school was established, it offered courses in a broad range of subjects including reading, writing, sewing, grammar, arithmetic, geometry, geography, constitutional law, astronomy, music and speech. Earlier schools had focused primarily on subjects which geared women to traditional work inside and outside of the home, and were not as concerned with providing women with a well-rounded education.

In 1904, Dra. Columba Rivera, María Sandoval de Zarco and Dolores Correa Zapata, three well-educated women in Mexico City, founded a feminist monthly magazine called *La Mujer Mexicana*. The magazine was owned exclusively by women and published only articles about women's issues and feminism. The writers for the magazine focused on the importance of educating middle class women and helping less fortunate women.

Few feminists at this time were concerned with women's suffrage and tended to focus mostly on greater educational opportunities for women, decent wages for working women and reforming the Civil Code which discriminated specifically against married women. Women believed that if they made advances in these areas, the double standard would end, and that

women's legal rights in marriage would be strengthened. Many of the women involved in feminist activity in the latter part of the nineteenth century period, also became active in the Mexican Revolution, and contributed to the growth of the feminist movement in Mexico during the contemporary period.

Notes

- 1 Adelaida R. Del Castillo, "Malintzin Tenepal: A Preliminary Look into a New Perspective," Essays on LaMujer, Rosaura Sanchez and Rosa Martínez Cruz, eds. (Los Angeles: Chicano Studies Center Publications, 1977), p.139.
- 2 Castillo, p.139.
- 3 Alfredo Mirandé, The Chicano Experience: An Alternative Perspective (Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), p. 166.
- 4 Cordelia Candalaria, "La Malinche, Feminist Prototype," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* (Summer, 1980) Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 6.
- 5 Candalaria, p. 6.
- 6 Alfredo Mirandé and Evangelina Enríquez, La Chicana (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 46-49.
- 7 Luís Gonzalez Obregón, "La Decima Musa" Mexico Viejo: Noticias, Tradiciones, Leyendas y Costumbres (Paris: Bouret, 1900 p. 258-61.
- 8 José Joaquin Fernández de Lizardi, Heroínas mexicanas (Mexico City: Vargas Rea, 1955), p. 9.

CHAPTER 2
FEMINISM AND THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION
The Contemporary Period (1910-1990)

Mexican Life Under Porfirio Díaz

By 1911, Porfirio Díaz had been the dictator of Mexico for almost three decades, and along with wealthy land owners controlled the country while millions of people lived in peonage. Immediately before the outbreak of the revolution, 3,000 families owned half of Mexico's land; of the 10 million people who worked the land, 9.5 million owned none of it.¹ The wealth that was created was controlled by a very small group of Mexicans and foreigners who dominated Mexico's banks, insurance companies, mines, textile mills and railroads. There was a closed political system, no political freedom and censorship of the press. Several newspapers were closed down for publishing criticisms of the government. In order to keep the "peace" in the countryside and intimidate the poor so that they would not protest, Díaz established a brutal police force which did not hesitate to imprison and kill anyone who spoke out against the government.

During this time, poverty, exploitation and mistreatment of landless peasants and workers of both sexes increased. By 1911 the exploitation of women in the fields and factories far exceeded that of men. Women were forced to work long hours under terrible conditions, in the most menial, low paying jobs, and thousands of women became prostitutes in order to survive and feed their families. In the early 1900s, 120 out of every 1000 women between fifteen and thirty were registered as prostitutes with the department of health, and presumably thousands more were unregistered.² Discrimination against women, which contributed to their desperate economic position and forced them into jobs such as prostitution, was perpetuated by the government

and the church which promoted the idea that women were inferior and incapable of holding important positions. The Díaz regime was influenced by Social Darwinism and its notion that women were biologically and intellectually inferior, and that women's fundamental functions were reproduction and the sexual satisfaction of men. ³

Precursors of the Revolution (1900-1910)

In the early twentieth century, prior to the outbreak of revolution, women from all social and economic classes became involved in the effort to protest the system of government. Many of these women were feminists whose goals were to liberate the Mexican people from Porfirio Díaz's regime, and to free women from their oppressive position in society. Several educated women founded radical newspapers and were involved in revolutionary organizations which were supportive of Madero's democratic ideals and/or committed to the overthrow of Porfirio Díaz.⁴ In the forefront of the resistance were Juana Belen Gutiérrez de Mendoza, Elisa Acuña y Rosetti, Dolores Jiménez y Muro and Sara Estela Ramírez, who became known as the "founders of Mexican feminism and precursors of Chicana feminism".⁵

Juana Belen Gutiérrez de Mendoza was a teacher who spent her life helping to educate poor Indian children and working to gain more rights for agricultural and industrial workers. She was also a journalist and in 1901 founded her own newspaper called, *Vésper*. She strongly believed in the formation of a separate feminist republic which she thought would be a solution to the antagonism between the sexes and subordination of women. However, Gutiérrez de Mendoza focused her life more on the revolution than on the idea of feminist separatism. During 1901 she became friends with the Magón brothers, two revolutionaries who organized against the government by founding the Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM). Juana was arrested several times because of her revolutionary activities, and went to prison in 1902 and

1903. The government confiscated *Véspers*. In prison she met and organized with many other women, including Dolores Jiménez y Muro and Elisa Acuña y Rosetti, and she continued to direct a newspaper called *Fiat Lux*. During the revolution she served under Zapata, commanded troops and became a colonel.⁶

Elisa Acuña y Rosetti was also a teacher and a coeditor of *Véspers*. She helped found Hijas de Cuauhtémoc, a feminist organization which strove to change the desperate situations of indigenous women and of women working in the fields or in the cities. She also had important administrative positions in the feminist organizations, Liga Pan-Americana de Mujeres and the Consejo Feminista, as well as in several other feminist groups. Like Juana de Mendoza, Elisa worked with the Magón brothers, who asked her to sit on the board of directors of the Centro Director de la Confederación de Clubes Liberales de la Republica (Ponciano Arriaga), a liberal organization founded by Camilo Arriaga. Elisa Acuña y Rosetti also worked for Redención, the first anticlerical organization. During the revolution she founded a paper, called *La Guillotina*, and at one point was forced to leave the country because of her radical activities. When she returned, she joined Zapata's forces and campaigned for him in Puebla.

Dolores Jiménez y Muro was also an outstanding woman during this time. She was a political writer, helped to edit three important political works and was the president of Hijas de Cuauhtémoc. She was imprisoned for her revolutionary activities and while there formed a plan for a new feminist organization called Regeneración y Concordia, a group which eventually worked to better the conditions of the Indians and the proletariat, elevate the economic, moral and intellectual status of women and unify all of the revolutionary forces. She was a strong supporter of Zapata, served in his army and became a colonel. She also campaigned for him and wrote the preface to "Plan de Ayala", his plan for agrarian reform.

Sara Estela Ramírez was a Mexican poet, teacher, labor organizer and defender of human rights. She is different from the other women I have discussed because she worked for the struggle of liberation for Mexican people both in Mexico *and* in the United States. As an adult she moved to Texas and while there served as the official representative of Ricardo Flores Magón and the Partido Liberal Mexicano. In Mexico she was involved in Ponciano Arriaga, Regeneración y Concordia, and worked as a journalist for *La Corregidora*, writing about women's oppression in relation to the Catholic Church, and the exploitation of women in the fields and in the factories. Later in this paper I will discuss Ramírez's contributions to the early Chicano/a civil rights movement in the U.S.

Women and the Revolution (1910-1920)

In 1910, when the revolution officially began, women were already very much involved in revolutionary and feminist organizations due to the groundwork laid by these four women mentioned above. The revolution itself helped to change traditional sex roles for an even larger number of women. During the revolution women held jobs that were normally reserved for men, and demonstrated competence in these jobs; women and men often worked together, thus women were able to gain men's respect and recognition in a way that they had not been able to before. However, women were often still discriminated against by men in the work place just as they were in the larger society.

During the revolution, hundreds of thousands of women from all socio-economic classes risked their lives while struggling for Mexico's liberation. These women were in danger of being sent to prison. Many had to flee the repressive government in Mexico and sought refuge in the United States. Women worked for the revolution as clerks, secretaries, telegraphers, journalists, propagandists, financiers, teachers, business women, political activists, train dispatchers, nurses and pharmacists. Many women were

involved in armed rebellion either by giving money to revolutionary groups, smuggling provisions, gathering arms and ammunition, passing information to revolutionaries, accompanying men in military units, *assoldaderas*, or fighting as soldiers themselves.

Many of women's contributions to the revolution have been forgotten; however, women's position *assoldaderas* is still present in Mexican history books and folklore. *Soldaderas* are often described as women who followed their men into battle and took care of them by tending the wounded, preparing food and washing clothes. Although these women are portrayed as "followers", they were actually "military strategists and political thinkers who actively contributed to the revolution."⁷ The important roles that *soldaderas* played is often minimized, but in many respects the revolution could not have occurred without them. These women often participated in the fighting and some of them were made officers and leaders of the men, for example Cornelia María de Luz Espiñosa Barrera and Remedios Farrera who became colonels, wore men's clothing and commanded troops consisting of hundreds of male soldiers. This phenomenon was widespread. There was a case in which a woman named Carmen Alanis commanded 300 men in the capture of Ciudad Juárez, and another woman, Romana Flores who was a chief of staff under a *carrancista* general who operated out of the Northeast. She also armed contingent the inheritance left by her revolutionary husband who died in the *maderista* rebellion.⁸

While women were working for the revolutionary cause, many of them realized that not only did the Mexican people need to be freed from an oppressive government, but that women themselves needed to be liberated from their own oppressive position in the male dominated society. Women understood that the revolutionary ideal of freedom was hypocritical if they did not fight for their own freedom, as women. They realized that they were fighting in vain for the revolution if it was only going to benefit men. As Alfredo

Mirandé and Evangelina Enríquez write:

The Mexican revolution enabled women to become involved not only in the protest of the Mexican population as a whole, but in the expression of exclusively feminist issues, for these forms of exploitation were closely intertwined.⁹

Women understood that, like men, they suffered from governmental repression but that they were also oppressed on the basis of their sex and therefore had concerns that were unique to them as women. During this period revolutionary women became more unified as they realized the relationship between governmental oppression of all Mexicans, and male oppression of women in the fields and factories, in revolutionary organizations, in the church and in the home. Women's involvement in the revolution gave them experiences in leadership, organizing, and public speaking. These experiences helped them to form a feminist movement which sought to bring about the legal, social and political liberation of women.

One revolutionary organization that supported the feminist movement was the Partido Liberal Mexicano. In 1900 Ricardo Flores Magón and his brother, Enrique, founded the Partido Liberal Mexicano and began the party publication, *Regeneración*. The PLM was one of the major forces behind the revolutionary movement and demanded major governmental, educational and labor reforms which would give more power to Mexican people. The PLM organized groups of field workers, led trade unions, organized liberal clubs and conventions, and protested against the government.

One of the central tenets of the PLM was the liberation of women. Several women were actively involved in the PLM from the beginning and played a vital role in the development of the party, and the feminist philosophy of the organization. The PLM and the Magón brothers were committed to

supporting women's rights and encouraged women to rebel against their oppression. This is best exemplified in an essay written by Ricardo Flores Magón in 1910 entitled "A La Mujer" (To Women) which appeared in the party's publication, *Regeneración* :

Compañeras, do not fear the revolution... Man's bondage is yours and perhaps yours is more sorrowful, more sinister, and more infamous. Are you a worker? Because you are a woman you are paid less than men, and made to work harder. You must suffer the impertinence of the foreman or proprietor; and if you are attractive, the bosses will make advances. Should you weaken, they would rob you of your virtue in the same cowardly manner as you are robbed of your labor...though women work more than men, they are paid less, and the misery, mistreatment and insult are today as yesterday the bitter harvest for a whole existence of sacrifice....do not look up to the heavens for solutions and explanations because in that lies the greatest contribution to your eternal bondage. The solution is here on earth ! That solution is rebellion.¹⁰

The stance the party took on women's issues had an impact on the revolution and its accomplishments. For example the PLM and the feminist organization *Regeneración y Concordia* influenced the drafting and signing of the "Plan politico y social" of 1911. This plan discussed the problems of urban reform, higher salaries for both sexes, and improvement of the lives of the indigenous population. In 1904 the Magón brothers were forced into exile in the United States, but continued organizing there and became involved in the early Chicano/a civil rights and feminist activities in Texas. I will go into more depth about their U.S. involvement later in this paper.

Throughout Mexico, feminists formed organizations which supported revolutionary ideals and struggled to gain women's rights. Some of these organizations were *Admiradoras de Juarez*, *Amigas de Pueblo*, *Hijas de*

Cuauhtémoc, Sociedad Protectora de la Mujer, Ligas de Orientación Feminina and Regeneración y Concordia. Women also established publications, held conferences, marched and protested in the streets, and pressured in any other ways that they could for their full political rights, including the right to vote.

Francisco Madero, the successor to Díaz was interested in women's rights due to the influence of his wife, Soledad Gonzales, and was greatly supported by women, but did little to strengthen their position in society. President Carranza, who was in power from 1917-1919, was also interested in women's rights and made attempts to improve the political rights of women both before and during his term as president. His feminist activism was due mainly to the influence of his personal secretary, Hermila Galindo, who was a strong feminist and ahead of her time in many respects.

Galindo was the author of several feminist and political pamphlets, and from 1915-1919 was the editor of the feminist journal, *Mujer Moderna*. She campaigned for Carranza throughout Mexico and spread feminist information as well. She encouraged women to support Carranza, join organizations which worked for the revolution, and counter the force of the Catholic women's groups which did not support the revolution or women's rights. Galindo was one of the first Mexican feminists to argue that the Catholic Church was the main obstacle to the advancement of women and feminism in the country, a strategy that was used by feminists throughout the contemporary period to draw attention to their demand for political equality. During Carranza's presidency Hermila Galindo became the most prominent advocate of feminism in the country. She believed that women should have the same rights and privileges as men, and that they should have a well-rounded education. She advocated the right of women to vote, believing this was the only way that women could achieve full equality, and she wanted women to be allowed the opportunity to run for office. Galindo also worked very hard to

revise the Civil Code of 1884, which limited women's rights when they married. Carranza supported the revision of the Code and changes finally came about in 1926, due to her work. She was one of the first people in Mexico to support sex education, arguing women needed to understand their sexuality and that schools needed to include human reproduction as part of their teaching of biology. These ideas were radical for her time and received little popular support. However, sex education has remained an issue in the feminist movement until the present day, and many of the ideas and beliefs she supported were later advocated by Mexican feminists in the 1920s and 1930s.

Due to Galindo's influence and two feminist congresses held in the Yucatán in 1916, provisions for women were included in the Mexican constitution when it was revised in 1917. Among the revisions was article 123 which granted maternity leave, protected women from working at night and from working in certain dangerous occupations. Unfortunately, these provisions also discriminated against women by limiting their job opportunities. Other articles gave women marital equality on paper, but gave insufficient protection to unwed mothers and children born out of wedlock. However, these revisions were the first steps in the struggle to ensure equal rights for women.

In 1910 the Yucatán was one of the most economically and socially advanced regions of Mexico, and was a center for feminist activity during the revolution. General Salvador Alvarado, who became the military governor of the Yucatán in 1915, was a strong supporter of the revolution and of economic and cultural reform in the Yucatán. He was also influenced by feminism and was interested in helping the weak and the oppressed, believing that the struggle for women's rights was an integral part of overcoming the oppression of all poor and indigenous people. He worked to improve the educational opportunities for women because he wanted women

to be able to support themselves, and to be better prepared to fight against discriminatory laws. In her book, Against All Odds, Anna Macias writes:

He (Alvarado) was a lone revolutionary leader who wanted women to play an equal role in creating a new Mexican society. This explains his concern for female education, insistence that women gain legal equality and conviction that women were capable of participating in political life.¹¹

Alvarado encouraged women to participate in labor struggles by forming special cooperatives, and he urged women in certain industries to form unions. He supported Ligas Femeniles Socialistas, established throughout the state during his term, which were socialist women's organizations working for the advancement of women and socialism within Mexico. Alvarado brought about reforms by signing progressive labor laws which improved women's working conditions. He supported efforts to help domestic servants and prostitutes, who were mainly Mayan women and children, and he opened up jobs for women in government offices as cashiers, secretaries and clerks.

The work of Hermila Galindo, countless individual feminists and feminist organizations influenced Alvarado to call for the Primer Congreso Feminista (First Feminist Congress) in January, 1916. The purpose of the congress was to raise women's consciousness about their position in society and to discuss how it could be strengthened. This congress was the second of its kind held in Latin America and included reports on the international condition of women, as well as the position of women in Mexico, and provided resolutions for the protection of women and children.

The Primer Congreso Feminista had four basic themes: freeing women from their traditional roles, the importance of education in women's lives, women's participation in public life, and the community's role in helping

women achieve a higher position in society. The congress also covered religion, legal equality of women and men, reforms of the Civil Code and a proposal that women over 21 and older could vote in city and town elections. The central organizing committee was primarily composed of women, with Consuelo Zavala Castillo as the chairperson, and Dominga Canto as the vice president. Hermila Galindo was unable to attend the congress but sent a speech to be read, entitled, "La Mujer en el Porvenir" (Women in the Future), which defended the position that women were equal to men intellectually, and therefore should be recognized as leaders of the revolution. She also argued that women should have the same sexual freedom as men, a statement which contributed to the separation of the participants into different political groups.

Three separate positions emerged from the congress: Catholic conservative, radical and moderate. The Catholic conservatives condemned Galindo's speech wanting to maintain women's traditional role as wives and mothers. They feared that too much education would make women unattractive to men. The radicals believed that men and women were equal in every way, and that women should take an assertive role in society by voting and running for office. They also advocated socialism. Like the radicals, the moderates supported education for women and saw it as a way to liberate women from their oppression. However, they thought that education should be practical and teach them how to be better wives and mothers. They supported women's participation in public affairs but argued that the present political rights should only be practiced by men until women were prepared to exercise those rights. Moderates and radicals both wanted to reform the 1884 Civil Code and supported education, primary school reforms, new academic curricula, art academics and public conferences. The most important proposal passed during the congress was women's suffrage. The proposal requested that the state of the Yucatán lead the rest of Mexico in changing the national constitution to allow women to vote in all city and town

elections. Although some members of the congress opposed this idea, the petition was passed: women in the Yucatán were granted the right to vote in local elections in the early 1920s under the governorship of Carillo Puerto. However, women throughout the rest of Mexico did not have this right until 1946.

The Primer Congreso Feminista was important for several reasons. It was the first of its kind in Mexico. It was organized primarily by women, was well attended, clarified some of the most important women's issues at the time, and proposed municipal suffrage for women over 21. The congress also encouraged women to continue demanding change and was a landmark in the women's struggle for liberation even though many of the goals of the congress did not come to fruition until years later.

During the spring of 1916, Salvador Alvarado called for a second congress. This second congress was attended by half the number of people as the first, which may have been due the extended length of the first congress, and the fact that the second congress was held only a few months later. The topics of this congress included primary school education, marriage and custody rights of divorced parents, women's suffrage and women's right to hold governmental positions. One of the highlights of the gathering was a speech given by Mercedes Betancourt de Alberto, which pointed out the contradiction between the ideals of equality which were espoused by revolutionary leaders, and the exclusion of women from the benefits of the revolution. The first congress accomplished more objectives, but the second congress provided a place for women to review the first congress and discuss their goals for the future.

A national constitutional convention was held in the city of Querétaro later in the year 1916, which passed a bill stating that Salvador Alvarado could not run again for the governorship of the Yucatán. Due to the lack of his leadership, the increasing violence of the revolution, and the economic

hardships in the state, social reforms slowed down in that region. The women's movement in the Yucatán did not gain momentum again until the 1920s when Carillo Puerto was governor.

By the end of the revolutionary period (1910-1920) few concrete improvements had been made in women's legal status but the social status of women changed. The revolution gave many middle and upper class women the opportunity to go beyond the previous societal limitations as they "built, influenced and led the revolutionary movement on a par with men."¹² Although women contributed a great deal to the revolution, there was still strong opposition to the feminist movement and to the demands for equality and women's suffrage. Women were not able to make many legal advances during the revolution and the struggle for suffrage failed because men in power viewed women's political activism as a threat to the revolution and the establishment of a secular government. Many revolutionaries feared that if women's rights were associated with the revolutionary movement, the majority of the population would be deterred from supporting the revolution, and that the opposition to the revolution would grow even stronger. Many revolutionaries also believed that women's position in society should not change, and that a focus on women's rights would direct attention away from the revolutionary goals.

During the revolution, suffrage was not the main focus of the feminist movement because prior to, and during the revolution, the men in power and men within the political system had not been elected, but had come into power by force. Therefore, there had not been any elections for over thirty years. In addition few women anywhere in the world had the right to vote in the early 1900s. Once the revolution ended suffrage became the focus of the women's movement and many men supported this feminist agenda, as the Magón brothers and Alvarado had in earlier years.

Even though there were few legal gains for women during the

revolution, the women who fought for women's rights during this time established a stronger, more unified feminist movement. This movement grew after the revolution, became more powerful and succeeded in fulfilling many of the goals envisioned by feminists of the 1900-1920 era. The feminists who fought for the revolution and women's rights "bequeathed an invaluable legacy of leadership to the Chicano/a labor and feminist movements" in the United States.¹³

Notes

- 1 Victor Alba, The Mexicans. The Making of a Nation. (New York: Pegasus Press, 1967), p.108-140.
- 2 María Antioneta Rascón as quoted in Alfredo Mirandé and Evangelina Enríquez, La Chicana (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 154.
- 3 Alfredo Mirandé and Evangelina Enríquez, La Chicana. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 210.
- 4 Madero wrote a pivotal book entitled, The Presidential Succession of 1910. He gave lectures throughout Mexico, founded a newspaper and organized anti- reelection clubs. He became a leader of the revolution and eventually became the president of Mexico.
- 5 Mirandé and Enríquez, p. 204.
- 6 Zapata was a revolutionary who led a primarily indigenous movement in Morelos and southern Mexico against the Díaz regime. He was an agrarian leader and wanted land reform and an end to the dictatorship.
- 7 Ricardo Romero and José Flores (eds.) Chicana Voices. Intersections of Class, Race and Gender. (Austin: The Center for Mexican-American Studies, 1986)
- 8 Mirandé and Enríquez, p. 213
- 9 Mirandé and Enríquez, p. 211
- 10 Magdalena Mora and Adelaida Del Castillo, eds., Mexican Women in the United States. Struggles Past and Present (Los Angeles: University of California, Chicano Study Research Center Publications, 1980), p. 160-162.
- 11 Anna Macias, Against All Odds. The Feminist Movement in Mexico to 1940 (Westport, Conn. : Greenwood Press, 1982), p. 80.

¹² Yolanda Alaniz and Megan Cornish, *The Chicano Struggle: A Racial or National Movement?* (Summer, 1985) Vol. 3, p. 5.

¹³ Alaniz and Cornish, p. 5.

CHAPTER 3

THE EARLY CHICANO/A CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT AND FEMINIST CONSCIOUSNESS

The Contemporary Period (1910-1990)

Bridges Between Mexico and the Southwestern United States (1910-1920)

During the Mexican Revolution approximately one million people, including peasants, soldiers, and supporters of revolutionary leaders, escaping political persecution, fled the violent war in Mexico and settled in the Southwestern U.S.¹ During the 1910s Mexicans in the United States continued to organize against the Díaz regime, and also worked in the early civil rights movement, trying to improve the lives of Mexicans and Chicanos/as. Mexicans and Chicanos/as who were active in the civil rights movement during the early 1900s were often sent to jail and deported to Mexico, and were in danger of police brutality, racial violence and lynching.

Just as Mexican feminist activities were interwoven with the Mexican revolutionary movement so too were Chicana feminist activities intertwined with the early Chicano/a civil rights movement. The Mexican revolution was an important impetus for the growth of Chicana feminism in the U.S., providing models for Chicanas and giving them a rich feminist legacy of which they could be proud. Many feminists who were working for the revolutionary cause and for the rights of women in Mexico, were also involved in civil rights and women's rights activities in the United States. Therefore, it is sometimes difficult to separate Mexican feminist activities from Chicana history and development.

In the United States, Mexicans and Chicanos/as were a doubly

colonized people. Not only had they been colonized by the Spanish, but also by Euro-Americans who conquered Northern Mexico and claimed it as United States territory. Mexican women and Chicanas suffered a triple oppression; they were discriminated against on the basis of their sex and *also* because of their race, language and class.

Mexicanas and Chicanas who lived in the early 1900s worked for the survival of the entire community, rather than focusing exclusively on women's rights. In the U.S. Mexican women and Chicanas, unlike their sisters in Mexico, were prohibited from working in higher education and politics, therefore most women worked at the grassroots level. They were involved in labor organizing, criminal justice, protection of Chicano/a civil rights and the provision of better educational opportunities for children. Women also helped to establish organizations called "mutualistic" societies. These groups provided Mexicans and Chicanos/as with support and protection for burial services, health care, protection against police brutality, abuses by the law and illegal deportations. "Mutualistic" groups also provided social functions which brought the community together.

One organization which had the support of hundreds of women was the Partido Liberal Mexicano. The Magón brothers, the founders of the PLM, were forced to leave Mexico in 1904 because of their revolutionary activities. They moved to Laredo, Texas, where they continued to organize against Díaz and for the rights of Mexicans and Chicanos/as. The PLM became one of the main influences on the Chicano/a civil rights movement in Texas, and focused its efforts on organizing for better working conditions and against discrimination, police brutality and the lynching of Mexicans and Chicanos/as. They continued to publish their newspaper, *Regeneración*, in the U.S., where it was read by a large population of Mexicans and Chicanos/as throughout the Southwest. Through the newspaper, the PLM raised Chicano/a consciousness about women's position in society and discussed some of the

factors involved in the oppression of women. The Magón brothers realized that cultural and socio-economic oppression was doubly felt by women, and they encouraged women to organize their own groups, as well as to support the party. The PLM gave women organizing experience and established a large network of communication throughout the Southwest. Women were less likely to be harassed by government officials, and therefore assumed public roles in the PLM that male leaders were unable to because of the potential dangers of deportation, imprisonment and possibly death. Thus, women jeopardized their own safety by propagandizing and spreading PLM policy, and organizing forums and rallies throughout the Southwest to support the party.

Chicanas and Mexican women also established feminist organizations, newspapers and journals which allied them with the PLM and strove to emancipate women. Both the Liberal Union of Mexican Women and the feminist club Leona Vicario raised money for the party. Andrea and Teresa Villareal printed a feminist publication, called *La Mujer Moderna*, which also supported the work of the PLM. Individual women, like María Gonzalez, a Chicana feminist, also made financial contributions to the PLM. Gonzalez helped to raise funds for the PLM and provided financial assistance to political prisoners from Mexico.

The most visible woman working for the PLM in the United States was Sara Estela Ramírez who was born in Mexico but lived in Laredo, Texas as an adult. Sara Estela Ramírez is a very important figure in Chicana feminist history; she symbolizes the connection between Mexicana and Chicana feminism in that she worked for the rights of Mexicans and Chicanos/as, and also for women's rights in Mexico and in the United States. She was a Spanish teacher, political activist, and labor organizer as well as a writer of poetry, essays and articles for Spanish language newspapers. Her speeches were often printed in these newspapers as well, and she published literary

periodicals which were available in Mexico and in the United States. (One of her poems in which she encourages women to be active in the movement appears at the beginning of this paper). Ramírez worked for the Partido Liberal Mexicano, contributing to its efforts both in Mexico and in the United States. When the Magón brothers first came to the United States, they used her home as the headquarters for the PLM and eventually Ramírez became one of the leaders of the party.

Women's concerns were also included in several congresses that were held throughout the Southwest from 1910-1920. The congresses focused on criminal justice, the organization of workers, the status and education of women, and women's role in the liberation of Chicanos/as. The first of these congresses was called El Primer Congreso Mexicanista and was held in Laredo, Texas in 1911. The congress was convened by Texas-Mexicans who were concerned about the culmination of problems caused by Euro-American domination and control. Nicasio Idar, a liberal journalist, and his daughter, Jovita, a writer for *La Cronica*, organized the event. They extended special invitations to women and encouraged them to be active in the congress. Among the many issues discussed was the formation of women's groups under the direction of Caballeros de Honor, a Texas-Mexican fraternal lodge. Many women spoke at El Primer Congreso Mexicanista, including Hortencia Moncaya and Soledad Peña. Moncaya spoke about criminal justice and the frequent lynchings of Mexicans. After her speech, a representative of one of the protection societies claimed that she and other active women were "the descendants of Doña Josefa Ortiz de Dominguez, La Corregidora from Querétaro, and Doña Leona Vicario", both very important women in Mexican history.²

Soledad Peña spoke about women's role in the civil rights movement: "It is necessary that all of us understand our duty and that we take the proper course of action. I, like you, believe that the best way of complying with our

duty is to educate woman; to instruct her and encourage her and give her due respect".³ She also said that women would be true to the traditions of Mexican heroines and develop strength, pride and intelligence in their children.⁴

Soledad Peña, Jovita Idar and other women who participated in the congress, helped to establish the women's organization, Liga Feminil Mexicanista, in 1911. The Liga Feminil Mexicanista advocated women's economic and educational development and one of their first projects was to provide free instruction to poor Mexican and Chicano/a children who were not able to attend school.

Labor struggles were another important aspect of Chicano/a civil rights, and like all other areas of the movement, women were active as leaders in these. Mexican women have a long history of labor organizing; before the Mexican revolution, Mexicanas and Chicanas in Mexico and the United States organized labor unions that addressed their needs and tried to improve working conditions. In 1985, the authors of the periodical, *The Chicano Struggle, A Racial or National Movement?*, wrote that "Chicana and Mexicana labor leaders laid the groundwork for contemporary Chicana feminism and have been a key factor in Chicano Labor militancy".⁵

One of the foremothers of Chicana feminism and a major contributor to the Chicano/a labor struggles was Lucy Gonzales Parsons. Many scholars have questioned Gonzales Parsons ethnicity, some believe her ancestry was not Mexican and Indian, but Afro-American. In any case she worked within the Chicano/a community and therefore is an important part of Chicana history. She was a socialist labor organizer, who was active in labor struggles as a writer, speaker, and leader of protests and marches. She devoted her life to working to end the exploitation of laborers in the U.S., and to obtain civil rights for Chicanos/as and other oppressed people. Parsons' feminist activities included advocating women's right to divorce, contraception and birth control, freedom from rape and economic equality. She believed that women's

oppression was a result of capitalism and that women's slavery to men was a function of economic dependence. For this reason she was interested in the rights of working women and in 1886 led a march of several hundred women who demanded an eight hour work day and better working conditions.

Although Parsons was born and raised in Texas, she moved to Chicago with her husband later in life. There she was active in the Chicago working women's union which was comprised of housewives and other wageless women who wanted a suffrage plank in the socialist labor platform. These women demanded equal pay for equal work, and the admission of women into labor unions. In Chicago, Parsons was an activist in the Workingman's Party and the Socialist Party, and published a newspaper called *The Alarm*.

Lucy Gonzales Parsons is well known for her involvement in the Haymarket bombing in Chicago in 1886. Parsons and her husband attended a meeting at the Haymarket which was organized to protest police violence during a strike which was held a few days earlier. After the meeting 200-300 police entered the Haymarket, shot at the crowd and a bomb went off, killing several policemen. Nine people were arrested, including Albert Parsons. Although Albert Parsons was not present when the bomb went off, the court blamed him for the tragedy, saying that he caused agitation through his articles in *The Alarm* and a speech he gave at the Haymarket meeting; he was sentenced to death. Lucy Gonzales Parsons led a legal battle to reverse the decision, which lasted a year and a half and eventually went to the United States Supreme Court; however, the appeal failed. He died in while jail awaiting his execution day. It is said that he was killed by a bomb explosion, however, it is likely that he actually committed suicide.⁶

After Albert Parsons' death, Lucy Gonzales Parsons continued her socialist and feminist activities. In 1905 she helped to found the International Workers of the World (IWW) and worked as their representative, visiting labor

camps, mining camps and union halls throughout the United States. During her life she led several hunger strikes in Chicago and led a number of demonstrations of unemployed people in San Francisco.

*A Review of Feminism in Mexico
and the United States (1900-1920)*

Chicana activity in the civil rights and labor movements in the early 20th century is similar to Mexicana involvement in the Mexican revolutionary movement. In Mexico, women fought against the Spanish government in order to obtain rights for all Mexican people, and in the United States, Mexicanas and Chicanas contended with their Euro-American oppressors, struggling to obtain civil rights for all Mexicans and Chicanos/as. In both countries, these women were discriminated against on the basis of their sex. In response to their oppression as women, Mexicanas and Chicanas created feminist organizations and newspapers in order to gain more power, and to raise women's consciousness about their sexual oppression.

In Mexico, the feminists became unified in a large and influential feminist movement and feminism became a concern of a few politicians and presidents. Some political organizations, such as the PLM, incorporated the emancipation of women into their philosophy believing that achieving women's rights was an integral part of their organizational goals.

Chicanas and Mexican women in the United States organized autonomously for their own rights as women, but not to the extent that Mexican women did during the revolution. In the United States women focused on working for the survival of the entire Mexican and Chicano/a community, more than on concerns that only pertained to women.

There are many possible reasons for this phenomenon. Mexicans and Chicanos/as in the United States had been organizing for a relatively shorter period of time than people in Mexico, who had established a strong foundation for revolution in the early 1820s. In the United States, Mexicans

and Chicanos/as were just beginning to gain strength and momentum in their movement and they needed women to help build the movement.

In the United States, Mexicans and Chicanos/as were discriminated against on the basis of their skin color, culture and language. They were a minority in the United States struggling against the Euro-American majority, and, therefore had to contend not only with the oppressive government, but also with the dominant culture which discriminated against them. Thus, due to the position of Mexicans and Chicanos/as in the United States, and the abuses that they suffered, the needs of the whole community were more urgent than the specific needs of women. One of the most vital concerns of the Mexican and Chicano/a community was to maintain cultural values, traditions and the Spanish language, thus women focused on keeping these alive in their communities.

Although Mexican women and Chicanas focused most of their energies on the needs of the community, the liberation of women was included in the goals of the PLM in the U.S., just as it was in Mexico, and Chicano/a civil rights congresses included the status and education of women into their agenda.

A Brief Overview of the Chicana Struggles (1920-1960)

During the 1920s Mexicanas and Chicanas continued to be involved in the civil rights movement and they helped to found many new organizations which fought for the survival of the Mexican and Chicano/a community. Women and men also worked together to organize La Confederación de Uniones Obreras Mexicanas in 1927 in Los Angeles. This union strove to organize Mexican and Chicano/a farmworkers.

María L. Hernández was one of the remarkable woman who became active during the '20s and continued her work into the 1970s. In 1923, she was involved in civil rights activities in Texas and devoted her life to the economic, educational and political development of Chicanos/as. She was

an author and an orator and often spoke of the importance of the Chicano/a family to the civil rights movement. She believed that the family taught cooperation, organization and problem solving, all of which are important to working within a movement. Hernández was also a strong feminist and pointed out that whatever Chicanos/as had achieved in the U.S. had been done through strong family unity and the strength of women and men working together as equals.

The 1930s marked the peak of Chicana activity in labor struggles, and "women were so much a part of the organizing and strikes effort that the whole period is very reminiscent of the 1910 Mexican revolution and the participation of women".⁷ Hundreds of Mexicanas and Chicanas were active in labor struggles against agribusiness; they demanded improved salaries and working conditions, and picketed and held strikes in labor camps. Chicanas were also involved in strikes in factories throughout the Southwest. One example is the garment workers strike in Texas. Chicanas comprised one-third of the overwhelmingly female work force in the garment industry in the 1930s. All women in this industry were exploited, and they began to organize by forming the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU). Although Chicanas contributed to the formation of the union, Euro-American women took on union leadership. This dynamic caused problems within the union. However, it did succeed in holding a three-week strike in Houston, Texas, and almost all of the strikers were Chicana. Chicanas also participated in a four-week ILGWU dressmakers strike in Los Angeles in 1933, which affected approximately 2,000 workers in 80 factories.⁸ The strike itself was not very successful. However, it gave many women, including Mexicanas and Chicanas, their first experience in labor organizing. Even despite the danger of deportation, they learned to confront their employers, police and local officials.

Another important strike of the 1930s was the Pecan Shellers Strike in

San Antonio, Texas. During this time at least 80% of the workers in the pecan shelling industry were Chicanas.⁹ They received low wages and worked in unsanitary conditions. In February of 1938 thousands of pecan shellers walked off of their jobs in 130 plants because of a one-cent-per-pound reduction in the pay rate. Hundreds of the women strikers were thrown in jail and as many as 33 were packed to a cell. The strike was decided in favor of the strikers, but soon afterwards, thousands of men and women were fired from their jobs. One of the leaders of the Pecan Shellers Strike was Emma Tenayuca, a nineteen year old Chicana. She had been elected to a leadership position in the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America (UCAPAWA), a union which went to San Antonio to attempt to organize the pecan workers. Emma Tenayuca was an avowed Communist, and soon after the strike, joined the Communist Party and became the director for the Communist Party of Texas.

There is little information available on Chicanas' participation in civil rights activities during the 1940s. World War II changed the lives of women, as their lovers, husbands, brothers and sons joined the armed forces, opening more job opportunities for all women. As Euro-American women left their homes to work in the factories, more Chicanas went into domestic work. Big businesses established more factories along the U.S./ Mexico border as they could employ Mexican labor at a lower cost. Many companies depended almost entirely on the hundreds of Mexicanas and Chicanas who worked in these factories. Agribusiness also grew during this time, and the U.S. became desperate for fieldworkers. In 1942 the U.S. government made an agreement with Mexico which stated that the U.S. would provide minimum-wage jobs and decent working conditions if Mexico sent workers to the U.S. Although hundreds of thousands of Mexicans worked in the fields and factories for U.S. companies, they rarely received minimum wage and most of them lived and worked under deplorable conditions.

According to author Rudolfo Acuña, Chicano/a civil rights activities slowed down during this time because many male activists were fighting in Europe or working for the military in the U.S., and women were also occupied with with new jobs. It is also possible that Mexican and Chicano/a civil rights activities were more low key during the forties because of people's fear of deportation and because of escalating racial violence.

As the population of Mexicans grew in the early 1940s, so did racial tension, which manifested itself in the 1943 Zoot-suit riots in Los Angeles. In the spring of 1943, there were some minor clashes between Mexican and Chicano/a youths and the military. However, tension increased, and in June more serious rioting occurred when military personnel stalked Mexican and Chicano/a zoot-suiters in the streets. (Mexican and Chicano/a gang members often wore a style of clothing called a Zoot-suit). Sailors pulled teenage Chicanos/as and Mexicans off of buses, dragged them out of theatres and assaulted them by ripping off their clothes and cutting their hair. In The Chicanos Matt Meier and Feliciano Rivera describe the situation, "These vicious attacks quickly extended to everyone who seemed to look like a Mexican. For all intents and purposes, there was a war declared on Mexican-Americans by roving packs of undisciplined service men."¹⁰ Youth, women and children continued to be harrassed and attacked by sailors, civilians and law enforcement officials throughout the following week, and the rioting reached a peak on June 7 when sailors cruised the streets in taxis looking for victims to attack. The city police and county sheriffs officials responded by following behind the attacking sailors and arresting the victims of the assualts rather than the assailants. In the summer of 1943 more riots broke out throughout Southern California and similar confrontations between Mexicans, Chicanos/as and the authorities occurred in Chicago, Philadelphia and Detroit.

With McCarthyism, repression grew worse in the 1950s. During this

time hundreds of Mexicans and Chicanos/as were deported, including several well known civil rights and labor activists. People were afraid to speak their mind for fear of being sent to Mexico or being sent to jail for "communist" activities. Chicanos/as continued to hold labor strikes and work to better their community, but in a less visible and less vocal way than in earlier years. The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), which was established in the 1930s continued to work for the rights of Latin American people during the 1950s. The members of LULAC were from the middle and upper classes and were not interested in direct political action. Instead they organized around problems related to education, particularly segregation in the schools. LULAC's purpose was to concentrate on Chicano/a issues and "develop with in the members of our race the best, purest, most perfect type of a true loyal citizen to the U.S."¹¹ Women participated in LULAC, the G.I. Forum and church organizations and continued to push for progress and improvement within the Chicano/a community.

One of the most important events for Chicanas of the 1950s was the filming of "Salt of the Earth". The film portrayed Chicanas' contributions to the strike efforts of miners in Silver City, New Mexico. After the film was released, actress, Rosaura Revueltos was arrested and deported to Mexico. Also during this time, Dolores Huerta, the present vice president of the United Farmworkers Union, began her work in Stockton, California, by registering Chicano/a voters, and she became involved in the Community Service Organization which assisted Mexican and Chicano/a community. I will write more about Dolores Huerta's contributions to the civil rights and labor movements later in the paper.

In the 1960s the Chicano/a civil rights movement grew into a nation-wide liberation movement which struggled to gain more political rights for Mexicans and Chicanos/as and to improve their socio-economic status. This movement was strongly influenced by the activists who worked in the civil

rights and labor movements between 1900-1950. Also, in the late 1960s and early '70s, a unified Chicana feminist movement formed in the United States which gained a great deal of its power and strength from the work that women had done in Mexico and the United States in the first half of the 20th century.

Notes

- 1 Matt Meir and Feliciano Rivera, The Chicanos (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), p.123.
- 2 José E. Limón, "El Primer Congreso Mexicanista de 1911: A Precursor to Contemporary Chicanismo," *Aztlán, Chicano Journal of the Social Sciences and the Arts*, (Spring and Fall, 1974), p. 95.
- 3 Marta Cotera, Diosa y Hembra. The History and Heritage of Chicanas in the U.S., (Austin, TX: Information Systems and Development Statehouse Printing, 1976), p. 70.
- 4 Cotera, p. 70.
- 5 Yolanda Alaniz and Megan Cornish, *The Chicano Struggle, A Racial or National Movement?*, (Summer, 1985) Vol. 3, p. 13.
- 6 Alfredo Mirandé and Evangelina Enríquez, La Chicana (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 89-91.
- 7 Cotera, p. 87.
- 8 Clementina Duron, "Mexican Women and Labor Conflict in Los Angeles: The ILGWU Dressmakers' Strike of 1933," *Aztlán, Chicano Journal of the Social Sciences and Arts* (Spring, 1984), p.145.
- 9 Cotera, p. 88.
- 10
Meier and Rivera, p. 193.
- 11
Quoted in Rodolfo Acuña, Occupied America. The Chicano's Struggle Toward Liberation, (San Francisco: Canfield Press, 1972), p.189.

CHAPTER 4
THE CHICANO/A MOVEMENT AND THE
GROWTH OF CHICANA FEMINISM
The Contemporary Period (1910-1990)

*Women's Participation in the
Chicano/a Movement (1960-1970)*

By the early 1960s Chicanos/as had become the second largest ethnic minority in the United States, yet their position in the social structure had changed little since the early Chicano/a civil rights movement. The activists in the earlier movement made advances for Chicanos/as in society and education. They also secured certain rights for Chicanos/as in the fields and factories, and created an ideology for liberation, thus building a solid foundation for future Chicano/a movements. However, in 1960 Chicanos/as still faced the same difficulties that their ancestors had experienced: discrimination on the basis of skin color, culture and language, conditions of poverty and exploitation, inferior education, limited political rights, lack of medical care, and racial violence.

In the 1960s, the Cuban revolution, the Civil Rights movement, the rise of Black nationalist consciousness, and anti-war efforts influenced Chicanos/as to revitalize their own movement. They began to organize in the community, in the fields and factories, and on college campuses. Chicanas in the 1960s and '70s were active in all areas of the Chicano/a movement, just as their Mexican and Chicana sisters had been involved in all areas of the Mexican Revolution and Chicano/a civil rights movement of the early 1900s.

One woman who made significant contributions to the civil rights and labor struggles in the 1960s is Dolores Huerta. She "is a woman whose life and career symbolize the dedication of Chicanas to the organization of

workers and the liberation of her people".¹ Dolores Huerta began her work in the Community Service Organization in the late 1950s, registering Chicano/a voters, fighting police brutality, and documenting job discrimination against Mexican migrants. In 1960 she met César Chávez who suggested that she go to Sacramento, California to lobby for important legislation for Mexicans and Chicanos/as in the U.S. By 1961 she headed the legislative program, lobbying for access to benefits, such as old-age pensions for non-citizens, and disability insurance for farm workers. She also lobbied for the right to register voters door to door, and to take driver's examinations in Spanish.

In 1962 she and César Chávez co-founded a farm labor group called the National Farm Workers Association. Today this organization is called the United Farm Workers Union (UFW). According to Alfredo Mirandé and Evangelina Enríquez, this organization is similar to a cooperative, which incorporates many of the earlier ideas of Mexican and Chicano/a mutualistic organizations. The UFW supports, represents and advocates for migrant farm workers throughout the United States, and also concerns itself with problems affecting the larger Chicano/a community, thus providing a unifying force in the Chicano/a civil rights struggle. The priorities of the union include creating safe, pesticide-free working conditions, teaching responsible consumerism to the public, and working on job discrimination cases for farm workers. César Chávez became president of the UFW, and Dolores Huerta became the vice-president, chief negotiator and the spokesperson for the union. During the 1960s the UFW was able to ban the use of DDT, a highly toxic pesticide, raise workers wages from 50 cents an hour to \$8.50/hr. in some areas of California, establish full medical plans and pension plans for farm workers, and create a farm workers credit union and health clinics, financed by the medical plan and by farm workers themselves. The UFW also started two Mexican/Chicano/a radio stations. Among the many triumphs of the union, as well as one of its most widely recognized achievements, is the Grape Boycott

of 1965 and 1966. Chávez and Huerta were able to bring the strike to public attention, and negotiate with the government of California and with large land-holding companies for higher wages for Mexican and Chicano/a laborers, paid vacations and other benefits. The grape boycott also succeeded in influencing Chicano/a and Mexican migrant workers to organize in several other agricultural areas throughout California and the rest of the country.

Women participated in the Grape Boycott, and in the past twenty-five years hundreds of women have been members of the United Farm Workers Union. The UFW has gained much of its strength from the militance and leadership of farm worker women, and many women have been instrumental in the UFW as organizers, picketers, researchers, writers, speakers and fundraisers. In 1990 four out of the 12 central people in the union are women. Dolores Huerta believes that women are attracted to the union because of its belief in non-violent action. She claims that the UFW is very child oriented, providing maternity leave, a baby-bonus and a day care program for women who work in the union, and mothers are given certain privileges, such as time off, if their children are ill. However, Huerta also believes that there is still a great need for women to organize around problems such as sexual harrassment and rape by field supervisors and other farm workers.²

Although Dolores Huerta is the co-founder and vice-president of the UFW, she has often gone unrecognized by men in the movement. This is particularly evident in the literature about the UFW, such as The Chicanos, by Matt Meier and Feliciano Rivera, who discuss the UFW and César Chávez in depth, but fail to mention Dolores Huerta. Today, nearly thirty years after the founding of the UFW, Dolores Huerta is finally receiving the recognition that she deserves. She is a role model who is greatly respected by the Latino/a community and women of color.

Although women, such as Dolores Huerta, made great contributions to

the civil rights and labor movements during the 1960s and '70s, the general attitude of men within the movement was that Chicanas were important to the movement, but only as wives, mothers and lovers. Initially women were only given secondary roles. Women were not viewed as activists, nor recognized as leaders; they were not included in decision-making processes and their ideas about political strategy and action were not heard. When they attempted to be involved in the movement in non-traditional ways they were often labeled "unfeminine" and "deviant". Sexist attitudes hindered women's organizational and political development, and Chicanas made few gains for themselves in the beginning of the movement because they often put their own concerns aside for the common needs of all Chicanos/as.

Initially, the men in the movement thought that gender was irrelevant to their concerns and most Chicano/a activists did not acknowledge that gender, as well as race and class, determines life experience, power, privilege and the division of labor. Women's concerns were not incorporated into the ideology of organizations in the Chicano/a movement in the beginning, and when women dared to express their ideas regarding women's issues, such as abortion, rape, forced sterilization, sex segregation in employment, and equal pay for equal work, they were often chastised and called "vendidas" or traitors. Most activists within the movement did not consider these controversial issues to be central to the Chicano/a movement, and often felt that these concerns directed public attention away from so-called "more important" considerations affecting all Chicanos/as. At the first Chicano/a Youth Conference held in Denver in 1969 it became obvious that women's concerns were unimportant to many of the people involved in the Chicano/a movement. One of the workshops at the conference discussed the role of women in the movement, but when the workshop representative reported to the full conference on their discussion, she claimed that "it was the consensus of the group that the Chicana woman does not want to be liberated."³

The resistance to women's rights and the lack of male support was a severe contrast to the encouragement which many men gave to the women who were involved in both the Mexican Revolution and the early Chicano/a civil rights movement. Indeed, many Mexican men and Chicanos resisted the progressive women's movement during this period due to the common belief that women's position in society should not change, and because they feared that supporting women's rights would strengthen the opposition to the revolution and to Chicano/a civil rights. However, there were powerful men, such as the Magón brothers, Governor Alvarado of the Yucatán, and President Carranza, who did respect and publicly support the ideas of women and who also encouraged women to become political leaders. The Partido Liberal Mexicano in Mexico and the United States, and El Primer Congreso Mexicanista, held in Laredo, Texas in 1911, both held women's issues to be an extremely important part of Mexican and Chicano/a liberation. In the 1960s César Chávez supported the work of Dolores Huerta and other women involved in the United Farm Workers Union, however, in the beginning of the most recent Chicano/a movement the majority of male activists discouraged women from organizing.

Feminists in the Chicano/a movement may have experienced resistance to women's issues because the Euro-American women's movement was gaining momentum and posed a threat to members of the Chicano/a movement who feared that Chicanas would abandon the cause and join the Euro-American women's movement. Marta Cotera illustrates this point when she writes:

Unfortunately, the only effect that Anglo feminism has had on the Chicana has been negative. Suddenly, *mujeres* involved in the struggle for social justice, who have always advocated more and stronger women, and family participation in all political activities are suspect. They

are suspected of assimilating into the feminist ideology of an alien culture, that actively seeks our continued domination.⁴

The majority of Chicano/a activists perceived Chicana feminists as a threat to the Chicano/a movement and "feminism was not seen as something organic to the culture but as an Anglo trick to divide the Chicano movement".⁵ Many ideas about feminism emerged within the Chicano/a movement: the problem was the Euro-American man, not the Chicano; feminism was Euro-American, middle-class and bourgeois; and it was a diversion from the "real" and "basic" issues of racism and class exploitation. Another commonly held belief about feminism, was that it sought to destroy *la familia* (the family).

The question of feminism split the Chicano/a movement into two factions: the "loyalists" and the "feminists". The loyalists felt that there was no need for a separate feminist movement and that Chicanas were oppressed because all Chicanos/as were discriminated against by Euro-American society. They did not perceive patriarchy as a system of power which has origins different from those of racism and capitalism, and they did not acknowledge that Chicanos/as, as well as Euro-American men, discriminated against them as women. Loyalists believed that feminism was inspired by Euro-Americans, equated Chicana feminism with Euro-American women's liberation, and believed that Chicana feminism could only divide and weaken the Chicano/a movement. Loyalists also perceived feminists as individualistic and selfish because they were thought to place their own needs above those of the entire group. Many conservatives believed that the women's movement was closely linked to gay rights and abortion, both of which were condemned by the Catholic Church, and therefore, they wanted no part of the movement.

The feminists believed that the discrimination against women within the movement was contradictory to the liberation ideology of the movement;

therefore they saw a need to organize autonomously as women. Feminists pointed out that Mexican and Chicano/a culture had its own feminist heritage and proved that feminism was not inspired by Euro-Americans, but came from within their own history. They claimed to be supporters of their culture who followed the ideals and examples set down by their feminist forbearers, and stated that they were not traitors to their culture, but in fact they were active agents in the struggle for human liberation.⁶ Feminists believed that the Chicano/a movement was a commitment to the extended family and the community, one which demanded social change and human rights for the entire race. They realized that it was inconsistent with their values to fight only for women's liberation. They strongly believed that Chicana feminism must be consistent with the goals of the Chicano/a movement, and like the feminists during the Mexican Revolution and the early Chicano/a civil rights movement, feminists of the 1960s and '70s supported Chicano/a organizations and congresses. Chicana feminists also defended Chicano/a laborers, undocumented workers, and prisoners; they fought against racism, poverty, the Vietnam War, police brutality, and the oppression of Chicano/a culture and the Spanish language. Many Chicana feminists supported the radical idea of establishing a quasi-separate nation state, called Aztlán, which was seen as a final goal for the movement.⁷

Chicana feminists were often greatly frustrated by their task of working within a movement to end oppression, which did not acknowledge the oppression of women. They began to question their role in the movement, realizing, as had their sisters in the Mexican Revolution, that they could not hope to benefit from the movement unless their own concerns were also included.

Chicana Feminism and the Euro-American Women's Movement

Chicana feminists shared many of the same concerns as

Euro-American feminists, such as birth control, abortion, rape, sexual discrimination in employment, problems facing working mothers, daycare and welfare. However, Chicanas felt that it was important to define their own issues and goals in relation to their culture, and to develop their own ideologies in relation to these goals.

The majority of the Euro-American feminists followed a liberal feminist ideology which perceived men as the source of women's oppression and their focus was to gain equality with men. Chicanas, however, did not want equality with Chicano men because their men were also oppressed and lived in a powerless position in the United States. Chicanas discovered that liberal feminist ideology was limited in its ability to explain the fundamental cause for their condition in the United States because it did not address Chicanas' triple oppression of sex, race and class. During this time, Euro-American socialist feminists were concerned with class issues, but often overlooked the importance of race in a capitalist social structure.

Chicanas felt that Euro-American feminists were insensitive to Mexican and Chicano/a cultural values, and Euro-American feminists wanted Chicanas to subordinate their needs as members of a racially oppressed group by asking them to leave their brothers behind, and to work only for the liberation of women. In her article, "Colonized Women, The Chicana" Elizabeth Sutherland writes, "white women do not understand women who are colonized and who are fighting for survival against physical genocide (including forced sterilization), police brutality, hunger, deprivation and cultural genocide in white institutions and values."⁸ Chicanas could not leave their oppressed brothers to fight alone against these forces; they needed to struggle for the freedom of all Chicanos/as, not just for themselves as women. Chicanas not only felt that Euro-American women ignored their problems as members of a racially and economically oppressed people, but that the Euro-American women's movement would not incorporate Chicana feminist

concerns that were rooted in Chicano/a and Mexican culture.

Specific Concerns of Chicana Feminists

Among the many Chicana feminist concerns that deserve special attention are the role of the Catholic Church, cultural stereotypes of women, and *machismo*. These concerns have often been misunderstood by Euro-American feminists and Chicanas have felt that they needed to address these problems within their own cultural context, as part of their own movement. In re-evaluating Mexican and Chicano/a culture, Chicanas are able to determine which cultural traditions support their struggle as individuals, and which ones impede their fulfillment as free human beings.

Feminists during the Mexican Revolution, the early Chicano/a civil rights movement, and the contemporary Chicano/a movement have all recognized the Catholic Church as an oppressive power, and have viewed Catholicism as one of the most powerful obstacles in hindering women's liberation. The church reinforces male dominance and privilege and defines women as inferior to men. Catholicism teaches that women's role is to serve men socially, psychologically, emotionally and physically and that women must be submissive. The Church also attempts to control women's sexuality by claiming that divorce, sexual activity outside of marriage, lesbianism, the use of birth control, and abortion are sinful acts which merit punishment.

Mexican Catholicism has centered around the Virgen de Guadalupe, the maternal virgin, who represents one characterization of women in Chicano/a and Mexican culture. The Virgen de Guadalupe, the universal mother, is pure and passive and prepares the way for humankind's salvation through the birth of Christ the son.⁹ Mexican women and Chicanas are taught from birth that the Virgen de Guadalupe is a well respected woman whom all women should try to emulate. Thus, women have an important social role to be pure and pious. In order to do this, women must follow the laws of the church, which means being subordinated, faithful and devoted to men.¹⁰ Many

women in the Chicano/a movement felt that they could not step out of this traditional role, for fear that it would be dysfunctional in achieving goals of the movement. Feminists within the Chicano/a movement, raised with the symbol of Guadalupe, struggled to redefine her importance in their lives, without being restricted by what she has traditionally represented. In her article, "Cultural Influences in Hispanic Feminism" Carmen Delgado Votaw writes:

The myth of the "super-madre", the cult of the Virgen, so deeply ingrained in religious beliefs of Hispanic women, and a whole spectrum of values-- some deep, some subliminally embedded in women's consciousness -- all these have helped to shape, and sometimes restrain, feminist thinking.¹¹

In contrast to the Virgen de Guadalupe is La Malinche, the second prototype of the Mexican woman. La Malinche was Hernán Cortés' mistress; she facilitated communication between Cortés and native tribes. She was the "traitor" to Mexico and she symbolizes the Indian women who were violated by the Spanish. It is La Malinche, a single woman who is blamed for the conquest of Mexico and the down fall of the Aztec empire, rather than the Spanish or the numerous historical events which led up to the destruction of a powerful culture. Within the Chicano/a movement, feminists and other assertive, independent women, have often been compared to La Malinche and are called *vendidas*, or traitors. Just as Mexican people believe that La Malinche betrayed her people, and assisted in the downfall of the Aztec empire, Chicano/a activists have perceived feminists as traitors to the movement, who could destroy the gains in Chicano/a civil rights.

La Virgen de Guadalupe and La Malinche symbolize the culture's dual view of women, and have historically been models to control women. Women are allowed no departure from their acceptable definitions as either Malinches or Virgens.¹² Chicanas and Mexicanas have always been faced with these

limiting characterizations, and today they are still reinterpreting Mexico's past and redefining the importance these women have to Chicana and Mexican history.

Machismo, like the Catholic church and cultural stereotypes, is also a Mexican and Chicana feminist issue. Chicana scholars and feminists, as well as Chicano/a activists, have been reanalyzing and redefining the concept of *machismo* in order to better understand its role in Mexican and Chicano/a culture, and its relationship to women's liberation. Chicanas acknowledge that certain aspects of *machismo* are oppressive; however, they also realize that *machismo* can serve their culture in a positive way. In his article, "Qué gacho es ser macho: It's a Drag to be a Macho Man", Alfredo Mirandé discusses the origins of *machismo* and the negative and positive aspects of it. Mirandé argues that there are two models of masculinity found in Mexican and Chicano/a culture. The first model traces the origins of *machismo* back to the Spanish conquest of Mexico, "as the powerless colonized man attempts to compensate for deep-seated feelings of inadequacy and inferiority by assuming an overall masculine and aggressive stance."¹³ According to this model external attributes, such as strength, sexual prowess and power are stressed. The second model focuses on the evolution of a code of ethics that emphasizes honor, respect and courage. Alfredo Mirandé writes, "*machismo* according to this view is the result of adherence to this code. It is not manifested by outward qualities such as physical strength and virility, but by inner ones such as personal integrity, commitment, loyalty and most importantly strength of character."¹⁴ These two models are polar concepts of masculinity, but they do coexist in Mexican culture.

It is important to state however, that *machismo* is not particular to Mexican or other Latin American cultures. Author Salvador Reyes Nevares states, "machismo is a characteristic of certain Mexicans. It is worthless in any event, for defining the entire population of the nation (Mexico). There are

Mexicans devoid of machismo."¹⁵

Male domination and the subordination and exploitation of women is present in nearly all cultures around the world. Chicanas have pointed out that the Euro-American women's movement is also motivated by male oppression, a reaction to *white machismo*. Many Chicano/a and Euro-American scholars have targeted and blamed *machismo* for the social position of Mexicanas and Chicanas, rather than seeing how the dominant society has discriminated against Chicanas and Mexican women on the basis of sex, race and class. Portraying *machismo* as an exclusively Mexican and Chicano/a cultural trait "fits into the colonial mentality of the conqueror. It is a mechanism for shifting the focus away from Anglo oppression, to alleged pathologies within Chicano culture".¹⁶ Contemporary Chicana feminists argue that they are oppressed by men within their own culture, but that Mexican men and Chicanos are not solely to blame for Chicana's position in the social structure.

It is important how Mexican and Chicana feminists perceive the effects and role of *machismo*, and how that perception affects their political values and their views of the status of women in their culture and in the dominant society. Some Chicana feminists may believe that *machismo* is both a positive and negative force in their culture, and may work against the oppressive aspects of it, while encouraging the positive aspects of it within the Chicano/a movement. Others may only see *machismo* as a problem in Mexican and Chicano/a culture and develop their political strategies around this perception.

Chicanas Organize

Although some feminist organizations and journals were established in the early 1900s, a clearly defined movement to liberate Chicanas in the United States did not evolve until twenty years ago. In the late 1960s and early '70s Chicanas began to organize their own feminist movement in

response to the sexual discrimination within Chicano/a and Mexican culture and the Chicano/a movement, and also in response to the sexual, racial and class oppression of the dominant Euro-American society. Chicana feminists did not identify with the Euro-American women's movement because Chicanas had distinct issues, cultural considerations, and political and personal ties to the Chicano/a movement, all of which shaped their own movement for women's liberation. The majority of Chicana feminists developed a socialist feminist ideology which was influenced by the works of Marx and Lenin, and placed the liberation of women in the context of a class struggle and the liberation of their own people.

The Chicana feminist movement grew through the development of interpersonal networks and organizations, women's conferences, caucuses within Chicano/a conferences, and through the creation of several journals and newspapers. The majority of Chicana feminist organizations were based on the socialist feminist ideology; however, many of them were focused around a more moderate position. Numerous organizations and newspapers were tied to feminist activity in the Mexican Revolution and Chicano/a civil rights movement. For example women in the 1960s and '70s continued organizations and projects introduced during the early 1900s by the Club Liberal de San Antonio, the Liga Mexicanista Femenil, and the women who attended El Primer Congreso Mexicanista. Another organization, called the Hijas de Cuauhtémoc was patterned after the group of the same name which was established during the Mexican Revolution. This new organization strove to educate and liberate Chicanas from their oppression in Chicano/a culture and in the dominant society, and also founded a journal called *Encuentro Femenil*, which focused exclusively on women's issues.

Another way in which the Chicana feminist movement was linked to the past was through individual women who worked in the early 1900s for the Chicano/a civil rights movement and continued their activism through the

1960s and '70s. María L. Hernández was an activist who was involved in both the early and the most recent Chicano/a Movements, contributing to the liberation of women and Mexican and Chicano/a peoples. Marta Cotera writes:

Señorita María Hernández has been an effective model and leader in the 1960s and 1970s civil rights work because through her involvement, the contemporary generation has learned the history of past involvement and past progress. Most important, for women she is the living proof that Chicanas have the freedom, energy and capacity for development within the Chicano community.¹⁷

The Chicana feminist consciousness also grew by way of newspapers, journals and newsletters which printed articles about women's issues. Among these were *Viva La Raza*, *El Grito*, *De Colores*, *El Grito del Norte*, *Regeneración*, and *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*. *El Grito del Norte* included articles about Chicanos/as and other people of color, and raised Chicano/a consciousness about the Vietnam war and other social issues, including feminism. *Regeneración* addressed childcare, welfare, social security and women's political development. *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* was the second Chicana feminist journal ever published in the U.S., the first being, *La Mujer Moderna*, which was published in the 1910s. *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* was a student newspaper published at a college in Long Beach, California.

Among the newly founded organizations that were established by and for Chicanas was the Comision Feminil Mexicana which was created in 1970 at the National Mexican-American Issues Conference. The goal of the Comision was to organize women so that they could become leaders within the Chicano/a movement and within the larger community itself. The Comision founded the Chicana Service Action Center which is a Chicana-controlled employment center that works to provide meaningful

employment opportunities and job training for Chicanas. Chicanas who believed in a more conservative ideology established an organization called Mexican-American Business and Professional Women which has offices in three parts of Texas; in addition they founded the Chicana Professional and Business Women's Club in El Paso, Texas.

In 1971 Marta Cotera and Chicana activist, Virginia Musquiz, helped to found La Raza Unida Party in Houston, Texas, a Chicano/a political party, whose Texas branch was built and promoted by women who were active in civil rights, labor and campus struggles. Although women were a strong force in the party, sexism was still prevalent and since men occupied nearly all of the highest party positions. As a consequence, women decided to form their own caucus within the party, called Mujeres por La Raza, to insure that women's concerns would be addressed. In the same year, a conference affiliated with La Raza Unida Party, called the Conferencia de Mujeres por La Raza was held in Texas and focused exclusively on those issues which were central to women. In 1975 California Chicanas organized the Federacion de Mujeres del Partido Raza Unida. In addition they organized a day care program so that Chicanas could participate more fully in political activities. They also called for an end to forced sterilization. During the 1970s Raza Unida Parties were established throughout the United States, and many of them included women's caucuses.

In May 1971 the First National Chicana Conference was held in Houston, Texas. Six hundred Chicanas from 23 states attended the conference and passed several resolutions which were to serve as guidelines for women's workshops, seminars, groups and organizations. Many of these resolutions were similar to the ones created by feminists in the Mexican Revolution and the Chicano/a civil rights movement. These resolutions included: free and legal abortion, birth control, sexual freedom, denunciation of the practice of using women of color for medical experimentation, and an

end to the double standards between women and men. They also demanded the ERA, choices and equality for Chicanas in education and occupation, fair divorce laws, welfare rights, and services for working Chicanas, (i.e. 24 hour community-controlled bilingual and bicultural childcare centers). Those who participated in the conference recognized the Catholic church as an oppressive institution and opposed any institutionalized religion.¹⁸ In 1974 the Mexican-American Legal Defense Fund launched a Chicana's Rights Project which focused on the research needs of Chicanas. They compiled information on educational and employment problems and promoted litigation on the behalf of Chicanas.

*An Overview of the
Chicana Feminist Movement (1960-1980)*

Contemporary Chicanas, like their Mexican and Chicana sisters of the early 1900s, realized that they needed to organize autonomously as women because their needs were not being met by the larger movement. They have been faithful to the Chicano/a movement by remaining loyal to the issues and goals of the movement and actively participating in the struggle for the freedom of the whole race.

Initially it was difficult for women to make progress within the Chicano/a movement. Throughout the 1960s Chicana's struggled to make their voices heard, and eventually, in the early 1970s feminism was included in the ideology of the larger movement. El Primer Congreso Mexicanista of 1911 served as a strong influence in the development of the movement's new ideology. Five major themes formed the new ideology: "1) a critical attack on the subordination of Chicanos as a holistic phenomenon; 2) a personal, artistic and institutional affirmation of the spiritual variant of Mexican culture found in the U.S.; 3) the assertion of a feminist position within the larger movement; 4) the search for a united political solution to Chicano problems, including at least a partial acceptance of radical politics; and 5) the somewhat unclear projection of a quasi-separate nation state (Aztlán) as the final goal for

this movement."¹⁹ This ideology helped to guide movement activities on campuses, in labor and in organized politics. Over time many Raza Unida Parties throughout the country, and Chicano/a student organizations such as Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MeCha), the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO), and the United Mexican American Students, have included women's rights in their platforms and have developed Chicana commissions or caucuses to see that the movement addresses women's needs. Sexism, however, has remained a problem within all areas of the movement, and feminists have continued to struggle in order to have their concerns included in the larger Chicano/a movement and to be perceived by men as equals in the on-going fight for Chicano/a *and* women's liberation.

Notes

- 1 Alfredo Mirandé and Evangelina Enríquez, La Chicana (The University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 233.
- 2 The information on Dolores Huerta and women's position in the UFW relies mainly on an informal interview with Dolores Huerta on 4/29/90 at the University of Oregon.
- 3 Mirandé and Enríquez, p. 235
- 4 Marta Cotera, "La Mujer Mexicana, Mexicano Feminism," *Magazin*, (September, 1973), p. 30.
- 5 Mirandé and Enríquez, p. 235.
- 6 Mirandé and Enríquez, p. 238
- 7 Aztlán, is the semi-mythical place north of Mexico from which the Aztecs migrate South to Tenochtitlan, today's Mexico City. Aztlán symbolizes the rejection of racist oppression and the colonized mentality which facilitates that oppression. On the other hand the concept is reactionary on issues of race and class relations and glorifies the Aztecs.
- 8 Elizabeth Sutherland, " Colonized Women, The Chicana," Sisterhood is Powerful, Robin Morgan, ed. (New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1970), p. 376-384.
- 9 Sylvia A. Gonzales, "La Chicana: Guadalupe or Malinche," Comparative Perspectives of Third World Women: The Impact of Race, Sex and Class, Beverley Lindsay, ed. (New York: Praeger, 1980), p. 23.
 According to Mexican Catholicism La Virgen de Guadalupe was an apparition of an indigenous woman which appeared to an indigenous man, named Juan Diego. She appeared to him several times and asked him to build a temple for her. Juan Diego told the priests of the Catholic Church about this experience and they believed that La Virgen de Guadalupe was actually the Virgin Mary. La Virgen de Guadalupe came to symbolize the mother of Christ as well as the mother of the Mexican people. The Catholic Church has used the legend of La Virgen de Guadalupe as a way to convert the Mexican indigenous to Catholicism. La

Virgen de Guadalupe is an important symbol of Mexican nationalism and the assimilation of native religions into Catholicism.

10 Bernice Rincón, "La Chicana: Her Role in the Past and Her Search for a New Role in the Future," *Regeneración*, (1971), p.15.

11 Carmen Delgado Votaw, "Cultural Influences in Hispanic Feminism," *Agenda*, 1981, p. 44.

12 Delgado Votaw, p. 48.

13 Alfredo Mirandé, "Qué gacho es ser macho: It's a Drag to be a Macho Man," *Aztlán* (Fall, 1986), p. 65.

14 Mirandé, p. 65

15 Salvador Reyes Nevares as quoted in Ada Sosa Riddell, "Female Political Elites in Mexico," *Women in the World*, Lynn B. Iglitzin and Ruth Ross, eds. (Santa Barbara, California: American Bibliographic Center-Clio Press, 1976)

16 Mirandé and Enríquez, p. 242.

17 Coteria, p. 80.

18 Bernice Rincón, "Chicanas on the Move," *Regeneración* (1971), p. 52.

19 José E. Limón, "El Primer Congreso Mexicanista de 1911: A Precursor to Contemporary Chicanismo," *Aztlán, Chicano Journal of the Social Sciences and the Arts* (Spring, Fall, 1974), p. 85.

The author interprets "a critical attack on the subordination of Chicanos as a holistic phenomenon" to mean that the Chicano movement struggles against the ethnic, cultural, language and class oppression of Chicanos.

CONCLUSION

Chicana history includes Mexican history and the history of the Southwestern United States, and can be separated into three periods: the colonial period (1519-1821), the nineteenth century period (1821-1910) and the contemporary period (1910-1990). Mexican women and Chicanas have been actively involved in the liberation struggles of their people in each of these periods, as is documented in the Mexican War of Independence of 1821, the Mexican War of 1835, the French invasion in the 1860's, the Mexican Revolution of 1910, the early Chicano/a civil rights movement from 1910-1920, and the Chicano/a movement of the 1960s.

During each of these historical periods, there have been feminists fighting for the liberation of women, although, in the contemporary period Mexican and Chicana feminists became more unified; several women's organizations and magazines were established, and women held feminist congresses, marched in the streets and fought in as many possible ways as they could for their rights as women. In Mexico women organized a strong, influential feminist movement during the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1920, and it grew considerably during the 1930s and 1940s. Although there had been Chicana feminist activity in the United States throughout the 20th century, Chicanas were not able to establish a cohesive feminist movement until the 1970s; once they became more unified, they were able to strengthen the position of Chicanas within the Chicano/a movement, as well as within the larger society.

Machismo is one of the predominant themes of the literature written about the Chicana feminist movement of the 1970s. Chicana feminists argue that the discrimination they experienced as women in the Chicano/a movement of the 1960s was one of their main motivations for organizing an

autonomus women's movement. Feminists were frustrated by working within a liberation movement which did not recognize the oppression of women or acknowledge concerns that were unique to Chicanas--both as women and as members of an oppressed people. Because Chicanas experienced sexism within Chicano/a culture and the Chicano/a movement in the 1960s, it is highly possible that women in earlier movements faced similar problems of discrimination in Mexican revolutionary organizations, and in organizations established during the early Chicano/a civil rights struggles from 1910-1920. The authors who have written about feminist activity during the revolution and the early Chicano/a civil rights movement allude to discrimination that women experienced within these liberation struggles, but do not provide the reader with concrete information or examples about the difficulties that women faced. Instead, the authors tend to idealize the few men, such as the Magón brothers, and Governor Alvarado, who respected women's concerns and encouraged women to organize. Most likely, the majority of Mexicans and Chicanos resisted women's rights during the revolution and the early Chicano/a civil rights struggles, and women's struggle in liberation organizations and in society during the early 1900s was probably much more difficult than is presented by authors of Chicana history.

In 1990, Chicana feminist, Elizabeth Martínez, points out that sexism or *machismo* is still a serious problem among Chicano/a activists. In her article, " 'Chingón Politics' Die Hard: Reflections on the First Chicano Activists Reunion" Martínez discusses the manifestations of sexism within the reunion and within the movement as a whole. One hundred and thirty people attended the reunion, most of whom had been actively involved in La Raza Unida Party during the 1970s. Martínez states that it was evident during the reunion that sexism still dominated Chicano/a politics. According to Elizabeth Martínez, the reunion discussion chairs, event hosts and speakers were overwhelmingly male and that several men made sexist jokes and asides

even during the formal program of the reunion. The reunion also did not offer childcare. In a panel which aimed to reanalyze the past, every presenter was male and a new book which was highly praised at the reunion called United We Win. a History of La Raza Unida Party, fails to discuss the vital role played by women in La Raza Unida Party.

Martínez explains, however, that some efforts were made to recognize women's accomplishments, for example, Emma Tenayuca, the "heroine of the Pecan Sheller's Strike of the 1930s", was the guest of honor at a banquet dedicated to honoring Chicana activists.¹ Activist Rosie Castro spoke at the banquet, and criticized the obliteration of Mexican women and Chicanas from history books. Martínez acknowledges that twenty years ago efforts such as this would not have been made, and that this, in fact, demonstrates some progress within the Chicano/a movement.

As well as discussing difficulties within Chicano/a culture and the Chicano/a movement, Martínez also writes about problems that still face the majority of Chicanos/as due to their socio-economic position in the United States. She writes, "the biggest reality that remains unchanged, if not worsened, is the conditions facing Chicanos"², and she quotes some disturbing statistics:

In 1989, Chicanos were more likely than 10 years earlier to be poor. A quarter of all families and a third of all children live below the poverty line today. Since 1970, the earnings of Latino males have declined from 90% to 78% of what white men with equal training earn. The drop-out rate in East Los Angeles that students protested with "blowouts" in 1968 remains the same today: 50 percent. At the same time, gains from the struggles of 20 years ago have been dismantled in the 1980's; affirmative action, bilingual education, and Chicano studies fight for their lives in many places.³

In addition, Martínez also discusses the gains that Chicanos/as have made in the past 20 years, by stating that in 1988 Latinos held 3,360 local and state government elected positions, well over triple the numbers of the 1960s.

Martínez believes that Chicano/a political involvement is changing and that Chicano/a activism today reaches beyond Chicano/a communities to international politics throughout Latin America. Today many Chicanos/as are making connections between U.S. governmental repression against Latinos residing in the United States, and U.S. foreign policy which supports oppressive governments in Latin America; many Chicanos/as are realizing that their struggle is part of a "global struggle for national liberation."⁴ The Chicano/a Left is continuing to work for labor, environmental issues, coalition building, culture survival and women's writing of history and literature.

As Chicanos/as are uniting with Latin American peoples in their struggles for liberation, Chicana feminist are also standing in solidarity with other Latinas in the United States, as well as abroad. In Breaking Boundries, Latina Writings and Critical Readings authors Eliana Ortega and Nancy Saporta Sternbach write:

The unity of Latinas in the eighties began to be perceived in the collectives and alliances born with the decade, a confluence of the liberation movements of both the U.S. and Latin America. The collections *Cuentos: Stories by Latinas* and *Compañeras: Latina Lesbians* are good indicators of this process. They unite as storytellers or as participants in oral histories those women who took part in the Civil Rights movement, the Chicano movement, Gay Liberation, or the progressive revolutionary movements in Latin America, and whose views have been informed by the Women's Movements of the U.S. and Latin America.⁵

Chicanas and other Latinas have also been uniting with other women of color since the 1960s and '70s. They have reached out to non-Chicana feminists in order to build bridges between women of all races and people of

all colors. Feminism has been a challenge to the Chicano/a movement and to Chicano/a cultural nationalism because of Chicana feminists' desire to create a multicultural movement, especially in the areas of institutionalized education and politics. Chicanas and Latinas have joined other women in establishing labor groups, such as the Coalition of Labor Union Women, which was established in 1968, building feminist coalitions and caucuses, and compiling anthologies, such as This Bridge Called My Back, Writings by Radical Women of Color, edited by Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa. Focuses of Chicana and Latina feminist writing during the past decade, which are exemplified in This Bridge Called My Back, include cultural history, the environment, the extended family, stereotypes, racism within the Euro-American women's movement, sexuality, and the importance of bilingualism.

During the 1970s Chicana poetry emerged which addressed issues of racism within the Euro-American women's movement. Today this is still an important focus of Chicana and other Latina feminists, as racism continues within the Euro-American women's struggle for liberation. Chicana feminists feel that Euro-American feminists still fail to acknowledge, take into account or address the issues of women of color.⁶

In the past ten years, more Chicanas and other Latinas have not only struggled against racial oppression within the Euro-American women's movement, but also against the oppression of lesbians within the Latina feminist movement. In Breaking Boundries, Latina Writings and Critical Readings, Nancy Saporta Sternbach discusses the issue of lesbianism within the Latina feminist movement:

We (Latinas) also learned that sexuality and its free choices and practice--a major component of white feminism--was simply not a unilateral agenda for women of color, or not always prioritized as it was by white feminists. Rather we began to see that it had to be viewed with other issues such as class,

ethnicity, cultural norms, traditions and the paramount position of the family.⁷

In the past decade many Chicanas and other Latinas have "come out" as lesbians and have written about their experiences. Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, two outstanding Chicana authors, have written extensively on their love for women and on lesbianism in relation to Chicana feminism and liberation ideology. Moraga argues that cultural control over women cannot be blamed solely on cultural stereotypes, such as La Malinche and Virgen de Guadalupe, but that women are also controlled by the institution of obligatory heterosexuality. Cherríe Moraga was the first Chicana to address lesbianism or homosexuality in her theoretical analysis of liberation.⁸

As well as writing about lesbiansim, Moraga and Anzaldúa also discuss the importance of bilingualism both in speech and literature and both authors combine the use of Spanish and English in their writings. There is a common belief among many Latina feminists that "language is not simply a means of communicating ideas, passions, feelings, and theories, but it also symbolic, representing, among other emotions, love for one's culture."⁹

Chicanas uniting with other Latinas and women of color, the issue of lesbianism within the Chicana feminist movement, and the validity of bilingualism, are only a few areas of Chicana feminism that have been important to the movement over the past twenty years, and each one of these deserves a great deal of attention in future research on the Chicana feminist movement.

Mexican women and Chicanas organized for women's rights in Mexico and the United States during the Mexican Revolution of 1910, the early Chicano/a civil rights struggles from 1910-1920 and the Chicano movement of the 1960s and '70s. Feminist activities in Mexico and the United States were intertwined through individuals, publications and organizations which worked for the liberation of women in both countries. This study of Mexican women's

and Chicanas' involvement in human liberation struggles, as well as in women's movements in particular, proves that there are women all over the world who are fighting for their liberation as people and as women. This information also exemplifies that there are many different perspectives of history to consider.

Euro-American men have dominated academic education in the United States, and have emphasized Anglo-Saxon Protestant heroes, while ignoring the history and achievements of people of color and women of all ethnic groups. From Sor Juana Inés de La Cruz, a Mexican feminist who lived in the 17th century, to modern day feminists like Cherríe Moraga, Mexican women and Chicanas have struggled for centuries to make their voices heard. World-wide women and their histories of struggle have been silenced. This paper is an effort to make sure that women's history is not forgotten.

Notes

- 1 Elizabeth Martínez, " 'Chingón Politics' Die Hard: Reflections on the First Chicano Activists Reunion," *Zeta Magazine* (April, 1990), p. 46.
- 2 Martínez, p. 49.
- 3 Martínez, p. 49.
- 4 Martínez, p. 50.
- 5 Eliana Ortega and Nancy Saporta Sternbach, "At the Threshold of the Unnamed: Latina Literary Discourse in the Eighties" Breaking Boundaries, Latina Writings and Critical Readings. Asuncion Horno Delgado, Eliana Ortega, Nina M. Scott and Nancy Saporta Sternbach eds. (Amherst, Massachusetts: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1989), p. 8.
- 6 Nancy Saporta Sternbach, "A Deep Racial Memory of Love: The Chicana Feminism of Cherrie Moraga," Breaking Boundaries, p. 48.
- 7 Sternbach, p. 51.
- 8 Sternbach, p. 57.
- 9 Sternbach, p.54.

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