

four

SAINTLY MOTHER AND SOLDIER'S WHORE

THE LEFTIST/CATHOLIC PARADIGM

In the nineteenth century, when the United States was leaping toward the future with grand visions of expansionism, México was not ready for the "future." Unlike the White, Anglo-Saxon Protestant, whose puritanism shaped a democracy founded on capitalism, the Mexican comes from, in the words of Octavio Paz: "a Catholic world of Mexican viceroyalty, a mosaic of pre-columbian survivals and baroque forms."¹ Then, in the middle of the last century, when certain Mexican intellectuals felt the very model of progress and modernity lay just across the border—México was invaded and literally divided in half by its model. In almost one fell swoop, the United States appropriated territory greater than France and Germany together.

But mestizas have had irreconcilable differences with WASP society that go much deeper than the issue of territorial invasion. In the following pages I would like to discuss two doctrines that many Chicano Movement activists in the seventies were motivated by—consciously and unconsciously—in their struggle against WASP domination. These were a Marxist-oriented ideology (although it was not as popular as the movement's nationalist overtones it was not necessarily separate) and Catholicism. I undertake this discussion because many women still identify as Catholics and many feminists were first exposed to socialist ideology as a way toward Chicana activism.

In the Watsonville chapter, I discussed the shortcomings of socialism for the mexicana turned activist. Although socialist feminists have gone to great lengths to try to merge Marxist-oriented thought with feminism, with the case of the mexicana/Chicana this is a highly improbable course of action. First, the woman activista is not necessarily a feminist. Second, the communist stigma attached to socialism causes most Latino/a activistas to shy away from even engaging in such discussions.

On the other hand, she usually is Catholic. Here, we will see how the male dominated Chicano Movement and the Chicana feminist

However, there is much worldwide archaeological evidence that proves the book of Genesis is a testimony of retaliation against the previous mythologies that associated woman with the power of creation. In fact, woman *did* create.¹³ Aside from injecting his sperm into her womb, man's participation in the creative process is that of *observer*. With this in mind, we can understand why as male society took control—a long, long time ago—it felt it necessary to appropriate woman's "mysteries," along with her labor and her children. The Bible is composed of texts that could be used to argue any ethical or political point. But despite this fact, the Old and the New Testaments have shown indisputable contempt for women. Enrique "Hank" López writes, "Everyday throughout the world, millions of Jewish men utter a prayer thanking God for not creating them as women. There are, of course, millions of non-Jewish men who feel the same way, but their gratitude is not formalized in prayer."¹⁴

On the other hand, some progressive thinkers look to contemporary examples of indigenous matriarchal societies to prove that such cultures have existed and argue in favor of them because matriarchies are founded on preservation rather than on destruction and our planet and its inhabitants are in dire need of emergency conservation.

For too long we have been told what we are and why we are as women: *mujeres mestizas* (sino descendientes de sangre Europea, *somos indias sin razón*), *católicas* (sino ahora *protestantes o pecadoras*), social definitions embedded in a history that has subordinated the female gender.

Five hundred years ago the militant Mexicas knew they had lost their way and called to their/our Toltec ancestors as in the following ancient Nahuatl canto from mother to daughter: "... You will spin/you will weave/you will learn what is Toltec/the art of feathers/how to embroider in colors/how to dye the threads . . ."¹⁵ We must undo our anachronistic weave. Ultimately it may be a question of starting from scratch, gathering our own raw materials, applying our own dyes. Men (and the women who have been convinced of phallic worship) *will* learn to become humble participants in this process, to trust our millennia-old experience of cooperation and communion with every living organism. We will teach each other that submission need not be humiliating and that strength need not be synonymous with aggression.

homosexuality. The church only permits sex between husband and wife for the sole purpose of reproduction. The wildfire spread of AIDS demands, at the very least, that sexually active individuals *may* prevent its spread by using contraceptives. However, condoms are no guarantee against contracting HIV. According to Howard's International AIDS Index (as reported in *Elle* magazine) in 1994 70 percent of HIV cases are heterosexually transmitted and more than half of the victims are women. The church grants males sole authority, and these men to be worthy and holy must be kept from women.

The highest percentage of the Catholic faithful are women. Women are made responsible by government and church for the children they bear, who suffer all manner of disease and maladies from industrial poisonous exposure and poverty. Women are the lowest paid in the labor work force. The "proletariat masses" of whom socialists speak are mostly women. Women are spoken of and to by Church authorities, government officials, and male community leaders, but to date have had little voice themselves.

Socialist-communist doctrine as we have understood it in recent history and Christianity both fall far short as realistic responses to the urgent needs of most mexicano/as on both sides of the border. A sense of urgency may be gained from the example of México City, which is home to twenty one million inhabitants today, all of whom suffer from dangerous exposure to air pollution (the effects are equivalent to smoking a pack of cigarettes a day) and other polluted natural resources, and many, many, many people live there demoralized and in appalling poverty. México, D.F. is the most populated city in the world. People on both sides of the border suffer from similar dangerous and deplorable conditions, not to mention all the rest of us—from large cities like Los Angeles to small towns like Sunland Park, New Mexico.

COMMUNAL SOCIETIES EXISTED AGES BEFORE the rigid control of patriarchal Christianity and later, communist doctrine. A conservative viewpoint on behalf of some scholars and thinkers resists drawing conclusions about the possibility of matriarchal practices in pre-recorded history because of lack of conclusive evidence and because it is too controversial, or rather too threatening to what we have for so long accepted to be absolute truth in Western Civilization.

associated with aggression in our competitive world, cooperation and conciliation may actually prove more beneficial to society.

Women's liberation theology is also women's struggle against anything in society that prohibits her full participation and contributions as a human being—*imago dei*. Women who see man and woman created in the image of God and who believe that God is the perfect guide and example for how we should all lead our lives on this earth, would out of necessity question why they are not treated as humans who also can strive for perfection. Traditionally, only men could hope for perfection because they image God. Women could only aspire to salvation by negation of self, that is to deny femaleness.

Hispanic women's theology is valuable insofar as it attempts to reflect woman's reality to enable her to overcome material obstacles and to participate in a communal process with other women, her family, and community toward economic betterment within the ascriptions of her faith. However, I see women's liberation theology as problematic in the process toward human liberation, both of spirit and body. Philosophically, Christianity is based on the belief in a remote god (generally still accepted as a male: father), far removed from our mortal, material selves. He is an inimitable model since he is spirit and we are flesh; and yet, Christianity is based on the struggle that requires man to imitate God. Because of our "crime" of disobedience to this Father God we must strive for redemption. *To be born is a sin in itself.* The only time that God became flesh was through his son, Jesus Christ; and the New Testament and Catholic doctrine have taken great pains to teach us that woman had nothing to do with this birth.

Christianity is based on the dualistic principle and polarization of good and evil. Christianity *depends* on our desire to *disobey*: to rebel against the repression of the human spirit and the desire to create a balance out of the celebration of flesh and spirit—to experience a life of ecstasy. The word ecstasy itself, if not related to the passion and suffering of Christ, implies sin.

Marxism and Catholicism alienated humanity from its spirituality. While Marxism focused too narrowly on class and economic inequities and denied the existence of the soul, Catholicism has a history of implementing an attack on humanity in the name of God the Father. In 1993 the Pope has reiterated his position against contraceptives and

"HISPANIC WOMEN'S LIBERATION THEOLOGY"

Ada María Isasi-Díaz and Yolanda Tarango state that "the self-definition of a vast number of persons is an intrinsic element of reality. The overwhelming majority of Latinas see themselves, understand themselves as, and claim to be Christians. The majority consider themselves Catholics even if they go to other churches."¹²

According to Isasi-Díaz and Tarango, women see their culture through "Christian" eyes on the one hand, and understand their Christianity through "culture," on the other hand. Religion, over the millennia, has remained the most significant structure in women's lives. It is not difficult to deduce that one who aspires to adhere to her Mexican identity will find it nearly impossible to do so if she dismisses the influence of the church.

Isasi-Díaz and Tarango claim that Hispanic women's liberation theology is "Hispanic Women's experience." As such, it is a synthesis of all that informs her reality, including popular religiosity in the form of Native American and African religious practices. Women who do not want to give up their religion because it is too tied up with their identity are turning to their own experiences to understand their spirituality and the Christian form it takes for them. For example, a Xicanista may still believe in the Holy Trinity of the Catholic Church, yet, her feminism may lead her to give the Virgen de Guadalupe greater importance than God and his son, with regard to her personal faith. The Virgen de Guadalupe, again, while being relegated by the Church to a secondary role as the mother of Christ, is regarded by Xicanistas as spiritual mother and the successor of the Nahua goddess, Tonantzin. Therefore, the Xicanista combines the traditional view of the Christian god with goddess worship to give her a source of inner strength.

With the radical feminist notion that the personal is political, women throughout the world are developing a theology appropriate for them. Examination of concepts and attitudes in unprecedented ways is the kind of serious work that social change requires. For example, in *Hispanic Women's Theology*, the authors suggest that the passivity prevalent in women's culture no longer can be viewed as a weakness, but as a mode of survival. While strength has often been

half of the world's Roman Catholics are Latin American, and I would venture to state that at least half of that membership is female. Therefore addressing women directly on the subject of social injustice is crucial. Women do not want to take up arms against soldiers and police. Women do not want to be subject to non-consenting sterilizations by government and private industry officials. Women do not want to have infants with no medical care. Women do not want to give up their faith in a higher being despite their dismal circumstances because it is that very faith that often keeps them from despair.

Guerreto sees feminists as a "special interest group" marginalized by dominant society along with ethnics of color. Whereas in the early days of the Chicano Movement, feminists were still associated with white dominant culture, there is substantial documentation now by women of our culture who are also feminists and could have lent this text the benefit of new insights.

While the book as a whole espouses a theology that demands some restitution on the part of the United States government for the poverty and the racism to which our people are subjected, its approach is clearly reminiscent in language, tone, and attitude of the rhetoric widely used in El Movimiento's heyday. It is difficult to imagine that it realistically aims to communicate with the present generation, with women-identified activists, or with the majority of today's low skilled work force who are poorly educated, impoverished women.

In Guerrero's book, women are misread and underestimated—again—by male activism; he seems hardly aware of the male dominance embedded in his proposed Chicano liberation theology. The "leadership" that he identifies in his book, for the most part suffers from a reluctance to rethink anachronistic Marxist-oriented convictions. When Guerrero requests a discussion on the theme of theology as a mechanism that has historically served the needs of the "oppressor," his respondent, Tomás Atencio, a Protestant, replies, "The best way to look at it is from a Marxist perspective . . ."

For the sake of holding on to their political beliefs at all costs (with the same relentless devotion they have had for their Christianity), some male leaders have caused their marriages and families to become dysfunctional. And again, women were left with children to raise with little assistance from men or their professed beliefs.

men, women bear and raise their children. It is society that makes men and women. In a traditional Mexican household, for example, a father will order his children to obey their mother. (*¡Hazle caso a tu mamá!*) One is given the impression that the mother holds some authority in her home. Note however, that the children are not obeying the mother so much as following the father's order. More significant than this small example of the dynamics of traditional Mexican homelife are the countless ways in which sexism is enforced in society: by the media, various civil and private institutions, as well as the male-dominant hierarchical structure of the Church and government.

Although all nine individuals were asked the same questions, we do not hear from the others on the subject of male dominance. Likewise, we are not always privy to the responses of the two women on other themes. Recalling Gutiérrez's and Sánchez's advocacy of violence as a possibility in bringing about social reconstruction, we are left to wonder what their particular views were on the subject of "machismo y la mujer." Let's keep in mind that a large measure of the work force requiring social justice is composed of women who, if they protest their conditions, are ultimately terrorized by men recruited into police forces and armies. With what—or rather—how, are dispirited, underpaid people supposed to fight men trained, armed, and sent out to torture and kill on behalf of their government's interests? Haven't we witnessed such massacres of obreros in Latin America within our own lifetimes? Furthermore, governments have shown no tolerance for those liberation theologians who have attempted to defend the rights of the poor.¹¹ The outright assassinations among the Catholic clergy—Archbishop Romero gunned down while giving Mass is one shining example of this. What phallogentric ego could imagine this suicidal strategy as the basis of a religious ideology? Nevertheless, according to Guerrero, the opinions of these nine respondents are the "valid and viable groundwork for creating a new Christian theology."

A Chicano Theology serves as evidence of the paternal attitude inherent in our culture among those, including those on the left, who elect themselves as our representatives. Chicanos cited Engels's claim that half of the work force consisted of females and today, more than half of the world's work force, in fact, consists of women. Moreover,

"BY UNDERSTANDING GUADALUPE, YOU UNDERSTAND CHICANOS" (pg. 117). Guerrero sees la Virgen de Guadalupe as the symbol of hope for liberation. We are told that our Mexican patron saint will not forsake us despite our suffering, and we are asked to take a "leap of faith" in her. However, la Virgen de Guadalupe again is manipulated by men to serve nationalism, and historically, this has ultimately implied violent action. In man's society, a "Protectress" always condones war and sanctions nationalism.¹⁰ The Catholic Church—the entire history of Christianity, in fact—has condoned the violence and destruction of its Holy Wars. Two of Guerrero's respondents, José Angel Gutiérrez (founder of La Raza Unida Party) and Ricardo Sánchez (poet), both advocated violence as a potentially necessary form of action when questioned on racism and how we might best contend with it in white society. Most significantly, Guadalupe is reinstated here as man's "mother." She is a deity who blesses men's aggression against their enemies and provides her devotees alone with her nurture, comfort, and protection.

On the issue of "machismo y la mujer," we hear (predictably) from the two women, Dolores Huerta and Lupe Anguiano. Their answers reflect the previous generation of Chicano activism but neither defines herself as a feminist in the interview. Both women acknowledged machismo in the movement and female oppression in the church. "The church has been responsible for a lot of the machismo because it does not do anything to counteract it," replied Dolores Huerta (page 40). The only male respondent whose opinion on the subject of women within the context of liberation theology we are privy to is Monsignor Reyes.

In an unfortunate demonstration of conservative male-centered thinking, Monsignor Reyes believes that *women contribute to their subordinate roles by orienting male children into a privileged position over females.* Completely unaware of feminist analysis on this subject, neither Guerrero nor Monsignor Reyes, seem to recognize that woman has been conditioned and directed toward perpetuating male privilege. Moreover, for centuries sons have had birth-given privileges that override their mother's own authority in the home. Monsignor Reyes sees woman as mother therefore the "maker" of men. Women do not make

culture treated females as commodities. The role of mestizas in both societies was to serve the economy: with her labor and her children. Each religion perpetuated this role by divinely sanctioning it.

The Marxist oriented activist of the Chicano Movement may have claimed to address women solely from a materialist perspective but he was nevertheless still regarding woman in religious terms—and those religious terms subordinated woman in Chicano culture.

An example of how male activists differ in their view of women's experiences may be found in Andres Guerrero's book on Chicano liberation theology, *A Chicano Theology* published in 1987.⁸ In contrast to the methodology employed by Isasi-Díaz and Tarango, in their book *Hispanic Women's Theology: A Prophetic Voice of the Church*,⁹ who took great care to propose a theology that was relevant to those women whose lives are directed by their religiosity by surveying women who are actively changing Catholic thinking, Guerrero chose as his informants nine individuals whom *he* considered to be spokespersons for the varied communities to which our people belong throughout the United States: "The Chicano experience of oppression is best brought out, I believe, by Chicano leaders as they express their struggles, fears, and hopes for the Chicano community" (pp 33–34). It is important to note here a patronizing attitude in Guerrero's approach. First, he has *designated authorities* to represent millions of Catholic Chicano/as and second, he presumes that these designated authorities can speak for the needs of millions of Catholic Chicano/as by solely addressing the racist and economic inequities they experience in the United States. Guerrero's leaders are selected from among activists of the Chicano Movement of the 1960s and early 1970s. Their achievements notwithstanding, we now have an entirely new generation largely incognizant of the work many of Guerrero's respondents performed more than two decades ago. More significantly, we now have new voices emerging that are reassessing our vision as a people based on a current summation of the past twenty years.

Among those nine individuals whom Guerrero interviewed, some well recognized for their long-time commitments toward improving the living conditions of certain communities of ours, only two were women. Two of the men were Protestant. Two were officials of the Roman Catholic Church.

Amerindian women into the twenty-first century, we cannot make a blanket dismissal of Catholicism either. Rejecting the intolerant structure of the church does not automatically obliterate its entrenchment in our culture.

LIBERATION THEOLOGY

If some activists have agreed that traditional Roman Catholicism is not a satisfying religious doctrine to serve the needs of their communities, alternative ways to apply their Christian beliefs have been considered, such as liberation theology.

This re-vision of the Catholic activists is mostly heard of today within the context of revolutionary work in Latin America. In the United States many Latinos, Amerindians, and Chicanos are also being forced to reflect on the role of the church in their lives and communities because it has not only added to their devalued social status, but also suppresses their intuitive spirituality.

In this section I would like to discuss the liberation theology movement as it affects us as Xicanistas. I use two sources here that speak directly to us about this subject and compare and contrast how men and women see this movement with regard to Latinos in the United States. Liberation theology in practice is a blend of Marxist and Christian beliefs. However, both ideologies are male-centered, have hierarchical structures, and significantly repress the feminine principle that is crucial to our spiritual and material aspirations as Xicanistas. I discuss these issues more fully in other chapters and prominently in chapter 7.

It has been noted by white feminists that women experience culture differently from men to the extent that some of them consider themselves "bicultural." Likewise, the women in the Chicano Movement experienced their struggle for social justice differently from the men. Likewise, we experience institutionalized religion differently.

According to the Chicano cosmic consciousness, woman was defined by the religiomythology of the Mexica pantheon; in everyday practice, the Mexican mestiza was defined by Catholicism. Because male and female activists used Mexican models they could not escape from defining woman in religious terms. By doing this they ignored the fact that both sixteenth century Aztec society and Spanish Catholic

activista for La Raza, not only a feminist but Chicana feminist) now has documentation of her particular history and present condition in the United States in the form of books, plays, murals, art, and even films that the culturalists have produced.

WOMAN REMAINS DEFINED BY RELIGIOSITY

Above, I held forth the view that early Chicano activism was influenced by socialist ideology but remained Catholic. Most women were not as apt to follow any socialist line, however as they were inclined to assert a pride in their ethnicity, that at the extreme end became Chicano nationalism. Even among the minority who "returned" to indigenismo so as to more adamantly reject Western culture and white supremacy, it was difficult to eradicate Christianity from their lives because Christian symbols and beliefs have infiltrated many indigenous practices, family and community ties remained Catholic, and many Mexican customs are tied to Catholicism.

However, the point I would like to stress in this chapter is *not* that socialist doctrine as it has been practiced in other countries and within the Chicano Movement has not shown itself to truly liberate women. My point is also not the historical abuse of women and indigenous people by the church, nor that today, its most repressive mandates are in relation to women. What I would like to emphasize here (and throughout this book) is that beneath the definition established by the cultural fervor of Chicanismo was and remains a significant component of the mestiza's identity—her spirituality. For the most part, as stated above, this manifests in her life in the form of Catholicism because it is the religion she has been taught and that is sanctified by society. However, this undercurrent of spirituality—which has been with woman since pre-Conquest times and which precedes Christianity in Europe—is the unspoken key to her strength and endurance as a female throughout all the ages.

While we do not acknowledge other important influences so readily, our religious orientation is a combination of Christianity, Amerindian, and African influences, but primarily passed on to us through the filter of Mexican Catholicism. Although the Catholic Church as an institution cannot, for a number of reasons, guide us as Mexican

SAINTLY MOTHER AND SOLDIER'S WHORE

days of American glory when the Fords and Rockefellers were in the making. But that self-made millionaire potential was no more real for most U.S. Latinos in the 1980s than it was in the past. Nevertheless, this caused a major backlash against the Chicano tone of the seventies. While cultural pride remained, the Latino Movement's leftist collective fervor was subdued.

For the early activists, remaining steadfastly dedicated to our own work has been no small feat. Oftentimes, we were married and had children. We had to work to help support our families; frequently, we were unable to get financial help from relatives. At the same time, we may have been attempting to get a college education on a government grant, loan, or academic scholarship. By and large, we did not identify with the white woman's movement and therefore received no intellectual verification of the injustice we felt as women. We experienced social and religious constraints with relation to our roles as daughters, lovers, and mothers. In addition, women sometimes had to live with alcoholism, drugs, physical and mental abuse: no resources and no recourse but to manage however we might.

The strength of our collective resistance to dominant society motivated us onward. In a similar nationalist spirit as that of the Black Power Movement, which also "returned" to its roots, we refused to cut our long braids, to conform to standard English for the sake of being tokenized in the job market. We gave our children pre-Conquest names like Xochitl and Cuauhtémoc, tirelessly volunteered in our barrios and started health clinics and daycare centers. To affirm our mexicanidad and to give us courage we resurrected every pre-Conquest and Catholic icon, ritual, symbol possible—from the Aztec calendar to the Virgen de Guadalupe banner.

All the while, we wrote poems, we painted, we told stories. Many women who showed great creative promise did not continue. Some were forced to stop. Some went mad. Others died. We know who they were; we remember their names. We know how well or how bad their children turned out. The fiery conviction that made women refuse to assimilate into the white dominant culture took its toll.

The new generation of women who followed suit have these obreras culturales as unprecedented models who served to validate their own perceptions. The young Xicanista (not just Chicana, not

this revolution!
 Come on Malinche,
 gimme some more!"⁷

In the Chicano Movement men's regard for women's activism went from dominance to condescending tolerance to finally, resigned confusion if not, outright resentment.

CULTURAL NATIONALISTS DID NOT HAVE A STRUCTURED IDEOLOGY

Like most poets and artists—of whom there were many—cultural nationalists found the black and white schema of social scientists constricting. As creative individuals, they did not articulate their criticisms (of broad society and of their own Movement) and their perceptions except through their often misunderstood and underestimated artistic endeavors. On the other hand, the Marxist-oriented activists suffered from the myopia of their nineteenth-century dogma.

Just as there were women actively working among the Marxist oriented activists yet getting little visible recognition, there were numerous women among the cultural nationalists who went ignored. It has not been until nearly two decades later that the public has become aware of the artistic and literary expressions of those women who have

- 1) remained steadfastly dedicated to their work as artists and writers
- and 2) turned to some strain of feminism to gain support as women for their perspectives.

It is at this historical juncture that I define the *activista* as *Xicanista*, when her flesh, mind and soul serve as the lightning rod for the confluence of her consciousness. *Xicanistas* may also arrive at this consciousness from roads other than the ones discussed here, to be sure; and one generation later, young *Xicanistas* are contending with the polemics of the Bush-Reagan years that affected their generation. The regressive nature of the 1980s Republican era brought on a renewed macho vigor in that generation of males and many young women found themselves contending with the same sex-ist issues of their forerunners in *El Movimiento*. The resurgence of supermachismo lodged by the old Anglo leaders of the Republican Administration was equally conservative. This conservatism also influenced the thinking of the new generation. It was a return to the

ary tone for what our roles as activists should be but, that tone was underwritten by the values and traditions of Catholicism; both were hierarchical and patriarchal.

A large number of women activistas subscribed to an equally animated sector of El Movimiento known for its cultural promotion of Chicano nationalism. In the late sixties to mid-seventies, we were asked to emulate the *past* in the role of the soldaderas of the Mexican Revolution, the young women who took up arms and followed their men, carrying a comal and molcajete in tow to feed the soldiers, as well as providing various other services—sex and picking up an escopeta to fight were not the least of them.⁵

In the spirit of cultural nationalism however, early activistas did in fact dress and behave appropriate to the role Chicano ideology assigned to them. Efforts to bring about egalitarian representation of women in that era were often patronizing at best. With the flamboyant defiance of Frida Kahlo (celebrated painter and wife of Diego Rivera, a “cultural nationalist” in her own time) women donned the rebozos of their Revolutionary grandmothers and the huipiles of their Amerindian heritage. Even though Frida Kahlo, most active in the thirties and forties, was notorious for her eccentric flair, it apparently was her husband who insisted that it would be an act of betrayal on her part to dress in North American gringo fashions.⁶

Poetry by men and women of that period called the pueblo to arms even as it urged women to stand by their men. Some women's poems, however, eventually surfaced to indicate that we were not all that satisfied with our new nationalist image. The poems were filled with ethnic pride but tinged with anger and frustration at the severe restrictions on our participation in El Movimiento. The following excerpt from Lorna Dee Cervantes' well known poem of that era, “You Cramp My Style, Baby”, best highlights this point:

“You cramp my style, baby
when you roll on top of me
shouting, “Viva La Raza”
at the top of your prick.

. . . And then you tell me,
'Esa, I LOVE

exclusively to Catholics. We know that church officials in México after the Conquest argued as to whether Amerindians indeed had souls, but indigenous philosophy also recognized life after death. These beliefs have been inherent in the mestizo/a's way since pre-Conquest times. The soul is a Mexican reality.

However, the materialist analysis of Marxism that addressed the economic exploitation of the working class (Chicanos adapted it with a specific focus on racism) did not acknowledge spirituality. The failing of Marxism lies in its inability to separate spirituality from the collusion of institutionalized religion with male-supremacist, profit-based society. When Marxist-oriented activists thought they had freed themselves from the church's strangle hold and surrendered to materialist theory, how many were actually convinced of their existentialism that denied all questions of non-material nature?

Leftist ideology did not resolve or reconcile this conflict for the activista. In terms of internal critical issues that contributed to the eventual dissolution of the early Chicano Movement, I believe that prominent among them was that most activistas could not fully assimilate socialist views that were exclusively based on materialism. Although there were pretensions on the part of politically conscious activists to reject Christianity, it remained an ongoing undercurrent of our Chicanismo because of its permeation of Mexican culture. In addition, for the Chicana, especially, both forms of thought meant a reinforcement of patriarchal oppression. As for those women activistas who did join the male calvary's call to socialism—how did they take to socialist-communist ideology? Imagine a Mexican Catholic mestiza in the United States replacing her religious beliefs with the convictions of non-Christian male thinkers, not simply the white Europeans Marx and Lenin, but also revolutionary leaders from Mao Tse Tung to Che Guevara. The fact is, most women who participated in the Chicano Movement could not.

In fact, most did not follow any specific political line. The early activista was usually pragmatic regarding her activism, moved by personal experiences and guided mostly by male hegemony. The most prominent figures of the Chicano Movement of that epoch were men, Cesar Chávez, Corky González, Reies Tijerina, and Luis Valdez, among others. Throughout all aspects of El Movimiento men set a revolution-

living their lives, which remain today affected by family and community and generations of Mexican customs. They worked in government-funded jobs in their barrios in Chicago and on Christmas Eve made tamales with mothers and *tías* and went to Midnight Mass. They started bilingual pre-schools in San Francisco and stood up as the Maid of Honor at their best friend's wedding. They painted socially relevant murals in San Diego and sponsored a niece for her quinceañera. And when a family member died in Texas or a new one was born in Michigan they went to church to have the appropriate ritual performed for their loved one. Roman Catholicism permeates Mexican culture and Mexican traditions exude Catholicism.

In the late sixties and in the seventies—as has been well established by many a feminista today—the leadership of the Chicano Movement was in the firm grip of the men, many of whom espoused a leftist ideology. In spite of the male leader's commitment to Marxist-oriented ideology, his immediate world was informed by Catholicism: A child who is cleansed of original sin through baptism, then receives the sacrament of the Holy Ghost when he is about seven years old (the age of reason), is then sent on to accept in full conscience the teachings of his faith through confirmation. The Catholic Chicano's godparents are often more meaningful than blood relatives because the relationship was sanctioned by *God the Father*. By the time he is a young adult his psyche is solidly influenced with the Christian principle of duality: life is divided into opposites. You are either good, doing good, represent the good, or you are bad.

The rituals of going to Mass every Sunday, Christmas celebrations, heterosexual marriages, and the children's baptisms that naturally follow are no less a part of his comprehension of life than the iconography that surrounds him in his environment. In his parents' home there may have been an altar, a crucifix above his headboard, the Virgin of Guadalupe everywhere (for it is said that all Mexicans are Guadalupanos), the whispers of rosary prayers over the sick, the constant exhortation to place one's trust in higher powers, not only in the Holy Trinity, but in the retinue of God the Father's heavenly saints who will guide and assist him through the rigors of life and on to paradise in the afterlife.

The idea of eternal life or the existence of the soul does not belong

power that the Roman Catholic Church once was and that, with the Spanish monarchy, conquered indigenous México.

Yet, Chicana activists, fervent about their struggles against racism and sometimes sexism within and outside El Movimiento, have donned the white gown symbol of virginity, veiled their faces, and taken marriage vows at the Church's holy altar to sanctify their lives and to fulfill its doctrine. They attend its Mass, observe original sin by having their children cleansed of it during baptism, are soothed by its rituals. And because of their political consciousness they struggle with their worship of the indomitable Father and the overtones of female shamefulness that are imbedded in the Catholic Church's doctrine.

Since Mexican culture is also hierarchical, women are made answerable to figures of authority in their immediate world. With regard to the low status of mestizas in society, most women in El Movimiento may not have openly rebelled against the church's teachings, if for no other reason than because to oppose the Church would mean causing conflict within her own family and community.

IN THE 1970S a move from Catholicism to a socialist-communist ideology for a Chicana activist in El Movimiento may not have seemed so contradictory to her inherent beliefs. The two ideologies have several qualities in common: the polarities of good and evil (U.S. imperialism representing evil or sin, the masses organized through socialism representing the good); a deference paid to a higher good (God for Catholicism and the needs of the pueblo as defined by the male leadership of the Chicano Movement); and the respect that both have for patriarchal order and hierarchy.

While radical groups publicly denounced the church for its institutionalized oppression of our people ("Although more than half of the Catholics in the Southwest are Chicanos, the Catholic Church hierarchy has continuously insulted its Chicano membership by its racist practices . . ."4), many activists categorized religious traditions as part of Chicano culture in their urgent desire to induce immediate social change.

Some radical activists in addition to ideologically rejecting the church, moved toward indigenismo and began to practice Native American and Mexic Amerindian ways. But most activists went on

feminine, which lies within both man and woman, is best recognized in our devotion to Tonantzin/la Virgen de Guadalupe. Our particular ancestors in Tenochtitlan worshipped Tonantzin. Jesus Christ the blameless, incarnated God and revolutionary, and God the Omnipotent Father, whom we fear, remind us to stand guard against men, against ourselves, so fallible and capable of betrayal. But only by calling forth the Virgen de Guadalupe/Tonantzin—the feminine principle within ourselves—do we truly receive courage. It comes from her unconditional compassion and acceptance, not from our fear of inadequacy. And as we receive from her, so denigrated and rendered powerless by the Church, state, and men's movements—except to serve their cause—we first give to ourselves, those around us, and to the world. It is a natural law and knows no doctrine.²

THE CHURCH HAS A VAST HISTORY OF DOMINATION throughout the world. Most women activistas were aware, at least to an extent, of the ruthlessness of the Spanish Inquisition and the persecution of countless Amerindians as a result of the Conquest. In fact, the Inquisition lasted approximately three and one-half centuries and with the conquest of the Americas, "new heretics" were seized upon: the indigenous populations. Although there seems to be no way of knowing just how many people were tortured and murdered as heretics throughout Europe and later in the Americas as a direct cause of the Inquisition, it is agreed by most historians that an overwhelming majority were women.

The Roman Catholic Church once stood indisputably as a wealthy and political world power. It was no less intent on accumulating wealth in the Americas than it had been throughout Europe. Little, if any consideration was given to the native peoples who were at first regarded as less than human and used strictly for labor. "Central México, which had once had some 25 million inhabitants, was reduced, it is estimated, to a residual population of one million."³

The marginalized Amerindian living a subsistence existence in present México is the descendent of the Amerindian slave of colonial México. The mestiza today, descendent of this heritage, has been shunned for being of mixed blood in México, the United States, and elsewhere. Such are the resounding effects of the imperialist world

government. Furthermore, at this writing, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the capitalist enterprising of China, and the strangling of Cuba, it may be said that the United States has successfully rid the world of any real "communist threat."

Although, as I stated above, most activists were not self-identified as communists, Marxism grants the right of the masses to rebel while indisputably the "free-enterprise democracy" of multinational interests does not desire, and will not tolerate, retaliation from its sea of underpaid human resources in this country and throughout the world. Although a response to the exploitation of human and natural resources by gross capitalism is needed, I will focus my arguments in the following pages on how the omission of the feminine principle in both Marxist-oriented ideology and Christianity prohibit woman's full participation in society. More precisely, omission of the feminine principle in society prohibits true social transformation, that is, one based on inclusion and not exclusion.

Inherent in both doctrines—Christian and socialist—that influenced Chicana conscientización is a male-dominated perspective. With examination and review Xicanistas may conclude that the merging of feminism and socialism may not be considered as the sole plan of action. By recalling the long forgotten ways of our Amerindian heritage, we will be led back to a view that all things created in the universe are sacred and equal.

The U.S born and national mexicana, in most cases, is very far removed from her Amerindian ancestors, although she may look very india, feel india, and be regarded as negatively as Native American women are regarded in dominant society. Unlike white feminists who freely borrow myths and rituals from the Eastern and Western traditions and investigate Native American traditions, especially in how they are connected with the feminine principle, we do not feel comfortable laying claims to Amerindian ways. As Christianized mestizas we have been conditioned for generations to reject our indigena blood, as well as invalidate folk medicine for Western medical practices and above all, to put our faith in God the Father.

However, the feminine principle to which I refer is concerned with preservation, protection—especially of the young and less fortunate—and affiliations of communities for the common good. This positive

have been unavoidably influenced by the permeation of our culture by Catholicism, despite leftist and nationalist language and overtones. I don't mean to imply here that Marxist-oriented thought by any means at any point had a real measure of influence among Chicano/a activists. The number of individuals who participated actively in the Chicano/Latino Movement who also identified as Marxist-oriented were relatively few in number. Moreover, Marxist theory is only about 140 years old and has hardly had the chance to be fully realized in the few countries in which it was attempted, while Catholicism, centuries old, as an institution has been a world power. Consequently today, Catholicism is synonymous with Mexican society.

Nevertheless, the very fact that the Chicano/Latino Movement (just like the Black Power and the American Indian Movements) was engaged in the active struggle for our civil rights—denied to us for centuries through institutionalized racism—caused it to be seen by the federal government as a threat to *democracy* and to be identified as communistic. The late sixties and seventies are marked by murders, political imprisonments, and harassments of leading activists (men and women) from movements that challenge the United States to live up to its democratic promise.

The systematic quashing of the Chicano/Latino Movement that resounded throughout Latin America wherever Latino activists made alliances, resulted in the 1980s in a new generation bred on double-speak. Many Latino/as who came of age during the 1980s not only did not believe in the premise of collective action but rejected it for the individuated free-enterprise one espoused by WASP ideology. Moreover, they disowned the Chicano/Latino Movement for being what they understood as unnecessary radicalism, engendered by unsophisticated grass-roots revolutionaries with huge chips on their shoulders. In the communities, activism also waned due to the severe cutbacks for community related programs, such as rehabilitation training, as well as because of the economic depression, and gang and drug-related violence that followed.

Conditions of people of color in the United States, Latin America, the Caribbean, and elsewhere throughout the world have increasingly grown worse since the successful dismantling of the Chicano/Latino, Black, and American Indian Movements by the United States