

CHICANA FEMINIST THOUGHT

THE BASIC HISTORICAL WRITINGS

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La Nueva Chicana (1971)

The old woman going to pray
does her part,
The young mother hers,
The old man sitting on the porch,
The young husband going to work,
But let's not forget the young
Chicana,
Bareheaded girl fighting for
equality,
Unshawled girl living for a better world,
Let's not forget her,
Because,
She is LA NUEVA CHICANA
Wherever you turn,
Wherever you look,
You'll see her,
She's still the soft brown-eyed
beauty you knew,
There's just one difference,
A big difference,
She's on the go spreading the word.
VIVA LA RAZA
Is her main goal too,
She is no longer the silent one,
Because she has cast off the
shawl of the past to show her face,
She is LA NUEVA CHICANA

Ana Montes



Protest march in Los Angeles, California, early 1970s. Courtesy of Raul Ruiz, *La Raza* magazine, Los Angeles, California,

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ordered motherhood
Chicanas demanding
what would
be the result of oppression
they faced?

*New Voice of La Raza: Chicanas Speak Out**

MIRTA VIDAL

At the end of May [1971], more than 600 Chicanas met in Houston, Texas, to hold the first national conference of Raza women. For those of us who were there it was clear that this conference was not just another national gathering of the Chicano movement.

Chicanas came from all parts of the country inspired by the prospect of discussing the issues that have long been on their minds and which we now see not as individual problems but as an important and integral part of a movement for liberation.

The resolutions coming out of the two largest workshops—"sex and the Chicana" and "marriage—Chicana style"—called for "free, legal abortions and birth control for the Chicano community; controlled by *Chicanas*." As Chicanas, the resolution stated, "we have a right to control our own bodies." The resolutions also called for "24-hour childcare centers in Chicano communities" and explained that there is a critical need for these since "Chicana motherhood should not preclude educational, political, social and economic advancement."

While these resolutions articulated the most pressing needs of Chicanas today, the conference as a whole reflected a rising consciousness of the Chicana about her special oppression in this society.

With their growing involvement in the struggle for Chicano liberation and the emergence of the feminist movement, Chicanas are beginning to challenge every social institution which contributes to and is responsible for their oppression, from inequality on the job to their role in the home. They are questioning "machismo," discrimination in education, the double standard, the role of the Catholic Church, and all the backward ideology designed to keep women subjugated.

This growing awareness was illustrated by a survey taken at the Houston conference. Reporting on this survey, an article in the Los Angeles magazine *Regeneración* states: "84% felt that they were not encouraged to seek professional careers and that higher education is not considered important for Mexican women. . . . 84% agreed that women do not receive equal pay for equal work." The article continues: "On one question they were unanimous. When asked: Are married women and mothers who attend school expected to also do the housework, be responsible for childcare, cook and do the laundry while going to school, 100% said yes. 88% agreed that a social double

*From *International Socialist Review*, October, 1971: pp. 7-9, 31-33.

standard exists." The women were also asked if they felt that there was discrimination toward them within La Raza: 72% said yes, none said no and 28% voiced no opinion.

While polls are a good indicator of the thoughts and feelings of any given group of people, an even more significant measure is what they are actually doing. The impressive accomplishments of Chicanas in the last few months alone are a clear sign that Chicanas will not only play a leading role in fighting for the liberation of La Raza, but will also be consistent fighters against their own oppression as Chicanas around their own specific demands and through their own Chicana organizations.

Last year, the women in MAPA (Mexican-American Political Association) formed a caucus at their annual convention. A workshop on women was also held at a Latino Conference in Wisconsin last year. All three Chicano Youth Liberation Conferences—held in 1969, 1970, and 1971 in Denver, Colorado—have had women's workshops.

In May of this year, women participating at a Statewide Boycott Conference called by the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee in Castroville, Texas, formed a caucus and addressed the conference, warning men that sexist attitudes and opposition to women's rights can divide the farmworker's struggle. Also in May, Chicanas in Los Angeles organized a regional conference attended by some 250 Chicanas, in preparation for the Houston conference and to raise funds to send representatives from the Los Angeles area.

Another gathering held last year by the Mexican-American National Issues Conference in Sacramento, California, included a women's workshop which voted at that time to become the Comisión Femenil Mexicana (Mexican Feminine Commission) and function as an independent organization affiliated to the Mexican-American National Issues Conference. They adopted a resolution which read in part. "The effort of Chicana/Mexican women in the Chicano movement is generally obscured because women are not accepted as community leaders either by the Chicano movement or by the Anglo establishment."¹

In Pharr, Texas, women have organized pickets and demonstrations to protest police brutality and to demand the ousting of the city's mayor. And even in Crystal City, Texas, where La Raza Unida Party has won major victories women have had to organize on their own for the right to be heard. While the men constituted the decision-making body of Ciudadanos Unidos (United Citizens)—the organization of the Chicano community of Crystal City—the women were organized into a women's auxiliary—Ciudadanas Unidas. Not satisfied with this role, the women got together, stormed into one of the meetings and demanded to be recognized as members on an equal basis. Although the vote was close, the women won.

The numerous articles and publications that have appeared recently on la Chicana are another important sign of the rising consciousness of Chicanas. Among the most outstanding of these are a special section in *El Grito del Norte*, an entire issue dedicated to and written by Chicanas published by *Regeneración* and a regular Chicana feminist newspaper put out by Las Hijas de Cuauhtémoc in Long Beach, California. This last group and their newspaper are named after the feminist organization of Mexican women who fought for emancipation during the suffragist period in the early part of this century.

These facts, which are by no means exhaustive of what Chicanas have done in this last period, are plainly contradictory to the statement made by women participating in the 1969 Denver Youth Conference. At that time a workshop held to discuss the role of women in the movement came back to report to the conference: "It was the consensus of the group that the Chicana woman does not want to be liberated."

Although there are still those who maintain that Chicanas not only do not want to be liberated, but do not need to be liberated, Chicanas themselves have decisively rejected that attitude through their actions.

"Machismo"

In part, this awakening of Chicana consciousness has been prompted by the "machismo" she encounters in the movement. It is adequately described by one Chicana, in an article entitled "Macho Attitudes," in which she says:

When a freshman male comes to MEChA [Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán—a Chicano student organization in California] he is approached and welcomed. He is taught by observation that the Chicanas are only useful in areas of clerical and sexual activities. When something must be done there is always a Chicana there to do the work. "It is her place and duty to stand behind and back up her Macho!" . . . Another aspect of the MACHO attitude is their lack of respect for Chicanas. They play their games, plotting girl against girl for their own benefit. . . . They use the movement and Chicanismo to take her to bed. And when she refuses, she is a *vendida* [sell-out] because she is not looking after the welfare of her men.²

This behavior, typical of Chicano men, is a serious obstacle to women anxious to play a role in the struggle for Chicano liberation.

The oppression suffered by Chicanas is different from that suffered by most women in this country. Because Chicanas are part of an oppressed nationality, they are subjected to the racism practiced against La Raza. Since the overwhelming majority of Chicanos are workers, Chicanas are also victims of the exploitation of the working class. But in addition, Chicanas, along with the rest of women, are relegated to an inferior position because of their sex. Thus, Raza women suffer a triple form of oppression: as members of an oppressed nationality, as workers, and as women. Chicanas have no trouble understanding this. At the Houston conference 84 percent of the women surveyed felt that "there is a distinction between the problems of the Chicana and those of other women."

On the other hand, they also understand that the struggle now unfolding against the oppression of women is not only relevant to them, but is their struggle. Because sexism and male chauvinism are so deeply rooted in this society, there is a strong tendency, even within the Chicano movement to deny the basic right of Chicanas to organize around their own concrete issues. Instead they are told to stay away from the women's liberation movement because it is an "Anglo thing."

One needs only to analyze the origins of male supremacy to expose that position for what it is—a distortion of reality and false. The inferior role of women in society does not date back to the beginning of time. In fact, before the Europeans came to this part of the world women enjoyed a high position of equality with men. The submission of women, along with institutions such as the church and the patriarchy, was imported by the European colonizers, and remains to this day part of Anglo society. Machismo—which, as it is commonly used, translates in English into male chauvinism—is the one thing, if any, which should be labeled an "Anglo thing."

When Chicano men oppose the efforts of women to move against their oppression, they are actually opposing the struggle of every woman in this country aimed at changing a society in which Chicanos themselves are oppressed. They are saying to 51 percent of this country's population that we have no right to fight for our liberation.

Moreover, they are denying one half of La Raza this basic right. They are deny-

ing Raza women, who are triply oppressed, the right to struggle around their specific, real, and immediate needs.

In essence, they are doing just what the white, male rulers of this country have done. The white male rulers would want Chicanas to accept their oppression precisely because they understand that when Chicanas begin a movement demanding legal abortions, child care, and equal pay for equal work, this movement will pose a real threat to their ability to rule.

Opposition to the struggles of women to break the chains of their oppression is not in the interests of the oppressed but only in the interest of the oppressor. And that is the logic of the arguments of those who say that Chicanas do not want to or need to be liberated.

The struggle for women's liberation is the Chicana's struggle, and only a strong independent Chicana movement, as part of the general women's liberation movement and part of the movement of La Raza, can ensure its success.

NOTES

1. *Regeneración*, Vol. I, No. 10, 1971, p. 3.
2. *Las Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*, unnumbered edition, p. 9.

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*La Chicana: Her Role in the Past and Her Search for a New Role in the Future**

BERNICE RINCÓN

Woman's struggle to become a person in her own right takes on a peculiar note for the Latin woman. If she also happens to be of Mexican descent, her battle seems almost insurmountable, and yet today the sisters are working to develop a strategy that will enable us to be women people, rather than chattels or pets; and, at the same time, not to so radically disturb the balance of the man-woman relationship that we become neuters.

*From *Regeneración*, Vol. 1, No. 10, 1971: pp. 15-18.

Many of the more enlightened Latino men in the movement are also recognizing that the status quo cannot be allowed to remain unchanged. If we speak of freedom, it must encompass all people equally, regardless of sex. These ideas are being expressed more frequently by the enlightened male leadership in the movement. The ideas are worded differently or perhaps presented in a different way, but the inevitability of change in order to establish a better society is there. César Chávez speaks of this issue to the Campesino [farm worker]. The poet, Roberto Vargas, speaks about it to teachers and college students. El Teatro Triste addresses itself to it in the barrio in its skit, "El Cuchillo" [The Knife]. The status quo must go! It is a new time and we need ~~to~~ to make use of everybody's talent and energy.

Traditionally, Mexican culture has been male-oriented and dominated.

Family Roles

1. Paternal Role: The father wields almost unlimited power within the home. His word is usually law, and he is obeyed unquestioningly by his wife and children, especially the girls. Ordinarily, the girls may not leave the house without his express permission. If there is no father in the home, this role is usually assumed by the eldest son or male in the household. The literature and songs abound with reasons for this life style.
2. Maternal Role: Traditionally, the role of the Mexican woman is one of subordination. "She is expected to be submissive, faithful, devoted, and respectful to her husband and to take the major responsibility for rearing the children." A good wife is not expected to find fault with her husband or to be curious or jealous of what he does outside the home, nor is she supposed to share in his political, economic or social activities unless they are centered around the home.

Women are [considered by traditional Mexican culture] inferior beings, because in submitting, they open themselves up. Their inferiority is constitutional and resides in their sex, their submissiveness, which is a wound that never heals. The Mexican considers woman to be a dark and passive being. He does not attribute evil instincts to her; he even pretends she does not have any. Or, to put it more exactly, her instincts are not her own, but those of the special, because she is an incarnation of the life force, which is essentially impersonal. Thus, it is impossible for her to have a personal, private life, for if she were to be herself, if she were to be mistress of her own wishes, passions or whims, she would be unfaithful to herself. She is an undifferentiated manifestation of life; a channel for the universal appetite. In this sense, she has no desires of her own.

The falsity of this conception is obvious enough when one considers the Mexican woman's sensitivity and restlessness, but at least it does not turn her into an object, a mere thing. She is a symbol, like all women of the stability and continuity of the race. In addition to her cosmic significance she has an important social role, which is to see to it that law and order, piety and tenderness are predominant in everyday life.

This point of view is closely adhered to by both male and female members of the Mexican culture and permeates all strata of society. The head on clash of this point of view with the Anglo-American idea of the woman's role and the reasoning behind it are a direct cause of conflict and alienation in many Mexican-American homes. Most Mexicans of a low socio-economic level are from rural areas, whether they reside in the United States or in Mexico. As a result they have developed those characteristics generally common to rural people. Thus, they are reluctant to accept change, clinging tightly to those attitudes and behavior patterns which give them a feeling of security in the face of situations which tend to point up their inadequacies.

While 80% of the Mexican-American population does reside in the cities in the

United States the major part of the Mexican immigrants are from rural areas. The 1960 Census figures report 1 in 6 Mexican-Americans was employed as a farm laborer. This paper will try to relate this cultural background to the added complexities this brings to the life of Mexican-American women.

It is necessary to understand what constitutes a "bad" woman in the rural-Mexican culture as contrasted with that of the Anglo-American "bad" woman.

It is interesting to note that the image of the "mala mujer"—the "bad woman"—is almost always accompanied by the idea of aggressive activity. She is not passive like the "self-denying mother," the "waiting sweetheart," the "hermetic idol," she comes and goes, she looks for men and then leaves them. Her extreme mobility, through a mechanism similar to that described above, renders her invulnerable. Activity and immodesty unite to petrify her soul. The Mala is hard and impious and independent like the Macho. In her own way she also transcends her physiological weakness and closes herself off from the world. In contrast the Anglo "bad" woman is characterized by her sexually loose conduct and only peripherally by her fulfillment of other social functions. The Anglo tradition of industrial and political democracy has encouraged women to actively seek equal rights and employment outside the home. The emphasis on "getting ahead" has encouraged women to work outside the home and to seek higher education. This has been accomplished with at least the tacit approval of the men in the society. The emphasis on the nuclear family has increased the pressure on parents and children to become independent of each other. Girls are encouraged to be independent and to compete with siblings and others in the race to "get ahead." The "All American" girl is consciously pretty, clever, poised, sophisticated in the ways of society, educated, ambitious, energetic and active, adept at competing and privileged in the world of men, and is a partner in marriage, or so she has been led to believe until now.

This dichotomy in the role of females in the society places much emotional strain on the Mexican-American female who may be 90% Mexican and 10% American or the other way around. Depending on where she is in the acculturation scale she is bound to feel or be made to feel "bad," "enslaved," "wild," "submissive," "chattel," "toy," or unintelligent."

The Chicanos who are traditionalists are still tied to this ideal of Mexican womanhood. The Chicana is torn between being what her man wants her to be and what she knows she must become in order to function in today's action oriented world. She knows that there is already a population explosion, she knows that simple economic facts do not allow for unlimited propagation. She knows that she does not need to suffer and she wants to keep that maturity, that serene security, that ability to change pain to joy and lust to purity.

Traditionally we have encouraged women to stay at home and to work only when it is absolutely necessary for the survival of the family. As inflation and acculturation take place the pressure for women to work increases. Some statistics from the 1960 Census:

Employment of Mexican-American women

Professional 9%

Clerical and Sales 30%

Unemployed 10%

Education of Mexican-American women: 7.1 years

One year of college 6%

Drop-out rate is at least half of the student population.

We need to come to a decision within ourselves. Is material gain a good enough reason to become educated or go to work? If a woman is forced to work or just enjoys working how can she make an adjustment of values so that the feeling of guilt is mitigated? If a woman is going to work, how can we motivate her to aspire to professional status? When we say that a woman's place is in the home do we really mean it for all women?

In a patriarchal system the dependents are protected to a certain degree from the stress and strain of decision making. A girl who is not allowed to go out on dates unchaperoned does not have to trouble herself with wondering what she will do when her date decides to park. A woman who is not allowed to work or know about income does not need to worry about how the rent will be paid. If an error in judgment is made papa or her esposo [husband] must take responsibility if he wants to maintain his leadership; thus life in the patriarchal system has its rewards for those who function well within it. For those who do not it is prison.

In any system that advocates absolute power and authority of one person or group over another is distasteful at times to the subordinate group and the Chicana has had years to contend with this situation in that institution called Machismo as it relates to the Chicana. There are modifications that would be worth considering if we are speaking of social justice for all the people. So that question is what would we change? Perhaps listing some of the positive and negative aspects of this institution will help.

Positive

1. Bravery, loyalty
2. Pride in self as an individual
3. Responsibility of leadership in the family
4. Sacredness of the family (La Raza)
5. Human values: Love of fellows: compassion, suffering, liberty for all
6. Lack of concern for money
7. Love of music, dancing (joy of life)
8. Love of children
9. Respect for religion
10. Respect for elders
11. Modesty and reserve
12. Liberal political orientation
13. Good manners
14. Willingness to fight when needed

Negative

1. Absolute power
 - a. Exploitation
 - b. Self centeredness
 - c. Violence used to maintain power through fear
 - d. Closed aloofness
2. Women seen as a subordinate creature created to make man's lot more comfortable and pleasurable
3. Too much pride
4. Absolute power-inclination to strong man politics; Hero worship-dictatorships
5. There is a sharing of the joys of life only as man sees fit. Woman's place is home.
6. Large families (here the church has also contributed)
7. Too much responsibility placed on the male to maintain his "position"
8. Drinking, wenching, etc., seen as a sign of manhood
9. Fighting seen as a proof of masculinity
10. Too modest and reserved for survival in today's society

What is the motivation for change? Do we need to change in order to become Americans? We do not think so. We are Americans. There are some very positive good things that the Mexican culture has to offer for the improvement of life in these United States. How we go about making change will determine if we are going to be able to do it or if we will be faced with a coalition of backlashes formed of the Anglo society and our men and brothers. The basic conflict is *corazón* [heart/soul] vs. materialism and we must keep this in mind as we push for change.

La Chicana has the best of two cultures at her fingertips. Don't push her to assimilate. We have something good. Take it easy, play it cool and we will come up with something better.

Contrary to the traditional "role" there have always been those who were individuals and therefore were and are admired for their bravery and spirit. The Mexican Poetress Sor. Juana Inés de la Cruz, La Corrigadora Doña Josefa, Las Soldaderas personified by "La Adelita," Amalia Hernández of the Ballet Folklórico de México and countless "Artistas." Today, of the women active in the movement for social justice, the most well-known woman is Dolores Huerta, Vice Chairman of the Farm Workers Union (UFWOC).

We are not without role models and we have support from at least some of our men. We were most impressed by the young women of the MEChA Chicana Caucus northern region held at Stanford University in March 1970. After much discussion about the role of the Chicana in the movement the consensus of opinion was that we do not wish to join with the Anglo Woman's Liberation. We do not want to compete with men. We do want to be given the opportunity to do whatever it is that we do best in the line of work. We want to have our efforts recognized and our success rewarded with more responsibility and when feasible with financial awards. We want to have our ideas recognized and implemented with credits going to the originators. We want to be in on the decision making if we are "leaders" and to work beside our men as equals.

There is progress being made toward social change for all. I found this poem written on a poster in the Teatro Triste center:

India Es Mi Mujer

La mujer was created from the rib of man.
 She was not made from his head to top him,
 Nor out of his feet, to be trampled upon,
 But out of his side, to be equal to him,
 Under his arm, to be protected,
 And under his heart to be loved.
 India Era Mi Madre

and useless rhetoric on this subject. . . ." These are the words of Francisca Flores, founder of Comisión Femenil Mexicana, and editor of *Regeneración* (Chicano Magazine).

We realize that we cannot achieve the changes necessary to make the Chicana a person in her own right without the support and cooperation of at least most of the men in our lives.

We have been to many Chicana conferences and meetings and there are very few Chicanas who want to go along with the Anglo-American woman's movement "women's liberation." We want justice in our daily lives and respect for the work we do. Equal pay for equal work if it is a paid job. Equal recognition if the work is volunteered. These are a few of the goals of the Chicana in the movement.

Look around at the Chicanas you know who have had any degree of success outside the home. You know that few of them could have made it without the encouragement, material help, and respect of their families; especially the fathers, brothers, husbands and sons.

The movement needs every person to be involved. In order to do this the Chicano will have to change. Change is always painful, but La Raza Cósmica is on the move. And our contribution to the world is bearing fruit. The Chicana must be ready for the challenge of the harvest. She must sit at the table as a person in her own right. She must no longer be relegated to the status of serving maid at the feast that celebrates humanity. Viva la Causal and equality and liberty for all the people!

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*Chicana Feminism**

ANNA NIETOGOMEZ

I want to address myself to the common questions that come up in regard to Chicana feminism. What is Chicana feminism? I am a Chicana feminist. I make that statement very proudly, although there is a lot of intimidation in our community and in the society in general, against people who define themselves as Chicana feminists. It sounds like a contradictory statement, a "*Malinche*" statement—if you're a Chicana you're on one side, if you're a feminist, you must be on the other side. They say you can't sta

*From *Caracol*, Vol. 2, No. 5, 1976: pp. 3-5.

on both sides—which is a bunch of bull. Why? Because when you say you're Chicana, you mean you come from a particular community, one that is subject to racism and the exploitation of centuries. When you say you are a feminist you mean you're a woman who opposes the oppression of not only the group in general, but of women in particular. In fact, the statement is not contradictory at all, it is a very unified statement: I support my community and I do not ignore the women in my community (who have been long forgotten). The feminist movement is a unified front made up of both men and women—a feminist can be a man as well as a woman—it is a group of people that advocates the end of women's oppression.

People—reactionaries I call them—sometimes define a feminist as someone who hates men. Maybe this is not totally erroneous, but the label is a tactic used to keep people from listening to the issues. If somebody attacks you for being a Chicana feminist, he's diverting attention from some of the important issues at hand. What are these issues? The movement is one that supports social, economic and political issues in regard to the position of women—bettering the position of the Chicana. The Chicana is a woman and she cannot separate herself from that. One of the primary social issues is the double standard. It says that there is such a thing as male privilege and such a thing as female submission. Another issue is education—women have the right to education. When the woman was conceived it was not automatically determined that she was going to be barefoot, pregnant and tied to the stove. A third issue is child care—it's not a female duty, it is a community responsibility. Economically, the woman should have equal employment regardless of race—equal pay, equal training and an economic position which is not dependent on fathers, husbands and sons. As long as she is economically dependent she will have to allow male privilege, to compromise herself. She will always have to accept the secondary position. Politically, it means equal participation, equal representation, and inclusion of issues which address her as a woman, as a Chicana in the Raza community.

Is Feminism for Anglos?

Marta Cotera wrote an article several years ago saying that feminism is not an Anglo idea. I resent the usual remark that if you're a feminist you have somehow become an Anglo or been influenced by Anglos. That's a sexist remark, whether it comes from hermanos or hermanas. Why? Because of what it is saying—that you, as a Chicana, a Chicana woman, don't have the mentality to think for yourself! Somehow we are only supposed to be repositories—everything we say is either his idea, or the white anglo "her" idea, but not our idea. When we're confronted with these remarks about Chicana feminism, we can say, "Just a minute. Chicanas can think, too. You'd better sit down and listen to what we're thinking, because we're not only thinking it, we're doing it."

The History of Feminism

Let me prove to you that feminism is a world-wide event. It has been a world-wide event since the beginning of oppression. You can find the roots of women's struggle to end oppression of people and of themselves as far back as 200 years before the birth of Christ, in Viet Nam, in China, in Gaul, in Africa, and in the valley of Mexico. We have documentation of women who were queens, rulers, who were feminists: who addressed themselves to the needs of women in their communities, their nations. One of the most renowned feminist of the past is well known throughout the world, though she is not well known by Chicanas. Her name is Sor Juana, and she has been

called one of the first feminists of the Americas (which is incorrect, because there were many pre-Columbian feminists). Several of the North American Indian societies were matriarchal and advocated the non-oppression of women—the non-oppression of anybody. Sor Juana was a seventeenth century genius. She was a genius who happened to be a woman and who therefore had only two alternatives: to marry, or to join the convent and marry God. She chose the latter because she felt it would offer her more flexibility and more opportunity to study. And she did study—she studied very hard. She was enthusiastic, to say the least, about learning. She spoke about women's hair—how the hair was a symbol of women's beauty, but if it covered an empty mind, it was nothing but a mask. She said that not until a woman's mind was equal in beauty to her long hair should she have her long hair, so in three months she would plan to read a certain amount, and if she hadn't she would cut off her hair. In three more months, if she hadn't achieved her goal of, say, three volumes, the hair was to go right back until the goal was reached. Sor Juana is famous for *Respuesta*, a letter to the bishop addressing itself to a letter he sent her praising Sor Juana for her brilliance but telling her that her duty was not to be brilliant but to serve God. The role of women was to be silent, not heard. Sor Juana very politely wrote back, "Surely you must know more than I; however, as I recall, Jesus did not say that women should be silent and not heard. You forget that the temple was a place of learning and discussion, and that women were preaching and talking to their people there, not just bowing their heads in silent prayer or absent-mindedly planning their week's activities. Jesus came into the temple and addressed himself to the people there, those who were speaking there, and those people were the women. Yes, it's my duty to be a servant of God, but how can I understand theology"—theology was a high point of learning in Mexico and in fact it still is—"how can I understand that, if I can't understand biology, geology, psychology? If the world's supposed to be a manifestation of God's great goodness, how can I understand that if I don't know anything about it? These are the prerequisites for my understanding of His great and beautiful powers." So she advocated that women have the right to education. But women did not have this right until after the Revolution. During the eighteenth century they did open some convents where women could go and get educated, but the education was primarily in religious studies.

Feminism In Tejas

Here in the United States we have women who are very involved in the labor movement. I'm sure you know that most of the outstanding, internationally known women recognized for their efforts in the labor movement are Tejanas. Louisa González was a Tejana associated with the Haymarket Massacre. She was involved in organizing an international workers' alliance, and she advocated women's workers rights to pressure unions, to remind unions that women were working in the factories and should have their needs addressed, and that women should support the issues of the union. You have Emma Tenayuca, who was a farmworker organizer, who at the age of 18 had to support the majority of farmworkers in the pecan-shellers strike of 1938. And in El Paso you have the strike against Farah [1972], which was primarily an issue of women. Most of the workers in the factory were women, and 85% of them were Chicanas. The women who went around the nation to ask people to strike Farah Pants for Chicanas did a fantastic thing—the quiet, non-obtrusive, submissive women were coming to say, "You'd better strike Farah Pants."—Because we are workers. Because we demand workers' rights. Because as women, we demand maternity leave, because we ask for free birth

control (and not false birth control), and because we ask for better working conditions for everybody. All these things are part of the history of the *Tejana*, and they are things that Chicanas all over the nation admire and identify with.

Today, What is Chicana Feminism Doing?

Today, Chicana feminism is trying to rally enough women and get them to come out from behind the doors so that everybody can hear us say, "We're a legitimate body. No one can deny that any more. Ask us about our political stance, not our validity, as women fighting for women's rights within the Chicano community." Right now, we're in the process of making the Chicano movement responsible to Chicana issues, making it support issues that involve race, welfare rights, forced sterilization—making the Chicano movement address itself to the double standard about male and female workers, and making it live up to its cry of *Carnalismo* and community responsibility. We're saying, "Prove it! Let's carry it out! Let's support child care. Children are not our individual responsibility but the responsibility of our community." We are working to get women together to build up a base, and working to get the Chicano movement to support and advocate our issues as women.

Is the Chicana Feminist Movement Different from the Anglo Women's Movement?

I myself feel that some of the distinctions made are irrelevant, but it's still very much like asking how the Chicano movement is different from the Black movement. These questions indicate that you're still fighting for recognition of your own identity, and at times I just think, "Well, I'm not here to talk about the Anglo women's movement. If you want to find out about the Anglo movement, you go and find out, and then go and find out about the Chicana movement, and compare them for yourself." Besides, the answers are obvious. The Chicana movement has to address itself to racism, and it is obvious from what Marta Cotera has written, what Evey Chapa has written, in terms of the Texas Women's Caucus (which is primarily Anglo), what you have to deal with. The issue of racism and the issue of class interest. And that class interest is not our interest. However, at the same time, I believe that not all Anglo women are middle class. It's the media that leads you to believe that, and you swallow it. What is the Anglo women's movement? First, you have to understand that it is not a unified movement. There are at least three positions. There are the liberal feminists, who say, "I want access to power. I want access to whatever men have access to. I want women's oppression to end insofar as they do not have these things." Then there are radical feminists, who say that men have the power, and that men are responsible for the oppression of women. A third position is that of women's liberationists, which says that women's oppression is one of the many oppressions in the economic system of this country, that we must understand and support that system as well as correct it and unify people to end all oppressions. Where does the Chicana women's movement stand in relation to these three positions? I do not have the authority to represent anyone in answering that, and the Chicana feminist is in the making from one place to another. But from my point of view, in my own private Los Angeles experience, the general feeling is that men do not have the power. Certainly Chicanos do not have the power, otherwise there would not be a Chicano movement. We recognize that obvious fact. At the same time, we recognize and criticize the fact that the Chicano seems to try to compensate for that lack of power with the use of "male privilege"—coming down with the double standard.

What is Male Privilege?

Here's the double standard: "If I have a meeting, you stay at the house and take care of the kids. If you have a meeting, have it at the house and take care of the kids at the same time." Male privilege is, "Let's fight for equal pay for me, and maybe later on for you." Male privilege sometimes makes the Chicano movement just like a male liberation movement. The implication is this: "Our problem is that women have to work because we are not given our economic position as men." So once the men are paid what they're due, have an economic base as workers, then women won't have to be out in the public world. When liberation comes along, everything will be hunky-dory and the women can stay at home. That says to me, "Whose liberation are you fighting for, anyway? I'm fighting for people's liberation." If the answer is, "I am fighting for people's liberation," I say, "Okay, then if you are, it means there is no 'proper place' for the Chicana except the world as a whole. There is no one place for the Chicana—just the world as a whole."

Welfare Rights

We have other issues and here's how they differ from the Anglo women's movement and the Chicano movement as it stands now. When was the last time you heard about welfare rights at a meeting? When was the last time you heard Gloria Steinem or Betty Friedan talk about welfare rights? Do you know what welfare rights are? Why don't you, if you don't? We're supposed to be poor people. One of the criticisms I have of Chicanas is that we don't use the welfare rights system, therefore we don't make it address our needs.

Rape

For the last year there have been issues of rape in which women have defended themselves. These were Third World women—for example, Inéz García, who suffered from rape and who retaliated. Who supported her? She was sent to jail. Where was the Chicano movement? There were people in the Chicano movement who said that Inéz García deserved it, that everybody knows that women really want to be raped, that she can enjoy it, and that rape doesn't justify the taking of human life. This is an example of a confusion in our community response to an important issue. Chai Lao is an Asian woman; she was arrested by a police officer. He said, "I'll tell you what. I won't take you in if you submit to me." She said no. He raped her; she killed him. Joanne Little is the most nationally publicized example of this. She was a woman, a prisoner. The guard said, "Do me a little favor, honey, and I might do one for you." She said no. He raped her; she killed him. Rape is an act of violent aggression, and it's something we have the right to defend ourselves against.

Child Care

Middle class women ask for more child care centers. In Los Angeles, child care costs about \$150. The figure should be about a third of the rent, but it's equal to the rent. That is my rent. Chicanas ask for free child care. Chicanas ask for bilingual child care, bicultural child care.

Employment

In the middle class, the employment issue is social mobility, it's promotion, tenure. Women with Ph.D's don't want to be secretaries. The issue for the Chicana is just employment. "Give me a job. Give me a good-paying job. Let me have access to training." Again, pure class difference.

Raza Power Means an End to Colonization

These are some of the issues in Chicana feminism. We are saying something very positive. Raza power! Men, women, and children. Everybody. When we say jobs, we mean jobs for all. But something I haven't mentioned is that a lot of the things that are going to change are those things that maybe we revere and sanction and call a part of our culture. If something in our culture that is advocating oppression is unable to be criticized, evaluated and changed, this is wrong. In our culture we happen to say "*la mujer buena*" [the Good Woman] and "*la mujer mala*" [the bad woman]. And if you're active in *Raza Unida*, you're suspected of being *la mujer mala*, and in order to prove that you're not, you have to live the life of a nun. Well, I say the life of a nun is oppressive. "*la mujer buena*" and "*la mujer mala*" are historical ideas that came from the colonization of the people in Mexico. In order to assimilate and acculturate the Indians, they used to control the women by setting up two models. First, they imported poor Spanish women to marry the Spaniards. Their oppressed role was that of the woman who stays home, and the only place she goes is to church or to visit her in-laws. That was the model of the Spanish woman. The model of the Indian woman was different, a very active one. She was the business person; she was the one who controlled the market place, did the crafts, worked in the fields, participated in child care. She was the priestess of religious functions. This was a total role. Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying she wasn't oppressed; I'm not saying that at all. I'm saying it was different, and comparatively speaking, it was a freer role. In order for the colonization to affect everybody, they put up these two roles. They used the concepts of the church, *Marianismo* on the one hand, Mary Magdelene on the other. The Spanish woman and the Indian woman. *La mujer buena* and *la mujer mala*. Clear who's on the top and who's on the bottom! So we perpetuate those two roles and we perpetuate our own colonized situation. We have to recognize what change will bring to this colonization, which we have unintentionally continued.