

Understanding Patriarchy as an Expression of Whiteness: Insights from the Chicana Movement

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INTRODUCTION

One of the arguments that Professor Guinier and I make in *The Miner's Canary*¹ is that whiteness is a social and political category that groups (or individuals) inhabit.² Whiteness is measured by distance from blackness. While this may seem like a binary construction, it is instead better understood as a continuum based on the historical structure of race management in the United States. As such it is both an ascriptive and descriptive category. As a descriptive category, it can be adopted by individuals even if that identity is at odds with the larger social category applied to their group. For example, an individual member of an ethnic group like Mexican-American or Cuban-American might think of and even publicly identify his or herself as “white,” even though he or she is “Hispanic” or “Latino,” broadly considered to be non-white. There are several phenomena at work here—not just self-description, but also the experience of an “other” description. That is, one might be “white,” “Hispanic,” and “non-white” all at the same time, but is rarely called on to enact the social meaning of each of those categories at once. Because of this, the political dimension of race becomes one of its most salient attributes.

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1. LANI GUINIER & GERALD TORRES, *THE MINER'S CANARY: ENLISTING RACE, RESISTING POWER, TRANSFORMING DEMOCRACY* (2002).

2. *Id.* at 34.

Race, of course, is but one aspect of the self or of political or social categorization. Class and gender relations (in addition to other considerations) also combine to structure social relations and individual consciousness. One of the questions that feminists like Catharine MacKinnon and Marylyn Frye asked early on was whether patriarchy has a color.³ This is not as simple or as odd a question as it might first appear. What this question asks is whether the pattern of racial management is structurally similar to or part of the system of gender management, and vice versa.

This paper examines this question through the lens of the early Chicano movement and the emergence of Chicana feminism, with its resistance to patriarchy as well as to white supremacy. Chicana feminism, both in its later form, but more importantly in its nascent or inchoate form, represented a challenge to the racial politics of the Chicano movement. This confrontation emerged through a resistance to the sexual roles that developed during this period.

I. THE MEXICAN-AMERICAN EXPERIENCE: GENDER AND THE MANAGEMENT OF RACE

Whiteness has a gender.⁴ The history of American racial thought held that to be white was to possess certain superior characteristics that on closer inspection turned out to be as gendered as they were racial. Though the content of the construction of race and gender changed over time, the gendered nature of whiteness, and of race in general, remained constant. Whether attempting to claim white privilege for themselves or positioning themselves in opposition to that privilege, America's racial and ethnic minorities have historically defined and redefined themselves in relation to the core characteristics of whiteness. To be white was to be civilized, rational, moral and in command of one's emotions. Of course, these are also gendered characteristics. The absence of these characteristics was stereotyped as definitive of lesser races, and was sometimes even characterized as such by the occupants of those classes. "Those

3. See MARILYN FRYE, *THE POLITICS OF REALITY* 125–27 (1983); CATHARINE A. MACKINNON, *WOMEN'S LIVES, MEN'S LAWS* 84–90 (2005).

4. CATHARINE A. MACKINNON, *TOWARD A FEMINIST THEORY OF THE STATE* (1989).

people” are more “emotional,” “sentimental,” or “hot blooded.” Of course, the emotions generated by the experience of powerlessness and marginalization are part of the social construction of racial categories. However, suffice it to say that ascription and description define the ideal man by negative example. While racialized groups have engaged in this self-definition in order to challenge the racial construction that defines non-white as inferior to white, what has largely passed unnoticed is that this process has tended to reinforce attitudes, institutions and structures of gender that position women subordinate to men.

Both gender and race are social constructions.⁵ These roles have been naturalized into various local expressions and they emerged from a period in which biology was believed to be a prime determinant of one’s social identity. Although biological determinism⁶ and biological essentialism⁷ have largely been rejected today, it is important to remember that gendered and racialized roles are historically, geographically and culturally specific.⁸ Essentialism

5. By social constructions, I mean ideas created by the institutions of social relations. In writing that race and gender are social constructions, I argue that racial and gendered categories and the meanings and characteristics associated with those categories are not universal, inherent or natural. Though the social management of difference often uses appeals to nature or biology to justify its racial and gendered categories, it in fact creates those categories through an unequal distribution of social goods and access to life chances. As Craig Calhoun puts it:

[Social constructionism] challenges at once the idea that identity is given naturally and the idea that it is produced purely by acts of individual will. At their best, social constructionist arguments also challenge “essentialist” notions that individual persons can have singular, integral, altogether harmonious, and unproblematic identities. And by the same token subtle constructionist arguments challenge accounts of collective identities as based on some “essence” or set of core features shared by all members of the collectivity and no others.

CRAIG CALHOUN, *CRITICAL SOCIAL THEORY* 198 (1995).

6. Biological determinism refers to the belief that social consequences are the product of biology (for example, the idea that women are biologically better suited for nurturing roles).

7. Biological essentialism is a close relative to biological determinism, *supra* note 6. Whereas biological determinists see an inexorable link between biology and social consequences, biological essentialists argue that all people who share a biological trait also share social traits.

8.

In philosophy, essentialism refers to a core essence inherent in something—a word, a person, a group—defining what that thing is. Historically, being essentialist on sex or race has meant being biologically determinist: as if people are the way they are, act and think and feel the way they do, have the abilities and resources and occupy the

has not been totally banished, of course. This can be seen in the way in which the aptitude for various jobs, a secretary for example, are understood as “natural.” One only has to look at the recent brouhaha surrounding Harvard president Larry Summers’s remarks about women and science to see that what is considered natural and what is not remains an open question.⁹

One of the early tasks of critics of the extant racial and gender hierarchy was to trace the legal and historical constructions of race and gender. This was necessary in order to challenge the notion that race and gender are objective or universal qualities, and to instead to argue that race and gender are critical determinants of access to power and to social goods.¹⁰ Racial construction, according to Tomás Almaguer, is best understood as the social expression of the competition for access to power and privilege.¹¹ There are different expressions at different times, but race historically determined the places that whites and non-whites would occupy in the constitution of society’s political and economic organization.¹² Similarly, gender

social status they have because of their sex or race specific physiology. What is deemed the essence of race or sex—hence, the people who are raced or sexed—are biological facts like hormones, body type, and skin color. These so-called natural traits, in the essentialist view, determine social outcomes and individual qualities. Essentialism in this sense has long been central to the ideology of racism and sexism in its most vicious forms.

MACKINNON, WOMEN’S LIVES, MEN’S LAWS, *supra* note 3, at 85 (footnotes omitted).

9. See Barbara Kantrowitz, *Sex and Science*, NEWSWEEK, Jan. 31, 2005, available at <http://www.msnbc.com/id/6856839>. “Harvard’s controversial president struck a nerve on campuses around the country when he questioned whether women have the brains for math and physics.” *Id.*

10. See generally TOMÁS ALMAGUER, RACIAL FAULT LINES: THE HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF WHITE SUPREMACY IN CALIFORNIA (1994); NEIL FOLEY, THE WHITE SCOURGE: MEXICANS, BLACKS AND POOR WHITES IN TEXAS COTTON CULTURE (1997); IAN F. HANEY-LÓPEZ, WHITE BY LAW: THE LEGAL CONSTRUCTION OF RACE (1996); LINDA R. HIRSHMAN & JANE E. LARSON, HARD BARGAINS: THE POLITICS OF SEX (1998); NOEL IGNATIEV, HOW THE IRISH BECAME WHITE (1995); DAVID R. ROEDIGER, THE WAGES OF WHITENESS: RACE AND THE MAKING OF THE AMERICAN WORKING CLASS (1991); George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: Racialized Social Democracy and the “White” Problem in American Studies*, 47 AM. Q. 369 (1995); Peggy Pascoe, *Miscegenation Law, Court Cases, and Ideologies of “Race” in Twentieth-Century America*, 83 J. AM. HIST. 44 (1996).

11. ALMAGUER, *supra* note 10, at 3.

12. *Id.* at 19. Thomas Holt notes that the emergence of the modern economy depended on the evolution of a racialized expression of social difference. “What was new was that racialized labor forces became crucial to the mobilization of productive forces on a world scale.” THOMAS C. HOLT, THE PROBLEM OF RACE IN THE 21ST CENTURY 32 (2000).

constructions are also tied to relations of power and privilege. Dealing specifically with the ways in which this has been expressed in law as written, interpreted and enforced, Catharine MacKinnon argues that “state power emerged as male power,”¹³ and male power in its cardinal expression was white.

Although not completely parallel, race and gender are constructed in similar ways. Most believers in white and male superiority have historically justified their views with some combination of cultural and biological essentialism.¹⁴ This ideology of racialism and patriarchy posits that racial and sexual differences, and therefore inequalities, result from “inferior or different genetic endowment” and are therefore natural and inevitable.¹⁵ As the biological foundations of race have largely been discredited, the theory of cultural determinism has, for the most part, replaced explanations of racial differences.¹⁶ However, while biological determinism has largely been discredited with regards to race, it has far from disappeared with respect to gender. It is still respectable in some circles (as the above-mentioned remarks by President Summers demonstrate) to speculate that observed variations between men and women’s social status, career choices, aptitudes and talents are linked to biology.¹⁷

13. MACKINNON, TOWARD A FEMINIST THEORY OF THE STATE, *supra* note 4, at xi. Regarding the focus of her book, MacKinnon wrote:

Unpacking the feminist approach to consciousness revealed a relation between one means through which sex inequality is produced in the world and the world it produces: the relation between objectification, the hierarchy between self as being and other as thing, and objectivity, the hierarchy between the knowing subject and the known object. Epistemology and politics emerged as two mutually enforcing sides of the same unequal coin. A theory of the state which was at once social and discrete, conceptual and applied, became possible as the state was seen to participate in the sexual politics of male dominance by enforcing its epistemology through law. In a very real sense, the project went from marxism to feminism through method to analyze congealed power in its legal form, and state power emerged as male power.

Id.

14. See ALMAGUER, *supra* note 10, at 4; Alan Goodman, *Six Wrongs of Racial Science*, in RACE IN 21ST CENTURY AMERICA 27 (Curtis Stokes et al. eds., 2001).

15. ARTHUR BRITTAN & MARY MAYNARD, SEXISM, RACISM AND OPPRESSION 2 (1984).

16. *Id.* at 15–20.

17. FRYE, *supra* note 3, at 37.

In contrast, cultural determinists argue that racial minorities acquire their inferior racial characteristics from pathological cultures.¹⁸ These critics treat culture as though it were inheritable and static,¹⁹ much like biological determinists treated racial characteristics as inheritable and static. This belief can produce what economist Glenn Loury has called a self-confirming stereotype.²⁰ He explained:

A statistical generalization about some class of persons regarding what is taken with reason to be true about them as a class, but cannot be readily determined as true or false for a given member of a class. Furthermore, this generalization is “reasonable” in the specific sense that it is a self-confirming: Observers, by acting on the generalization, set in motion a sequence of events that has the effect of reinforcing their initial judgment.²¹

In many ways, arguments that depend on cultural determinism mimic older arguments that depended on biological determinism for their logical and moral punch. Both have a kind of fatalism at their core and ignore the ways in which social relations are reproduced. Thus, the impact of the arguments’ reproduction of the conditions that produce the stereotypes upon which people act is almost completely invisible.

When gender is added the mix, it becomes another way to enforce social hierarchies that are understood to be natural and experienced by the actor as normal. There are moral consequences that flow from this delusion. Historically, the imposition of gender norms was one way that institutions of white supremacy were maintained.²² These norms also marked the differences between racial groups.²³ Violations of these norms justified and rationalized the discipline,

18. BRITTAN & MAYNARD, *supra* note 15, at 15–20.

19. *Id.*

20. GLENN C. LOURY, *THE ANATOMY OF RACIAL INEQUALITY* 26–27 (2002).

21. *Id.*

22. GLENDA ELIZABETH GILMORE, *GENDER AND JIM CROW: WOMEN AND THE POLITICS OF WHITE SUPREMACY IN NORTH CAROLINA, 1896–1920*, at 19–20 (1996).

23. *Id.*

abuse and domination of non-whites.²⁴ For example, the most common justification for lynching in the post–Civil War era was to protect white womanhood from the predations of the hypersexual non-white man.²⁵ Of course, the trope of hyper-sexuality applied to non-white women as well as to non-white men. Controlling the sexuality of non-whites became a technique of racial management that had the added benefit of subordinating women. In this way, control of interracial gender relations preserved both white privilege and male privilege.²⁶ The binary relationship that was constructed opposed the pathological gender characteristics of non-white men and women against the normal and natural gender characteristics of white men and women. Because these ascriptive gender characteristics were normalized in the context of white men protecting what was “theirs,” these so-called natural gender characteristics elevated men over women in support of racial hierarchy, and thus normalized a gender hierarchy as well.

This process of social construction constituted whiteness fundamentally as male. Thus, as race is gendered, the superior race assumes the characteristics of the superior gender. Neil Foley commented on the relationship between whiteness and manhood.²⁷ According to Foley, Mexicans living in southwest Texas who had been radicalized by the Mexican Revolution and who fought for their place in the Texas economy and society were considered more manly, and thus more white, than those Mexican and white tenant farmers who did not.²⁸

24. GAIL BEDERMAN, *MANLINESS & CIVILIZATION: A CULTURAL HISTORY OF GENDER AND RACE IN THE UNITED STATES, 1880–1917*, at 50 (1995).

25. *Id.* at 47.

26. RUTH FRANKENBERG, *WHITE WOMEN, RACE MATTERS: THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF WHITENESS* 76 (1993).

27. FOLEY, *supra* note 10, at 100, 110.

28. *Id.* at 108.

Noble described the white “American renter” as a slave who would not struggle for his own emancipation and thus had lost the right to call himself the father of “white American children.” Mexicans, he implied, were usurping their prerogative by their manliness in seeking to protect their wives and children from exploitation.

Id.

Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore further illustrated the connection between race and gender roles.²⁹ Writing about the black middle classes in North Carolina from 1890 to 1920, Gilmore emphasized the relationship between whiteness and manhood.³⁰ She argued that “[i]n the 1890s, southern middle-class white men embraced the racialization of manhood.”³¹ This “racialization of manhood” occurred following black enfranchisement, when whites attempted to restrict black political power with the ideology of the “Best Man,” “who, by faith and by works, exhibited benevolence, fair-mindedness, and gentility.”³² Confident in their racial and male superiority, southern white men believed they “could effectively manipulate the Best Man criteria to exclude most African Americans from officeholding.”³³ Not all whites, however, met the Best Man criteria. Rather, “[t]he Best Man was not real but a theoretical device that worked to limit democracy by invoking the language of merit.”³⁴ Middle-class black men, according to Gilmore, responded by embracing the “Best Man” figure because it offered a set of criteria which, if followed, would grant them power.³⁵ “Reliance on the Best Man ideal meant that African-Americans constantly had to prove their manhood in order to maintain civil rights, even if they could never prove it to whites’ satisfaction.”³⁶ As Gilmore’s study reveals, any engagement by racial minorities with race and whiteness was also an engagement with gender and masculinity (and proper masculinity was also deeply tied to class).

29. GILMORE, *supra* note 22.

30. *Id.* at 63–64.

31. *Id.* at 61.

32. *Id.* at 62.

33. *Id.*

34. *Id.* Black economic and political success during Reconstruction, however, challenged white men’s belief in their inherent superiority. White supremacists responded with a political campaign that, by focusing on sexuality, encouraged whites to unify around race rather than class. *Id.* at 64. Using gendered ideas of race, they portrayed white women of all classes as chaste and black men as unable to control their sexuality, thereby making white women dependent on white men for protection and justifying the repression of black men. *Id.* at 68, 72. Black success, they argued, was simply an attempt to “to get close to white women.” *Id.* at 83. Social equality of blacks and whites thus meant sexual equality. Whites responded with violence towards and disenfranchisement of blacks. *Id.* at 144–46.

35. *Id.* at 64.

36. *Id.* at 63.

Michael Omi and Howard Winant characterized racial minorities' engagement with race and whiteness as an attempt to transform racial meanings through "rearticulation," the "infus[ion]" of "new meaning" into "elements and themes of her/his culture and traditions."³⁷ This "infusion" results in new collective identities and new collective responses to racism.³⁸ Although they focus on the 1960s to the 1980s, Omi's and Winant's treatment of such engagement as an attempt to change racial hierarchies by reshaping racial constructions can be applied to struggles for racial equality that preceded the social justice movements of the 1960s. Omi and Winant regarded race as "an unstable and 'decentered' complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle" as movements for racial equality create new racial meanings in an effort to open "space for political contestation."³⁹

Because of the relationship between the construction of race and gender categories, transformation of racial meanings also resulted in new ways of identifying and responding to gender and to sexism. The remainder of this essay explores the interplay of race and gender as Mexican-Americans struggled to reshape racial formations from the 1930s to the 1970s. Specifically, it explores the racial and gendered identities created by members of the League of the United Latin American Citizens from the 1920s to the mid-1960s, and by members of La Raza Unida Party from the late 1960s to the 1970s. It also explores Mexican-American and Chicana responses to the gendered aspects of emerging Chicano racial identities. Ultimately, this essay begins and ends with a discussion of emergent Chicana feminism that stresses the relationship between race and gender in an effort to

37. MICHAEL OMI & HOWARD WINANT, *RACIAL FORMATION IN THE UNITED STATES: FROM THE 1960S TO THE 1980S*, at 68–69 (1986). The authors are correct in arguing that "[t]he postwar black movement was different from its predecessors in *its ability to confront racial oppression simultaneously as an individually experienced and as a collectively organized phenomenon*." *Id.* at 146 (emphasis added). Rather than racism resulting from "the irrational products of individual pathologies," the black movement and other contemporary minority movements recognized "the institutional and ideological nature of race in America." *Id.* at 10.

38. Howard Winant, *Behind Blue Eyes: Whiteness and Contemporary U.S. Racial Politics*, in *OFF WHITE: READINGS IN POWER, PRIVILEGE, AND RESISTANCE* 3, 12 (Michelle Fine et al. eds., 2004).

39. OMI & WINANT, *supra* note 37, at 10.

reshape gender and racial formations in a more politically inclusive way, both within the movement and more globally. That Chicana feminism took on a specific form in many ways merely highlights the ways in which the feminist movement more generally problematized race and laid the ground work for legal and ideological, as well as tactical and strategic, efforts at progressive change.

II. THE ROOTS OF CHICANA FEMINISM

As I have suggested, it is now a truism, even if a largely under-theorized one, that race is socially constructed. Racial meanings are historically, geographically and culturally specific. Race may have no biological reality, but it has real, concrete social meanings that reflect and often determine relationships, life chances and distribution of resources, thereby segregating and stratifying people according to socially constructed ideas of race.⁴⁰ As noted anthropologist Renato Rosaldo pungently put it:

[Most of us] think race has no reality, that there is no genetic basis for dividing humanity into racial groups that differ in their capabilities for such things as intelligence, criminality, the bourgeois lifestyle, or salsa dancing.

A lack of empirical reality for a set of characteristics attributed to race should not deter us from its study. Consider, for example, the cottage industry that lasted for decades in anthropology. Even when anthropologists swore allegiance to the flag of agnosticism, they still wrote volumes on magic and witchcraft. Anthropologists did this from two angles. One hedged with qualifiers, like “they perform this ritual [described in minute detail] in the belief that it will cause rain.” In such statements, putative was a handy word. The other, was to say

40. See generally ALMAGUER, *supra* note 10; IGNATIEV, *supra* note 10; OMI & WINANT, *supra* note 37; ROEDIGER, *supra* note 10. As recently as October 18, 2004, the New York Times reported that the wealth advantage of white families has continued to widen. *Study Says White Families' Wealth Advantage Has Grown*, N.Y. TIMES, Oct. 18, 2004, at A13. “White households had a median net worth . . . 11 times that of Hispanic households and more than 14 times that of black households. . . .” *Id.*

that witchcraft was real in its effects, such as driving a stake through a putative witch's heart.⁴¹

Gender is similarly socially constructed and is as historically, geographically and culturally specific as race.⁴² It is instructive that Rosaldo chose the example of witches to illustrate the concrete consequences of occupying an unreal position. Gender, like race, "determines life experience, power, and privilege, and the division of labor is created on the basis of it."⁴³ Feminism, according to Cynthia Orozco, "is a recognition of the domination of men over women and attempts by women to end male privilege. . . . Feminism is necessary for liberation."⁴⁴ The centrality of the challenge of feminism was clear: no movement for liberation would be complete without it also being feminist.

One of the early formulations that attempted to delineate the specific difference and contribution of Chicana feminism was its characterization as a community-based feminism driven by the material conditions and needs of the larger community, as articulated through feminism.⁴⁵ Chicana feminism emerged out of the history of struggle by Chicanas *for* their communities and out of a desire to change Chicanas' positions *within* those communities that they have worked to protect, and, through that engagement, to change the position of women in society.⁴⁶ Like other feminists of color, Chicana feminists have developed an analysis that begins with the interconnectedness of race and gender as a way of guiding important

41. Renato Rosaldo, Remarks at a Plenary Session of the American Anthropological Association Conference (Nov. 23, 2002). As noted in the New York Times in February of this year: "The police in northeastern Limpopo Province arrested 90 youths and said more arrests were likely after a rampage in which 39 homes were burned to the ground, apparently in a fruitless hunt for a witch." Michael Wines, *World Briefing Africa: South Africa: Homes Burned in Witch Hunt*, N.Y. TIMES, Feb. 26, 2005, at A7.

42. See generally BEDERMAN, *supra* note 24; GILMORE, *supra* note 22.

43. Cynthia Orozco, *Sexism in Chicano Studies and the Community*, in CHICANA VOICES: INTERSECTIONS OF CLASS, RACE, AND GENDER 11, 13 (Teresa Córdova et al. eds., 1993) (footnote omitted).

44. *Id.* at 14.

45. Vicki L. Ruiz, *Claiming Public Space at Work, Church and Neighborhood*, in LAS OBRERAS: CHICANA POLITICS OF WORK AND FAMILY 33 (Vicki Ruiz ed., 2000).

46. ALFREDO MIRANDÉ & EVANGELINA ENRIQUE, LA CHICANA: THE MEXICAN-AMERICAN WOMAN 236-39 (1979).

struggles for social equality without privileging either aspect of their social identity.

The line of Chicana feminism is traceable through the history of *Mexicanas*, on both sides of the border, who, as mothers, wives, workers and activists, resisted the exploitation and subordination of their communities.⁴⁷ This historic resistance illuminated for early Chicana feminists the ways in which interlocking oppressions of race, class, and gender function as determinants of their social position, and thus are crucial for strategies of resistance. This interlaced oppression, according to Denise A. Segura, “refers to the interplay among class, race, and gender, whose cumulative effects place women of color in a subordinate social and economic position relative to men of color and the majority white population.”⁴⁸ According to Mirandé and Enrique, this combination of oppressions describes the impacts of the ideology of cultural assimilation (understood as “erasure” rather than as “transcendence”), the sexual discrimination experienced by all women, and the internal oppression Chicanas face from their own communities.⁴⁹ These were not just theoretical fault lines, they were (and continue to be) reflected in the segmentation of the labor market according to race and gender, as well as in the unequal divisions of labor within the home. This critique also reflects the pernicious effects of the failure to valorize labor in the home *as* labor.

Though *Mexicana* and Chicana activism predated the Chicano and women’s movements, much of Chicana feminist thought developed out of Chicana engagement with those movements. Chicana dissatisfaction with the women’s movement resulted from what Chicanas felt to be white women’s refusal to acknowledge the importance of *raza* and their inability to situate sexism and feminism within a family and community that Chicanas had neither the

47. See Maylei Blackwell, *Contested Histories: Las Hijas de Cuauhtémoc, Chicana Feminisms, and Print Culture in the Chicano Movement, 1968–1973*, in *CHICANA FEMINISMS: A CRITICAL READER* 59, 59 (Gabriela F. Arredondo et al. eds., 2003). For a history of the Chicana-led pecan sheller strike in San Antonio, Texas, see MIRANDÉ & ENRÍQUE, *supra* note 46, at 229.

48. Denise A. Segura, *Chicanas and Triple Oppression in the Labor Force*, in *CHICANA VOICES*, *supra* note 43, at 47, 48.

49. MIRANDÉ & ENRÍQUE, *supra* note 46, at 12–13.

privilege nor the desire to leave.⁵⁰ As Elizabeth Martínez explained, Chicana and white women possessed “clashing worldviews”⁵¹ regarding family, community and men. For non-white women, family

often serves as a fortress . . . a source of strength for a people whose identity is constantly under attack. Within that fortress, the woman as mother remains central. . . . For young, alienated Anglo women, on the other hand, the family—especially when nuclear—is often seen as an oppressive, patriarchal institution that limits women to the roles of housewife and mother. Her attitude is almost the opposite of the Chicana’s.⁵²

As Martínez suggests, Chicanas do not view traditional female roles as inherently disempowering. Rather, for many Chicanas, their roles as mothers and wives are inseparable from their roles as community activists; their responsibility to their communities is an extension of their responsibility to their families.⁵³ For example, in her study of The Mothers of East Los Angeles (MELA), an environmental justice organization of over 400 Mexican-American women, Mary Pardo writes, “[h]ere as in other times and places, the women’s activism arises out of seemingly “traditional” roles, addresses wider social and political issues, and capitalizes on informal associations sanctioned by the community. . . . Often, women speak of their communities and their activism as extensions of their family and household responsibility.”⁵⁴ MELA is continuing Chicanas’ legacy of “fus[ing] private life and public space in pursuit of social justice”⁵⁵ and is participating in Chicana feminists’ attempts

50. *Id.* at 241.

51. ELIZABETH MARTÍNEZ, *DE COLORES MEANS ALL OF US: LATINA VIEWS FOR A MULTI-COLORED CENTURY* 164 (1998).

52. *Id.* at 183.

53. Ruiz, *supra* note 45, at 30.

54. Mary Pardo, *Mexican American Women Grassroots Community Activists: “Mothers of East Los Angeles,”* in *CHICANA LEADERSHIP: THE FRONTIERS READER* 221, 221 (Yolanda Flores Niemann et al. eds., 2002). Mexican-American women living in East Los Angeles organized MELA in 1986 in response to the proposed location of a prison in their neighborhood. *Id.* at 223. The group has since organized against the location of other harmful facilities near the neighborhood and has joined efforts with environmental justice groups around California and the Southwest. *Id.*

55. VICKI L. RUIZ, *FROM OUT OF THE SHADOWS: MEXICAN WOMEN IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICA* 75 (1998).

to reconstruct conceptions of community, family and leadership in ways that empower women as leaders in Chicana/o movements.

As a result, Chicanas who struggled against the oppression of their communities were alienated by white feminists who had a less culturally specific analysis of male power. Perhaps another way of thinking about it is that it was culturally specific to white culture, which to white feminists seemed acultural. In addition, many white feminists' demand for the unification of women in opposition to sexism required Chicanas to subordinate their culturally and racially specific identities and experiences. It was as though they were being asked to give up the very knowledge that enabled them to resist the dominant cultural and political formations on multiple levels. Chicanas, Martínez writes, responded with "a self-defined Chicana feminism."⁵⁶

This self-defined feminism, however, also challenged Chicano activists' demands that Chicanas unify around racial identity in the struggle against racism and that they subordinate their experiences and concerns as women. Chicanas found themselves participating in "a struggle that called for an end to the oppression of Chicanos—discrimination, racism, poverty—goals which Chicanas supported unequivocally"⁵⁷ but that "did not propose basic changes in male-female relations or in the overall status of women."⁵⁸ Instead of challenging unequal gender relationships, Chicano activists embraced a rhetoric that empowered men without confronting the traditional and subordinate roles occupied by women.

Part of this is explained by the very nature of the gendering of race, so that a confrontation with racism would inevitably include claims to equal "manliness." The rhetoric of the Chicano movement challenged whites' perception of Mexican-American men as passive, lazy and therefore less manly than whites. Like the struggles documented by Foley in the cotton culture of Texas,⁵⁹ "manliness" was the entry point to resistance, and vice versa. Yet that process

56. MARTÍNEZ, *supra* note 51, at 164. Regarding the relationship between Chicana and white feminists, see also MIRANDÉ & ENRÍQUE, *supra* note 46, at 238–89.

57. MIRANDÉ & ENRÍQUE, *supra* note 46, at 324.

58. *Id.*

59. FOLEY, *supra* note 10.

necessarily foregrounded a confrontation *within* patriarchy, rather than a confrontation *with* patriarchy, as the path to liberation. Chicano politics was a “tough-guy politics” that presented Chicano cultural nationalism and the idea of Aztlán⁶⁰ in “ferociously macho imagery.”⁶¹ In accordance with this stance, activists deployed movement rhetoric that glorified the Mexican family as a form of community that was distinct from what was viewed as an emotionally thin and atomized white form of community.⁶² This idealization, positioned as a form of cultural distinctiveness with a political bite, obscured the ways in which the rhetoric uncritically adopted patriarchal values and practices, absorbed those values into the movement, and imitated those practices in its leadership styles and organizing methods.

According to Cynthia Orozco, Chicanos responded to Chicana feminist critiques of this “tough-guy politics” by accusing Chicanas of acting like white middle- or upper-class women, of diverting attention from the more important issues of race and class exploitation, and of threatening the destruction of the family, which, in the rhetoric valorizing it, represented the basis of Chicano culture and resistance.⁶³ Chicanas responded in a number of ways. Vicki Ruiz writes that the development of Chicana feminism initially divided Chicanas into feminists and loyalists, the latter of whom “believed that one should ‘stand by your man’ and ‘have babies por la causa.’”⁶⁴

It is easy to understand both responses. The critique offered by Movement activists created a threat of being written out of the community, where membership in the community was both a source of identity and of strength. Yet this threat did not eliminate the feminist critique, but instead merely hastened the development of its

60. Aztlán is a mythical land north of Mexico City inhabited by Aztecs before colonial invasions that activists claimed was the now-colonized Southwest. See MARTÍNEZ, *supra* note 51, at 126–27; MIRANDÉ & ENRIQUE, *supra* note 46, at 14; JOSÉ DAVID SALDÍVAR, BORDER MATTERS: REMAPPING AMERICAN CULTURAL STUDIES 116–17, 195 (1997).

61. Elizabeth Martínez, “Chingón Politics” *Die Hard: Reflections on the First Chicano Activist Reunion*, in LIVING CHICANA THEORY 123, 126–27 (Carla Trujillo ed., 1998).

62. Orozco, *supra* note 43, at 12.

63. *Id.*

64. RUIZ, *supra* note 55, at 111.

specifically Chicana cast. Thus, a Chicana feminist movement quickly appeared both within and outside of the broader Chicano movement. By embracing the Chicano movement, it challenged Chicana/o activists to think “about how racism and sexism are interrelated, reinforcing structures in a system that identifies domination with castration, that quite literally casts politics in sexual metaphor.”⁶⁵ Chicanas also responded by struggling to redefine power relationships within *la familia*, a word that encompasses both family and community.⁶⁶ Combining race and gender critiques of social inequality in search of “a truly inclusive political consciousness that embraces all who have been rejected,”⁶⁷ Chicana feminists argued that “feminism must be anti-racist . . . and anti-racism must be feminist.”⁶⁸

III. LULAC: THE ROLE OF RACE AND GENDER IN THE ADVANCEMENT OF AMERICAN SOCIETY

In 1929, four Texas-based organizations united to form LULAC, the League of United Latin American Citizens.⁶⁹ That year, a news reporter wrote that “[t]he purpose of the United Latin American Citizens is to promote the moral, economic, intellectual and political evolution of American citizens of Latin origin residing in Texas.”⁷⁰ A primarily middle-class organization, LULAC embraced assimilation into the United States, a country whose democratic and individualistic principles its members idealized.⁷¹ LULAC believed that American society represented civilization at its most advanced; thus, by embracing American culture, language and norms, Mexican-Americans could advance alongside of and into American, or Anglo-

65. Martínez, *supra* note 61, at 128.

66. MIRANDÉ & ENRÍQUE, *supra* note 46, at 107.

67. Aída Hurtado, *The Politics of Sexuality in the Gender Subordination of Chicanas*, in *LIVING CHICANA THEORY*, *supra* note 61, at 383, 417.

68. MARTÍNEZ, *supra* note 51, at 183.

69. BENJAMIN MÁRQUEZ, *LULAC: THE EVOLUTION OF A MEXICAN AMERICAN POLITICAL ORGANIZATION* 17 (1993).

70. Federation of Three Groups is Organized (undated, 1929) (unpublished manuscript, on file with author).

71. MÁRQUEZ, *supra* note 69, at 37–38.

Saxon, society.⁷² According to LULAC, racial discrimination, not racial inferiority, combined with insufficient attempts at integration, prevented Mexican-Americans from advancing socially and economically.⁷³ Consequently, LULAC waged a two-front battle that involved ending discrimination, particularly within education, and “assist[ing] and encourag[ing] about 800,000 people of Mexican descent, now residing in Texas, to assimilate as rapidly as possible, to fuse and transform themselves, in accordance with the customs and in so far as they may be good customs.”⁷⁴ The ideology was easily summarized: “Education, union and quick adaptation to the prevailing customs and usages of best citizenry of this country, will steer us safely over the seas of racial discrimination. . . .”⁷⁵

In fighting racial discrimination, however, LULAC did not challenge racial hierarchies, but instead simply challenged their place within the existing racial hierarchy that denied Mexican-Americans white privileges. Rather than argue for racial equality between *all* of America’s racial groups, LULAC manipulated what Gail Bederman referred to as the “discourse of civilization”⁷⁶ in order to claim racial equality for Mexican Americans. This discourse, according to Bederman, posited that societies advance according to their members’ respective racial inferiority or superiority.⁷⁷ Civilization “denoted a precise stage in human racial evolution” at which only the white race had arrived, and “people sometimes spoke of civilization as if it were itself a racial trait, inherited by all Anglo-Saxons and other ‘advanced’ white races.”⁷⁸ The ideology of advanced races and civilization led LULAC members to demand full rights based on claims that persons of Latin extraction descended from a race as advanced as that of Anglo-Saxons.⁷⁹ This idea of advanced or retarded races was supported by respectable anthropological theories,

72. *Id.* at 20–21.

73. *Id.* at 22–23.

74. M.C. Gonzales, *The Aim of LULAC*, LULAC NEWS (Mar. 1932).

75. F. Valencia, *Editorial*, LULAC NEWS (Dec. 1931).

76. BEDERMAN, *supra* note 24, at 23.

77. *Id.* at 25–27.

78. *Id.* at 25.

79. MÁRQUEZ, *supra* note 69, at 32–34.

yet it is unclear whether LULAC's founders shared these beliefs or whether they were just trying to use them to their advantage.

First published in 1932, *LULAC News* reveals through its editorials and news articles the belief that racial superiority and inferiority determined social evolution and progress. It also reveals the new racial meanings LULAC worked to create in order to gain entry into American civilization. Challenging the notion that persons of Latin extraction descended from an inferior race, LULAC members claimed that Mexican-Americans constituted a white ethnic group or alternatively that they were a superior mix of "the hot blood of adventurous Castilian noblemen, the whitest blood in the world, and the blood of cultured Aztecs and fierce Apaches, the reddest blood in the world."⁸⁰ Racially superior, Mexican-Americans possessed the characteristics of civilized people and deserved to be treated as such. As Tomás A. Garza wrote in a LULAC News editorial, "[t]he Latin-American People are too great to be isolated from the Citizenry of this Country. They are naturally gifted with sublime qualities: such as, Art, Music, Patriotism, Loyalty, Courtesy, trained to do great and noble things."⁸¹ Creating alchemy out of the discourses of race, progress and civilization to serve their purpose, LULAC members argued that discrimination against Mexican-Americans, a civilized people who descended from a civilized race, impeded the advancement of American civilization.⁸² In an effort to further this advancement

[t]he Great Leaders of the noble men who are active and anxious to see the United States of America progress in perfect Peace and who are lovers of Democracy, Justice and Humanity are performing an unselfish diplomatic duty of bringing about a perfect understanding between two GREAT PEOPLE, both descended from the White Race.⁸³

80. Rudolfo A. De La Garza, *Who Are You*, LULAC NEWS (Sept. 1932).

81. Tomás A. Garza, *LULAC: A Future Power*, LULAC NEWS (Feb. 1932).

82. MÁRQUEZ, *supra* note 69, at 31.

83. Garza, *supra* note 81.

In March, 1932, M.C. Gonzales, then President General of LULAC, wrote an editorial in which he explained LULAC's views about the relationship between race and civilization.⁸⁴

The existence of a people known to be members of a vigorous and masterful race commingling with other races of a strong force of character and high civilization, the fusions of such people, in the end tends to bring out the force and character and the fertility of intellect that create and perpetuate a leading nation . . . We say this upon the broad principle that it does not make any difference what ship [on which] an individual came over.⁸⁵

“Vigorous” races possessed “strong” characters necessary to advance civilization or American society—the two were synonymous. LULAC thus “conflated biological human evolutionary differences with moral and intellectual human progress”⁸⁶ in order to claim the same social space as whites.

Paradoxically, LULAC members criticized Anglos for conflating culture with race when such connotations essentialized Mexican-Americans as dirty, uneducated and lazy, rather than as noble and civilized.⁸⁷ In one LULAC News article, H. T. Manuel distinguished between early Texans of “a strong native race of relatively high culture” and recent immigrants “of limited culture and meager opportunity.”⁸⁸ He complained that “the attitude[s] of many Anglo-Americans are determined by the conditions found among the poor . . . Conditions which in reality are economic and cultural are supposed to be racial.”⁸⁹

Also paradoxically, LULAC members claimed racial superiority while simultaneously stressing the need to encourage, through education, the evolution of Mexican-Americans so that LULAC members would, “by our actions, place our racial group not at the

84. Gonzales, *supra* note 74.

85. *Id.*

86. BEDERMAN, *supra* note 24, at 27.

87. MÁRQUEZ, *supra* note 69, at 31–32.

88. H.T. Manuel, *The Latin American Child in Texas*, LULAC NEWS (Feb. 1932).

89. *Id.*

bottom of all the others, but at the top.”⁹⁰ For LULAC, positive evolution meant the creation of ideal American citizens who conformed to American culture while maintaining pride in their unique past and who fulfilled the obligations of American citizens.⁹¹ One LULAC News editorial stated:

We cannot be good and loyal citizens, however enlightened we may be, unless we contribute something toward our country’s progress and culture. Our race has distinguished itself in the past by giving Europe the best there is in literature, arts and sciences. It is our duty to carry out these accomplishments here in America . . . and demonstrate to the world . . . that we can excel other races in literature, arts and sciences here⁹²

LULAC members believed that it was possible to create through education a “better race,” one that was “more capable, efficient and respected” and that was “proud of its origin and its glorious past.”⁹³ Education acted as a civilizing agent, for it “enables its possessors to understand and enjoy the cultural traditions of civilized humanity. . . . Nature furnished the impulses of growth, but care guides them aright . . . Nature without man is wild and barbarous. Man without an education is ignorant and useless.”⁹⁴

By July 1937, Mexican-Americans had formed LULAC councils in New Mexico, Arizona and California.⁹⁵ LULAC ideologists strove both to prove their racial superiority and to advance as a race; they challenged the belief in Mexican-American racial inferiority by presenting to themselves and to dominant society images of Mexican-American men and women who were ideal, civilized citizens.⁹⁶ Mario García argues that “[a]s part of its effort to Americanize the Mexican-American image, LULAC upheld middle-class role models . . . LULAC equated Americanism with middle-class success and

90. Editorial, LULAC NEWS (Oct. 1932).

91. MÁRQUEZ, *supra* note 69, at 23.

92. J.T. Canales, *Intelligent Citizenship and Civic Pride*, LULAC NEWS (Mar. 1939).

93. Benjamin Osuna, *Education for Leadership*, LULAC NEWS (Dec. 1938).

94. *Why an Education?*, LULAC NEWS (Feb. 1937).

95. J.T. Canales, *The Westward Trend of Lulac*, LULAC NEWS (July 1937).

96. DAVID MONTEJANO, *ANGLOS AND MEXICANS IN THE MAKING OF TEXAS, 1836–1986*, at 232 (1987).

believed that true leadership could emanate only from the middle class.”⁹⁷ LULAC also equated Americanism and ideal citizenship with gendered characteristics; ideal male citizens exhibited ideal manhood and female citizens ideal womanhood. For LULAC members, as for much of American society, “the discourse of civilization had taken on a very specific set of meanings which revolved around three factors: race, gender, and millennial assumptions about human evolutionary processes.”⁹⁸

LULAC also embraced the ideology of the Best Man, as described earlier, which fit well into its conservative economic politics and its belief that once racial discrimination was eliminated, Mexican-Americans could advance as individuals according to their respective worth.⁹⁹ LULAC News was filled with images of “ideal men” who were educated, hardworking, self-reliant and noble. For example, in one article about the upcoming Del Rio School Segregation case, the author wrote about the three Mexican-American lawyers who would argue before the Supreme Court.¹⁰⁰ The author stated:

In the Gentlemen we have placed our utmost confidence and trust. Because of their unquestioned ability; because of their undivided interest in this case; because of their worthy and well proven merits; Because of their unblemished Character and noble past records, they have been selected to go before the noble and high minded Magistrates of the Supreme Court in Washington. . . .¹⁰¹

In July, 1932, LULAC News dedicated the month’s issue to a Dr. C.E. Castañeda, a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin, a professor and an author of five books.¹⁰² According to one writer, Castañeda was a “distinguished scholar, the educated gentleman, the true patriot, one of our outstanding representatives of whom the

97. MARIO T. GARCÍA, *MEXICAN AMERICANS: LEADERSHIP, IDEOLOGY, AND IDENTITY, 1930–1960*, at 37 (1989).

98. BEDERMAN, *supra* note 24, at 25.

99. See MÁRQUEZ, *supra* note 69, at 48.

100. Tomas Z. Garza, *Forward to Washington!*, LULAC NEWS (Oct. 1931).

101. *Id.*

102. M.C. Gonzales, *Honoring Dr. C.E. Castañeda*, LULAC NEWS (July 1932).

Latin-American race is proud.”¹⁰³ In another issue, an obituary about a LULAC member read, “[t]he white velvety texture of the multiple fronds, represent the purity and integrity of the man; his life was clean, he was straight; fine in though [sic], high in ideals, sure in the fulfillment.”¹⁰⁴ The embrace of ideal manhood presumed ideal womanhood. Yet the embrace of that ideal often worked to restrict women’s role in society and within LULAC. One LULAC News editorial reveals how LULAC weaved together ideas of civilization, racial superiority and gender norms in their struggle for racial equality with whites.¹⁰⁵ The editorial noted:

Spanish Civilization and Culture still holds its own and triumphs south of the Rio Grande and to us north of that line, and of the blood, it has left a legacy that cannot be easily surpassed in this melting pot of nations. The charm of the great southwest, our triumph in the arts, the Spanish influence felt here and there, which insure the sanctity of the home, and virtue of our women stand as a solid wall against the evils of modern civilization. History seethes with countless heroes and achievements of men of the race.¹⁰⁶

Yet, for women to be “virtuous,” LULAC documents reveal that it required women to restrict themselves to traditional female roles.¹⁰⁷ In this view, women who exhibited ideal womanhood restricted themselves to doing “women’s work,” such as “assisting in orphanages and health clinics, sponsoring youth activities, and collecting and donating toys and clothes to underprivileged children.”¹⁰⁸ For J. Reynolds Flores, women’s work involved “mak[ing] home the most beautiful spot on earth and herself the most attractive woman, as well as the worthiest.”¹⁰⁹ While education would

103. *Id.*

104. Mauro M. Machado, *In Memoriam*, LULAC NEWS (Nov. 1932).

105. *Editorial*, *supra* note 90.

106. *Id.*

107. J. Reynolds Flores, *How to Educate Our Girls*, LULAC NEWS (Dec. 1932).

108. GARCÍA, *supra* note 97, at 39.

109. Flores, *supra* note 107.

create self-reliant and virtuous citizens out of men, it would create “successful *wives*” out of women.¹¹⁰ In an editorial, Flores posited:

The foundation of society rests on its homes. The success of our homes rests on the wives. Therefore, first of all, teach our girls how to be successful wives. . . . Train them to do small things well, and to delight in helping others, and instill constantly in their minds the necessity for sacrifice for others pleasure as a means of soul development . . . Teach them the value of making themselves attractive by good health, physical development, neat dress, and perfect cleanliness. The worthy woman must learn that her worth alone will not keep her husband in love with her. . . . Unselfishness, perseverance, patience, and cheerfulness, must be her constant aids, and above all, tact.¹¹¹

That ideal women were considered in many ways inferior to ideal men is reflected in the failure to incorporate women’s auxiliaries into LULAC until 1932, in the monopolization of authority by male members, and in the types of work done by women’s councils. Of the thirty presidents who presided over LULAC from 1929 to 1965, all were men.¹¹² Of course, this was as much a function of the time as of LULAC’s uncritical internal politics. However, changing gender politics would ultimately have an impact on the structure of the organization. In May, 1934, there were fifty-five men’s councils and nine women’s councils.¹¹³ At the Fifteenth National Assembly, held in June, 1944, of twelve members chosen to serve on committees, two were women.¹¹⁴ Of the councils that attended, eight were men’s councils and two were women’s councils.¹¹⁵ Of general officers elected, one out of fifteen was a woman, Helen Duran, who was elected as Second Vice President General.¹¹⁶ While the women’s

110. *Id.*

111. *Id.*

112. George J. Garza, *History of LULAC: Told One of Few Times*, OBSERVATORIO LATINA (Houston), Jun. 26, 1966.

113. Ivey Gonzalez, *Organizations of Latin-Americans in Wichita Falls, Texas*, LULAC NEWS (May 1934).

114. Minutes of the Fifteenth National Assembly (Jun. 24–25, 1944) (on file with author).

115. *Id.*

116. *Id.*

councils did play important and independent roles, these roles often centered on planning social events and fundraisers and assisting with LULAC meetings.¹¹⁷

Despite LULAC's patriarchal attitudes and practices, LULAC women used their involvement in LULAC to push the boundaries of traditional women's work and to claim a more active role in LULAC and in Mexican-American society.¹¹⁸ LULAC women also manipulated discourses of civilization and of racial advancement, arguing that women as well as men were necessary for the improvement of persons of Latin extraction.¹¹⁹ In 1932, LULAC News reported on a music-literary program organized by a Ladies Auxiliary at which one member "addressed the meeting with a very interesting address touching upon the work that the women must perform in carrying out the Aims and Purposes of the League. The ideas were very clearly stated and denoted the clear conception that our sister organization has the things that Lulac stand for."¹²⁰

Two years later, Ivey Gonzalez wrote about a LULAC organization in Wichita Falls, Texas.¹²¹ She noted:

One of the best indications of our successful undertaking is brought out by the fact that the women have organized a Council and have 17 active and passive members and 4 honorary members. They are enthusiastic over the prospect of making a better organization than the men have. It is likely that they will soon realize their desire. Women are like that. When they get started they are to go further than men. At the same time, it is a fact that where the women go to men will follow, so it seems that our people will soon have their hopes realized.¹²²

Yet another LULAC News editorial encouraged the creation of more ladies' councils as a large number of men's councils went

117. See, e.g., *Vote of Thanks*, LULAC NEWS (Jan. 1933).

118. *We Need More Ladies Councils*, LULAC NEWS (July 1937).

119. F.T. Martínez, *Around the Lulac Shield*, LULAC NEWS (Dec. 1937).

120. *Ladies Auxiliary*, LULAC NEWS (Oct. 1932).

121. Gonzalez, *supra* note 113.

122. *Id.*

inactive.¹²³ The author “challeng[ed] the women to come to the rescue” and to “get more Ladies Councils to join our League so that we may prove to our brothers that we can accomplish more than they can.”¹²⁴ In Albuquerque, the Ladies Council argued that “the future of Lulackism does not depend only in what the men are doing but also in the part that the women will play to further the cause for which the Organization was founded.”¹²⁵ Though encouraging expanded roles for LULAC women, the author described the members of the Albuquerque Ladies Council in both modern and traditional ways.

Other issues of LULAC News reveal the tension between women aspiring to break free of traditional roles while maintaining pride in their roles as mothers and wives.¹²⁶ In 1939, the Ladies Organizer General proposed and successfully organized the sponsorship of the May issue of LULAC News.¹²⁷ Her actions, one editorialist wrote, proved that “willingness to contribute to the progress of our League can be accomplished by our women as well as the men.”¹²⁸ In the same issue, LULAC News presented biographies of members of various Ladies Councils.¹²⁹ These included the biographies of women who had attended college or professional school and who had worked outside of the home, many as teachers and professors, and had served on education-related boards and committees.¹³⁰

García argued that LULAC women were influenced by “modernizing trends in the United States,” in which women were acquiring higher education and working outside of the home in larger numbers, and that they “hoped to adapt the traditional role of Mexican women to an American context.”¹³¹ A *LULAC News* editorial lends support to his argument.¹³² The author wrote:

123. *We Need More Ladies Councils*, *supra* note 118.

124. *Id.*

125. Martínez, *supra* note 119.

126. F.I. Montemayor, *Women's Opportunity in Lulac*, LULAC NEWS (Dec. 1937).

127. LULAC NEWS (May 1939).

128. *A Worthy Precedent Established*, LULAC NEWS (May 1939).

129. *Biographies of Ladies Council No. 9*, LULAC NEWS (May 1939).

130. *Id.*

131. GARCÍA, *supra* note 97, at 39.

132. Montemayor, *supra* note 126.

The idea that “the woman’s place is in the home” passed out of the picture with hoop skirts and bustles, and now it is recognized that women hold as high a position in all walks of life as do the men. . . . The female gender of the species is making her way into the functioning of all phases of world activity And women Lulac must realize that it is now time to get into our League, and stay in it.¹³³

The author cited examples of women who pioneered the movement of women outside of the home, such as Carrie Nation, a prohibition activist; Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins; Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt; and Amelia Earhart.¹³⁴ Calling on more women to join the organization, the author argued that “[w]omen can become as outstanding in the work of the Lulac organization as in any other type of work. There is a place for them, and there is a great need for their services.”¹³⁵ She also manipulated ideas of racial advancement to position women in a role that contributes to that advancement.¹³⁶ For example, the author noted:

We pride ourselves on being a sturdy race. We are a race that is capable of facing and tackling the problems that confront us. We are a resourceful race that has always been able to put forth the best. Let’s do that now No longer is the woman’s place entirely in the home, but it is in that position where she can do the most for the furthering of her fellow women. The Lulacs offer that opportunity.¹³⁷

While some LULAC men supported women’s involvement in LULAC, many resisted their expanded roles. In 1938, one frustrated LULAC woman discussed attempts at the recent annual convention to “suppress[] the Ladies Councils of our League or at least to relegate them to the category of auxiliaries.”¹³⁸ According to the author, those in favor of restricting women’s activities claimed that

133. *Id.*

134. *Id.*

135. *Id.*

136. *Id.*

137. *Id.*

138. *Son Muy Hombres*, LULAC NEWS (Mar. 1938).

the ladies councils “have been a source of trouble, friction and discontent,” while forgetting that “most of the serious trouble, friction and discontent which has been experienced by our League, since its existence, can be easily traced to our Men Councils’ activities.”¹³⁹ She also accused the General Office of ignoring the needs of the ladies councils.¹⁴⁰ According to the editorial, LULAC men were responding to fears that women were assuming greater power within the organization.¹⁴¹ For example, the author noted:

The real cause of the apprehension among those who favor the move, is the aggressive attitude which some of our women members have adopted and show in the conduct of our League’s affairs. The contributing causes of this state of mind among our [men] is the fear that our women will take a leading part in the evolution of our League; that our women might make a name for themselves in their activities; that our [men] might be shouldered from their position as arbiters of our League; and the fact that some of our would-be leaders and members cannot get over that Latin way of thinking that in civic affairs and administrative fields men are superior to women.¹⁴²

This criticism directly challenges the cultural nationalism implicit in LULAC’s characterization of itself. LULAC women who were dissatisfied with the restricted roles of women in LULAC both accepted as well as challenged and complicated the ideas of civilization and of advancement. These women continued to believe that Mexican-Americans constituted a superior race and, as such, were capable and worthy of participating as equals within American society. They questioned, however, the picture of the ideal man and woman that progress towards civilization had produced. Perhaps most critically, they used the LULAC rhetoric to critique racial discrimination in their own critiques of gender discrimination.

139. *Id.*

140. *Id.*

141. *Id.*

142. *Id.*

It would be easy to dismiss the language in these historical records as merely being reflective of their times generally, but that would miss the point. The rhetoric of LULAC in attempting to craft an ideology of both pride in Latino identity as well as of pursuit of assimilation had to come to terms with the contradiction created by their reliance on ideas of progress. The dynamic of choosing a class-based ideology from which to craft their rhetoric of identity meant that the movement towards assimilation would gradually erase the content of the cultural distinctiveness that drove their identity politics. Moreover, it would, as the women in LULAC revealed, contain the elements of direct cultural conflict with idealized notions of Latin gender relations. According to their view, to be eligible to be part of the polity required proof of civilization and advancement, as measured by the dominant Anglo society. So, despite the cultural pride that pervaded LULAC rhetoric, their early ideology always implied either cultural erasure or a novel twist to the idea of the *mestizaje*.

IV. LA RAZA UNIDA PARTY: ITS ROLE IN THE CHICANO MOVEMENT AND ITS ESPOUSAL OF A GENDERED NATIONALIST DISCOURSE

In an invitation to their 1971 state convention, members of La Raza Unida Party (LRUP) characterized their organization as “a new political party in Texas designed to offer Chicanos and other disenfranchised peoples meaningful participation in the political process of this state. Raza Unida Party will bring dignity and self-respect to La Raza throughout Texas.”¹⁴³ The party, established a year earlier by Chicana/o activists, emerged during a period of unprecedented amounts of activism among Mexican-Americans.¹⁴⁴ Also unprecedented were the political and racial ideologies espoused by the movement’s most prominent activists and organizations.¹⁴⁵

143. LA RAZA UNIDA PARTY, A SPECIAL INVITATION (undated) (on file with author).

144. MONTEJANO, *supra* note 96, at 290–98.

145. For a discussion of La Raza Unida Party and its differences with mainstream Mexican-American organizations, see *id.* at 389–90; see also ARMANDO NAVARRO, MEXICAN AMERICAN YOUTH ORGANIZATION: AVANT-GARDE OF THE CHICANO MOVEMENT IN TEXAS 23–44 (1995) (discussing prominent leaders and their varying ideologies and political tactics).

The Chicano Movement had always been more a conglomeration of local, heterogeneous struggles than a unified national effort, although the ideology of Aztlán presupposed, at minimum, a broadly regional expression. The various elements of the Chicano Movement produced ideologies of resistance and transformative goals that appealed to and were shared by many Mexican-American activists, including those in LRUP. Primary among these was the felt need for the creation of a new and more militant Chicano identity. The idea of “Chicano” itself was a rejection of the Latin-American or Mexican-American nomenclature that historically shaped Mexican-American organizations. Chicano identity was interwoven with a gendered nationalism buttressed by the myth of Aztlán, by the equally powerful and often patriarchal myth of *la familia*, and by the idea of a historically emergent *raza cosmica*.

Older, more established, organizations like LULAC attempted to reshape the “racial formation”¹⁴⁶ of Mexican-Americans. By emphasizing their role in shaping American civilization, LULAC emphasized the European component of Latin American identity as well as the status of LULAC members as citizens.¹⁴⁷ Chicana/o activists, on the other hand, chose to identify with a mestizo identity rooted in a “collective perception of injustice based on a fundamental and persistent condition of group inequality with respect to ‘Anglos’ in American society.”¹⁴⁸

The Chicano Movement emerged out of resistance to the liberal agenda of the preceding “Mexican American Generation.”¹⁴⁹ Movement activists characterized that period as one which sought integration into white culture and institutions without fundamentally challenging the logic or constitution of that society or its institutions.¹⁵⁰ LRUP and its predecessor, the Mexican American

146. For a discussion of racial formations, see OMI & WINANT, *supra* note 37.

147. MÁRQUEZ, *supra* note 69, at 2.

148. MARIO BARRERA, *RACE AND CLASS IN THE SOUTHWEST: A THEORY OF RACIAL INEQUALITY I* (1979).

149. Lorena Oropesa, *Making History: The Chicano Movement*, in VOICES OF A NEW CHICANA/O HISTORY 197, 210 (Refugio I. Rochín & Dennis N. Valdés eds., 2000).

150. IGNACIO M. GARCÍA, *CHICANISMO: THE FORGING OF A MILITANT ETHOS AMONG MEXICAN AMERICANS* 8–10 (1997).

Youth Organization (MAYO),¹⁵¹ shared this disillusionment. As Ignacio García noted, “MAYO questioned the moral fiber of American society, accusing it of using democratic and religious demagoguery to keep whites in charge and minorities exploited.”¹⁵² Having abandoned their predecessors’ liberal agenda, actors within the Chicano Movement searched for new political and racial ideologies that would empower Mexican-Americans to struggle for social equality and justice.¹⁵³ This search resulted in a variety of solutions. Most agreed, however, on the need to develop an identity that would challenge the perception of Mexican-Americans as a passive people without a history or a culture worthy of respect. Chicanos, however, developed this identity within a political ideology different from that of LULAC.

A letter to the president of the Mexican American Southside Organization in San Antonio, Texas, from LRUP leader José Angel Gutiérrez reflected the Movement’s distrust of whites and the desire to create a Chicano identity that would empower Mexican-Americans to struggle independently of them.¹⁵⁴ The letter stated:

Our liberation is not dependent on gringos, liberals, socialists, or white radicals. We ourselves must take the first step toward liberation, and that is mental liberation. We must realize that we are as powerful, as good, as beautiful, as strong, and as able as any other group. We must realize that our liberation will come through our efforts, our designs, and our commitment.¹⁵⁵

As reflected by Gutiérrez’s letter, the Chicano identity was as much political as it was racial and cultural, for it signified pride in Mexican-American culture as well as a commitment to ending the social, political, economic and cultural subordination of Mexican-Americans. Rather than attempting to end this subordination by

151. MAYO was a student organization founded by five Chicanos in 1967 at St. Mary’s College in San Antonio. NAVARRO, *supra* note 145, at 80.

152. IGNACIO M. GARCÍA, *UNITED WE WIN: THE RISE AND FALL OF LA RAZA UNIDA PARTY* 54 (1989).

153. *Id.* at 11.

154. Letter from José Angel Gutiérrez to Pedro García, President, Mexican American Southside Organization of San Antonio (Sept. 31, 1971) (on file with author).

155. *Id.*

entering or advancing into white society, Chicanos desired to create new institutions free of racial hierarchies that exchanged power for conformity and assimilation.

Chicano identity was inextricably connected to Chicano nationalism. Activists filled the movement's rhetoric with imagery of Aztlán.¹⁵⁶ Chicanos argued that their struggles against oppression began with the arrival of European colonizers in the Americas and continued after the 1834–1836 Texas Revolution and the 1846–1848 Mexico-U.S. War, the latter of which resulted in the cession of the Southwest to the United States.¹⁵⁷ Chicanos claimed a heritage indigenous to the Southwest and employed this claim to buttress a separatist nationalist agenda and to locate a history of Chicano resistance.¹⁵⁸ While some activists responded to nationalist rhetoric with demands for the creation of a Chicano homeland,¹⁵⁹ most activists, such as those in MAYO and LRUP, worked to establish new institutions or to take control of existing institutions.¹⁶⁰ Chicanos merged their territorial (or institutional) nationalism with cultural nationalism, a celebration of Chicano culture and history as distinct from, but equal to, that of Anglos.¹⁶¹

MAYO and LRUP archives make apparent that both organizations embraced this nationalist discourse. The MAYO constitution, for example, reflects the connection Chicanos made between Chicano identity and culture and the need to create autonomous institutions.¹⁶² The constitution stated:

M.A.Y.O. affirms the magnificence [sic] of La Raza and the greatness of our heritage, our history, our language, our

156. Sarah Deutsch, *Gender, Labor History, and Chicano/a Ethnic Identity*, in *CHICANA LEADERSHIP*, *supra* note 54, at 179, 188–89.

157. See, e.g., RODOLFO ACUÑA, *OCCUPIED AMERICA: THE CHICANO'S STRUGGLE TOWARD LIBERATION* (1972).

158. José Cuello, *Introduction: Chicana/o History as a Social Movement* to *VOICES OF A NEW CHICANA/O HISTORY*, *supra* note 149, at 1, 14.

159. See Martín Sánchez Jankowski, *Where Have All the Nationalists Gone?: Change and Persistence in Radical Political Attitudes Among Chicanos, 1976–1986*, in *CHICANO POLITICS AND SOCIETY IN THE LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY* 201, 211–12 (David Montejano ed., 1999).

160. GEOFFREY E. FOX, *HISPANIC NATION: CULTURE, POLITICS, AND THE CONSTRUCTING OF IDENTITY* 120–23 (1996).

161. Jankowski, *supra* note 159, at 228–31.

162. MAYO, CONSTITUTION (undated) (on file with author).

traditions, our contributions to humanity and our culture. We also recognize the oppression foisted upon our people by a color mad society which has created a multitude of institutions, structures, and ideologies which serve to perpetuate the physical and mental oppression and exploitation of our people . . . The true liberation of our people can only come when we cast off the shackles of our oppression and create our own institutions dedicated to the liberation and betterment of our people¹⁶³

MAYO and its supporters established LRUP as one such institution, “an alternative that recognizes the existence of culturally distinct Peoples and their right to maintain that identity.”¹⁶⁴ Interestingly, the MAYO constitution and LULAC ideology share proclamations of the greatness of the Mexican-American people. The political implications of this greatness differed for MAYO and for LULAC, however.

It is also worth noting that LRUP shared with LULAC a nationalist rhetoric, though it put that rhetoric to different use. Like LRUP, LULAC used nationalism to support its demands for equality.¹⁶⁵ However, LULAC employed nationalism to demand full entry into American society.¹⁶⁶ An organization of American citizens, LULAC distinguished between Mexican-Americans, who arrived in the Southwest during Spanish colonization, and newly arrived Mexicans.¹⁶⁷ H.T. Manuel wrote of the former:

The Latin-American child came to Texas long before any other except the native Indian. A little more then [sic] four hundred years ago, the Southwest was peopled by a strong native race of relatively high culture, which had its center on the Mexican plateau. To this country . . . came the Spanish, and the blood of the Spanish mingled freely with the blood of the natives to produce a cross between the two great races. . . . [In contrast,

163. *Id.*

164. LA RAZA UNIDA PARTY, WHY RAZA UNIDA IS THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE FOR CHICANOS (undated) (on file with author) [hereinafter ONLY ALTERNATIVE].

165. MÁRQUEZ, *supra* note 69, at 65–67.

166. *Id.* at 2–3.

167. *Id.* at 16, 22, 23.

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i]t is among the children of this newest group [of Mexican arrivals] where much of our social and educational problem lies. By far the majority of those who have come in the last years are poor people, of limited culture and meager opportunity. . . .¹⁶⁸

LULAC thus created intra-group divisions according to class lines, as well as according to lines of length of residence in the United States. LULAC members, having resided in the American Southwest for generations, had contributed to American culture and civilization. As one editorialist wrote, “Spanish Civilization and Culture still holds its own and triumphs south of the Rio Grande and to us north of that line, and of the blood, it has left a legacy that cannot be easily surpassed in this melting pot of nations.”¹⁶⁹ LULAC used this legacy to challenge racial classifications that excluded them from full American citizenship. Regarding the classification of Mexican-Americans as something other or less than Americans, G.J. Garza wrote, “[h]ow can one group with equal or perhaps greater right to the nationalism of this country be the victim of discriminatory classification by another group composed of equally foreign origins and less cultural contributions . . . What then shall be our classification . . . The undeniable answer is Americans.”¹⁷⁰ While LULAC embraced nationalism for purposes of assimilation, LRUP members and other Chicano activists developed a nationalism that supported their separatist goals.

Committed to Chicano nationalism, MAYO members demanded unconditional loyalty to the Mexican-American cause. Its requirements for new members stated that members must possess “[a]

168. H.T. Manuel, *supra* note 88.

169. *Editorial, supra* note 90.

170. George J. Garza, *Our Classification—What Is It?*, LULAC NEWS (June 1947). The excerpt is preceded by:

[T]hese classifiers who wish to keep us conscious of our origin are themselves descendants of origins with little or no background. It is noted in many cases that these classifiers cannot boast of a culture of their ancestors that has in any way contributed to American culture, nor can they claim credit in the name of their ancestors for the discovery, exploration, and subsequent settling and development of this county. Something that the Americans of Spanish and Mexican descent can boast of. . . .

Id.

desire to put La Raza first and foremost. Can't belong to other political groups or owe allegiance to other philosophies—Young Democrats, republicans, communists, socialists, etc.”¹⁷¹ A MAYO pamphlet stated, “[w]e feel that we fall victim to seeds of division when we fight with one another. We need to spend less time fighting, physically or verbally, other Mexicanos who are weak before the gringo, and to spend more time building a Raza Unida to combat gringo and his methods.”¹⁷² This desire for unity, shared by many Chicano Movement activists and organizations, would later inhibit the expression of feminist critiques by Chicanas dissatisfied by what they felt to be a gendered nationalist rhetoric and sexist organizing practices.

In 1969, MAYO members helped organize boycotts by Mexican-American parents and students of schools in Zavala County to protest the schools' racist practices.¹⁷³ These practices included the school administrations' quotas for extracurricular activities that restricted involvement of Mexican-American students in favor of Anglos.¹⁷⁴ While the strikes began as an effort to increase Mexican-American representation on the cheerleading squad, students expanded their demands to include the implementation of a bilingual and bicultural program.¹⁷⁵ In 1970, MAYO members, energized by the boycotts' success, founded LRUP, which, according to Vicki Ruiz, “represented the zenith of cultural nationalism.”¹⁷⁶ Though it often made reformist demands, LRUP justified its existence with appeals to Chicano identity, nationalism and unity.¹⁷⁷ Prior to founding LRUP, MAYO members participated in the first Chicano Youth Liberation Conference, held in 1969 in Denver, Colorado.¹⁷⁸ At the conference,

171. MAYO, REQUIREMENT FOR NEW MEMBERS (undated) (on file with author).

172. MAYO, Untitled Pamphlet (undated) (on file with author).

173. NAVARRO, *supra* note 145, at 100, 118–20 (discussing the school walkouts in Crystal City and Edcouch-Elsa in 1968–1969).

174. *Id.*

175. GARCÍA, UNITED WE WIN, *supra* note 152, at 41.

176. RUIZ, *supra* note 55, at 116.

177. ONLY ALTERNATIVE, *supra* note 164. “The [Raza Unida Party] an alternative that recognizes the existence of culturally distinct Peoples and their right to maintain that identity.” *Id.*

178. GARCÍA, CHICANISMO, *supra* note 150, at 11.

attendees wrote El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán¹⁷⁹ to serve as a guiding document for activists. The Plan states:

El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán sets the theme that the Chicanos (La Raza de Bronze) must use their nationalism as the key of common denominator for mass mobilization and organization . . . social, economic, cultural, and political independence is the only road to total liberation from oppression, exploitation, and racism. Our struggle then must be the control of our barrios, campos, pueblos, lands, our economic, our culture, and our political life¹⁸⁰

Having established LRUP, party members then created the Congreso de Aztlán, “whose basic purpose [wa]s to provide direction for the platform, goals and chairperson of La Raza Unida Party.”¹⁸¹ The Congress “proclaim[ed] the people of la raza to be a nation within a nation, endowed with the right and obligation to struggle for self-determination . . . We recognize the two party system as being sham democracy serving only the needs of our exploiters and oppressors.”¹⁸²

Unlike LULAC’s Latin and Spanish American identity, Mexican-American activists’ new Chicano identity created space for LRUP members to work with other subordinated groups, particularly with blacks, regarding shared concerns and goals. The party, for example, granted membership to any voter in Texas “regardless of race, creed, religion, color, sex, language spoken, or national origin.”¹⁸³ At its first state convention, held in 1972, LRUP announced it would seek to build coalitions with black and Anglo groups with a “progressive philosophy.”¹⁸⁴ During the convention, the party nominated two black women for the U.S. Senate.¹⁸⁵ In addition, during his 1972 campaign,

179. CONGRESO DE AZTLÁN, THE PROGRAM OF EL PLAN ESPIRITUAL DE AZTLÁN (undated) (on file with author).

180. *Id.*

181. *Id.*

182. CONGRESO DE AZTLÁN, PROPOSAL FOR THE CONGRESO DE AZTLÁN (undated) (on file with author) [hereinafter PROPOSAL].

183. LA RAZA UNIDA PARTY, OFFICIAL PARTY RULES (undated) (on file with author).

184. Tony Castor, *Viva, Ramsey Muniz*, SATURDAY REV., Sept. 4, 1972.

185. David Shute, *Raza Unida to Widen Effort*, SAN ANTONIO EXPRESS NEWS, Oct. 31, 1972.

LRUP gubernatorial candidate Ramsey Muñiz advocated creating coalitions with other disenfranchised communities.¹⁸⁶ He stated:

My people have problems that have multiplied for years because they've been left out of the political system . . . But how many whites, blacks and others have found that they, too, have no voice in the political system? We're campaigning for Chicano rights, which essentially are civil rights, human rights, and people's rights. My people are Chicanos in flesh. But the whites, blacks, and others who have been oppressed or left out are Chicanos with us in spirit.¹⁸⁷

One LRUP flier stated that the party "knows of the problems that confront Black people every day."¹⁸⁸ Rev. Ralph David Abernathy, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), likewise saw the possibility of working with Mexican-Americans due to their shared experiences of racial discrimination.¹⁸⁹ "Things aren't right in Texas, so we're going to elect . . . Ramsey Muniz. He's a Chicano. He's not black but he's almost black."¹⁹⁰

While racial and ethnic identity remained paramount as a means of organizing, because this identity did not include whiteness but was rooted in a shared recognition of systemic racial oppression. Party members were able to work with other racial groups who faced similar oppression. Shared political ideologies facilitated the creation of interracial coalitions, thereby making the party a more inclusive one. At the same time, Chicanas in the LRUP struggled to make the organization more inclusive of women by developing a political ideology that also recognized systemic sexism.

The new Chicano identity faced criticism from Chicana feminists. Chicano nationalism was interwoven with ideas of community and family. Chicano Movement activists believed that their culture provided Mexican-Americans with unity and with the strength to

186. Castor, *supra* note 184.

187. *Id.*

188. LA RAZA UNIDA PARTY, UNITED PEOPLES PARTY (RAZA UNIDA) (undated) (on file with author).

189. *McGovern, Miss Jordan Get Nod by Abernathy*, AUSTIN AMERICAN-STATESMAN, undated.

190. *Id.*

resist discrimination.¹⁹¹ *La familia*, translated as both “the family” and “the community,” was a key component of this celebrated culture and appeared in the movement’s nationalist rhetoric, including that of LRUP. For example, one paper regarding Mexican-American struggles stated that “[t]he future always depends on the family effort. The family is the today, tomorrow and yesterday of the Chicano Movement. It is based on unity, respect, and sensitivity . . . There is no institution in the Mexican-American culture that can stand so strong for so long against the Gringo Purge. . . .”¹⁹²

Likewise, LRUP’s preamble reflected a belief in the importance of unity, achieved through “the strength of *la familia*.”¹⁹³ The preamble states:

[W]e the people who have been made aware of the needs of many through our suffering, who have learned the significance of carnalismo, the strength of la familia and the importance of people working together; and recognizing the natural rights of all peoples to preserve their self-identity and to formulate their own destiny, do, with courage and love in our hearts, a firm commitment to mankind and with peace in our minds, establish Raza Unida Party.¹⁹⁴

In celebrating uncritically the Chicano family and community and in failing to incorporate a gendered critique of society into their racial ideologies, Chicanas argued that activists perpetuated those families’ and communities’ patriarchal norms.¹⁹⁵ Vicki Ruiz argued that there existed a “‘gender objectification’ inherent in cultural nationalist ideology.”¹⁹⁶ The movement’s language and symbolism was gendered. Activists used words such as familialism, brotherhood, masculinity, and carnalismo and reflected empowering ideals of masculinity, such as the Aztec warrior, and traditional ideals of

191. GARCÍA, CHICANISMO, *supra* note 150, at 74–75.

192. The Mexican American Community and Mexican American Studies (1971) (unpublished manuscript, on file with author).

193. LA RAZA UNIDA PARTY, RAZA UNIDA PARTY PREAMBLE (undated) (on file with author).

194. *Id.*

195. Martínez, *supra* note 61.

196. RUIZ, *supra* note 55, at 112.

femininity, such as the Mexican-American wife and mother.¹⁹⁷ Because Spanish is a gendered language, activists often employed, by default, masculine words intended to include both men and women. The movement's gendered rhetoric, however, resulted as much from the masculine symbolism and meanings given to those words as to their grammatical structure. According to Maylei Blackwell:

This construction of masculinity shaped not only the discourse of nationalism but the social and cultural context of the Chicano youth movement as a whole, often authorizing asymmetrical gender relations. . . . Chicano nationalism also engendered constructions of idealized femininity largely through a conservative cultural construct of "tradition" within a patriarchal, heterosexual model of family. . . . [*La familia* served both as an organizing model and a metaphor for the Chicano movement.¹⁹⁸

Numerous studies of the Chicano Movement recount stories of sexism within Chicano organizations and attempts by Chicanas to redefine their roles within those organizations and *la familia*. For example, in her study of Chicana activity in El Teatro Campesino, a Chicano theater group, Yolanda Broyles wrote that actors lived and worked together.¹⁹⁹ Structured after *la familia*, the group operated in a patriarchal manner, with administrative power, play writing, and casting monopolized by the men.²⁰⁰ The plays produced by the group offered female characters only a handful of roles, all of which were one-dimensional, passive and "accessory to those of males."²⁰¹ Equally important, the plays failed to portray the world as seen through the eyes of women.²⁰² Women's dissatisfaction with these characters led to an internal struggle within the Teatro to redefine women's roles, a struggle that made apparent the contradiction

197. SALDÍVAR, *supra* note 60, at 117 ("There were no women. Where were they? Had they survived?" (quoting JOHN RECHY, *THE MIRACULOUS DAY OF AMALIA GÓMEZ* 45 (1991))).

198. Blackwell, *supra* note 47, at 65–66.

199. Yolanda Julia Broyles, *Women in El Teatro Campesino: "Apoco Estaba Molacha la Virgen de Guadalupe?"*, in *CHICANA VOICES*, *supra* note 43, at 162, 167.

200. *Id.* at 167–68.

201. *Id.* at 164.

202. *Id.*

between the group's progressive racial and class ideas and its static gender ideas, a contradiction "paralleled in various ways within the Chicano movement."²⁰³

Maylei Blackwell discussed the history of *Las Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*, a student organization formed in 1968 at California State University, Long Beach, as a forum for educating and creating awareness among Chicanas.²⁰⁴ The group, Blackwell argued, became a vehicle for women to address the treatment of women in the civil rights and Chicano movements and to organize collectively around their own experiences as Chicanas.²⁰⁵ The women's efforts resulted in the formation of "an explicitly Chicana gendered political identity"²⁰⁶ that attempted to reconceptualize the nationalistic discourse as one that was not so masculine and that struggled to end unequal divisions of labor and sexual exploitation within Chicano student groups.²⁰⁷

Women in LRUP also challenged their roles in *la familia* and in activist organizations, as made apparent by the large number of conferences organized by and for Chicanas and by the inclusion of anti-sexist statements and commitments in party documents and platforms.²⁰⁸ Women's ability to influence the party likely resulted from their significant presence from the beginning. According to a party paper regarding the role of women in LRUP, thirty-six percent of LRUP County Chairs and twenty percent of LRUP Precinct Chairs were women.²⁰⁹ Because of their large numbers, women were able to organize a number of conferences "to promote women's leadership on their own terms and not in the shadows of LRU men."²¹⁰

LRUP women organized a Conferencia de Mujeres Por La Raza Unida in December 1971, and again in September 1973, "to help educate the Mexican American women in the local community and surrounding areas in religious, political, and educational

203. *Id.* at 166.

204. Blackwell, *supra* note 47, at 62–67.

205. *Id.*

206. *Id.* at 65.

207. *Id.* at 65–67.

208. Roberta Fernandez, *Abriendo Caminos in the Brotherland: Chicana Writers Respond to the Ideology of Literary Nationalism*, in *CHICANA VOICES*, *supra* note 43, at 30, 36.

209. La Mujer (undated) (unpublished manuscript, on file with author).

210. RUIZ, *supra* note 55, at 116.

involvement.”²¹¹ Topics included the development of women, the political role of women in education, organizing in rural and urban areas, and the history of LRUP.²¹² Conference resolutions also dealt with issues less specific to women. For example, one resolution stated the women’s opposition to the Texas Rangers.²¹³

In November 1976, women organized a meeting entitled the Mujeres Caucus, to which they invited female members of the union of Texas farm workers to discuss their participation in the union.²¹⁴

Party conventions, platforms and documents reflected the presence and concerns of female members. At a 1971 meeting, the party’s platform committee dedicated itself to researching the role of the Chicana in the party and in the women’s liberation movement.²¹⁵ At its 1972 national convention, the party pledged to provide “responsible support to Latina women in their struggle for equal rights in all spheres of life.”²¹⁶ The proposal for the Congreso de Aztlán stated that “La Raza Party is opposed to the domination of one sex by another. The Party recognizes no distinction between men and women in the common struggle for self-determination; both women and men of la raza must provide leadership.”²¹⁷ In a letter written by the party’s national headquarters, party members wrote that the Congreso “will make general policy decisions over party direction, priorities, philosophy, and ideology while in session” and that its delegates “will be elected at the state convention.”²¹⁸ They continued, “[e]ach delegation should include a woman.”²¹⁹ At its 1978 state convention, LRUP passed resolutions regarding their opposition to police brutality, demands for support, and defense of the

211. Virginia Muzquiz, Remarks to Attendees of La Conferencia de Mujeres por La Raza Unida (Dec. 1, 1973) (on file with author); Invitation to La Conferencia de Mujeres por La Raza Unida (Sept. 19, 1973) (on file with author).

212. Schedule of La Conferencia de Mujeres por La Raza Unida (Aug. 4, 1973) (on file with author).

213. *Resolucion Sobre Los Rinches*, LA CONFERENCIA DE MUJERES POR LA RAZA UNIDA, Aug. 4, 1973 (on file with author).

214. Unsigned Letter (Nov. 10, 1976) (on file with author).

215. Minutes of Platform Committee Meeting (Nov. 21, 1971) (on file with author).

216. Priorities of the National Convention, El Paso, Texas (Sept. 1–4, 1972).

217. PROPOSAL, *supra* note 182.

218. Letter from La Raza Unida National Party Headquarters (undated) (on file with author).

219. *Id.*

undocumented worker from Mexico, minimum wage, the creation of Chicano studies programs, and support “of women’s issues and needs such as health care, day care counseling services and general self-desarrollo.”²²⁰

Challenges to patriarchy within LRUP were not uncomplicated, however. Archives of LRUP reveal the organization’s use of gendered nationalist rhetoric that obstructed recognition of gender equality issues.²²¹ Martha Cotera, one of the party’s most prominent women members, noted that “[w]hen women came into the party, they fell under the greater context of la familia de la raza.”²²² To stay in the party, women could not be “too outspoken on gender issues.”²²³ Instead, they must “retreat from certain activities that deal specifically with the special social needs of women.”²²⁴ At a press conference in 1969, for example, Gutiérrez linked resistance and masculinity by noting that “[w]e must fight if we are to endure as men—free men.”²²⁵ Likewise, in a letter to Gutiérrez, a member of the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán, a Chicano student organization, wrote about his desire to elect “Chicanos with balls”—aggressive, masculine Chicanos who would create change—to the Student Association and to the School Board.²²⁶ The martial tenor of this language of triumphing, vanquishing, and succeeding is also clearly redolent of the kind of masculinism that defined resistance.

Though LRUP archives reveal both the use of gendered nationalist rhetoric and challenges to patriarchy, they leave unclear how exactly these challenges were acted out and received, and what, if any, specifically gendered critiques of power relations developed alongside the party’s racial critiques. Cotera’s comments as well as a

220. Resolutions of the 1978 State Convention (undated) (on file with author).

221. La Mujer, *supra* note 209. “Raza Unida Party does not feel that a separate stand on the rights of women is necessary as it is explicit that women are included in the fight for equal rights. Raza Unida Party believes that the strength of unity begins with the family.” *Id.*

222. RUIZ, *supra* note 55, at 116.

223. *Id.* at 112.

224. *Id.*

225. Press Conference, José Angel Gutiérrez, (Mar. 1, 1969) (on file with author).

226. Letter from Tony Rodríguez, Chairman, Chicano Studies Committee de MEChA, University of Texas, El Paso, to José Angel Gutiérrez (Feb. 25, 1972) (on file with author). “En todas las elecciones que tenemos nosotros desde Student Association hasta School Board vamos a corer puros Chicanos, pero Chicanos con huevos. El todo el estado, La Raza vencerá!” *Id.*

handful of documents suggest tensions between efforts at ending racism and sexism.²²⁷ These tensions were likely created by the emphasis on the unity of *la Raza* as a prerequisite to a successful nationalist movement. In addition, male Chicano dissatisfaction with the women's liberation movement likely contributed to these tensions. One LRUP document, for example, argued that "the cry of Raza Unida Party has been the same one heard by the woman's movement: equal legal rights, equal educational and economic opportunities, equal political participation and respect of the individuals rights to control his own future without legal obstruction."²²⁸ The same document, however, criticized the mainstream women's movement for ignoring the importance of racism and the position of women of color in their communities.²²⁹ It noted:

The minority woman finds herself in an unusual position when faced with the new movement for equal rights for women. The minority woman can not speak of greater political participation, equal pay for equal work or even control over their own bodies, since all of these are denied in practice to all members of minority groups, male and female. This means that the minority woman does not have the luxury of dealing exclusively with feminism and fighting male chauvinism, as racism plays an even bigger role in suppressing peoples in the state of Texas.²³⁰

Rather than challenging "hierarchies of oppression"—rather than treating race and gender as connected and of equal importance—

227. SUPPORT COMMITTEE FOR ANNA NIETO-GOMEZ, WOMEN'S STRUGGLE (undated) (on file with author).

It had to happen. Sooner or later, it was inevitable that the question of feminism in the movement would come to a clash. Chicanos in the movement have been putting down the liberation of women as either a "white trip," a crop out, a bourgeoisie trip. The liberation of women has been shoved aside. However, feminism in the Chicano movement has emerged as a most powerful movement.

Id.

228. *La Mujer*, *supra* note 209.

229. *Id.*

230. *Id.*

members of LRUP simply flipped the hierarchy they saw in the women's movement, placing racism above sexism in their battle for social justice, thereby risking disregard of feminist concerns.

The women, men and youth of Raza Unida Party join their sisters in the woman's movement in demanding equal rights for all people but more importantly in assuring that human rights are guaranteed to all citizens . . . Raza Unida Party does not feel that a separate stand on the rights of women is necessary as it is explicit that women are included in the fight for equal rights.²³¹

Interestingly, this document emphasized the importance of *la familia*, but, in order to argue for the participation of both its male and female members as a requisite for social change, it implicitly urged Chicanas to submerge their differences within the movement for the greater good of la raza. It stated: "Raza Unida Party believes that the strength of unity begins with the family. Only through full participation of all members of the family can a strong force be developed to deal with the problems which face Raza Unida Party."²³² The party tried to have it both ways. It minimized the feminist critique by retranslating it into a liberal/universal formulation. That ideological move is precisely what the Chicana feminist critique was aimed at.

In an effort to ensure full participation, LRUP resolved to support an amendment to the U.S Constitution "providing equal protection under the law for women," stated that "all resolutions referring to equal rights or group representation included in the Raza Unida Party Platform apply to women whether they be working mother, career women, or housewives," and declared that "the participation of women including the decision-making positions within Raza Unida Party be actively continued through political education and recruitment of women."²³³

231. *Id.*

232. *Id.*

233. *Id.*

CONCLUSION

These archives make clear that while LRUP generally echoed the Chicano Movement's gendered nationalist discourse, women's issues and feminist critiques were very much on the minds of its female party members. Despite evidence of these concerns, these documents leave a number of questions unanswered. Why, for example, would LRUP support gender-specific legislation, education and recruitment, yet refuse to take a specific stand on women's rights? The internal debates that created this apparent contradiction are not revealed in the archives. Did this tension reflect a concession to Chicanas' advocacy for such a stand? Or did it reflect agreement with the argument for a hierarchy of oppression that placed racism above sexism? Moreover, apart from the ideological expression, what is not reflected in these documents is the actual concrete workings of the party: did party members act on the commitment to educate and recruit female members? And perhaps more to the point: how was work and power divided between men and women members?

When the histories of the La Raza Unida Party and the early days of LULAC are examined for what they reveal about the interplay of race and gender, the picture that emerges is complex. This is so because the relationship is dynamic and implicates in both direct and indirect ways conceptions of culture that go to the heart of identity and to the construction of identity as a site of resistance. What is clear, though, is that a thorough-going critique of racism, even liberal critiques like those advanced in the early days of LULAC, could not have emerged without an emerging critique of gender roles. In many ways, the insights of the Chicana feminists were presaged in the liberal (and relatively mild) critiques of the women in LULAC. The LULAC women's observations were not quite the same as attaching a color to patriarchy generally. They were asserting that their patriarchy had a color, but they were also claiming that racism by whites was patriarchal. What they saw was that patriarchy has color and if you challenge the mechanisms of racial management, you ultimately have to challenge the techniques of gender management, too.