



Chicana Research & Learning Center

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A CONCEPT PAPER:

CHICANA RESEARCH AND LEARNING CENTER

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Chicana Research and Learning Center is a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation in the State of Texas which seeks to research problems faced by Chicanas in an effort to develop and demonstrate innovative and/or alternative methods to deal with these problems. The Chicana Research and Learning Center was conceptualized in 1972 with input from Chicanas throughout the state of Texas and from California, Washington, D.C., and the Midwest. The areas of concern were enumerated and individual Chicanas devoted time and energy to insure that legal requirements were fulfilled, i.e., articles of incorporation and tax-exempt status; and that program areas were developed. Even though initial funding was limited, Chicanas continued their efforts in 1972 and 1973 to develop program areas on a volunteer basis with limited resources mainly consisting of human resources in the form of in-kind services.

In 1974 the Chicana Research and Learning Center came into full operation and has developed into a two person office in Austin, Texas. Four initial program areas have been developed and various community-oriented, social service activities, as well as research projects have been implemented throughout Texas.

II. THE PROBLEM

As women within a minority group, Chicanas confront special problems in their efforts to develop educationally, socially and economically in this country. This unique situation creates three major obstacles which Chicanas must overcome in attaining even minimum living standards for

emselves and their families. These obstacles are:

- Sex discrimination factors which are combined with biases against cultural and linguistic differences;
- Male-female role attitudes in the Chicano culture which cause many social, economic and educational problems; and
- Lack of accurate data concerning Chicanas including stereotypes which have been created and perpetuated by outsiders.

Chicanas are affected by similar sex discrimination factors which other women are struggling against. These factors, however, are multiplied within the United States because of their minority and socio-economic status. Chicanas are further hindered in their development by the biases which exist against language and cultural differences. Their cultural values are either mistakenly viewed as glorifying passivity or noninvolvement. This misconception is often used as an excuse to continue to exclude Chicanas from jobs, participation in decision-making roles or from pursuing a desired vocation. Chicanas' struggle for cultural pluralism, their desire and determination to identify with desirable Chicano values are ignored or rejected simply because they are different or because Chicanas seem reluctant to assimilate into the dominant culture.

On the other hand, Chicanas are often hindered by certain male-female role attitudes within their own culture. Sex attitudes and consequent marriage and family patterns account for a great deal of the Chicana's problems of delinquency, social and economic dependency and lack of education beyond the eighth grade. Chicanas are burdened with children and responsibility at a very early age. Thus, their economic and educational development is stultified at a very early stage making even continued educational programs unaccessible to them.

stistical data concerning the educational and economic status of Chicanas leaves no doubt that as a major ethnic group they are on the bottom of the opportunity ladder in the United States. Yet, it is difficult to consider the unique problems of Chicanas since most research finds them included with other women, or with Chicanos. In addition, existing information concerning Chicanas is developed by outsiders who perpetuate and create stereotypes. The seriousness of this situation causes many barriers in the path of development for Chicanas; barriers of which institutions seeking to assist Chicanos may not be aware. Specifically, these barriers are:

- Lack of accurate data concerning Chicanas;
- Inadequate research which focuses on negative aspects;
- Current solutions grounded on faulty information;
- Institutional insensitivity to the special needs of Chicanas;
- Disjointed efforts to resolve Chicana problems due to isolated program approaches;
- Lack of program documentation;
- Lack of appropriate bilingual-bicultural training and educational models;
- Under-utilization of the Chicana's bilingual-bicultural skills;
- Lack of programmatic efforts towards the development of the Chicana's potential;
- Exclusion of Chicanas from decision-making, both on policy-making levels and on matters which affect their everyday lives; and
- Lack of consideration of the socialization patterns under which Chicanas are raised, e.g., cultural stereotypes held by outsiders, confusion of "culture" with "societal condition", confusion of "cultural heritage" with "culture".

It must be made clear that Chicanas do not fit the stereotypes which the Anglo society has created; and that existing sex discrimination patterns

ve been developed based upon these stereotypes. Chicanas must be viewed in their own reality--their existence as minority women in the oppressed barrios of the nation.

Therefore, it is imperative that knowledge and clarification of Chicana cultural values be considered in program planning by those institutions which seek to alleviate the problems of Chicanos. This information is essential to the Chicano community; to federal, state and local agencies who are providing social services to Chicanos; as well as to the educational system which thus far has failed to fully meet the needs of the Chicano community. The Chicana Research and Learning Center seeks to provide the knowledge and expertise, encompassing the total experience of Chicanas, needed to alleviate many of the problems faced by Chicanas.

III. PROGRAM AREAS

The Chicana Research and Learning Center was organized to research and develop demonstration models which will define and determine (1) how Chicanas can be better assisted by agencies and/or institutions and (2) how Chicanas can break from economic dependency roles. Specifically, the Chicana Research and Learning Center was developed to:

- Identify the barriers that hinder Chicanas from making use of existing services and from receiving an adequate education;
- Develop means to overcome these barriers; and
- Develop self-help bilingual-bicultural training models through which Chicanas can participate fully in the process of identifying and planning effective solutions to the problems which they face in their communities.

Since the Chicana Research and Learning Center was created, these specific goals have been met and many successes have been demonstrated

in the implementation of four initial program areas: Research, Clearinghouse, Technical Assistance, and Training.

A. RESEARCH

Current federal and private agencies have conducted research based on inaccurate need-assessments, minimal input of expertise from Chicanas and based on a "deficiency", "deprived" or "compensatory" perspective. The Chicana Research and Learning Center, however, has been conducting research based on a consensus of needs as defined by Chicanas. In order to establish research priorities, the Chicana Center has been identifying and consulting with Chicanas who have academic, as well as applied expertise in many general areas of concern. Social issues have therefore been prioritized for Chicanas by Chicanas.

The Chicana Research and Learning Center has projected a two-pronged approach to the research efforts: (1) the collection of historical data and (2) the collection of hard data concerning the status of the Chicana. Research efforts have been concentrated mainly in the area of the historical aspect of the involvement of the Chicana. The historical information which has been collected, has been utilized by Chicanas involved with the Chicana Center in presentations made to community groups and in lectures to university students, and has been well received. Some hard data has been collected on a limited basis and a processing system for this data is being developed. It is hoped that eventually these materials can be further utilized for:

- Curriculum in the public school system to assist in the development of a positive self-image in Chicanitas;
- Booklets to be utilized as supplemental materials in Chicano studies and Women studies courses; and
- Information packets for community groups to assist in meeting local needs.

B. CLEARINGHOUSE

Chicanas have had a limited access to, or an uncoordinated supply of, information because there has been no centralized clearinghouse for the collection and dissemination of available information. Federal and private agencies have developed valuable information packets which have limited impact on development because of their inability to coordinate dissemination efforts. Further, some information has been developed by Chicanas themselves. Therefore, the Chicana Research and Learning Center is establishing a clearinghouse for the purpose of centralizing information and facilitating the dissemination to community and academic groups and individuals.

Resource files are being developed from which information is available upon request. Ongoing communication with other institutions provides continuing information for dissemination. In addition to the resource files, the Chicana Research and Learning Center has developed information files concerning Chicanas and other women in the areas of literature, media, politics, education, social sciences, history and contemporary thought.

The essence of a clearinghouse concept after data has been collected is dissemination. The Chicana Research and Learning Center has actively sought to establish a communication network with Chicanas throughout Texas and in other states. At present, a data bank of the names, addresses and areas of expertise of 700 women throughout the state has been collected and is part of the information dissemination system of the Chicana Center.

Many mujeres have already utilized the resources of the Chicana Center to assist them in their local communities. University men and women have also availed themselves of the resources of the Chicana Center.

In addition, other agencies have utilized the data bank to place Chicanas in job positions and to recommend board and committee appointments to various organizations.

C. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Chicanas have been faced with the development of programs without the benefit of technical assistance from a centralized office. This situation has lead to failure in the development of successful program models since concentrated efforts aimed at minimizing program problems have been missing. The Chicana Research and Learning Center has been providing technical assistance to developing programmatic efforts for Chicanas by Chicanas, either directly through the personnel of the Chicana Center or, when expertise is not directly available, through contacts with organizations which can provide needed information.

The Chicana Research and Learning Center has provided assistance to various Chicanas throughout Texas. The main areas of requests for technical assistance has been in the implementation of educational conferences. Mailing lists, information packets and workshop facilitators have been provided by the Chicana Center to the various efforts to educate la mujer. In addition, community and academic groups and individuals have requested technical assistance from the Chicana Center in the areas of fundraising, seeking resources, developing program activities and disseminating information concerning Chicanas.

D. TRAINING

Chicanas have had limited access to training models to meet their needs within their own communities. Most training models have been developed outside of the Chicanas immediate environment and fail to take

into account the unique bilingual-bicultural skills of Chicanas. The Chicana Research and Learning Center has been developing bilingual-bicultural training models through which Chicanas can participate fully in the process of identifying and planning effective solutions to the problems which they face in their communities.

Motivations training sessions have been developed by the Chicana Research and Learning Center as the initial training model. This training model has proven extremely successful in stimulating community participation in social programs and works effectively as a tool for engendering goal-oriented action for small and large groups.

IV. CONCLUSION

The Chicana Research and Learning Center is the only institution in the nation providing community-oriented, social service activities, as well as implementing research projects for Chicanas by Chicanas. Realizing that the problems Chicanas face can not be solved in a vacuum, the Chicana Research and Learning Center is working with many community and academic groups and individuals to facilitate the development of Chicanas. Focusing on the development and dissemination of information for Chicanas as well as Chicanos, the Chicana Research and Learning Center hopes to assist in the alleviation of problems faced by the Chicano community.

V. PERSONNEL

Name/Location

Position

Evey Chapa
Austin, Texas

Executive Director

Ms. Chapa's areas of expertise are administration and community involvement. She is well versed in education, community affairs, and Chicano and Chicana issues. She has served as an administrative consultant, as a lecturer on Chicana and Chicano topics, as a workshop facilitator for Chicana conferences and as faculty and Associate Director for the Juarez-Lincoln Center, Antioch Graduate School of Education. Ms. Chapa is the author of several published and unpublished articles concerning la mujer Chicana.

Belinda Herrera
Austin, Texas

Research Director

Ms. Herrera's areas of expertise are Sociology-Political Science and research techniques. She has been involved with several community-oriented organizations and has worked on many research projects and committees. Ms. Herrera has served on the Advisory Committee to the Center for Mexican American Studies, University of Texas at Austin, and presently serves on the National Coordinating Committee of the Chicano Social Scientist Association.

VI. CONSULTANTS/RESOURCE CONTACTS (Selected List)

Name/Location

Area Of Expertise

Lydia Espinosa
South Bend, Indiana

Cultural Anthropology

Ms. Espinosa is the past immediate Research Director of the Chicana Research and Learning Center and is currently a graduate student at Notre Dame. She is an extremely dynamic and capable Chicana whose concern for the Chicano community keeps her involved in community affairs as well as academic concerns. She has served as a teacher, as a lecturer on Chicana topics and as the Academic/Financial Officer of the Juarez-Lincoln

Name/LocationArea of Expertise

Center, Antioch Graduate School of Education. Ms. Espinosa presently serves as a research consultant to the Chicana Center.

Marta Cotera
Austin, Texas

Chicano Information Specialist

Ms. Cotera is the Chairwoman of the Board of Directors of the Chicana Research and Learning Center. She is an information specialist with more than fifteen years of library experience and a bibliographer of Chicano materials. She is vitally concerned with the welfare of the Chicano community and demonstrates this with involvement and action. Ms. Cotera presently serves as the Deputy Director of the National Migrant Clearinghouse Information Center.

Emilio Zamora
Austin, Texas

Chicano History

Mr. Zamora is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Texas at Austin. His area of specialization is Chicano labor activity, 1900-1920. He has presented papers at the Western Historical Association Annual Conference, at the American Historical Association, Pacific Branch Conference and will present a paper at the University of Texas at Austin Graduate Student Conference. His article entitled "Chicano Socialist Labor Activity in Texas, 1900-1920" is soon to be published in Aztlan, Chicano Journal of the Social Science and Arts.

Aurelio Montemayor
Austin, Texas

Training

Mr. Montemayor has had extensive training and experience as a trainer with VISTA, with the ADOPT (Achieving Definitive Objectives Through Participatory Training) system and in Paulo Freire's method of concientizacion. He is the Vice-President of the Mexican American Council for Economic Progress, Inc. (MACEP), a corporation which he helped to found. Mr. Montemayor is presently the head of the training department, Division of Human Resources of MACEP.

Rebecca Pedroza
Austin, Texas

Office Procedures/
Administration

Ms. Pedroza has served as support staff for several

developing institutions and is presently employed as the Academic Officer with the Juarez-Lincoln Center, Antioch Graduate School of Education. Her experiences have provided her with knowledge concerning almost every aspect of developing and maintaining an efficient office. Ms. Pedroza currently serves as the Treasurer of the Chicana Research and Learning Center.

Cecilia Preciado-Burciaga
Stanford, California

Chicano Education

Ms. Preciado-Burciaga is the Assistant to the President and Provost for Chicano Affairs at Stanford University. Her past immediate position was with the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, Mexican American Division as a researcher and writer. Utilizing her area of expertise, Chicano Education, she has assisted many community and academic groups throughout the nation. Ms. Preciado-Burciaga has also facilitated the development of Chicana organizations throughout the nation.

Cecilia Suarez
Montebello, California

Ms. Suarez is currently with the School of Education at California Polytechnic University in Pimona and a Ph.D. candidate at the University of California at Los Angeles. She has served as a teacher, child development supervisor, a curriculum coordinator and as a head start coordinator. In addition, she has served as a consultant to the California State Department of Education, to National Follow Through and to the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights. Ms. Suarez presently is a Board Member of the Chicana Research and Learning Center.

Dr. Juan Gomez Quinones
Los Angeles, California

Chicano History

Dr. Gomez Quinones is an Associate Professor in the History Department at the University of California at Los Angeles. He is the founder and associate editor of Aztlan, Chicano Journal of the Social Sciences and Arts, a member of the Editorial Board of Mexican American Collection, Arno Press (New York), and a member of the National Chicano Social Science Association. He was a fellow of the Social Science Research Council and the American Council of Learned