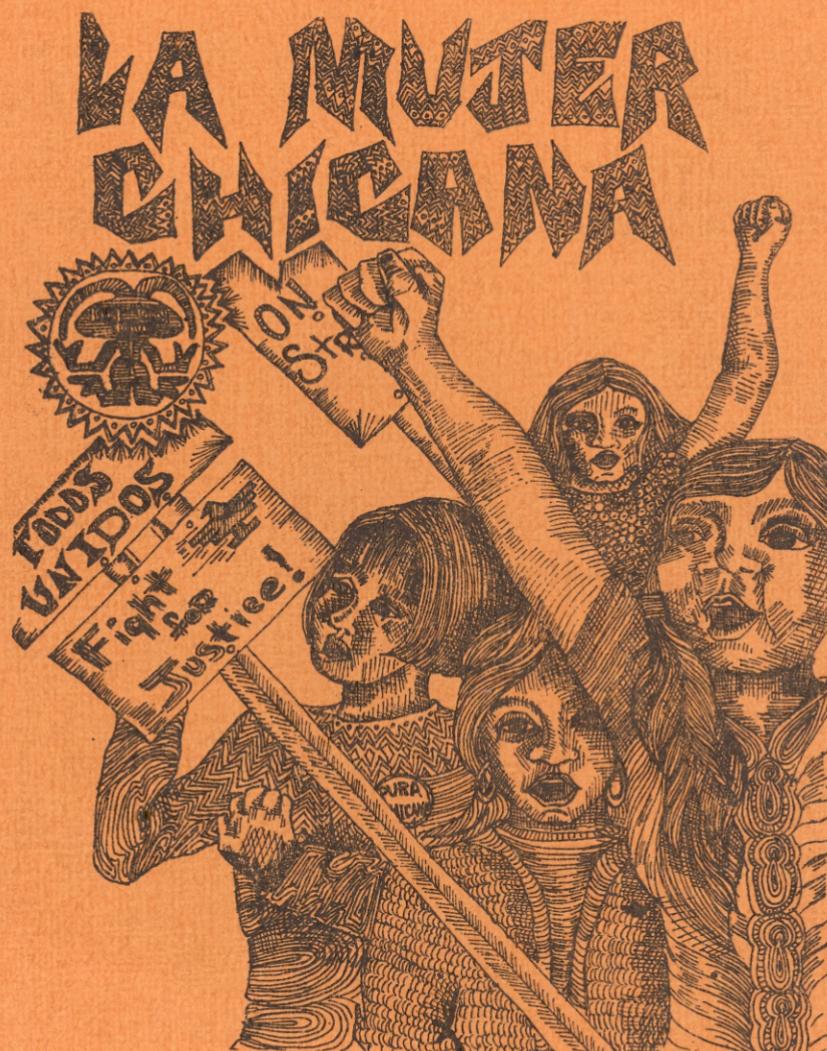


Women-Chicanas (RUP) C

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR CONFERENCE

By chicanas of La Raza Unida Party



Mexico City
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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR CONFERENCE: Mexico City, 1975

PRESENTATION BY: Chicanas of La Raza Unida Party in the United States of America

Chicanas of La Raza Unida Party in the United States send special greetings to all the United National delegates in the historic International Women's Year Conference.

The full participation of women in society is a goal, a dream yet to be realized by every country and every culture worldwide today. As Raza Unida Party delegates to this conference we would like to share with you our views of what Women's Liberation means to Chicanas in the United States.

First of all we believe that **Liberation** can be obtained only after a group succeeds in reaching a true analysis of its reality. Root causes of sexism, oppression and discrimination must be eliminated if true **Human Liberation** is to be lasting and not simply an occasion for one group to become the next oppressor. A solid historical framework and an **analysis** of a group's **economic, political** and **social status** is a process which helps a group reach the conclusions of that much sought reality. It is within this context that La Raza Unida Chicanas in the United states are zealously working for their **Liberation**.

Political: The history of our people, our economic and social conditions lay a strong argument and reason for La Raza Unida Party, an independent party in the United States which seeks a Chicano/Chicana political vehicle for gaining control of our own communities, our lives, our humanity.

The two party system has never served the interests of our people. Life experience have taught us that "our needs as a people can only be resolved by us", because only we understand what those needs are. La Raza Unida Party seeks to create social, political, economic, and ethnic institutions that will break the cycle of Chicano repression in the United States. These institution must develop political and educational reforms, a sense of ethnic identity, and equitable distribution of economic goods and resources.

La Raza Unida Party does not seek power as an entree into Mainstream American Society--in fact, we reject assimilation into a racist system--but, rather, as a way to safeguard our cultural distinctiveness.

Chicanas comprise close to 50% of La Raza Unida Party leadership. At the National Convention of the eighteen States participatin--six were lead by women.

Many of our efforts to establish a multilingual-multicultural society where we are free to express our humanity--where we can feel free to speak Spanish (our Language) and not be punished--to live according to our value system which is based on respect for human dignity--and to live without being ridiculed and labeled as uncivilized, clannish, and so forth.

Because the Chicana understands well the mind of the colonizer, we would like to suggest that this conference change the term **development** to **Liberation**. We have learned from personal experience that development is used by colonizers

impose upon, to organize and make grow from a pattern already set by them (the Colonizers). If we are to work as women for the liberation of all world women, we must do this from a premise of mutual respect for language and cultural variations. We must be ready to support the expression of a woman's humanity in her own language and culture.

History: The history of the Chicana is the history of her people which began after the United States-Mexican War of 1846-1848. It was at this period in history when as a colonized people the Chicana and Chicanos began to evolve into a distinct and different people in the United States. We would like to elaborate on a few historical facts which have greatly affected our lives.

Distorted History: Chicana and Chicano historians find history written about us greatly distorted. We are depicted by our colonizers as people without history, uncivilized people in need of salvation. Dr. Rodolfo Acuna's Look **Occupied America: The Chicano's Struggle Toward Liberation** (1972) is one of the several outstanding works expounding on distortion of our history. In the process of rewriting our History we find outstanding Chicanas as leaders of the Liberation of our people, for example Luisa Moreno a Union organizer who lead a Cannery strike - 1938 in San Antonio, Texas - during this period as in many other periods, Chicanos and Chicanas were the great source of cheap labor in the United States economy. Emma Tenayuca, another Chicana, also lead the Pecan Sheller's Strike February 1, 1938. We find that many Chicanas started Escuelitas del barrio--Herlinda Salinas, for example, in 1928-1955 started la Escuela Benito Juarez in Crystal City, Texas.

Social Science Research Bias: If history depicts us as uncivilized then it follows that social program will be established to try to civilize us. Social Scientists in the United States have greatly damaged our image. An outstanding Chicana who is about to get her Pd. D. from U.C.L.A., Ms. Deluvina Hernandez writes in her Monograph **Mexican-American Challenge to a Sacred Cow:**

...through the literature runs a common stereotypic thread which has been taken for truth, built upon and perpetuated by social scientists through the decades. The group of people with traits ranging from laziness, lack of achievement, ahistoricism, nonintellectualism, fatalism, emotionalism, irrationalism, indiscriminativeness in personal relations, sexually irresponsible, noneducation-orientation, to filling social roles and positions passively and statically, and isolationism from the rest of civilization. Only a very few recent studies have dared to challenge these past imbedded assertions. Finally, Mexican-Americans themselves are beginning to academically review past and current research, in order to destroy the fabrications which have become immortalized in the name of social science and consulted as authoratative information on Mexican Americans. [p. 7]

The Stereotyped Chicana: Ms. Cecilia C-R Suarez writes about the stereotyping process in a paper titled "Sexual Stereotypes--Psychological and

Cultural Survival." She finds that stereotypes have stifled and imposed certain restrictions upon people or groups of people. This has hindered their full development to contribute in our society. For instance, the stereotype of the woman as being passive and wanting to stay at home has restricted and stunted her full potential. The Chicana carries a double burden when it comes to stereotypes, for she is also discriminated against as a member of an ethnic group which has a long history of prejudicial treatment by the dominant society. A good example of this is William Madsen, an anthropologist, in his book **The Mexican American in South Texas**. He goes to great lengths to describe the Chicana as being submissive and that the Chicana wife **gratefully submits** to physical abuse from the Chicano husband. The male is described as sharing his machismo (his manliness) by having affairs.

The literature on the Chicana sex roles are very clearly refined. There is usually an unquestioning acceptance of the masculinity of machismo cult concerning the Chicano male. The male is therefore labeled as one who has a tendency to male superiority and a dominance thru multiple sexual conquests and the Chicana is described as defenseless and submissive to the macho.

According to Nancy Graves, another anthropologist, the child rearing practices of Chicanas cause mental retardation in her children. These stereotypes have had harmful effects not only on the Chicana, but also on her family, as evidence by the generally low socio-economic status of the Chicano population histofically.

Therefore in a national meeting of Chicana Researchers called by Ms. Lupe Anguiano in 1971 while working in a National Women's Task Force in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, the Chicanas requested that new research be done. They also recommended that Chicanas be involved in any future research project done about them.

Economic Status: According to the 1973 United States Census Bureau, there are an estimated 6.3 million Chicanos (Mexican origin) in the United States. Spanish is the first language spoken in the homes of over half of the Chicano population.

We are a young population, the women's median age is 19.5 years of age while the male median age is 18.0 years.

About 45% of all Chicano families live with poverty level incomes. Forty-five percent of the working Chicano population earn \$2,000 annually compared to the Black women's income of 5,147 and the White women's income of 5,998. Only 5.2% of all Chicanas hold proggessional jobs. Families headed by Chicanas number 12.6%.

Historically Chicanas and Chicanos have been a major source of cheap labor in the United States. The agricultural fields, the cannaries the sewing factories, and the automotive industry are but a few areas of our labors. Many labor strikes have been lead by our people such as the world known Farm Worker Strikes lead by Cesar Chavez in California.

We are currently struggling with a major Immigration problem in the Southwest and Midwest United States. Thousands of our people including Chicanos and Chicanas are being deported into Mexico and labeled illegal. These undocumented workers are greatly blamed for the economic problems of the United States. Many of these undocumented workers are women who are

working for slave wages in the United States homes. While U.S. women seek equal rights they oppress other women with such wages. Ms Susan Racho in a Channel 7 television program about two years completed a study of the treatment of sexual violence committed by United States Immigration officers of Mexican women worker without documents.

This paper would be incomplete if we did not say a few words about the deplorable economic conditions of Chicana household heads who are on Public Welfare. In a special research project the epitome of the exploitation of women sexually, socially, economically and politically. Because she doesn't have a man to support her she is placed on a meager or stingy budget. She is given just enough for her and her family to stay alive. She is trapped in a Welfare System that cripples her humanity and leaves her little resources to find a way out of Welfare. According to the United States laws she must live alone with her family. Thus the Chicana who in many cases would live with her parents or near relatives who would help her take care of her children finds herself alone. The majority of Day Care programs are foreign culturally so many Chicanas do not utilize these Day Care Centers. Chicanas have made many efforts to organize and operate our own Bilingual-Bicultural Day Care programs but again we are not trusted by administrators or outsiders, even other women in the the United States have failed to understand our arguments and efforts.

The world economic issue is of grave importance to this Conference if it is to have any significance in the elimination of sexism and oppression in the world today.

Education: Education in the United States is mono-lingual (English) and mono-cultural (Anglo). A child whose first language is not English will suffer major setbacks in this system. Chicano children usually come to school speaking "Spanish" and identifying with cultural values of that language, the teacher on the other hand does not know Spanish and does not understand or appreciate the cultural values of the child so the inevitable happens: the Chicano child fails in the system.

To be American is to identify with the Pilgrim fathers, the Chicano child identifies with southwest founding Mexicans and Spanish founders.

Chicano and Chicana children are placed in mentally retarded classes etc. etc. The educational achievement of Chicana and Chicano children is a crime.

The median years of education for Chicanas is 9.0 years and for Chicanos is 9.1 years. Only 5.9% of all Chicanas have completed four or more year of college.

Throughout the Southwest it is estimated that about 45% of the Spanish-surnamed residents have less than 5 years of education. About 65% of Chicanos age 45 and over have less than 7 years of education, with median of 6 years of schooling. In Texas the situation is especially critical, where the average number of years of school completed for Anglos is 10.8 years, for Blacks 8.1 years, but only 4.7 years for Spanish surname persons.

These alarming statistics have led to attempts to fill the voids in the educational process as it affects Chicanos. It has become obvious to the Chicano communities that the only way the educational system will ever fit the needs of Chicano children is for Chicanos to control or at least have significant input and impact at all decision-making levels of the educational system. Only at these levels will Chicanos be able to restructure the educational process so that it will meet the needs of a bilingual and bicultural people.

