

## WOMEN IN THE CHICANO MOVEMENT: Grassroots Activism in San José

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*The Chicano Movement of the 1960s and 1970s united numerous Chicanas in San José, California, as they challenged racial and class inequality in public education and city institutions. Despite their exceptional devotion to the movement, Chicano Movement historians who focus almost exclusively on men have not adequately recognized Chicana activists. This article seeks to provide a more complete and nuanced picture of women's roles and contributions to the movement, thereby expanding our understanding of regional Chicana grassroots activism. It analyzes ten oral narratives of Chicana activist veterans of San José who articulate their leadership roles in the movement, revealing their dedication as they mobilized and empowered their community. Many Chicanas stood side by side with Chicanos, and, when necessary, women forged an autonomous political space in order to combat patriarchal notions of women's roles.*

During the 1960s and 1970s, the Chicano Movement united numerous Chicanas. San José, California, was no exception. The Chicano Movement proved to be a vehicle through which Chicanas of San José resisted institutional discrimination, fought against perennial police brutality, challenged the city government that ignored their civil rights, and demanded gender equality. Even though pioneers such as Vicki Ruiz have exposed us to the rich legacy of Chicana activism, traditional scholarship of the Chicano Movement continues to focus almost exclusively on the contributions of men. In the prominent monolithic analysis of the Chicano Movement, women are defined as a largely unseen sector of the movement:

Whereas men were the visible leaders, women for the most part were the “behind the scenes” organizers responsible for effective

mass mobilization, communications, and the day-to-day tasks of movement building. . . . [T]hey performed duties of secretaries, cooks, and other tasks that women normally performed in their families. (Muñoz Jr. 2007, 7)

Certainly some Chicana activists did fit this pattern, but many others did not. Chicana historian Maylei Blackwell (2011) explains the need for a valid assessment of Chicana activism: “[E]xamining the contested histories of gender and feminism in the Chicano Movement” illuminates the “histories of women’s mass involvement and their role in changing our notions of Chicana/o politics in ways that have not been fully acknowledged or documented” (28). Using ten oral narratives, this article seeks to accurately acknowledge Chicana politics, roles, and contributions in San José and expand our understanding of women’s grassroots activism in the Chicano Movement.

My focus on the contributions of women reveals their vitality at the local level. Their grassroots militancy set the stage for the regional progress that contributed to the Chicano Movement. Chicanas in San José heard the call to activism and became involved in grassroots Chicano organizations as founders, organizers, and participants. They were college students, working women, single women, wives, mothers, grandmothers, and community advocates. Several Chicanas juggled familial and movement responsibilities. Some were mothers who brought their young children to meetings of community organizations and the San José City Council, pushing strollers at rallies, marches, and on picket lines. This study draws on the oral narratives of ten activists who were among many in San José.<sup>1</sup>

The ten women whose testimonies provide the foundation for this article all come from poor or working class backgrounds. They were born between

1929 and 1949. Many were the first in their families to attain a high school diploma. Eight attended college, two earning doctoral degrees. During their years as movement activists, they ranged in age from eighteen to forty-five.<sup>2</sup> Eight of the narrators agreed to have their names used in this article: Delia Alvarez, Ernestina Garcia, Sofia Mendoza, Elena Minor, Consuelo Rodriguez, Concepción “Concha” Saucedo, Rachel Silva, and Shirley Trevino. Two narrators who asked to remain anonymous are identified by pseudonyms: Fernanda Reyes and Monica Valenzuela.

The testimonies demonstrate how thoroughly the Chicano Movement penetrated everyday life in San José’s community. Delia Alvarez served as a member of a Chicana organization called *Mujeres de Aztlán*, and she spoke out against the Vietnam War while the North Vietnamese held her brother as a prisoner of war. Ernestina Garcia founded *El Comite Pro-Estudiantil*, a grassroots organization of ethnic Mexican parents who opposed a school’s practice of penalizing Mexican American children for speaking Spanish. Sofia Mendoza organized junior high school children, parents, teachers, and community supporters to stage one of the first Chicana/o student walkouts in San José. Elena Minor was called by prosecutors to testify against her Chicana comrades at the hearings of the Hellyer Park Riot in 1971. Fernanda Reyes, inspired by the leadership of her sister activists, joined *La Confederación de la Raza Unida*, a grassroots Chicana/o group. Consuelo Rodriguez risked her teaching position to challenge institutional discrimination and support Chicana/o students at Theodore Roosevelt Junior High School. Concha Saucedo led women and their children to march on behalf of the United Farm Workers grape strike at the Fiesta de las Rosas parade, only to be physically beaten by police officers. Rachel Silva picketed local supermarkets during the United Farm Workers grape strike and was disparagingly called “Pit Boss” by the San José police for her leadership on the picket line. Shirley Trevino joined

the membership of the police surveillance organization, Community Alert Patrol and participated in its evening and weekend street patrols. Monica Valenzuela challenged the gender roles of her family through her involvement in the Chicano Movement. These ten Chicanas are champions in American history, improving conditions for future generations of Mexican Americans and other marginalized groups in San José.

Oral narratives of movement veterans and active participants offer uniquely valuable perspectives in Chicana/o history. As Adela de la Torre and Beatriz Pesquera (1993) observe in their path-breaking anthology of essays in Chicana/o Studies, although scholars have routinely ignored Chicanas, they “have spoken out—around kitchen tables, in community and political organizations, at union meetings” (1). Through oral history, these voices can be more widely heard. Moreover, as historian Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis (1991) stresses, oral narratives are especially important with respect to women of color. They are “a powerful instrument for the rediscovery of womanhood so often overlooked and/or neglected in history and literature alike” (43). These activists’ accounts present a counternarrative to the majoritarian history, recounting experiences of race, gender, and class resistance from the perspective of women in grassroots activism.

### **Segregated East San José**

During the years of the Chicano Movement—the 1960s and 1970s—San José’s Spanish surnamed population rose from 14 to 21 percent (Zlolniski 2006, 27). Yet housing segregation confined the majority of Mexican Americans in San José to the eastside barrios of town (Regua and Villarreal 2009, 53–55). From 1920 to 1945, neighborhood covenants in many parts of San José forbade property owners from renting or selling homes to people of Mexican ancestry (Pitti 2003, 88). Only in East San José could large numbers

of Mexican Americans live, raise families, and find employment. Limited employment opportunities commonly funneled Mexican Americans into low wage agricultural and construction occupations (89). East San José was short on adequate housing stock and on city services, such as paved streets and sidewalks, public transportation, street lighting, sewage, and protection from annual flooding (90). One especially notorious eastside neighborhood—home to labor leader César E. Chávez and his family—was known as Sal Si Puedes or “Get out if you can.” Chicana Sofía Mendoza recalls East San José’s devalued reputation in her oral narrative:

Before I moved to East San José, I heard that everybody that was bad lived in East San José. Everybody that was poor lived in East San José. The schools in East San José were no good. I never heard anything good about it. Never. When you drove around, without knowing it, just by appearance, what they were saying was true. (Mendoza 2009)

Mendoza brings light to the deprivation experienced by those of Mexican descent of East San José. The deficient conditions generated action for change by Mendoza and other Chicanas in the Chicana/o Movement.

### **Community Organizing to Combat Educational Discrimination**

In 1967, Sofía Mendoza became aware of the educational challenges Mexican American schoolchildren faced at East San José’s Theodore Roosevelt Junior High School. Listening to the students, she learned of the maltreatment they received at the school. She was shocked to discover that Roosevelt’s administrators were expelling Mexican American children for minor violations of the rules and sending them to juvenile homes without first speaking to their parents (Jiménez, A. García and R. García 2007,



**Figure 1**

Sofia Mendoza discussed her concerns at a community meeting in San José. Courtesy of the Chicano Collection, Cultural Heritage, San José State University/ Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Public Library.

99). Roosevelt's faculty and administrators used racial epithets; Mendoza remembers Mexican American students being called "pepper bellies," "bean chokers," and "taco benders" (Mendoza 2009). Sixteen teachers disciplined Mexican American students with wooden paddles. Mexican American students were routinely tracked out of honors or advanced courses and tracked into special classes for developmentally disabled children. In addition, numerous Mexican American students were given daily worksheets rather than textbooks because the school administrators and teachers believed the students were not sufficiently responsible to take care of the books. Ultimately, many Mexican American students from ages eleven to fifteen dropped out of

Roosevelt and quit attending school because the teachers and administrators deemed them “unworthy of an education” (Rodriguez 2010).

Mendoza decided the mistreatment of Mexican American students had to stop immediately; with the intent of organizing the parents to confront the school officials, she started visiting Mexican and Mexican American parents. She asked parents how their children were being treated at school. She documented what the parents and the students told her by writing their statements on paper and having them sign it. With a delegation of 500 students and parents, many of whom had never been involved in school affairs before, Mendoza met with Roosevelt’s administrators to discuss the school’s abusive behavior. The complaints fell upon deaf ears. Mendoza recalls that the Parent-Teacher Association at Roosevelt also refused to listen to the parents’ grievances. Mendoza, the parents, and the students then took matters into their own hands, with the support and participation of two Chicano faculty members at Roosevelt, José Carrasco and Consuelo Rodriguez, and a radical community organization known as the Black Berets for Justice.<sup>3</sup> Together they organized a student walkout to expose the school’s racist practices and mobilize community-wide resistance. On Friday, April 26, 1968, 150 of Roosevelt’s Mexican American students walked out of their classrooms in unison at 10:00 a.m. and stood outside of the school grounds, picketing, and chanting, “Walk out!”<sup>4</sup> Students marched to nearby William Street Park and later returned to Roosevelt’s campus. Female and male members of the Black Berets for Justice served as peacekeepers, protecting the students at the walkout and march.

The following Monday morning, a general assembly of 500 students had a rally in the school’s auditorium to speak out about the racist practices of Roosevelt’s teachers and administrators, explains Consuelo Rodriguez in her testimony. An article in the San José State University Chicano student paper *El Machete*

described a group of Mexican American parents who met with the school's administration on the following Tuesday to make demands on behalf of their children. Their demands included terminating the use of derogatory remarks by teachers, the hiring of Chicana/o teachers and counselors, and offering courses on Chicana/o history and culture ("Chicano Student Union" 1968).

This protest walkout at Roosevelt was one of the first of many Chicana/o student walkouts in San José. The vigorous support it received from the surrounding community prompted the school board to fire the school's principal and vice principal and thirty-six of its teachers (Mendoza 2009). Sofía Mendoza reflects:

The students learned so much from their organizing. They learned that people could make changes in the system. They learned that they have every right to make changes without winding up in juvenile hall for being labeled as troublemakers. It was really wonderful. (Jiménez, A. García and R. Garcia 2007, 100)

For Consuelo Rodriguez, this victory was bittersweet. As a teacher, she had firsthand knowledge of the mistreatment of Mexican American students. Often, the students confided their experiences of inequality to Rodriguez. Like Sofía Mendoza, Rodriguez visited Mexican parents at their homes to discuss their children's experiences. She was pleased that the school board took action against the worst offenders, but she also paid a price for supporting the protest. After the walkout, some of her faculty colleagues at Roosevelt refused to speak to her or labeled her an agitator and called her efforts on behalf of the students "stupid" (Rodriguez 2010). Other teachers insisted to school administrators that she be fired.





**Figure 2**

Theodore Roosevelt Junior High School instructor and community activist, Consuelo Rodriguez sits at her desk. Courtesy of Consuelo Rodriguez.

Other women became activists also in response to the public school system's abuse of Mexican American youth. In 1968, as a young wife and mother, Ernestina Garcia began fighting for the rights of schoolchildren in Milpitas, a town located in the greater San José area. In 1969 at Samuel Ayer High School, Mexican American students who were caught speaking Spanish in school were forced to pick up trash during class time even though the U.S. Supreme Court had recently overturned a state law that banned students from speaking Spanish on school grounds (Alaniz and Cornish 2008, 62). Learning of the situation at Ayer, Garcia began visiting the students' homes and mobilizing their parents. This led her and other Mexican parents to establish El Comité Pro-Estudantil, which successfully pressured Ayer administrators and faculty to stop punishing students for speaking Spanish.

In spring 1969, near the end of the academic year, Ernestina Garcia's daughter came home from Milpitas's Rancho Middle School very upset with her school yearbook, *El Anuario*. When students did not have a picture taken for the yearbook, the student editors inserted a stereotypical cartoon image of a Mexican man sleeping next to a cactus and wearing a sombrero and huaraches next to their names. The words "asleep again" were printed below the Mexican image. Garcia remembers: "I looked at the yearbook and said, 'Oh, no, this has to change'" (Jiménez, A. García and R. Garcia 2007, 125). She and the parents of El Komite protested the school's racist depiction of a Mexican in the yearbook.

When El Komite took this complaint to a meeting of the Milpitas School District Board, its concerns were berated. The board called the parents communists and threatened to have the police forcibly remove them from the boardroom. Garcia recalls that the parents of El Komite "made a big *barullo* because we wanted the sponsors of the yearbook fired" (Jiménez, A. García and R. Garcia 2007, 125). After the rebuke by the board, El Komite reached out to people of nearby San José, enlisting the help of several Chicana/o organizations. As a result of broad community support, El Komite compelled the board to fire Rancho Middle School's principal and monitor the yearbook's production. In 1970, *El Anuario* simply placed the words "Picture Not Available" near the names of students for whom there were no photographs.

### **Becoming a Chicana**

Many Mexican American women found the term 'Chicano' difficult to identify with. Fernanda Reyes recalls an encounter with Theodore Roosevelt Junior High School instructor and community activist, José Carrasco, in 1967, as a defining moment for her. The meeting introduced her to the

Chicano Movement and the term 'Chicano'.<sup>5</sup> Reyes met Carrasco for the first time while hosting a house meeting for Mexican American parents concerned with a San José school board. Reyes recalls that when Carrasco kept mentioning the term 'Chicano' she became agitated with his use of the word. Reyes remembers thinking,

What is this shit? Who is this jerk? Get him out of here...and then someone said he was a teacher or something and I thought, I have never heard of a Mexican teacher. Who is this guy, but the more I got to know him, the more impressed I was. (Reyes 1989)

Despite her initial resistance to the word 'Chicano,' Reyes developed respect for Carrasco, the term, and the Chicano Movement. She later described that being part of the movement was "like getting religion in which little else mattered" in her life (Reyes 1989). Chicano women identified with the feminized term 'Chicana' in a different manner. Some embraced it while others opposed it. However, for many the label eventually became a marker of pride, unity, and autonomy.

### **Supporting the United Farm Workers' Grape Strike and Boycott**

Pivotal to Chicana and Chicano activism and, at times, intertwined with the Chicano Movement, was a table grape strike led by the United Farm Workers (UFW) from 1965 to 1970. In 1965, Mexican and Mexican American farm workers joined a strike by Filipina/o grape pickers in Delano, California. The UFW came out of that alliance. Under the co-leadership of César E. Chávez and Dolores Huerta, it launched a nationwide boycott of grapes sold by growers who refused to recognize the union.<sup>6</sup> Residents of San José and many other cities throughout the country supported the grape strike and boycott and picketed grocery stores that sold non-union grapes.

All ten of the Chicana activists at center stage in this article actively supported the grape strike, called *La Huelga*. Several were former agricultural workers who had worked in the fields alongside César E. Chávez and his family. During the strike, Monica Valenzuela spent her Saturdays picketing and distributing leaflets to consumers at supermarkets, asking them not to purchase non-union grapes. She proudly states, “I was a faithful picketer” (Valenzuela 1989). Concha Saucedo, a captain of the grape boycott in Santa Clara County where San José is located, distributed leaflets, picketed supermarkets and helped maintain awareness of the boycott with presentations in the community every Friday and Saturday night. Rachel Silva, her children, and other activists avidly picketed stores selling non-union grapes. Silva, a boycott captain in East San José, recalls her picketing and protest strategies in her oral narrative:

On the weekends, I would take them [her children] to boycott with me. They were my crew to boycott. We started at Safeway.... During the grape boycott, there were a few people who would fill up carts in stores with little items like ice cream. I would get things that were going to perish and then walk out of the store and leave the cart there. Sometimes, I would say [to the cashier] “Oh my goodness, I forgot my wallet” and leave. They would wait for us to come back with the money and they had to put everything back—which took time. I got arrested twice for disturbing the peace. (Silva 2010)

Silva was nicknamed Pit Boss by the police for her leadership qualities on the picket line. On one of Silva’s picketing efforts, she invited Roberto Durán, a young friend of her son’s, to join them, along with others on the picket line. Inspired by Silva’s strength on the picket line, Durán later penned the poem “Rachel” about her, in 1993:

The so-called movement  
took the best years  
leaving the lines of loyalty  
on your dedicated face

I remember you  
leader of picket lines  
who dared burly six-foot  
two-hundred-pounders  
to cross her path

I remember you  
at the top of your voice  
as the safe and lucky supermarket patrons  
stepped on your lungs

coming out of stores in San Jose  
saluting you with middle fingers  
sometimes stopping in front of your face  
to eat grapes Julius Caesar-like  
and you handed them flyers anyway

La Rachel de San Jose. (Durán 2002, 311)

Like Silva, Saucedo, and Valenzuela, other activists were deeply inspired by the UFW grape strike and boycott.

### **Protesting the Vietnam War and Challenging Gender Roles**

Another issue on Chicana activists' agendas was the U.S. war in Vietnam.

Second only to Los Angeles, in significant numbers, San José's Chicanos served in the war as draftees or volunteers.<sup>7</sup> On August 5, 1964, U.S. naval pilot Lieutenant Everett Alvarez, a resident of adjacent city Santa Clara, performed a surveillance flight mission over North Vietnam. The North Vietnamese shot his plane down in the Gulf of Tonkin, captured him, and held him as a prisoner of war (POW) for eight-and-a-half years. He was the first and longest held POW of the war. Delia Alvarez was Lt. Alvarez's younger sister. Her family assigned her the task of family spokesperson. Each evening, her family gathered around the television to watch the evening news coverage of the war. Increasingly, she began to feel "totally helpless" (Oropeza 2005, 2). Approximately five years after her brother's capture, she grew to oppose the war, joined the antiwar movement, and spoke out against it. Alvarez recalls,

For me it merged together, the Chicano Movement and Anti-War Movement. Because I was a sister of the first POW, I had a forum to speak out that others didn't. I was invited all over the country in big rallies at San Francisco and other locations to get the word out to stop the war. (Alvarez 2010)

Alvarez's antiwar outspokenness garnered criticism from some Chicano males in San José. Chicanos announced to her sister activists that Alvarez became a big Chingona who forgot about them. She confides, "There were some Chicanos who were hoping when my brother came home he would put me in my place for my activism because I was pretty out there. Of course, my brother didn't when he returned" (Alvarez 2010). At the end of the Vietnam War, Lt. Alvarez was released and he returned home to Santa Clara in 1973. The Vietnam War and her brother's imprisonment empowered Alvarez to speak out and defy rigid patriarchal notions of Chicana behavior.

### **Organizing Against the Fiesta de las Rosas Parade and Police Brutality**

In June 1969, a tragic event for the Chicana/o community occurred at the city's annual Fiesta de las Rosas parade. Chicanas were at center stage of this violent confrontation. Fiestas de las Rosas celebrated the history and beauty of individual cities in the American Southwest. The Fiesta had taken place in San José since 1926 (S. Clark and A. Clark 2010, xii). In 1969, the festivities were especially elaborate; at taxpayer expense, the city hosted a weeklong celebration of the bicentennial of the Spanish founding of California in 1769. Events included a beauty pageant, a rodeo, a horse show, a rose show, and arts and crafts activities. On Sunday, June 1, the celebration culminated in a parade whose grand marshal was the actor Lorne Greene.

Paid for with \$31,000 of San José's city funds and led by executive director Bob Baskett and chairwoman Jean Sauerwein, the San José Goals Committee was in charge of the planning for the Fiesta. The committee sought to celebrate San José's Spanish heritage, yet reduced the city's Mexican history to a stereotype. For example, the committee's plans for the parade included a skit depicting a stumbling Mexican peasant leading a burro while a Spanish caballero shouted at the Mexican to "get moving" ("Fiesta de las Rosas: Analysis" 1969). The Chicano community mobilized to remove this inaccurate and demeaning characterization from the parade.<sup>8</sup> Many Chicana and Chicano residents of San José viewed the parade and its skit as an insult to Mexican history, people, and culture. They believed the Fiesta exemplified the city's disregard for Mexican history. As the stakes grew, the Fiesta of 1969 became a catalyst for further unity, militancy, and organization in the Chicana/o community.

A year before the parade, Mexican American community leaders pressured the Goals Committee to alter the parade's depiction of Mexican history. These leaders also contended that the public money allocated by the city

for the Fiesta should have gone toward meeting housing, employment, and educational needs in East San José. On numerous occasions, activists from the Chicana/o community took these concerns to the Goals Committee, but to no avail. In her testimony, Concha Saucedo remembers one such meeting:

A group of us who were activists from all different parts [of San José] said to the San José Goals Committee, “If you’re going to do the parade, it should help out this community. It shouldn’t be for the merchants, but for the needs of the community” and they didn’t go for that. So we all decided to boycott it. (Saucedo 2010)

Discontent with the parade planning spread from Chicana/o activists to grassroots organizations and community supporters. Many community associations joined in a coalition to embrace the Chicana/o call for a boycott of the Fiesta. Supporters included GI Forum chapters in San José, Santa Clara, and thirteen other towns; the Japanese American Citizens League; the Ladies Auxiliary; the Mexican American Political Association; the Mexican American Cultural Foundation; the Santa Clara County Democratic Central Committee; the Mexican American Teachers Association; the Mexican American Lions Club; the Mexican American Citizens League of Santa Clara County, and twenty-eight Catholic priests from churches in Santa Clara County (“Fiesta Critics, Support Mounts” 1969; “MAPA On One Side” 1969). Three months before the Fiesta, the parade’s opponents sent San José’s Mayor Ron James a letter of concern. Instead of altering the parade, he publicly branded concerned Mexican Americans as “Reds”—communists who wished only to spread trouble (“Fiesta de las Rosas: Analysis” 1969).

According to the *San Jose Mercury News* over 75,000 people attended the parade on June 1<sup>st</sup>. No more than 100 of them were Mexican Americans,



some came as spectators and the rest to protest (“Fiesta Parade Seen by 75,000” 1969; “Fiesta Militants Heading For Trial” 1969). Among the protestors and spectators were six of the ten women whose oral narrative memories inspired this article.<sup>9</sup> Fearful that Mexican Americans would create a disturbance, some 300 plainclothes and uniformed police officers were on guard while a police helicopter hovered over the one-and-a-half mile stretch of the parade. When the skit depicting the Mexican peasant and his burro passed the crowd, “all the gringos would laugh,” said a Chicana spectator (Méndez-Negrete 1996, 223).

Although Concha Saucedo and other activists who went to the parade had initially planned to boycott, they later changed their minds and decided to attend and peacefully protest. Nevertheless, midway through the event, violence broke out between Mexican American demonstrators, spectators, and the San José police force.<sup>10</sup> Saucedo recalls demonstrating and the traumatic beating she received from the police at the parade:

We decided to ask the Charros to permit us to enter the parade and for them to leave a space where we could enter and march as a group. Many of us were a part of the United Farm Workers. We were so peaceful and non-violent. I had asked parents to come with their children. At the time, San José had a police tactical squad that was trained to control agitators or activists. They had gloves with metal tips in them and their batons had metal rods in them. They had big shields and would march in formation. So we went innocently well... dumbly to the Fiesta parade and we lined up in the street. I was to give a signal as to when everybody was to go into the street and start. The police were lined up on motorcycles all along the street. The Charros came by, they gave us the signal, and we all went into

the street. At that moment, the motorcycle cops started to use their motorcycles as an instrument against us. They went into the crowd knocking us down, pursuing us. I looked back and I saw the tactical squad come from one of the side streets kind of making a sweep. It was mayhem. I was worried because you know the parents brought kids and some had kids on their shoulders. We started running and trying to help people.... They were just waving their batons and there were a lot of women and it seemed to us that they purposely started beating on the women because what that caused was the young men who were just watching the parade who saw what could be their mothers to become involved. So I was being beaten. I just got so enraged that I just forgot everything I had learned about non-violence and I said [to the police], "You Fuckers! You're not going to get me off the street. You'll have to kill me first." When they started beating me, I was caught in a place. Consuelo [Rodriguez] came running. That's how I met her. She came and pulled me out somehow...and we went running, falling, and trying to help young people who had fallen. The police kept after us and they really used the motorcycle as the vehicle to harm people. (Saucedo 2010)

Saucedo's firsthand account suggests that the police singled out Chicanas to be beaten.

Monica Valenzuela's testimony confirms the pattern of abuse during the parade toward women by the police: "A policeman threw me. I'll never forget that it was really frightening...people getting clubbed and hit. The riot was really the police again.... They're the ones who came in storming with their clubs out. We were not armed" (Valenzuela 1989). A Chicano protestor recalls, "We were standing on the edge of the parade protesting with our

cards and one of the policemen stepped on a lady's foot—deliberately—on a motorcycle” (Villarreal 1991, 160). Jesse Dominguez, a member of the Black Berets for Justice exclaims, “I seen a woman get beat up by two cops” (97). Attending the parade with her young daughter, Fernanda Reyes remembers that it was the first time she saw a police officer hit anyone: “I had always grown up thinking that police are there to protect you and help you.... That day they were not there to take care of us” (Reyes 1989). Word of the police actions spread quickly through the Chicana/o community, in which the parade was soon known as the Fiesta Fiasco (“Fiesta Fiasco” 1969).

By targeting Chicanas, the police escalated the violence, for Mexican American men jumped into the fray as would-be protectors of women and children. Although some men did not hesitate to help the women, others did not come to Chicanas’ defense. A Chicano boycotter of the parade describes watching the melee on television, “I saw the news about this riot and saw police and people getting beat up like Ernestina Garcia” (Jiménez, A. García and R. García 2007, 205). Concha Saucedo expresses the women’s concerns:

You know we were upset with some of the [Chicano] men because they weren’t out there in the same way that we were. They said, “We had to man this or that, or we had to get people out of jail” but we said, “Yeah but we were out there taking the hits.” (Saucedo 2010)

Chicanas who were on the frontlines of the Fiesta Fiasco encountered physical abuse by law enforcement and questioned Chicanos’ lack of support.

Three police officers sustained minor injuries, but at least a dozen Mexican Americans were beaten so badly they had to be taken to the nearest hospital for treatment. This group included a veteran of the Vietnam War who had received

a Purple Heart (“Fiesta Casualty List About A Dozen” 1969). Twenty-one Mexican American men and two Mexican American women were arrested and charged with assaulting a police officer, disturbing the peace, resisting arrest, or assault with a deadly weapon (“Police Arrest 23 Protestors” 1969). In articles, the *Mercury News* published the names of the Chicano men and women who were arrested at the parade, including their ages and home addresses.

The community’s organized response to the police brutality got underway that very evening, when protestors who had escaped arrest—including some who were seriously injured—gathered at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in East San José’s Sal Si Puedes neighborhood. At the meeting, they agreed that collective mobilization, a key ingredient to grassroots political activism, was necessary. They established a new umbrella coalition to advocate for the rights of Mexican Americans. Thus was born La Confederación de la Raza Unida, which soon included at least sixty-seven other organizations, from the Community Service Organization and Economic Services Organization to Chicano and Chicana student groups from Santa Clara University, San José City College, and San José State University (Pitti 2003, 190). Seven of the ten women included in this study were members and key figures of La Confederación.<sup>11</sup>

Police aggression occupied an important place on La Confederación’s agenda. In an oral testimony, retired Anglo police officer, Robert Williams, shed light on San José Police Department’s (SJPd) treatment of the Chicana/o community. Williams worked for the SJPd from 1968 until his retirement in 1993. His patrol beat was East San José. Recalling the department’s lack of diversity in the late 1960s, he estimates that among 286 San José police officers at the time, there were no females or Asian Americans, fewer than ten Latinos, and no more than three African Americans (Williams 2010). At the helm was Police Chief John “Ray” Blackmore, who held the position from

1947 until 1971. Describing Chief Blackmore and his leadership, Williams says: “Blackmore was old school. He was heavy-handed in dealing with the public. He followed another kind of justice and allowed law enforcement to practice swift justice. The public feared the police” (Williams 2010).

Under the Blackmore regime, police officers were free to rough up Mexican Americans. Chief Blackmore’s successor, Robert Murphy, who served from 1971 to 1976, also turned a blind eye to such misbehavior.

Recalling the Blackmore-Murphy regime, Sofía Mendoza says:

The San José Police Department ran the town. Every time the police were accused of a killing, we would go to the [San José] City Council, but they would just sit there. They didn’t understand why we were complaining and why we wanted an investigation, and so they wouldn’t do anything. (Jiménez, A. García and R. García 2007, 101)

In response, Mendoza cofounded an organization called Community Alert Patrol (CAP), which soon had nearly 1,000 members.<sup>12</sup> Seven of the ten Chicana activists in this article were involved in this organization.<sup>13</sup> CAP took direct action against the SJPD’s abuse of Mexicans. On Friday and Saturday nights, until three or four o’clock in the morning, CAP members patrolled San José, using radio scanners, two way radios, cameras, and tape recorders to monitor and document the police’s abuse of power. Ernestina Garcia, who took part in the patrols, remembers:

The problems we faced as Chicanos were, like we used to say in the ‘60s, “pretty heavy.”...My husband and I continued working on the Patrol because this police harassment had to stop. I told everyone that we had to unite as a community. (Jiménez, A. García and R. García 2007, 128–29)

Rachel Silva, another CAP activist, describes her work on the streets: “We went out with walkie talkies. We would intercept arrests that they would make. If they were going to make an arrest, we would be sure to be there. We would be there taking pictures” (Silva 2010). Sofia Mendoza remembers that, over the course of five years, the SJPD took the lives of sixteen people, most of them Mexicans (Mendoza 2009). Shirley Trevino emphasizes, “People came together to control the police. I think the police organized *us!*” (Trevino 2010; italics added).

In addition to police brutality, the Chicana/o community confronted unremitting animosity and bias from the city’s leading newspaper, the *San Jose Mercury News*. For instance, when protestors were beaten and arrested at the Fiesta de las Rosas parade, the newspaper reported that Chicana/o “militants” had stormed the celebration (“Disturbance Quickly Quelled” 1969). This story typified the paper’s distorted coverage of Mexican American issues. In his master’s thesis at San José State University, Stan Tulleo provides a content analysis of *Mercury News* stories about Mexican Americans from 1967 to 1979. Ninety-nine percent of the articles were negative, with many merely parroting the police department’s excuses for brutalizing Chicanas/os (Tulleo 1981, 7). The *Mercury News*’s coverage of Mexican Americans contributed to the polarization of the city government and the Mexican American community.

### **Resisting Police Mistreatment at the Hellyer Park Riot**

Just two years after the Fiesta Fiasco another melee erupted between Chicanos and the SJPD; this one at Hellyer Park in southeast San José. With approval from the city’s Department of Parks and Recreation, Chicanos established their own Parque de la Raza de Paz inside Hellyer’s perimeter, but police repeatedly harassed community members who gathered there (Trevino 2010). On Sunday, May 23, 1971, with 300 people in the entire park, fewer than 100 Chicanas/os

were in Parque de la Raza. In response to an assault in the park, eighty police, sheriffs, and highway patrol officers swept into Parque de la Raza to remove all Chicanas/os (“Alert Patrol Claims ‘Mistreatment’ During Fracas” 1971). Widespread violence occurred between Chicana/o park-goers, CAP members, and law enforcement. CAP member Shirley Trevino recalls the events:

One day the kids came to the [CAP] meeting because the police were beating up youth at the park. Rachel Silva, Fran[ces] Escalante, Elena Minor, and myself volunteered to go out there on a Sunday. That day all hell broke loose. I was taking pictures of cops beating up...little *Chicanitas*. They were hitting them on their backs and heads. I thought this is wonderful because I can show my pictures to the City Council and the Board of Supervisors that this is what they [police] are doing out there. They started scattering everybody. There was a riot. We jumped in a CAP car. There were six of us in a CAP car. We were squeezed in. It was so hot. And they put a paddy wagon in front of our car and they wouldn't let us leave. Finally, I said, “We need to breathe.” So I rolled down my window a little bit. The police grabbed my hair through the window. They pulled me out of the window by my hair. And they opened up the car. They took the cameras. They took the film. We had tape recordings of the kids screaming. They ran over the tape recorders. (Trevino 2010)

Destruction of CAP equipment was not only the destruction of property, but also the destruction of evidence of unrelenting police mistreatment of Chicanas/os. Rachel Silva complements Trevino's account, illustrating the brutality that the police inflicted on Chicanas. After being removed from the CAP car, Silva was maced, arrested, and led to a paddy wagon by the police. She claims she never heard a formal dispersal order from the police. A reporter for the *Mercury News*

quoted Silva and her violent confrontation with law enforcement: “The police yanked my right arm behind my head. I thought he was going to break it. I told him he didn’t have to pull my arm, that I wouldn’t resist. He said, ‘I’ll break it if I have to’” (Carroll 1971, np). Fifteen people were arrested that day on charges of obstructing justice, inciting a riot, or public drunkenness.

While most of those arrested were later acquitted, two women—CAP members Frances Escalante and Rachel Silva—were convicted of inciting a riot. Silva remembers her time in custody:

We were in jail singing “De Colores” really loud. We were giving them [the guards] a bad time. They would say “Stop Singing!” But we just wouldn’t let them think that we were afraid, so we kept singing. We weren’t afraid of anything. (Silva 2010)

When Escalante and Silva’s case went to trial, the prosecutor compelled their comrade, Elena Minor, to take the witness stand against them. Minor considers this one of her unhappiest memories of the Chicano Movement. In her narrative, she confides: “The worst memory was Fran and Rachel’s convictions of inciting a riot at the Hellyer Park incident. My theory is that they were convicted because they were older Chicanas and mothers who ‘stepped out of line’” (Minor 2010). Escalante and Silva were tried by a jury, found guilty, sentenced to pay a \$200 fine, and ordered to serve thirty days in jail with two years of probation (Geilhufe 1979, 69).<sup>14</sup> According to Elena Minor’s testimony, law enforcement sought to make an example of Chicanas who “stepped out of line” with arrests and physical abuse.

### **Challenging Cultural and Patriarchal Gender Norms**

Cultural stereotypes were disrupted when Chicanas, like Silva, who were middle-aged wives and mothers, were publicly disobedient, resisting unfair



treatment. Even Chicanos in the community had difficulty accepting Chicanas' new behavior and criticized them. After her release from jail, Silva's husband was confronted and held accountable for her actions by Chicanos. Recalling Chicanos' disparaging remarks, Silva discloses,

The men despised what we were doing. They didn't agree with us making trouble. At that time my husband was the director of MACSA (Mexican American Community Services Association). He wasn't too happy with my involvement either because it would reflect on him. When he became director of MACSA guys on the board of directors told him that he had to keep his wife in line. (Silva 2010)

Silva's activism reflected on her husband and his control—or lack—of her. Rather than applauding her for her commitment to Chicana/o rights, for risking her safety, and for standing up to police, some Chicanos condemned Silva for setting a poor example of appropriate female behavior.

Chicanas paid a high price for their activism. Some of the Chicana activists interviewed for this article faced other forms of frightening hostility. Oftentimes, when Ernestina Garcia was driving home from a meeting, a car tailed her from San José to Milpitas (D. Garcia 2009). Several women received death threats. According to Sofía Mendoza, her life was threatened repeatedly in telephone calls from anonymous members of the American Nazi Party and in letters from hate groups. One male caller asked how she preferred to die, “by a knife or a gun?” (Jiménez, A. García and R. Garcia 2007, 108). Whatever fear Mendoza felt, however, was vastly overshadowed by her commitment to the cause:

During the '60s, I had to be involved in many issues: education, police brutality, etc. I believe I contributed to solving some of these

problems.... I was a whirlwind. I was everywhere. But, I wouldn't change anything in my life. I would do the same thing over again. (112)

Chicanas were certain that their sacrifices and activism for the movement were justified.

### **Gendering the Chicano Movement**

Numerous Chicanas stood at the forefront of the local movement, holding leadership positions and motivating other women to become leaders as well. Several Chicana movement veterans took on traits that were unfamiliar to them. Rachel Silva points out, "There wasn't really anyone to look up to or to mentor us. We became mentors for others" (Silva 2010). Chicanas adopted gender roles, practices, and identities that were unexpected and new to them. Yet they navigated their way through the Chicano Movement, finding a space for their contributions in order to secure rights for Chicanas and Chicanos.

In the Chicana/o community organization La Confederación de la Raza Unida, for example, Ernestina Garcia filled multiple executive positions, from treasurer to president. She coordinated and supervised La Confederación's staff, filed class action lawsuits on behalf of the Chicana/o community, and represented the community at meetings of the San José School Boards, the Board of Supervisors, the City Council, and police officials. Although Ernestina Garcia did not call herself a role model, her example emboldened other Chicanas, especially after she became La Confederación's president in 1976. Fernanda Reyes recalls: "Now Ernestina she was at various [community events] and I don't know if she had young kids, or how she handled it...[B]ut she inspired me...[S]he had a lot of heart.... [S]he was so damn dedicated, really dedicated" (Reyes 1989). Garcia's stalwart dedication to the organization and the community earned her a second term as President of La Confederación, serving from 1979 to 1982.

Some of La Confederación's male participants thought it would ruin the organization to have a woman president. When she proved them wrong, some resented her success, which encouraged other Chicanas to assert themselves. The men sometimes feared that female empowerment in La Confederación would automatically diminish male power; and such worries sometimes translated into condescending and sexist behavior at organizational meetings. According to Doreen Garcia, Ernestina's daughter, at one meeting a few Chicanos proudly announced that they left their wives at home where they belonged. Or when a project was deemed too difficult for the men, they would say, "Give it to the women. Let them finish it off to nothing" (D. Garcia 2009). Gender tensions in La Confederación and other organizations reflected a larger pattern in the Chicano Movement. Because women demanded equality in meetings, leadership positions, and decision-making, Chicano males often labeled them *vendidas*, or sellouts, (Rodriguez 2010). The men accused them of putting their own egos above the welfare of the Chicana/o community.

Other men, however, avidly supported Chicana activism and leadership. In San José, that honor roll included Mauro Chavez, Rudy Cordova, Ernesto Galarza, Fernando Torres-Gil, Lino Lopez, Paul Sanchez, and José Villa. Significantly, despite the sexism they faced from some male counterparts, Ernestina Garcia and other women preferred to fight side by side with the men. When the men in La Confederación passed the hardest projects to women "to their surprise the women would actually take the work head on and accomplish what was needed to bring greater unity" (D. Garcia 2009).

Neither Ernestina Garcia nor the other nine activists discussed in this article identified themselves as feminists. Frequently, Anglo women active in the

Women's Liberation Movement invited Chicanas to join their efforts. Most women in the Liberation Movement advocated against gender injustice and considered male domination in economics, politics, and society as their primary struggle (MacLean 2009, 3). Although Chicana activists supported equal rights for women, they seldom shared the Women's Liberation Movement's priorities.<sup>15</sup> Fernanda Reyes explains,

The kinds of things that they were talking about were foreign to me. We weren't like the Anglo females in what we wanted. Oh they had a lot of silly things, what we saw as silly things. We felt we had a lot of heavy issues to face. (Reyes 1989)

Foremost on Chicana activists' agenda were struggles around poor housing, healthcare, childcare, police brutality, inferior public education, and other products of racial inequality.

Even if they did not identify with Anglo womens' feminist movement, women active in the Chicano Movement ran afoul of traditional definitions of proper female behavior and roles. Monica Valenzuela's conventional Mexican family members did not approve of her involvement in politics:

I was under a lot of pressure from my own family that didn't believe in any of this [Chicano Movement].... They're holding you back and they don't want you to get involved, and you do it anyways.... [T]hey felt I was a disgrace.... It was very difficult for me. Very, very difficult. (Valenzuela 1989)

Fernanda Reyes points out, "You can't give yourself 100 percent to a movement, something has got to suffer, and I think a lot of families did

suffer” (Reyes 1989). Unfortunately, Rachel Silva’s marriage suffered from the pressure of her community activism, arrests, incarcerations, and time away from her family. Comparing her experience to that of Ernestina Garcia and Sofía Mendoza, Silva reveals:

Ernestina’s husband was always supportive. Sofia’s husband was supportive. But, some husbands didn’t like what their wives were doing. My husband was one of them. My husband would come home from work to take care of the kids and I would go to my meeting. Of course, he didn’t like that. There were a few of us seniors. We would get involved in anything. It was never “No we can’t do that or our husbands won’t let us.” There were some things that some of us would do even if our husbands didn’t like it. Consequently, that was the end of my marriage. I sacrificed my marriage. (Silva 2010)

Although they are proud of their role in the Chicano Movement, the women who shared their stories speak sadly about the ways in which their activism disrupted their marriages and family life.

Still, Ernestina Garcia and her sister activists pressed for gender equality within the Chicano Movement. In December 1973, as a member of La Confederación’s executive committee, she issued a press release titled “Chicanas Protest” that challenged movement men’s efforts to dominate movement women.<sup>16</sup>

Since the beginning of the Chicano Movement, we have supported it; we have always been on the front lines, on the picket lines, and some of us have even been arrested in past confrontations in the struggle to acquire the rights accorded us under the laws of the

land. We protest having to wallow in the filth and corruption and arrogance of Chicanos who degrade us and erect barriers to our progress and growth.... We are exploited by our own, those whom we supported and helped attain positions. We are protesting and will no longer be a CRIADA to those Chicanos who sit at the decision-making tables. We will sit at the table and decide our own destiny. (E. Garcia 1973)

Less than three weeks later, in January 1974, Garcia elaborated on this statement in an additional release called “El Plan de las Chicanas de La Confederación de la Raza Unida.” “There exists a triple exploitation, a triple degradation. Chicanas are exploited as women, as poor people, and as Raza.... Our participation, if all obstacles are eliminated, will accelerate and strengthen our struggle to the highest degree,” she wrote (E. Garcia 1974). Garcia was confident that if women were treated rightfully, the movement would strengthen.

In the late 1960s, Chicana activists in San José put women’s empowerment into practice by forming a network known as *Mujeres de Aztlán*. It pulled together women from various Chicana/o organizations to “fight for women’s issues” (Alvarez 2010). Among the members of *Mujeres* were the community heavies such as Delia Alvarez, Elena Minor, Rachel Silva, Shirley Trevino, as well as Ernestina Garcia. *Mujeres de Aztlán* gave women their autonomous and political space. Elena Minor describes the project:

*Mujeres de Aztlán* was an informal, fluid group of assertive, activist, politically progressive Chicanas who connected through school and community. The group kicked ass when ass needed to be kicked and were often in the middle of a lot of the community action work that went on in those days. One day, we dubbed ourselves *Mujeres de*



CONFEDERACION DE LA RAZA UNIDA

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EL PLAN DE LAS CHICANAS  
DE LA CONFEDERACION DE LA RAZA UNIDA

The strengthening of the Chicano Movement will be determined by the measure to which it takes into account the needs of La Raza as a whole, and by the measure to which it actively works to meet these needs and to eradicate every form of exploitation which burdens us all.

There exists a triple exploitation, a triple degradation. Chicanas are exploited as women, as poor people, and as Raza. Because of the nature of this oppression of women, there lies within us a tremendous potential for commitment of serious struggle. Our participation, if all obstacles are eliminated, will accelerate and strengthen our struggle to the highest degree.

We want to eliminate the exploitation of man by man, in every form, and to eliminate the oppression of women so that both hombres y mujeres will be igual.

We must guarantee each other the means of physical support and spiritual progress.

Bearing this in mind we must recognize that a people as a whole can never be liberated if an entire sector of that people remains in bondage. We must realize that Chicanas add a new dimension of leadership which is sorely needed now.

We Las Chicanas de La Confederacion de La Raza Unida state our position as follows and we expect that our platform will be added to all future plans of La Confederacion de La Raza Unida.

Figure 3

"El Plan de las Chicanas de la Confederación de la Raza Unida," January 8, 1974.

Courtesy of Doreen García.

Aztlán but we were not really a formal organization with a structure and by-laws. I was usually in a support role. Each woman was a leader in her own right. (Minor 2010)

Mujeres de Aztlán made some male activists anxious; they tried to discredit it by suggesting that its members must be lesbians (Jiménez, A. García and R. García 2007, 131). That response buttresses Delia Alvarez's argument that Mujeres was a necessity because too many movement men regarded movement women as rivals rather than colleagues:

The men were only going to take care of the men. There was a lot of fight for justice and all that, but that didn't mean that justice was also for the women who were a threat to the men. It was clear that the Chicanas were not being treated fairly. Some of the Chicanos were very expressive like "F-u-c-k y-o-u." Some of them were outright mean. There were a lot of examples of that. We became very active because the Chicanos were not going to meet the needs of the Chicanas. (Alvarez 2010)

The emergence of Mujeres de Aztlán served notice to Chicanos that Chicana activists would not stand for men diminishing their roles, treating them as servants or junior partners. They would not roll over and play dead nor implement a wait-and-see approach for equality. Chicanas determined that they were the captains of their own ship.

This article demonstrates that Chicana activists practiced what Chicana historian Vicki Ruiz (1998) identifies as community-centered consciousness and non-hierarchical leadership (100). Community-centered consciousness is an awareness of local issues in which women work to improve their community





**Figure 3**

A Mujeres de Aztlán retreat at Ben Lomond, California, in 1969. From left to right in this photograph are Rachel Silva, Elena Minor, Ernestina Garcia, Shirley Trevino, and Frances Escalante. Courtesy of Shirley Trevino.

and make significant changes. Non-hierarchical form of leadership empowers others and is not a top-down type of leadership. Josephine Méndez-Negrete (1996) complements Ruiz's description of women's community-focused activism: "Fronting or spotlighting is not a primary objective.... Self-effacing behavior is common among the women.... Acting from strength and conviction that their actions are for the common good rather than position" (316). Chicanas in San José fostered decision-making and leadership at the grassroots level and implemented community-centered consciousness to empower and mobilize the community.

Chicanas in San José, the foot soldiers and leaders of the Chicano Movement, energized a resistant movement against the police, grape growers, civic leaders,

and public schools. Their activism may initially appear to be family-centered, nonpolitical activities, but Chicanas' efforts are, in fact, a major expression of political demands by disempowered women (Zolniski 2006, 147). Through collective action, Chicana activists committed themselves to the community and were determined to eliminate gender, class, and racial discrimination while balancing activism, feminism, and familial responsibilities. Although gender equality was not a tenet of the Chicano Movement, it became a corollary of the movement for many Chicana activists in San José.<sup>17</sup>

Consequently, the movement fostered Chicana consciousness and contributed organically to a new Chicana identity. Maylei Blackwell claims that Chicana organizers created an "autonomous space for women's political participation and challenged the gendered confines of Chicano cultural nationalism" (2011, 1). Indeed, Chicanas in San José worked with men to empower the community, but they also pressed for women's rights in the movement. And they altered the definition of the Chicano Movement in San José as they added to its agenda—improved housing conditions, access to childcare and healthcare, educational rights for children, and other aspects of gender and racial equality.

The ten women whose narratives profiled exemplify what Vicki Ruiz has identified as the twin pillars of female activism in the Chicano Movement: "community-centered consciousness" and a commitment to non-hierarchical leadership (1998, 100). As developments in San José show, however, the stress on community needs and democratic movement building does not preclude self-assertion and self-definition. In fact, dedication to the common good sometimes required that Chicanas place themselves at the movement's forefront and challenge men who thought that women did not belong there. The Chicana activists did not hesitate to sacrifice themselves for the movement, but self-sacrifice does not mean capitulation. Only if we recognize

that fact can we discern the threads that connect statements like “Chicana Protest” and groups like Mujeres de Aztlán to Chicanas’ grassroots organizing around education, police brutality, the grape boycott, and other community concerns. The threads become obvious when movement veterans share their memories; recollections of CAP’s street patrols, for example, lead inexorably to stories about Mujeres de Aztlán. It is time for historians of the Chicano Movement to recognize and document such connections. The stories of Chicana activists must be told.

### **List of Chicana Activists in San José**

Delia Alvarez

Ernestina Garcia

Sofía Mendoza

Elena Minor

Fernanda Reyes\*

Consuelo Rodriguez

Concepción “Concha” Saucedo

Rachel Silva

Shirley Trevino

Monica Valenzuela\*

*\*Pseudonym*

### **Notes**

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Historians annual conferences. Conference session chairs, Adriana Ayala, Gayle Gullett, and Gina Marie Pitti offered advice and insightful feedback on my research. Ramon Martinez kindly introduced me to several women who are included in this article. Finally, I give muchisimas gracias to the Chicanas who welcomed me into their homes and lives and shared their remarkable stories for this article.

<sup>1</sup> The women were selected for this project because they were prominent leaders or “heavies” during the Chicano Movement. I personally collected seven of the narratives in face-to-face interviews that lasted two to four hours each. Transcripts were used for two narratives from the Chicano Oral History Project Collection at San José State University/Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Public Library.

<sup>2</sup> Ernestina Garcia, Sofia Mendoza, and Rachel Silva became grassroots organizers in San José’s chapter of the Community Service Organization.

<sup>3</sup> In 1965, activist Sal “Chemo” Candelaria founded a grassroots Chicano organization called the Black Berets for Justice who sought to improve the conditions of the Mexican community through civic involvement and protection; see Arturo Villarreal’s 1991 master’s thesis, “Black Berets for Justice,” from San José State University.

<sup>4</sup> More Chicano students wanted to walk out and tried to leave the school building, but the school officials locked the doors.

<sup>5</sup> I define a Chicana/o as an individual of Mexican ancestry in America who identifies with the Chicano Movement.

<sup>6</sup> Although Dolores Huerta was an important force in the leadership of the United Farm Workers, few Chicanas in San José knew her. Chicanas in San José were friends with César E. Chávez and expressed their support for him by committing themselves to the grape strike.

<sup>7</sup> Of the 143 soldiers from San José who died in the Vietnam War, forty-one were Chicanos. See “The Sons of San Jose” on the *San Jose Vietnam War Memorial* website, accessed February 19, 2012, <http://www.sjwarmemorial.com/14601.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Many Chicanos considered San José’s Spanish history as an exploitation of Mexican and indigenous people. Chicanos argued that the Spanish influence in California led to a cultural genocide of Native Americans with whom they identified.

<sup>9</sup> Ernestina Garcia, Fernanda Reyes, Consuelo Rodriguez, Concha Saucedo, Rachel Silva, and Monica Valenzuela attended the Fiesta de las Rosas parade.

<sup>10</sup> The exact cause of the violence is unknown.

<sup>11</sup> Ernestina Garcia, Sofia Mendoza, Elena Minor, Fernanda Reyes, Rachel Silva, Shirley Trevino, and Monica Valenzuela were members of La Confederación de la Raza Unida.

<sup>12</sup> Sofia Mendoza cofounded the Community Alert Patrol with her husband, Gilbert, and other community activists.

<sup>13</sup> Ernestina Garcia, Sofia Mendoza, Elena Minor, Fernanda Reyes, Rachel Silva, Shirley Trevino, and Monica Valenzuela were members of the Community Alert Patrol.

<sup>14</sup> The \$200 fine and thirty-day jail sentence charges were later dropped for Frances Escalante and Rachel Silva.

<sup>15</sup> See Perlita R. Dicochea. 2004. "Chicana Critical Rhetoric: Recrafting *La Causa* in Chicana Movement Discourse, 1970–1979." *Frontiers* 25(1): 77–92.

<sup>16</sup> The press release was submitted to the *San Jose Mercury News*, *Eastside Sun*, *Milpitas Post*, U.S. California State Senators Don Edwards, Alan Cranston, John Tunney, and Charles Grubser, Jack Ybarra of the Central Trade Center, José Villa of the Mexican American Community Services Agency, Comisión Femenil Mexicana, and the National Organization of Women.

<sup>17</sup> The tenets of the Chicano Movement include cultural pride, group unity, and commitment to change among other key aspects.

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