LAS RAÍCES DE CHICANA FEMINISM: Resistance and Transformation

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Abstract: This article presents the historical roots (raíces) of Chicana feminism, chronicles Chicana activism of the 1960s into the present, and details the challenges and opposition faced by both the Chicano and white feminist movements. Moreover, the implications of the rise of feminist thought/discourse and its advancement of women of color in academia are discussed. Chicana feminism has been instrumental to reinforce the efforts of Chicanas and Chicana/Latina-focused groups such as MALCS (Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social) to question and challenge norms, practices, mainstream beliefs, and the status quo to create social change.

Keywords: *Chicana feminism, feminist consciousness, discourse, Chicano Movement*

In this article, we present the historical roots (raíces) of Chicana feminism and chronicle Chicana activism, from the 1960s and forward. We emphasize the challenges and opposition faced by Chicanas, by both the Chicano and white feminist movements. We discuss the implications of the rise of feminist thought/discourse and its advancement of women of color in academia. We conclude by sharing that Chicana feminism has been instrumental in the establishment of Chicana/Latina-focused groups to carve out spaces in academia and in society such as Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social (MALCS). This year marks MALCS' 40th anniversary; therefore, we start with las raíces, the history of social movements that highlight Chicana feminism's resistance and transformation.

Historically, Chicana feminism has its roots (raíces) in the Chicano Movement, which began with Mexican American agricultural workers

in 1962 and culminated with student activism in schools during the late 1960s. These and many other actions led the charge for rights to access care and supportive services (García 1989; Gershon 2022; Lechuga-Peña and Lechuga 2018). Chicana scholars have described the Chicano Movement as a male-dominated social movement engaged in revolutionary combat, which catalyzed the women inside the Movement to fight the sexism they experienced (Little 2018). Chicanas in the Chicano Movement used their feminist awareness to advance a political agenda, pointing out inconsistencies in the Movement's philosophy, and speaking about their own overlapping experiences of racism and sexism (García 1989; Gershon 2022; López 1977; Wolf 1990). Thus, the Chicano Movement was significant in these women's personal journey toward feminism (García 2014; Hurtado and Sinha 2021). The resulting knowledge that was produced and transmitted was in the service of justice (Sendejo 2018).

The term Chicano/Chicana refers mainly to people of Mexican ancestry who live in the U.S. Southwest and who have family ties and community links to Mexico from more than a century and a half ago and up to the Mexican American War (Acuña 2011; Castillo 1994; García 2014; Ríos-Bustamante 2000). Blea (1997) notes that Chicanos are members of the largest ethnicity in the United States, yet they still hold minority status in their Indigenous homelands.

To identify as Chicana is to claim a social, cultural, and political identity long denied in the United States. However, there is still some contestation about the origins of the term "Chicano" and "Chicana"; some say it was first used as an insult by European conquerors, while others believe it originated with the ancient Mexica tribe of Mesoamerica (García-Girón 1978; Ríos-Bustamante 2000; Stephen 2007). The label started being used by young Mexican Americans as a tool for cultural awareness and resistance (Blackwell 2018).

However, many Mexican Americans were apprehensive to adopt the term given the negative connotation attributed to the word as being 'less than Mexican' and mal educado. When Chicanas appropriated the term for themselves, they were engaging in activism as working-class women evoking "race and ethnicity, class, and gender in their simultaneity and their complexity" (Saldívar-Hull 2000, 45). Mexican American women would reclaim the label "Chicana" to signify a consciousness and critical resistance to sex and racial discrimination rooted in their identity and experience (Delgado Bernal 1997; Chabram-Dernersesian 2006; García 1989; Kasun 2016; Palacios 2016; Reyes Cruz and Sonn 2015; Ríos-Bustamante 2000; Sandoval and Latorre 2008).

Mexican and Mexican American women have a long and tumultuous history of resistance, stretching back to 1848 and even further to conquest and colonization (Aldama and Quiñonez 2002; Flores Carmona 2014; García 1989). For example, the contributions and abilities to be leaders, advocates, and warriors as they fought against political and social structural inequalities, has been documented but disregarded. Historically, Mexican American or Mexican-born women living in the U.S. have been engaged in sociopolitical movements. However, supporting the men in their community, who were on the frontlines of battles, not only included their traditional domestic chores of caring for children and the elderly at home but also expanded to marksmanship and military planning (Resendiz and Espinoza 2016; Salas 1990). For those that took up arms, these soldaderas displayed qualities that can be tracked back to Mesoamerican female warrior ancestors all the way through to contemporary Chicana academics (García 1989; Resendiz and Espinoza 2016; Segura 2003).

Toward Feminist Consciousness

As mentioned, the Chicano Movement of the 1960s was a catalyst for the emergence of Chicana feminist conocimiento and awareness (García

1989). The Chicano Movement's sociopolitical focus was on racial-ethnic oppression, exploitation, and discrimination, while Chicanas began to point to the overlapping sexism they experienced (García 1989, 2014; Lechuga-Peña and Lechuga 2018). According to Lechuga-Peña and Lechuga (2018) the Movement itself began with the United Farm Workers' activism around farming struggles led by Cesar E. Chavez and Dolores Huerta. Reies López Tijerina in New Mexico and Rudolfo 'Corky' Gonzales in Colorado attempted to rally the community through activism in response to the loss of Mexican land/property grants. All these actions led to advocacy which raised the awareness of high school and college students to recognize and combat discrimination, high dropout rates, Eurocentric curriculum, and lack of qualified culturally competent educators. Student-led efforts in the form of walkouts across the country functioned to fight the disparity in schools, an important tool to uplift and bring about social change. This action led school districts across the nation to respond to the call for social change. Corky Gonzales also aided these efforts by holding the National Chicano Youth Liberation Conference in 1969 to channel youth-led activism. The core tenets of the Movement were formulated at the conference and became known as El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán (Serrano Nájera 2014).

The Chicano Movement was driven by concepts that placed women in supportive secondary roles to care for the men and family while ignoring women's need for equality. During this time, Chicanas mobilized a collective voice within the movement, questioning certain attitudes, practices, and beliefs by exchanging knowledge and history across generations (Chicana 1979; Sendejo 2018). Specifically, they began to recognize the additional discriminatory and racial inequalities that afflicted them as women of color (Crenshaw 2013) while working alongside their men in the Chicano Movement to rid U.S. structures of racism, capitalism, and patriarchy (Rodriguez 1996;

García 1989; Gershon 2022; Hurtado and Sinha 2021). While Chicanas were quick to point out the abuse their male counterparts faced in the workplace, they also pointed out that they, too, were subject to exploitation. Oppression based on race and class, as well as sex and gender, was a part of their daily lives. Patricia Hill Collins' concept of the matrix of domination best articulates these "intersecting oppressions of race, class, and gender" (Collins 1994, 45). Critiques and concerns were voiced, and women began to organize and create women-led groups around the issues of gender, sexuality, and reproductive rights to engage in 'identity politics' (Dicochea 2004; García 1989, 2014; Hurtado and Sinha 2016; Roth 2004). Chicanas became politically aware and began to question traditional family roles, the male-centered cultural nationalism that anchored the movement, and the toxic machismo that kept men from sharing power with women. They demanded space for dialogue within the movement to address these tendencies.

Traditional family roles in Mexican, Mexican American or Chicano communities have often been conceptualized as familismo. This core cultural value of familismo refers to "strong in-group feelings," (Bardis 1959, 340) and emphasized family goals, mutual support, and efforts that uplift the family. Chicanas saw there was a need to change male-female dynamics in their community, which hinged on machismo and marianismo. Chicanas were additionally challenged by cultural nationalism, or the emphasis on cultural pride and cultural survival within a white dominated society (Kasun 2018).

Chicanas problematized the values of machismo, which privileged domination, patriarchal authority, and chauvinism. Indeed, machismo was harmful to the Chicano community since it perpetuated the reputation of Chicanas as submissive, passive, docile, and weak while men held onto the hypermasculine subjugation of women. Additionally, the cultural value of

marianismo encouraged subordinating women's actions to those of men and imposed a heavy burden of obligation (Torres 1991). In other words, this built on the idea that women should be selfless to their family and community while being subservient to their men, children, and household.

Many Chicanos maintained their traditional sense of masculinity. Their attitude was that it emphasized arduous work, responsibility, and accountability all characterized by hypermasculinity (Flake and Forste 2006). It grew out of need and served as a shield to the people against the bigotry and racism of the prevailing mainstream culture. However, machismo held no Indigenous precedent and was imposed on Mexican American culture, leading to an imbalance of power between the sexes (Neff and Suizzo 2006). Chicana feminists advocated for a redefinition of machismo, which they perceived as a form of oppression rather than as a manifestation of national pride. Women argued that machismo imposed colonial assimilation and restricted gender roles for women. Many Chicanas pushed for a change in cultural nationalist stance (García 1989). This action further alienated Chicanas from their male counterparts—with men labeling Chicana feminists as traitors.

Chicana Feminists Viewed as Traitors to the Cause

Chicana feminists were labeled vendidas/defectors/traitors to the Chicano Movement, as the men felt they had no loyalty and devotion to align to the cause and expressed feminist concerns separate from their own cause (Nelson 2008). Some Chicanas found unity over their lack of equality, causing division within the Chicano Movement. Since the loyalists viewed men and women as experiencing the same levels of racial and ethnic persecution, they saw no reason to see sexism as an issue. Chicano loyalists had an interest in equal rights under the law, access to education, immigration reform, adequate housing, an end to

police brutality, and an end to the Vietnam War (Aldama and Quiñonez 2002; Anguiano 2012; Olcott 2017; Rosales 1997).

Chicanos desired to keep Chicanas united to their cause, therefore, these men equated Chicana feminism to the white women's feminist movement. Some loyalists even suggested that white feminist leaders like Gloria Steinem were Central Intelligence Agency spies out to cause a schism in the movement by using divisive rhetoric about women's rights (Aldama and Quiñonez 2002; Anguiano 2012; Olcott 2017; Rosales 1997). Chicanos saw white feminism as individualistic, anti-family/anti-culture/anti-man, and a threat to the cause. Thus, they made comparisons, even labeling Chicanas as agabachadas and, therefore, engaging in an anti-Chicano Movement (Córdova 1994; Rublin 2007). Specifically, Chicanos saw feminism as a separatist identity movement that bolstered the white feminist ideas, which went against the concepts of familismo and marianismo. They also claimed that white liberal feminism did little to advance the cause of racial discrimination (García 1989). This resistance stifled Chicana feminist efforts towards activism within the movement to fight for a broader inclusive form of social justice that was more culturally attuned than the white feminist movement.

White Feminist Movement versus Chicana Feminism

As part of its mission to dismantle sexism from the inside out, the feminist movement's actions urged white, middle-class women to see the ways in which their own lives were deeply politicized, pushing them to transform gendered hierarchies (Freedman 2003; Rampton 2015). White middle-class women started doubting their roles and saying they needed to form their own liberation movement. Betty Friedan's publication of *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) was a watershed moment in the revival of the feminist movement. Friedan, a mother, homemaker, and political activist, provided a critique of

middle-class patterns by urging educated women to voice their discontent, arguing that women had no outlets for expression other than being a wife and a mother. Friedan urged middle-class women to seek new roles/responsibilities and to seek new personal and professional identities rather than having them defined by the male-dominated society (Gershon 2022; Hamby, Clack, and Neely 2005; Norton 2005). Friedan and twenty-eight other professional women created the National Organization for Women to fight for equal rights. This group also helped pass the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which included protections for women in the workplace. Many issues were covered, including sexuality, family, workplace, prejudice, and inequality (Gershon 2022; Mink and Smith 1998; Norton 2005).

In this vein, white feminism is described by Eisenberg and Ruthsdotter (1998) as arising in three separate phases, each functioning to increase public and political attention to women's issues. They organized the suffrage movement to contest discrimination against women and win voting rights (Rampton 2015; Yenor 2018). The Women's Liberation Movement, also known as the second wave of the feminist movement, was not always inclusive. It emerged in the 1960s as a response to the Civil Rights Movement, the sexual revolution, and reform legislation (*My Feminism* 1997; Rampton 2015; Yenor 2018). During the second wave of white feminism, white women took the lead in the battle for equality and access to opportunity, and they also sought to investigate the root causes of women's oppression: patriarchy. However, by focusing solely on patriarchy, white women blatantly ignored race-ethnicity, and class (Carrillo and Dean 2020). Both white and Chicana women advocated for their reproductive rights, including the right to choose an abortion and gain access to contraception, but this shared demand across racial lines did not fully address racial or class differences in terms of access to medical care (García 1989; Gershon 2022; Rampton 2015).

Furthermore, in the third wave, white feminists challenged the very concept of gendered discourse, ushering in an era in which women were keen to prove that they resisted being reduced to objects and to being controlled, including the very clothes they wore (Rampton 2015; Ritzer 2008; Yenor 2018). Chicanas advocated for a shift away from patriarchy, which they argued bred both racism and classism as acts of exploitation. Both white women and Chicanas hoped that women would be granted equal rights to those of men and would be able to restore control over their bodies (Echols 1989; Herring 2003; Hurtado and Sinha 2021).

While white feminists blamed male power for sexism, Chicanas saw that Chicanos were not treated as equals in U.S. society, thus they could not maintain the status quo (Hamby, Clack, and Neely 2005). Moreover, Chicanas argued that economic equality was unachievable due to a lack of work prospects for non-white women, while white women were advocating for the ratification of an Equal Rights Amendment. Although white feminists were instrumental in the domestic violence/anti-rape movement, they did not address the disproportionate impact of police brutality on communities of color, calling instead for the mandatory arrest of batterers and increased police presence in communities. Chicanas advocated for a woman's freedom (i.e., reproductive justice) to choose parenthood by focusing on issues such as forced sterilization, the marketing of experimental/unsafe contraceptives, and economic justice, while white women established a reproductive rights agenda that centered on abortion rights. Chicanas felt fated to end up like their male counterparts—discounted and diminished—even as white women advocated for the establishment of women-only venues, groups, and organizations (Grant and Parker 1998; hooks 2000; Louie 2001).

The white women's feminist movement viewed all women as monolithic, and the movement failed to recognize the diverse racial-ethnic backgrounds of

Chicanas, and other minorities (i.e., African American, Native American, Asian American, white working-class, lesbian, and Third World women) and the interlocking oppression faced by women of color. White feminists often undermined, ignored, excluded, and disregarded the ideology of women of color and their overlapping identities. White women did not acknowledge the struggle for the rights for farmworkers, welfare recipients, and immigrants as part of their call for equality (Cotera 1977; García 1989; Gershon 2022; Louie 2001). Because of this, white feminists and Chicana feminists pursued different goals for social change. Chicanas campaigned for white feminism to recognize its internal racism, and as a result, two separate movements emerged (García 1989; Gershon 2022; hooks 2000).

Although Chicanas were invited to white feminist meetings, organization gatherings, and talks, Chicanas felt marginalized and experienced cultural insensitivity to their struggle. Chicanas felt frustrated supporting the very people who suppressed their voices, and they began to question their involvement in the white feminist movement, as they were simultaneously questioning their place in the Chicano Movement (Gershon 2022). Hence, Chicanas had to carefully tread the divide, conflict, and struggle within both movements, as well as situate themselves within each movement in order to pursue the varied forms of social justice that impacted their lives, i.e., the transformation of oppressive traditional gender roles, class discrimination, and racial discrimination (Carrillo and Dean 2020). Nonetheless, this divide would come at a cost and elevated arguments and counterarguments.

Chicano Arguments and Chicana Counterarguments

With the Chicano Movement's unwavering fixation on racial justice, educational reforms, and political and economic determination for their community, there arose a division within the movement between Chicano

loyalists and Chicana feminists (García 1989). Chicano loyalists argued that Chicana feminists were disrupting the traditional norms and gendered role scripts of males and females within the Chicano community. The more independent Chicana feminists became in asserting their autonomy, the more they were labeled by the movement as a mala mujer or traitor. Chicana feminists were accused of taking up the white woman's fight and abandoning traditional values. Chicanas refuted these claims by citing examples of historically strong, self-reliant women from Chicano and Mexican history (Dicochea 2004; García 1989, 2014).

However, Chicanos attempted to downplay the accomplishments of soldaderas in the battleground, emphasizing instead their loyalty and support as camp followers to their men. In response, Chicanas noted that these female soldiers chose to fight during the 1910 revolution against the Mexican government (Resendiz and Espinoza 2016). Scholars today similarly characterized the bravery, authority, and action of these women as an act of resistance (Fernández 2009). It is no surprise that Chicanas have continued to look to history and pre-Columbian Indigenous women for examples of strong, independent leaders (Chicana 1979) as role models, to challenge deficit notions of their capabilities, and to revise historical accounts that ignore their contributions.

For instance, Chicana feminists reclaimed, reappropriated, and recast the mistress/whore/concubine of conquest, La Malinche, also known as Malintzin, Malinalli, or Doña Marina (Aldama and Quiñonez 2002; Flores Carmona 2014; Cypess 1991; Downs 2008). La Malinche was a skilled linguist, erudite diplomat, and a respected intellectual (Flores Carmona 2014). She spoke Yucatec Maya and Nahuatl, and was one of twelve slaves given to the Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés by the Indigenous people of the

Yucatán coast who opposed the Aztecs in 1519 (Chicana 1979). Given her fluency of the languages spoken in the area, she became Cortés' intermediary, Nahua advisor and translator (Aldama and Quiñonez 2002; Anguiano 2012; Contreras 2008; Flores Carmona 2014; Nelson 2008; Pérez-Lagunes 2001). Many have attributed her actions aiding the Spanish as a traitor who helped her slave master conquer and ravage Mexico, but she was also a victim of the conditions of conquest. Mexican nationalist ideologies labeled La Malinche a traitor rather than cultural broker and mother of mestizos, as she is credited with birthing the first mixed-race child of European and Indigenous Amerindian heritage (Contreras 2008; Flores Carmona 2014; Nelson 2008; Pérez-Lagunes 2001). La Malinche became a weapon of conquest in her own right, playing the roles of "snake" and "Mexican Eve," the traitor and temptress, often referred to as La Chingada (Alarcón 1989; Cypess 1991; Nelson 2008; Moriel Hinojosa and Daphne 2013; Paz 1995).

As the centuries have passed, the injustice done to Doña Marina has been diminished, forgotten, and disregarded, and the name La Malinche has become synonymous with a disloyal and traitorous woman who has sold out to foreign powers and forces (Contreras 2008). To be labeled with the moniker Malinchista is to be seen as a traitor to one's own country and one who devalues their national identity (Hamnett 1999; Nelson 2008). La Malinche became a symbol connecting the cultures of colonial Spain and New World Mexico (Kasun 2018; Nelson 2008). Chicana feminists reappropriated Malinche as a way to challenge male-centered nationalism and patriarchal economics. Therefore, Chicanas established a matrilineal foundation of mestizaje in their recovery of La Malinche's history, reclaiming Malintzin as a form of empowerment and reframing the discourse (Chicana 1979; Contreras 2008).

Chicana Feminist Discourse

To raise awareness and mobilize other Chicanas, Chicana feminists organized a range of pláticas, classes, conferences, and symposiums, which led to emergence of the theoretical, literary, and activist discourses that are now recognized as Chicana feminist thought (Acuña 2011; Espinoza, Cotera, and Blackwell 2018; Kasun 2018). One of these important historical moments occurred in 1971, when more than six hundred women gathered in Houston, Texas for the First National Chicana Conference. It called for resolutions around the issues of abortion, equal access to education, the establishment of child-care centers, and the abolition of traditional marriage roles (Saldívar-Hull 2000). This was one of the first formalized sites where Chicanas deconstructed and challenged dominant racist, sexist, classist, and heterosexist paradigms in a critical mass. They critiqued the ways colonialism persisted within the borders of the United States, albeit in subtler, more oblique manifestations. According to García (1989) Chicana feminism uses a critical lens to deconstruct, analyze and examine a gendered and colonized identity and its effects on racism, patriarchy, and capitalism (Kasun 2018). Moreover, Chicana feminist activists who transitioned from being students to scholars and writers-theorists perceive transformation as a multifaceted process that extends beyond the dynamics of power that govern conformity and resistance in their immediate environment. Present day Chicanas employ the movement's praxis, activism, and engagement to consciousness-raising efforts, and use the term Chicana to align themselves to Chicana feminist fight and social thought (Roth 2004).

Since these early gatherings, Chicanas have sought to create a paradigm shift and to define ownership of their theories, methods, and modes of expression (Kasun 2016). They have turned to poetry, literature, creative writing, and traditional social science methodologies, which are just a few of the many

tools and approaches that have been used to question long-held dominant assumptions, stereotypes, and prejudices. Multiple themes arise from these writings: the Chicana is not passive; their past is steeped in struggle and opposition; their story and present reality can only be understood at the intersection of race and class discourse analysis; and as agents they are experts in knowing their truth (Córdova 1999). Chicana feminism cultivates knowledge production systems that are unique and specific to Chicana experiences and their socio-historical contexts (Reyes Cruz and Sonn 2015; Ríos-Bustamante 2000). Chicana feminist queer authors such as Gloria E. Anzaldúa, Cherríe Moraga, and Emma Pérez all have made significant contributions to this body of research by discussing the challenges that Chicanas face because of their multi-faceted positionalities in regards to their racial-ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, and gender. Here, we highlight Gloria E. Anzaldúa as a key contributor of canonical contributions to Chicana feminist thought.

Gloria E. Anzaldúa

Anzaldúa challenged the status of Chicanas in hegemonic feminist discourse by exploring how Chicanas make sense of the world and society, how they perceive the world, and develop a sense of intuitive knowing (Arredondo et al. 2006; Kasun 2016; Nelson 2008). Anzaldúa's seminal work, *Borderlands/La frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987/2012), published over three decades ago, was the first book to be produced using code-switching/language alternation, the incorporation of both English and Spanish writing (Pérez 2005; Alvarez, Tovar, and Alessandri 2020). Anzaldúa used these strategies to examine the experience with living in multiplicity, rather than in a binary system. She helped to articulate how Chicanas exist between the borders of their American and Mexican heritage as they are not considered to be either fully American or Mexican (Saavedra and Perez 2013).

Growing up in the Rio Grande Valley, Anzaldúa attended Pan American University, now known as The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, where she graduated with a degree in English in 1968. She wrote of her experiences growing up and living between figurative and literal borders (Alvarez, Tovar, and Alessandri 2020; Texas State Library and Archives Commission 2022). Anzaldúa used her writing as a tool of engagement in negotiating her identity early on in her undergraduate education. She also merged her scholarly engagement and activism early on, working as a migrant-farmworker liaison upon graduation from college. She moved to upstate Indiana to begin activism work and this activism continued until she moved to Austin, Texas to pursue higher education. It was in Austin where she continued to attend meetings, conferences, and marches on the topic of rights for farmworkers, women, and women of color. These actions influenced her pedagogical practices and the methods for which she taught social justice to and about women in her higher education (Blackwell 2018).

For Anzaldúa, that meant living as a Chicana, a U.S. American, queer/lesbian, and working-class woman. Her work promoted the concept of mestiza consciousness, helping Chicanas learn to accept and name their multiplicity (Nelson 2008; Pérez 2005). For Anzaldúa, mestiza consciousness is an awareness that deconstructs patriarchy and colonialism and reclaims one's spirituality and a feminist cultural sense while re-imagining the imposed borders of identity (Thomas 2016). Chicanas that develop a mestiza consciousness are equipped to engage in activism because of the critical awareness they develop. Anzaldúa suggests that considering the various forms of oppression one faces, opens a path toward racial and sexual decolonization for oneself and for others. Moreover, Anzaldúa explored the negotiation of identity via code-switching in her own stories, auto/biographies, prose,

and poetry, making it challenging to grasp all the layers of meaning in her writings in just one read-through (Alvarez, Tovar, and Alessandri 2020).

This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color (1981) was an important anthology co-edited by Anzaldúa and renowned Chicana feminist scholar, Cherríe Moraga. According to Lioi (2008), this anthology included the testimonios of Chicanas and other women of color who discuss their experiences of oppression and triumph over adversity. The text details their experiences with decolonization and highlights how activists, women of color writers, lesbians, activists, and theorists merge their personal, political, and academic pursuits (Espinoza, Cotera, and Blackwell 2018; Pérez 1999, 2005). Blackwell (2018) notes that Anzaldúa's idea for developing *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* came from participating in a writing retreat in 1979 facilitated by Merlin Stone at the Goddess at Willow, a women's retreat center, in San Francisco, California. During her time at the writing retreat, Anzaldúa expressed frustrations in her writings regarding the lack of support and guidance as a woman of color attempting graduate studies for a doctorate degree. Stone pushed and inspired her to collect and write about women of color experiences on the margins (Sendejo 2018).

Anzaldúa's scholarship remains one of the most influential contributions to Chicana feminism, border studies, women's studies, and queer studies. Her work imparts a framework to deconstruct and re-imagine the Chicana in history and to develop a collective knowledge. Additionally, Anzaldúa's life and legacy have sparked celebrations, documentaries, books, and societies that continue to honor her legacy (Alvarez, Tovar, and Alessandri 2020). Her writings have been described as "emerging cross-disciplinary and transnational politics of resistance" that are "'border,' 'diasporic,' 'hybrid,' or 'mestiza/o' in nature" (Sandoval 1998, 353).

Anzaldúa provided Chicana feminists not only revolutionary tools, but she also amassed a collection of stories and auto/biographies many faculty of color employ within academia (Kasun 2016; Barragan 2014). Lugo-Lugo (2008) argued that these methodological tools helped feminist researchers develop an oppositional consciousness of discipline, knowledge, and social change, empowering them to take a more active role in the academy and the university which previously attempted to deny or erase their presence. Following her death in 2004, the Benson Library at The University of Texas at Austin's campus became the permanent home for Anzaldúa's papers, which included the course syllabus for the ethnic studies course, "La Chicana in America," as well as Anzaldúa's personal documents and publications (Sendejo 2018). Even though she passed away almost nineteen years ago, she is still honored for her scholarship and contributions to Chicana feminist thought. In April 2022, a literary landmark designation by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission was unveiled on the campus of The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley in her honor (Taylor-Uchoa 2022; Texas State Library and Archives Commission 2022). Without a doubt, Gloria E. Anzaldúa is a key contributor in defining and inserting Chicana feminist thought in academia.

Chicana Feminism and Beyond

As we have delineated throughout this article, Chicanas evolved from activists to scholars, using education to gain liberation. In educational spaces, Chicana educators, students, and activists impart knowledge through a kinship of community through opposition both in the community and in academia to advance a social justice agenda (Espinoza, Cotera, and Blackwell 2018; Lechuga-Peña and Lechuga 2018; Montaño and Burstein 2006; Sendejo 2018; Serrano Nájera 2014; Sosa-Provencio 2016; Urrieta 2007). The university itself serves as a forum for organizing around an open discourse and intellectual production of feminist thought through scholarship (i.e., spiritual,

literary, artistic, and other works) and curricula (Sendejo 2018). For example, in June of 1982, a group of critically engaged and empowered Chicana professors, undergraduates, graduate students, and community activists at the University of California, Davis formed the nationwide feminist organization called Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social (MALCS). It would take a year of work to formalize this national organization that celebrates its 40th anniversary this year. The primary focus of the national organization was to continue combating the discrimination that Chicanas experienced and continue to face on college campuses because of their race, socioeconomic status, and/or gender.

Córdova (1999) further notes the work of MALCS and its members (MALCSistas) is to bridge academia with the community. The organization addresses current societal issues (i.e., reproductive justice, racial justice, and decolonial justice) by bringing together a formal network of scholar-activists, students and community activists from all over the country. MALCS melds scholarly activism to acknowledge the work done by women of color and address societal and institutional problems faced by such community activists, students, and professionals (MALCS 2023b; Sosa-Provencio 2016; Sosa-Riddell 1998). MALCSistas build on her-story and the foundational work of activists, feminist movements, and scholars. They are producers of knowledge, using their pedagogy, praxis, and consciousness raising practices to continue acknowledging Indigenous and Chicanx/Latinx feminist activists, scholars, and community members (Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social 2023a).

Indeed, Chicana scholars and community activists, like those involved in MALCS, developed a sense of identity tied to their lived experiences of and education about oppression, resistance, transformation, and social justice (Urrieta 2007). Subjected to the conditions of colonization, multiple

generations of Chicanas must contend with the physical and psychological violence upon their minds, body, and spirit (Sosa-Provencio 2016). Accordingly, Castillo-Garsow (2012) writes about how Anzaldúa positioned Chicanas as women of color who exist in an academic borderlands, a place where they are "neither here nor there," excluded from resources, tools, and opportunities in academia. These trying circumstances allow Chicanas to negotiate the often-conflicting forces of their diverse identities across cultural, racial, linguistic, national, psychological, sexual, and spiritual lines (Delgado Bernal 1999; Kasun 2016). Besides organizations like MALCS, entities like the Chicana Research and Learning Center located in Austin, Texas provided an initial way to seek and identify problems faced by minority communities and women to deal with these very problems while promoting Chicana leadership and overcoming educational and social constraints (Sendejo 2018). Furthermore, the advancements made by Chicanas continue to shed light on oppressive structures that obstruct learning and advancement (Rodríguez and Cervantes-Soon 2019). When compared to other racial and cultural groups, Chicanas continue to be the least likely to have completed postsecondary education (Carrillo and Dean 2020). Thus, it is important to learn from the past, from las raíces de Chicana feminism and focus on educational strength, resilience, and efforts to understand the process for success and to be more critically aware with this conocimiento.

As a result of these conocimientos and as activist educators we can become more committed to promoting social justice and encourage others to establish their unique voices and actions. Hand in hand, Chicanas and MALCSistas continue to advocate for social change, focusing on academia, family, and community. Yet, the sociopolitical consciousness of Chicanas in the twenty-first century is rooted in the knowledge production of the feminist pioneers who pushed us to challenge the intersections of race, gender, class, and

sexuality and problematize heteronormativity and traditional race-gender scripts (Espinoza, Cotera, and Blackwell 2018; Hurtado 1998; Rodríguez and Cervantes-Soon 2019). The activism of the individuals we acknowledge in this article provides a model of social justice praxis that bridges scholarship production and social transformation. These actions are further used to engage in a conversation about rights and resources for the community and the future (Sendejo 2018) and continue to produce knowledge from a Chicana perspective and raise a consciousness that will help Chicanas/os/xs express and describe their current social conditions.

Conclusion

The dicho "sin las mujeres no hay revolución" speaks volumes in this overview of Chicana feminist thought. By reclaiming a traitor-turned-heroine, reimagining family-community, and integrating into a unified Chicano Movement, Chicana feminism has established a discourse in academia that challenged the historical patriarchy of the Mexican American people (García 1989, 2014; Kasun 2018). Subsequent generations of Chicanas are equipped to tackle the challenges by integrating pedagogy, research, and service into teaching beyond the university system. Scholar-activists, community educators, students and activists have benefited from learning about and from Chicana leaders, from their mentorship and guidance. Las raíces de Chicana feminism allows us to see how far we have come and how much work remains to be done to ensure justice (i.e., racial justice and decolonial justice) for women of color (MALCS 2023a; Resendiz, Espinoza, and Espinoza 2022). Leading Chicana figures such as Gloria E. Anzaldúa have given the academy the theoretical frameworks, methods, and practical skills necessary to question the dominant, mainstream body of knowledge in the country. In this piece, students and readers alike are offered a historical reflection that promotes education,

insight, and acknowledgment to push us to continued action by bridging the gap between academics and activism. Chicanas/os/xs will learn about social consciousness, awareness, and transformation through the Chicana feminists' ongoing resistance, tension, triumph, challenge, and action.

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