

THE CHICANO MEXICANO FAMILY  
AND THE STRUGGLE FOR  
LIBERATION AND SELF-DETERMINATION

EL PARTIDO NACIONAL DE LA RAZA UNIDA  
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Traditionally, the family has played a significant role in the Chicano Mexicano struggle. It was the common bond during the years immediately following the Mexican American War. Nationalism may not have existed, but the family was the refuge - the safe house for Chicano Mexicanos under anglo colonialism. Whereas anglo society places less emphasis on the family, especially the extended family, it continues to be an integral part of our cultural, social and political life.

Nevertheless, the Chicano Mexicano family has not been immune to modern issues, such as the U.S. feminist Movement and the Gay Movement. Such Movements have challenged the concept of the traditional family overall, but particularly the ethnic families, such as those of the Chicano Mexicano, African, and other Latinos. Their significance cannot be denied. We understand that these Movements have had an impact on the Chicano Mexicano family, however, the purpose of this document is not to debate these issues. Our purpose is to examine the Chicano Mexicano family in order to explain the crucial role it plays in our overall struggle for liberation.

Families in struggle must evolve through three periods according to our investigation of the Chinese, Russian, Cuban, Palestinian, Nicaraguan, and Chicano Mexicano family. The three periods include The Resistance, Revolution, and Reconstruction.

In The Resistance period, the family is a symbol of a cultural pride that serves to reject the negativism of the dominant society. As a colonized people, we struggle to maintain our customs, language, and history. Presently, the Chicano Mexicano is in this phase. The seed is planted in this phase and it determines how successful the next two phases will be.

During the Revolution period, la familia has the potential of becoming an institution of change. During the period of Liberation, the familia becomes a fort of revolutionaries. This has been the case in most Movements for liberation. The family becomes a center of revolutionary resistance. The Palestinians are a clear example of this. In the absence of the man, families - mothers, sons, daughters, aunts, and uncles are developing and forging revolutionaries to continue the struggle. This courageous Palestinian example is evidence that the "familism to nationalism" transformation serves to formulate the liberating ideology, and is crucial to the struggle. It is the period of armed struggle, such as those in South Africa, Palestine and El Salvador. The Revolution and its principles are nurtured.

The Reconstruction period must produce a revolutionary government capable of maintaining revolutionary achievements. Reactionary forces, if permitted, will cause major setbacks. The Sandanista Government is currently in this phase.

Confusion regarding this period has risen. Some Chicanos Mexicanos have mistakenly placed our struggle at this point. However, as previously stated, we are at the first stage, that of resistance. Cuba's creation of the "new man" through education is a perfect example of a country in the Reconstruction phase. In order for the Cuban Revolution to achieve its goals of creating an independent and socialist Cuba, the youth had to reflect the ideals of collective work, materialist philosophy, and most important, self-determination. As a result, Cuba hoped to create many Ches. It is important to note at this point that the methods employed at each stage by previous revolutions are not necessarily those that our struggle must follow. When we arrive at each stage, the people themselves must determine what method to employ. However, much can be learned from other Movements. We must not set limitations on our struggle by becoming closed-minded to other ideas.

For our Native American and Mestizo ancestors, the family was the unit that ensured equal distribution of work and social goods. It provided cohesion for our people. A few extended families composed the villages and barrios, often interrelated by blood or marriage. These family units were the shock troops that withstood the assaults of the anglo's attempts to take away our lands, our language, our culture, our pride, and gave our people the shelter they needed from the alienating world of anglo society's ruthless competition. The family nursed our wounded and buried our dead when they were physically and psychologically assaulted by society. The family was the bastion that protected our land for the eventual reconquest from the hands of the exploitive anglo colonizer.

The Chicano Mexicano family lived in villages formed for mutual assistance as opposed to the self-imposed isolation carried out by the anglo "frontiersmen," trappers, and nuclear family empires that later produced robber baron ranchers that invaded the lands of Northern Mexico. Chicanos moving into the cities during the phases of urbanization would often bring members of the extended family, creating miniature versions of the villages that they had left back home. This is evident in the colonias that formed in places like Los Angeles, Denver, San Antonio, and Albuquerque.

Chicano Mexicano barrios in the cities have re-established and maintained the same social relationships that were active and viable in the villages. Visible and notable boundaries separate Chicano Mexicano communities from the anglo communities. Not only do the barriers take on a physical form, such as railroad tracks, or rivers, but the housing, dress, food, and atmosphere are also different. These differences definitely set the Chicano Mexicano barrio apart from the anglo communities. In fact, those Chicano Mexicano families that have adopted anglo style housing have failed to erase the Mexicano atmosphere.

The speech and mannerisms of highly anglicized Chicanos Mexicanos betray their Mexicano characteristics. The Chicano Mexicano separated from his family constantly yearns to rejoin it. This is the case with those that move into anglo enclaves and cities. Their children, raised in an anglo atmosphere, experience the same wistfulness or sense of lack. Despite the fact that anglicized Chicano Mexicano youth are not familiar with Mexican customs practiced by portions of their families, they wish to relate to that culture, language, and ambient. They are caught between the learned anglo experience and the Mexicano experience. Due to their upbringing in an anglo society, they experience difficulty adapting to Mexicano customs, although they feel attached to them.

However, the pendulum is swinging away from anglicization, as more and more Chicano Mexicano families return to their language, food, customs, culture, and people. The Chicano Mexicano family was weakened by the constant assault on our language by the schools, marketplace, and media. The influx of fresh cultural linguistic reinforcement from Mexico and America Latina, however, is creating the necessary impetus for us to regain the ground we lost through anglo colonization.

In order to regain and reutilize those values that made us strong and a separate and viable community, we must evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the Chicano Mexicano family and its relationships.

As previously stated, North European culture has not valued the family, especially the extended family, to the extent that the Native American and Mestizo culture have. Consequently, "rugged individualism" and competition, as well as the concepts of "I got mine," were given more importance. During the height of growth, constant distancing and separation from the family occurred. After marriage, couples attempt to separate themselves from their families, while the Chicano Mexicano and Latino families often settle in the same location, forming towns or entire sections composed entirely of family members. The strong tie of interdependence is absent in the anglo family.

Anglo colonization was carried out through the dispersion of individual families, while Chicano Mexicano settlement was carried out through movements of entire extended families that stayed together for many generations. When the anglo moved into the cities, he often did it alone or with this immediate nuclear family that was quickly scattered when the children were grown. This type of family structure was very well adapted to the capitalist mode of production that required workers that could be located and shifted to industrial sites being developed. It required proletarian labor. As anglo society expanded and became more urbanized, this labor became the basis for the alienation of the family.

As society became more structured and compartmentalized, the family became more and more separated, with less contact during the working day. The father spent the day at his work place, often unable to come home for lunch, while the children were left with the mother or shuttled off to school according to their ages. The mother was responsible for household duties or other "womanly pursuits." Children often developed other interests centered around school or their peers. This drew them further away from family activities and their parents. Furthermore, parents developed activities to occupy their children's time during nonschool hours, requiring less work around the house from them. The father, unlike previous fathers, did not make time to establish contact, communication, and guidance for the children.

Society impressed upon adults that in order to fulfill themselves, they should go out and enjoy various types of commercial entertainment, be it bowling, movie theaters, or other forms of distraction. As society required mothers to go out during the day, it became necessary to give surrogate responsibility to caretakers outside the immediate family. Consequently, the family unit deteriorated, causing a situation in the home where family members were more like lodgers that come home to sleep, eat breakfast, and perhaps dinner.

Under these conditions, the youth became involved in questionable and antisocial behavior, despite their middle class status. Alcoholism became a major problem, as did divorce, alienation, and the separation of people from one another. They came to be described as "the lonely crowd." The deterioration of the family was responsible for this social breakdown. However, the root of the problem can be traced to the demands capitalist production places on its working class members.

More stress has been placed on women to leave home and enter the working force that caused men's alienation in the first place. Thus, women are now victims of the same stress that affects the working man. The Women's Movement is partly responsible for the transformation. However, the economic conditions that presently exist demand a double income for most families to make ends meet. Therefore, women's participation in the work force is also a result of economic demands. Furthermore, the media constantly portrays an image of an American standard of living that is unattainable to most families without a double income. The media's influence on how people should live is extremely significant. American society is geared toward production, not fulfillment and it is not prepared to deal with the alienation it creates as a result. Instead, substance abuse and suicide run rampant.

American childrearing methods have failed to produce positive results. These methods are even less appropriate for the Chicano Mexican family. As a matter of fact, anglo values have

only served to deteriorate our family unit through cultural conflict. In an attempt to protect their families from anglo racism and inequality, some Chicano Mexicanos have accepted the anglo values of individualism, consumerism, and immediate "fast food" gratification, only to be plagued by the same problems anglo families face.

Adults' feeling of powerlessness leads to a lack of concern for the family and eventually, its decay. Children susceptible to societal peer pressure, are less supervised as a result. Destructive or nonproductive lifestyles such as drugs, gangs, and individualism, are assumed in this manner. We must reach our youth, for they are our future. Initially, youth that is politicized and socially conscious must be reached. In turn, they can reach out to others. Patterned after Gabriela Mistral's system of one teach one that reduced illiteracy substantially in Mexico at the beginning of the century, the process will eventually reach all our youth.

Innovative childrearing methods are being practiced in many countries. Like Cuba, Russia, currently in the reconstruction phase, inculcates collective cooperation versus competition in their children and youth.

For the Chicano Mexicano child, parents must be teachers through example. The media's negative influence must be combated. Although, not an easy task, substitutes for G.I. Joe, Superman, and Rambo must be furnished. Imperialistic military heroes must be substituted by true freedom fighters. We have a rich selection of indigenous cultural heroes and outstanding personalities. People such as Cuatemoc, Moctezuma, Tlaloc, Juarez, Zapata, Villa, Magon, Cardenas, Murrieta, and Cortina are only a few. An ancestral pride and understanding that they are indigenous to the Southwest must be instilled in our children.

Children must also be exposed to their parents' organizational involvement so that they become familiar with it. Granted, children cannot be expected to attend lengthy meetings with their parents, but it is possible that they attend shorter ones with both parents sharing their supervision. Parents must understand that their children and political work cannot be separate entities.

Children need to be exposed to American society's contradictions at an early age. They must be taught collectivism, positive self-esteem, prudent consumerism, and to strive for long range goals versus competitiveness, negative cultural self-esteem, instant gratification and wasteful consumerism.

On the same note, we must also teach our children that other people exist outside the United States. We cannot allow our children to imitate American selfcenterism and chauvanism. These

attributes have simply produced a nation of isolated and ignorant people that are paranoid of anything "unamerican" and unaccepting of differences among people. Chicano Mexicano children, raised with an understanding that the world is composed of varied people will accept and understand differences. They will see all human beings as equals and not as superiors and inferiors. By teaching our children these valuable lessons, we invest in a more humane future.

A large number of Chicanos Mexicanos are heading down the same road of destruction as the anglo by following in his footsteps, as is the case with Chicana feminists that look to the anglo female for leadership and direction. For this reason, it is imperative to seek a Chicano Mexicano alternative to the proposed solutions of the United States, as well as the left.

This is not an easy task. We are constantly entangled in a massive web as we strive to survive in a capitalist society. We have little power determining housing, jobs, etc. Yet, we must pull out of this entanglement and cut the massive ties that hold us down. We must begin positive construction of our own society at a more advanced human level than the present American society.

First, we must look at our social family structure and analyze its strengths. These strengths have the potential to facilitate the unity and organization needed to form the type of society that is best suited to our particular needs.

Frequently, a community with scarce cash places a greater premium upon human interaction in the form of mutual assistance across family and community lines. The sharing of home, food and resources with relatives and others less fortunate is common. Anglo social scientists have been very critical of this practice. They claim the practice prevents individuals from "rising" due to the additional obligations sharing produces. Yet, the Chicano Mexicano family takes care of its own in this manner. We do not cast off the weak and helpless to society's uncaring hands. However, American practices, such as mental institutions and homes for the elderly that have traditionally been rejected by the Chicano Mexicano, are now eroding our strong sense of responsibility for our own. For this reason, we must re-establish and maintain close family ties.

The same sense of obligation and assistance extends to brothers and sisters. The family's welfare takes precedence over personal advancement. A society based on cooperative relationships and problem solving can be built on this solid foundation.

The fact that Chicanos Mexicanos are not in control of their own destiny continues to be the major obstacle. If we are to overcome this obstacle, the Chicano Mexicano family system must be utilized in order to involve every family member in our strug-

gle for self-determination. Through education, every family member can understand their role in the struggle. It is crucial for our people to realize that organization empowers us. For the purpose of maintaining unity, it is just as important for that power to be visible through advancements, small as they may be.

On the same note, problem solving skills obtained through involvement in the Movement, must be carried over into the home. These skills are an invaluable tool for reducing tension and resolving disputes within family relationships. Rapport and mutual respect between family members must exist, not competition for power and authority.

During the process of politicization, areas of greatest need must be defined. Adults and youth must be helped in defining these areas for themselves. They must see different means of attacking the problems, instead of seeing them as insoluble and leaving them at that. We must show the people that what seems to be a massive impenetrable wall is simply a wall made of stones and mortar that can be taken apart with patience, planning, and hard work. It can be reshaped for their benefit, be it a matter of stopping police brutality or providing city services. It is clear that we must initially work within the framework of the perceived needs of the people, for as Paolo Freire tells us in The Pedagogy of the Oppressed, people will only work within their level of comprehension and perhaps slightly higher. It is our task, as organizers, to keep the people expanding their understanding and reaching continually higher. In this way, they will become the agents of their own mental, social, political, and economical decolonization.

Thus, organization will develop in the Chicano Mexican community as adults and youth begin to support each other and work together on common problems. Such things as paved streets, lighting, sidewalks, recreation, etc. affect everyone. From these preliminary levels of organization, people who wish to attack other more extensive problems will come forth. We must continually provide people with an understanding of their relationships to the sociopolitical economic system, as well as an understanding of alternatives. A good example of an organization that has established this kind of training is the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores in Mexico. It has gained permanent national ballot status in Mexico. Even the older, illiterate members of the party know the totality of the party program and are able to discuss it and debate the alternatives. When a demonstration march is staged, the entire family is present, from the babes in arms to the patriarchs of the villages.

Clearly, there are problems within the family structure of Latina America. Society's male supremacy and traditional labor division have produced incorrect attitudes about women. Double standards, restrictive household and childrearing duties, and



the lack of higher education are only a few of these attitudes. These problems must be addressed through education so that our people recognize them as incorrect. The family will not be destroyed, but strengthened by correcting its weaknesses.

On the same issue, however, it cannot be denied that psychological and physiological differences between men and women exist. They need to be recognized. Research indicates that male and female children that have not been exposed to role models of male and female behavior do, indeed, have different interests and perspectives. Denial of such difference suggests that everyone is a unisex homogeneous model, fitting into the same mold. We must recognize these differences in order to build upon the strengths that each psychological makeup contains and ameliorate the weaknesses. Our goal is to create a just order for human beings and, in fact, more just human beings, not simply to produce clone copies for a colorless collection. This can only lead to drabness. Positive and contributory virtues of each individual must be recognized so that the collective whole is a better, broader community unit.

If we are to forge the society that is best suited to us, as Chicanos Mexicanos, we must have the necessary power to control the political apparatus, scholastic facilities, economic resources, and the media of communications. It is our responsibility to take control of these and develop a blueprint for the kind of society that we seek. We must develop a program for attaining power and resources before mobilizing. Without a plan and direction, all movement and organization simply serves to achieve immediate goals or to react to an immediate situation of oppression or need. This aimless wandering will take us nowhere. We must educate our people so that they understand this as they pass through the stages of reacting, to acting, to searching for a better alternative.

The concept of developing a classless society does not necessarily mean a society without families. At our disposal we have the means to provide enough food to feed every man, woman and child on earth an adequate and varied diet and to provide housing for everyone that will not only shelter them, but also be conducive to positive development. We have the ability at the present time to provide full meaningful employment for everyone by redefining the concept of a job to that of being a task that is socially necessary to provide the highest standard of living for all human beings. Human labor must be directed toward the production of goods and services beneficial to all human being, not just for the profit of the few.

With such full employment, the actual time spent producing the socially needed goods and services will be reduced, allowing more leisure time to develop stronger family relationships with the nuclear and extended family members. It must be a goal

worked on diligently and deliberately. It must also be well planned in order to accomplish it most effectively and efficiently.

Another major contributor to the breakdown of the family is the absence of financial stability, and consequently, the loss of dignity due to the lack of gainful employment. The family can only grow to its fullest potential as a formative organism when these deficiencies are corrected.

Varied educational levels (formal education, not to be mistaken for native intelligence) have also contributed to the discomposition of the family. The lack of economic support, as well as time, have created the variation. However, when these two factors are corrected, education will be truly attainable for all family members. Ultimately, society as a whole will reap the benefits.

Alienation, a major problem in American society, is the most damaging factor to the family unit. American society rejects "losers." In fact, the left also rejects the "lumpen" elements, branding them as beyond help. However, due to America's alienation of the poor, many Chicano Mexicano youth fit in this category. They can not compose the Partido's base, but because they are our own people, we must include them in our organizational and educational efforts.

Organization among working class Chicanos Mexicanos must be coupled with organization of the entire family. Since the priority of the working class Chicano Mexicano is the family, it is the natural order for our organizational efforts. Historically, the Partido's initial organizational success was based on family organization. This was also the case with the Crusade for Justice.

The values of sharing, unselfishness, and support in times of crisis derived from Chicano Mexicano family organization have shielded us from the strongest attacks. It has also preserved our values, language and concepts. Granted, it has weaknesses. But the strengths can overpower them. Such is the case with the Chicana Mexicana. Although incorrectly affected by some traditional Chicano Mexicano family practices, the family has also provided her with insights and strengths extremely valuable in Movement activity. Thus, rather than destroy the family structure in its totality, we must build upon the positive and correct the negative. The Cossacks in China that have preserved their way of life for hundreds of years and initiated positive changes are a notable example to follow.

For this reason, it is crucial that the Partido support the Chicano Mexicano family and work to promote its strengths. We must devote time, energy and resources to promote such things as the advancement of women's education in all fields. The Chicana

Mexicana's role in the Partido's decision making process must expand, as well as their role as Partido candidates, officers, and policymakers. It is a task that must be accomplished through the joint efforts of men and women.

This is also true on the social level. Together, men and women must open up the areas in service and industry that have previously been closed to women. All endeavors must facilitate family tasks such as raising children and developing family members. Our society must revolve around family and community needs.

Along the same line, married activists must politicize their spouses. History has taught us that it is impossible to lead a separate political and family life. One or the other will eventually cease to exist, if not both.

An activist must demonstrate to his or her spouse the seriousness of his or her involvement. Through one's actions, respect is gained and in turn, the politicizing process gains credibility. Although more personal, the politicizing process of one's spouse should take on the same formal tone that is used to politicize all new members. In the past, married activists have incorrectly assumed their spouses would become politicized through osmosis.

Basically, activists must be consistent demonstrating their seriousness, treat their spouses as serious candidates, and maintain consistent two way communication. After the politicizing process, a spouse's commitment can take several forms. The most productive is one where organizational responsibilities are shared between spouses. On the other hand, a spouse may simply be supportive and cognizant of preventing obstacles for his or her active mate. Whatever form a spouse's commitment takes, it is most important to move forward together as equals.

Since Chicanos Mexicanos became colonized by the U.S., concern over what constitutes a family has existed. In the early stages of colonialism, the American colonizer was perceived as uncivilized by the Chicano Mexicano. This was mainly attributed to their protestant religion and untraditional way of life.

The Chicano Mexicano's rejection of American family values and thus, assimilation, have elicited criticism from some social scientists that view assimilation as "modernization." In fact, the U.S. has managed to maintain this "modern image" so well, that other countries' bourgeois consider it the epitome of "modern society," and theirs backward. But interestingly enough, American social scientists are now questioning many American family values, such as individualism.

Living as a colonized people has taken its toll on the Chi-

chicano Mexicano family. However, it has withstood. Its strength is based on its historical foundation. It has been the center of social and political activities since precolumbian times. Thus, it is selfevident that our Movement was based on the family. Organizations such as La Raza Unida, Crusade for Justice, and UFW all revolved around the family and involved all family members. In fact, "the Chicano Power Period," as a whole, capitalized on the family.

The importance the family plays in our Movement and struggle for self-determination is clear. As our Movement grows, we need to follow the example other struggles for liberation have set and solidify productive family units. The preservation of our families, values, and struggle for self-determination depends on the individual. Every individual must embrace these beliefs before the politicizing process can be set into motion. Only then, can we take control of our destiny, for American society will continue to control our destiny as long as we are complacent. Research says we must keep in mind that we are up against a much more sophisticated form of colonialism than our grandparents were. Our only alternative is to consciously politicize and conscientize the Chicano Mexicano family.

The family has been an "individual's" domain, and thus, a personal matter for a considerable amount of time. Because the family plays a crucial role in our Movement for liberation and self-determination, this attitude must change. It is not our intention to meddle in an individual's personal business. It is, however, our intention to incorporate the family into our organization and utilize its strengths and values to build our Movement.

Neither is our intention to promote the image of a "good family." As previously stated, we are cognizant of the fact that negative aspects exist within the Chicano Mexicano family. Our intention is to be honest and through the politicizing and conscientizing process eliminate those negative aspects.

**LA CHICANA MEXICANA,  
HER STRUGGLE ONE WITH THE STRUGGLE  
FOR NATIONAL LIBERATION**

**EL PARTIDO NACIONAL DE LA RAZA UNIDA  
Central Committee  
May 30, 1989**

During the Chicano Power period of 1965 - 1975, many issues affecting Chicanos Mexicanos surfaced. Many of these issues were ones that we had struggled with over a long period of time. In fact, these issues originated during the conquest and colonization of our people. The Chicana Mexicana question and her struggle for liberation is such an issue.

Contrary to popular belief, the Women's Movement did not originate in the United States. The Women's Movement originated on a worldwide basis, but was particularly motivated by women from socialist countries, such as Cuba, the USSR, and other Third World countries.

The first International Women's Conference was held in Mexico City in 1975. Partly organized by Raza women of Latin America, the first International Women's Conference was especially significant for Chicanas Mexicanas because it was held in Mexico. The proximity of the conference to Aztlan assured the participation of Chicanas. For La Raza Unida Party, this conference provided an opportunity to introduce our Movement to the international community and establish formal contact with other women's groups through La Federacion de Mujeres of El Partido.

The Women's Movement in the United States has been distorted and fundamentally bought off. What remains is a Middle Class Feminist Movement whose main goal is to push women into the White Man's Corporate America. Unfortunately, many women of color see this as the authentic Women's Movement and strive to emulate the Anglo Feminist. In as much as the U.S. Feminist Movement tries to sell itself as progressive, the fact remains that it does not address the real issues that affect and oppress the Chicana Mexicana and other women of color. The issue of female equality is a valid one, however, it should not be confused for progressive and revolutionary change.

Our Movement and organization consider the Chicana's Movement as an integral part of the total liberation of our people. Chicanas can not be liberated if our people as a whole are not. Likewise, our people can not be liberated while women remain subject to male domination.

The subjugation of Raza women in the Americas stems from the colonization of the Americas. Thus, women's oppression in contemporary society is a by-product of the conquest and colonization of the Americas by European nations. The European colonizer brought a different set of social and moral rules to the Americas. These different rules had a tremendous effect on women and their role in society. Before the European conquest, women may not have partaken of all privileges as men did, however, their role in society was significant. This is substantiated by the fact that some Indian tribes were matriarchal.

Initially, the conquest was felt in Meso-America and the Caribbean. The first native nation to be truly colonized was

the Mexica (pronounced meshica), or as they were more commonly known, the Aztecs. For the most part, Chicanos Mexicanos have their roots in the Mexica culture. Migrating from Aztlan, the Mexicas set out on a pilgrimage in search of the promised land and ended up in Tenochtitlan - Mexico City. Theoretically, Aztlan encompassed what is presently the U.S. Southwest.

Mexica society was extremely organized at the time of the European conquest. Women, as well as men, were expected to abide by a set of strict rules. In contrast to European society, Mexica women participated in the most important institutions of society. They were advisors to the Ruler-Priest, and in special situations, priestesses. The colonization of the native peoples reversed the social status of women. As indigenous kings became slaves, Indian women became doubly oppressed as women and as Indians. The woman became property. In most cases, the European used the native woman as he pleased. It was common practice for an hacendado to spend the first night with the bride to be, if she belonged to his hacienda. It was also common for the Spanish patron to keep two homes - one for his legitimate family and another for his Indian or Mestiza concubine.

As natives and Mestizos were made slaves, women became recipients of the indigenous male's frustration that resulted. Male natives and Mestizos made women the scapegoat. The legacy of La Malinche, the Indian woman that assisted Cortes during the conquest of the Mexicas, further aggravated the woman's plight. As man became the source of slave labor, women became inevitable victims and pawns of the colonizer as well.

Religion was among the various institutions that contributed to the woman's plight after the colonization of the Americas. As previously stated, the Mexica religion had women in the priesthood. Although women's participation in the priesthood depended on social and economic status, the fact remains that woman partook in Mexica society to a much greater degree than European women. Christian societies consider women less than complete persons, claiming she was created from the side of man. Seen as the culprit for the sins of man since Eve gave the apple of temptation to Adam, condemning man to a life of suffering, women have been afflicted with Christianity's embedded bias.

Under such colonial conditions, it is evident why women who rebelled were castigated and labeled "bad women." During the Spanish colonial period, women had two alternatives: to become wives or enter a convent.

The expeditions to the North, what is presently the U.S. Southwest followed the initial Spanish and Portuguese colonization of the continent. These expeditions by "New Spain" were different from those of the Spaniards due to their composition. For the most part, they were Indian, Mestizo, African, and Mulatto families. These families colonized and intermixed with the na-

tives of the Southwest. Life for both men and women was extremely difficult, not only because of the terrain, but also because of the struggle to survive within the native nations of the Southwest. The information available from this period and the one that followed is very limited since the majority of the records have been lost or destroyed.

After the Mexican American War and the U.S. Expansionist Movement (1800-1848), the Mexicano-natives that inhabited the Southwest became servant and slave from one day to the next. Mexicano-native men became a source of forced labor and Mexicana native women became a beast of burden even more so. Like the Spanish conquistador before, the Anglo colonist treated women as objects or property.

Within the Mexicano colonias (barrios), the Mexicana had to struggle with the social and moral rules handed down from the Spanish conquest. Men being subjected to brutal racism by Anglo law, as they had been under Spanish law, again displaced their anger on the woman. Furthermore, the Mexicana native woman was simply a maid or a prostitute to the Anglo. Raza women frequently endured abuses from the patron in order to keep their jobs and their husband's job as well.

The Chicana Mexicana clearly faces many obstacles from the moment she is born. Although the degree may vary, Raza women are limited in education, opportunity and societal participation. Ironically, these imposed limitations coexist with a set of sexual and moral expectations that places the woman on a pedestal. These social limitations and moral expectations are evident among Chicano Mexicano families today. Sexual permissiveness is commonly acceptable for men, but not so for women. If a man impregnates a woman out of wedlock, he is simply being a man, however, the woman is considered a whore under these double standards.

Today, Chicano Mexicano families are yielding to the pressures of modern society. However, resentment and resistance still exist. Overwhelmed by modern society and confused by the lack of family structure within Anglo society, some families are engulfed with confusion and lack of control. Some parents still believe a woman's place is in the home. Often parents consent to their daughter's education because they see it as a "pass time" while she waits to get married. The same double standard exists when students become involved in the Movement. Although parents may not agree with their son's involvement, he is allowed the freedom to make his own decisions because he is a man. However, the Chicana interested in the Movement is labeled as "loca" or with ulterior motives. Frequently, Chicanas opt for peace in the family and stay out of progressive or revolutionary involvement.

Undoubtedly, women have suffered great injustices, but it is especially so of Chicana Mexicana, African, and other Latina women that suffer a triple oppression - that of sexism, colonial-



ism, and racism. Understanding the source of these injustices is the initial step. The next and more difficult one is correcting the situation so that the Chicana Mexicana is a full partner in our struggle for National Liberation.

Men must play an integral role in correcting the inequalities that afflict women. Words must be backed up by action. There can not be change unless both parties move toward creating that change. Revolutionary equality for women must be accomplished in a unified effort. Like our Movement for National Liberation, the responsibility lies with all of us. Chicanos must examine their attitudes about women and their role in the present society. Men that desire a traditional family must understand that it perpetuates women's oppression. Chicanos Mexicanos that claim to be progressive and aware of the woman's struggle must also examine their attitudes about women. Many times so-called progressive Chicanos Mexicanos are involved in progressive or revolutionary organizations, yet expect a traditional family and wife at home where he is the boss. Rather than being objective about our culture and traditions, these Chicanos Mexicanos rationalize their double standards as the preservation of our culture and traditions. This fallacy simply continues to hinder our Movement as a whole because it stunts the revolutionary growth of women. All cultures contain positive and negative aspects and must be recognized as such. The traditional double standards between the sexes is an example of a negative aspect in our culture that must be rejected.

For the Chicana Mexicana, equality is meaningless if the responsibilities that come with it are not assumed. Like many Chicanos, Chicanas commonly confuse "careerism" with revolutionary activism. Doing so, they simply abide by the White Man's capitalist system - to be American and get a piece of the pie. Undoubtedly, women must have equal access to education and economic advancement. However, confusing this for revolutionary change is dangerous because it leads to complacency, making these Chicanos and Chicanas part of the problem because they are not part of the solution.

Chicanas must share the responsibility of building a Movement for the National Liberation of our people as a whole. Historically, Chicanas Mexicanas have played an active role in the Movement. During the Mexican Revolution, many Adelitas gave their lives with the same valor as men. In the early 1900's, Chicanas Mexicanas were active in El Partido Liberal Mexicano. These are but a few examples of many where the Chicana Mexicana was active in the Movement despite the oppressive conditions imposed by her Chicano Mexicano companero. One can only wonder what her optimum functional level would have been had her potential not been shackled.

As a National Liberation Movement, the individual initiates the first step. Accepting the responsibility of that Movement,

the individual must take the responsibility of changing those attitudes that hinder our Movement. Chicanos Mexicanos must be willing to acknowledge the fact that they are oppressive to Chicanas Mexicanas and consequently struggle to change. Chicanos Mexicanos can not continue to rationalize such contradictions. They must realize that if they contribute to the Chicana Mexicana's oppression, they can also contribute to her liberation.

On the other hand, Chicanas Mexicanas must study and understand the root of their exploitation and that of our people. Only in this manner can the struggle for equality be transformed into the struggle for revolutionary change. True revolutionary Chicana Mexicana activists are in struggle for liberation because they understand their people's exploitation. They have no ulterior motive, but the desire to liberate their people.

The root of sexism, oppression and discrimination must be eliminated if true human liberation is to be lasting and not simply an opportunity for one oppressor to be replaced by another. Chicano Mexicano men and women must work together on a foundation based on mutual respect and support. Failure to do so will only undermine our unity and development as a people. Men and women are equally valuable to our Movement, people and families. We must recognize this and utilize every individual's abilities if we are to accomplish our goal of self-determination for our people.