

Chicana Activist and Author Enriqueta Vasquez to Speak April 2 at UCSD as Part of Chávez Tribute

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Jan Jennings

Activist and author Enriqueta Vasquez, a major figure in the Chicano Movement of the late 1960s and 1970s, will sign and discuss her recently published collection of writings at 3 p.m. April 2 at the Cross-Cultural Center at the University of California, San Diego.

The event is part of UCSD's monthlong celebration of the life and accomplishments of César E. Chávez, labor leader, champion of human rights and a principal figure in the Chicano Civil Rights Movement. Vasquez's talk is free and open to the public.

Enriqueta Vasquez and the Chicano Movement: Writings from El Grito del Norte consists of 44 columns Vasquez wrote during the peak of Mexican American radicalism, 1968-1972, to protest social and economic injustice. The newspaper, *El Grito del Norte*, founded and managed by Chicanas in New Mexico, provided the platform for her wide ranging critique.

"Besides being a prolific author, Enriqueta Vasquez was one of the most courageous figures of the Chicano Movement," said Jorge Mariscal, director of the UCSD Chicana/o-Latina/o Arts and Humanities Program. "Her travels to express solidarity with the Vietnamese and Cuban people, for example, put her in the middle of the Cold War anti-communist maelstrom, and her feminist writings boldly challenged sexism in her own community and the nation at large."

Vasquez wrote about racism, sexism, imperialism, and poverty, drawing upon her experiences as a Chicana. In one column, *Despierten Hermanos!* (Awaken, Brothers and Sisters!), she used both anger and humor, desperately trying to spur her fellow Chicanos to action, to protest the injustices she saw all around her.

Though these columns epitomize the Chicana writer's mature emotions, spirit and outrage, the seed was planted and nurtured as a youth. As a teenager she wrote her first letter complaining about local issues. Why could she not eat in local restaurants, but it was okay for her brothers to fight for this country? Good enough to die for their country, but not good enough to be treated as equals at home. And the fight for justice began.

Enriqueta Vasquez and the Chicano Movement: Writings from El Grito del Norte was edited by Lorena Oropeza and Dionne Espinoza who will join Vasquez at the April 2 to add their comments and perspective.

Oropeza is an associate professor of history at the University of California, Davis. She is the author of *Raza Si! Guerra No!: Chicano Protest and Patriotism during the Viet Nam War Era*. Espinoza is an associate professor in the Department of Chicano Studies and director of the Center for the Study of Genders and Sexualities at California State University, Los Angeles. Her research and teaching are centered on Chicanas and Latinas in the United States, cultural studies, and feminist studies.

For further information call the UCSD Cross-Cultural Center at (858) 534-9689 or Jorge Mariscal, chair of the 2007 César E. Chávez Celebration Planning Committee, at (858) 534-3897.

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