

CHICANA

FEMINIST THOUGHT

The Basic Historical Writings



Edited by Alma M. García

CHICANA FEMINIST
THOUGHT

THE BASIC HISTORICAL WRITINGS

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THE BASIC HISTORICAL WRITINGS

EDITED BY

ALMA M. GARCÍA

*Sociology/Ethnic Studies
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*For my mother, Alma Araiza García,
whose life exemplifies feminist struggle and
perseverance in the midst of adversity.*

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Introduction

ALMA M. GARCÍA

"Sisterhood is powerful"
—Robin Morgan

*"There is a pretense to a homogeneity of experience covered
by the word sisterhood that does not in fact exist"*
—Audre Lorde

*"Chicanas identify
Chicanas communicate chicanas
Let your spirits not die"*
—Anna Nieto-Gómez

*"Look at our women. They are strong you can feel it. They
are the rocks on which we really build"*
—Dolores Huerta

During the turbulent years of the 1960s and throughout the 1970s, a generation of Chicana feminists raised their voices in opposition to the gender tensions and conflicts that they were experiencing as women within the Chicano social protest movement. Although the Chicano movement—an insurgent uprising among a new political generation of Mexican-Americans—challenged persistent patterns of societal inequality in the United States, it ignited a political debate between Chicanas and Chicanos based on the internal gender contradictions prevalent within El Movimiento. Chicana feminists produced an ideological critique of the Chicano cultural nationalist movement that struggled against social injustice yet maintained patriarchal structures of domination. Chicana feminist thought reflected a historical struggle by women to overcome sexist oppression but still affirm a militant ethnic consciousness. As they forged a feminist consciousness, Chicana feminists searched for the elusive “room of their own” within the socio-historical and political context of the Chicano movement.

El Movimiento: The Paradox of Civil Rights and Ethnic Nationalism

Influenced by the Black nationalist movement and the Mexican-American community's historical legacy of discrimination and structural inequality in American society,

a generation of Mexican-Americans channeled their collective energies into a militant civil rights and ethnic nationalist movement in the late 1960s and 1970s. Surrounded by a radical climate of national political protests and insurgency such as the Black power movement, the anti-Vietnam War movement and the second wave of the women's movement, the movimiento focused on social, political, and economic self-determination and autonomy for Mexican-American communities throughout the United States.¹ This focus at the same time manifested a paradoxical agenda of civil rights and equal opportunity demands, on the one hand, and a more separatist ethnic nationalist rebellion, on the other.

This paradox revealed not a monolithic political base, but a Chicano movement that evolved from various struggles with specific leaders, agendas, and organizational strategies and tactics. The New Mexico land grant movement, for example, headed by Reies López Tijerina fought for the rights of dispossessed Hispanos, as those from New Mexico called themselves, whose lands had been lost as a result of the war between the United States and Mexico (1846–1848).² In California, César Chávez and Dolores Huerta organized migrant farm workers into the United Farm Workers union whose strikes, boycotts, and victories against the state's agribusiness would become the soul and inspiration of the Chicano movement as well as a national and international symbol of a struggle for social justice and equal rights.³ The urban-based Colorado Crusade for Justice, spearheaded by Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales, mobilized Mexican-American communities around the issues of political self-determination and community autonomy.⁴ In Texas, José Angel Gutiérrez founded a third political party—the Raza Unida Party—and challenged the state's political system for its systematic exclusion of the Mexican-American community. Gutiérrez and the Raza Unida Party's electoral revolt and victory in Crystal City, Texas, in 1970, became a political metaphor for the strength and tenacity of El Movimiento.⁵ In high schools and universities throughout the Southwest, Mexican-American students organized their collective efforts into a radical confrontation with an educational system that they indicted for its patterns of discrimination.⁶ Generations of Mexican-American parents had identified the educational system as a barrier to their children's achievement of the American dream: upward social mobility. After decades of educational neglect, young Chicanos and Chicanas organized school boycotts, known as blowouts, as a sign of militant protest.⁷

Drafted in large numbers into the military and out of proportion to their population in the country, Chicanos organized their own significant anti-war movement. This protest reached its zenith when over 20,000 demonstrators, mostly Chicano, protested the war in the National Chicano Anti-War Moratorium in East Los Angeles on August 29, 1970.

Culturally, the movement released a new energy of artistic and literary expression in what constituted a "Chicano Renaissance." Poets, writers, playwrights, and artists mobilized art as a political weapon for "La Causa"—the Chicano movement. The movement was not the first time that Mexican-Americans had protested their second-class status. Indeed, a strong historical legacy of protest existed, but the movement was the largest and most widespread expression of Mexican-American discontent.⁸

Cultural Nationalism: Ideology of a Movement

In 1967, Corky Gonzales's epic poem, "*I Am Joaquín*" reverberated "a triumphant vision, a tearful lamentation, and affirmation of . . . Chicano people. [W]ritten in fire,

shouted in song and whispered in pain.”⁹ Sharing ideological roots with Black cultural nationalism, Chicano cultural nationalism—*Chicanismo*—advocated an ideology and spirit of active resistance within Mexican-American communities throughout the United States. Gonzales’s poem, representative of a resurgent Chicano cultural renaissance, echoed a collective social and political lament throughout the movement:

I am Joaquín
Lost in a world of confusion,
Caught up in a whirl of gringo society . . .¹⁰

Chicanismo emphasized cultural pride as a source of political unity and strength capable of mobilizing Chicanos and Chicanas into an oppositional political group within the dominant political landscape in the United States. As an ideology, *Chicanismo* crystallized the essence of a nationalist ideology: a collective ethnic consciousness.¹¹ Chicano cultural nationalism placed the socio-historical experiences of Mexican-Americans within a theoretical model of internal colonialism. Chicano communities represented ethnic “nations” or “internal colonies” under the domination and exploitation of the United States.¹²

As a result, Mexican-Americans in the 1960s still faced fundamental inequities in comparison to many other ethnic groups especially Euro-Americans. More than one-third of all Mexican-Americans lived in poverty and the average educational attainment for Mexican-Americans was less than eighth grade, the lowest in the country. Job and wage discrimination added to poor housing opportunities only compounded the Mexican-Americans position in the United States.

Chicanismo served as a dynamically effective tool capable of mobilizing divergent struggles within the Chicano movement. By the late 1960s, cultural nationalism served a dual political purpose. *Chicanismo* provided a unifying worldview for El Movimiento while, at the same time, it provided the ideological link which cut across such groups as the Raza Unida Party, the United Farm Workers, the Crusade for Justice, and the student movement.

In time, *Chicanismo* gave rise to a parallel movement of ideological opposition that began to gain momentum. Many Chicanas, active within every sector of the movement, raised their voices in a collective feminist challenge to the sexism and male domination that they were experiencing within the movimiento. Developing first as cultural nationalists, these Chicanas began to see and experience some of the contradictions of *Chicanismo*, specifically as it applied to women. From their nationalist base, these Chicana activists began to evolve also as feminists.

The Struggles of Chicana Feminists

Chicanas participated actively during this entire period of social protest and community mobilization. Their work within each of the strands of the movement undermined long-standing stereotypes of Mexican-American women. Chicanas struggled for social equality during this period as had past generations of Mexican women in the United States.¹³

Chicana feminists inherited a historical tradition of political activism dating back to the immigrant generation of Mexican women, who together with their families, crossed the border into the United States at the turn of the century. Mexican immigrant women and their families fled the upheaval produced by the Mexican Revolution of 1910 as well as from economic displacement and poverty. Communities of Mexican immigrant families settled throughout the Southwest joining pre-existing

communities created after the U.S.–Mexico war of 1848. El Paso, San Antonio, San Diego, Los Angeles, and Santa Barbara—all experienced dramatic societal transformations that would shape future generations of Mexican–Americans.¹⁴ Throughout contemporary Mexican–American history, women played active roles in their communities in a struggle against persistent patterns of societal inequality. Their political activism shaped the course of major reform movements within communities of Mexicans in the United States. Recent scholarship is recovering this historical legacy by documenting the participation of women at all political levels.¹⁵

The political struggles of Chicana feminists during the late 1960s and late 1970s reflected a continuation of women's activism that paralleled the experiences of other women of color in the United States. A Chicana feminist movement, like that of African–American women, originated within the context of a nationalist movement. As Chicanas assessed their role within the Chicano movement, their ideological debates shifted from a focus on racial oppression to one that would form the basis for an emergent Chicana feminism discourse: gender oppression.

Chicana feminists shared the task of defining their feminist ideology and movement with other feminists, specifically other women of color. Like African–American, Asian–American, and Native–American feminists, Chicana feminists struggled to gain gender equality and racial/ethnic equality. Like other feminist women of color, Chicanas recognized that their feminist movement involved a confrontation with both sexism and racism.¹⁶ As a result, feminism, as articulated by women of color, represented an ideological and political movement to end patriarchal oppression within the structure of a cultural nationalist movement. Chicana feminists shared a common experience with other women of color whose life histories were shaped by the multiple sources of oppression generated by race, gender, and social class.¹⁷ Thus, a Chicana feminist movement represented a struggle that was both nationalist and feminist. Ultimately, the inherent constraints and cross–pressures facing Chicana feminists within the Chicano movement led to the broader development of Chicana feminist thought.

The Social Construction of Chicana Feminist Thought

Historically, women's participation in revolutionary struggles or mass socio–political movements has been linked with the development of a feminist consciousness. Studies of women involved in revolutionary movements such as the Chinese, the Cuban, Mexican, and Nicaragua revolutions document the origins of feminist movements within the context of a male–dominated national struggle.¹⁸ Similarly, case studies of the white feminist movement in the United States during the 1960s document the tensions experienced by women both in the New Left Movement and in the Civil Rights Movement.¹⁹ Male domination within each of these socio–political movements precipitated the rise of a feminist movement among white women during the 1960s. African–American feminists have also traced the origins of their feminist movement to their experiences with sexism in the Black nationalist movement.²⁰ Although cultural, political, and economic constraints limited the full development of a feminist consciousness and movement among Asian–American women during this period, the cross–pressures resulting from the demands of a nationalist and feminist struggle led Asian–American women in time to organize feminist organizations.²¹ Native–American women activists also voiced a feminist agenda as they clashed with sexism among their male counterparts.²²

Similarly, Chicana activists traced the emergence of their feminist “awakening” to the internal struggles within the cultural nationalist Chicano movement. In the

course of their political activism, directed at reforming the structures of social inequality embedded in American society and of proposing alternative structuring, Chicana activists turned part of their attention inward, embarking on a feminist journey that would change dramatically the course of El Movimiento.

In a special issue on Chicanas published by *Regeneración*, Chicana feminist activist Anna NietoGomez argued that sexism within El Movimiento represented a key issue facing Chicana feminists. NietoGomez called for a mobilization of Chicana feminists in order to unite against the issue of male-domination prevalent within the movement.²³ Similarly, Francisca Flores, another leading Chicana feminist and editor of the Chicana feminist publication, *Regeneración*, captured the early momentum that galvanized Chicana feminists:

[Chicanas] can no longer remain in a subservient role or as auxiliary forces in the [Chicano] movement. They must be included in the front line of communication, leadership and organizational responsibility. . . . The issue of equality, freedom and self-determination of the Chicana—like the right of self-determination, equality, and liberation of the Mexican [Chicano] community—is not negotiable. Anyone opposing the right of women to organize into their own form of organization has no place in the leadership of the movement.²⁴

Supporting this position, Bernice Rincón argued that Chicana feminists, through their efforts to gain full equality for women, would strengthen El Movimiento by eradicating internal sources of oppression. The dynamic process through which a feminist agenda was forcefully introduced into the Chicano movement by other Chicana feminists, such as Marta Cotera and Enriqueta Longeaux Vasquez who raised their voices in collective protest, proved to be a contentious political struggle. Like other feminist women of color, Chicana feminists experienced male resistance as their nascent feminism challenged traditional gender roles. Their efforts to redefine themselves as equal participants transformed them into an oppositional group in relation to their male counterparts and female counterparts who supported the view that feminism was a divisive force within the Chicano movement. Nevertheless, Chicana feminists continued their struggle to gain equality by challenging sexism. NietoGomez summarized the impact of Chicana feminism:

Chicana feminism is in various stages of development. . . . It is recognition that women are oppressed as a group and are exploited as part of la Raza people. It is a direction to be responsible to identify and act upon the issues and needs of Chicana women. Chicana feminists are involved in understanding the nature of women's oppression.²⁵

Throughout the 1970s, this initial generation of self-proclaimed Chicana feminists viewed the struggle against sexism within the Chicano movement and the struggle against racism in the larger society as central ideological components of their feminist thought.

Although many issues contributed to the development of Chicana feminist thought, the ideological critique of sexism or *machismo*, the term most frequently used within a Chicano context, contributed significantly to the formation of Chicana feminism. Chicana feminists, as active participants in the Chicano movement, experienced the immediate constraints of male domination in their daily lives. Their writings express their concern with traditional gender roles within Chicano families that relegated women into secondary roles. Chicana feminist challenged the portrait of the so-called "Ideal Chicana" drawn by Chicano cultural nationalists. This portrayal was inspired by a cultural nationalism that indiscriminately equated Chicano cultural sur-

vival with the glorification of traditional gender roles for Chicanas. Thus, Chicano cultural nationalist praised the “Ideal Woman” of El Movimiento for representing strong, long-suffering women who endured social injustice, maintained the family as a safe “haven in a heartless world” for their families, and, as a result, assured the survival of Chicano culture.²⁶ As in the Black nationalist movement, the culturally accepted role of women, as defined by a cultural nationalist ideology, relegated women to subordinate positions within the Chicano movement. Chicana feminists responded with scathing rebuttals that ultimately shaped the social construction of Chicana feminist thought. As one Chicana feminist argued:

Some Chicanas are praised as they emulate the sanctified example set by [the Virgin Mary]. The woman par excellence is mother and wife. She is to love and support her husband and to nurture and teach her children. Thus, may she gain fulfillment as a woman. For a Chicana bent upon fulfillment of her personhood, this restricted perspective of her role as a woman is not only inadequate but crippling.²⁷

A common trope found in many of the basic writings by Chicana feminists is the recognition that the existence and perpetuation of patriarchy represents an essential source of women’s oppression. Their writings vary in terms of analyzing the source of this oppression. Many view the origins of patriarchy and sexism within Chicano communities as a result of individual choices and actions. For others, “machismo” was a myth created by the larger Anglo society to maintain a system of racial/ethnic oppression. Most importantly, these historical writings document the involvement of an analysis of patriarchy and sexism as rooted in social structures permeating all levels of society. For most Chicana feminists, the origins of a Chicana feminist consciousness were directly linked to sexism within El Movimiento and the larger society. Gender oppression constituted “a serious obstacle to women anxious to play a role in the struggle for Chicano liberation.”²⁸ Many Chicanas feminists eventually analyzed gender oppression as a collective problem and answered with a collective solution: a Chicana feminist ideology and feminist activities within Chicano communities and Chicano organizations. Nevertheless, Chicanas fought for gender equality always cognizant of the interplay between race/ethnicity and gender. Marta Cotera—a leading Chicana feminist and prolific writer—captured the emergent roles of Chicana feminists:

There has always been feminism in our ranks and there will continue to be as long as Chicanas live and breathe in the movement . . . Chicanas will direct their own destiny.²⁹

Chicana feminists came under attack for their explicit critique of Chicano cultural nationalism. Some were criticized as followers of white feminists or as lesbians. Their feminist concern with patriarchal oppression was labeled by their opponents as secondary in importance to the more salient issue of racial or even class oppression. Chicana feminist discourse responded directly to such feminist-baiting attacks by stressing the universal aspect of sexism. Their writings reflected their views that Chicano cultural values could not be extolled from a cultural nationalist perspective without a critical analysis of sexism.

Chicana feminist lesbians contributed to the further development of Chicana feminist discourse and, as such, precipitated more virulent feminist-baiting. As a result of the oppressive climate, Chicana feminist lesbians voices were generally silenced. They participated in Chicana feminist activities, but it was not until the later years of the 1970s that they made their protests significantly vocal. By the end of this decade,

conference proceedings and resolutions began to include references to the specific oppression experienced by lesbians within the Chicano movement and the Chicana feminist movement. Chicana feminist lesbians brought to the Chicana feminist movement an additional voice from the margins. Their writings revealed the societal contradictions experienced by Chicana feminists whose sexual orientation and lifestyle was not only misunderstood by many within the Chicano movement but vehemently criticized by many Chicanos and Chicanas, revealing basic homophobic sentiments. In a political climate that viewed a Chicana feminist ideology with suspicion and, often, disdain, Chicana feminist lesbians confronted even more strident political attacks. Cherríe Moraga eloquently summarized the multiple sources of oppression that Chicana feminist lesbians encountered in their daily lives. Ultimately by the 1980s and now throughout the 1990s, Chicana feminist lesbians have contributed to the further development of Chicana feminist thought. As Moraga states in her essay in the path-breaking anthology *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*:

My lesbianism is the avenue through which I have learned the most about silence and oppression. . . . In this country, lesbianism is a poverty—as is being brown, as is being a woman, as is being just plain poor. The danger lies in ranking the oppressions. The danger lies in failing to acknowledge the specificity of the oppression.³⁰

Documenting Chicana Feminist Thought

Chicana feminist discourse developed as Chicanas struggled in opposition to the unresolved gender tensions and contradictions that they experienced both within the Chicano movement and their communities. As a result of their collective efforts to overcome racial and gender oppression, Chicana feminists constructed a feminist ideology based on their specific experiences as women of color. Ideological discussions over Chicana feminism took place at multiple levels. Ideological debates emerged within the ranks of Chicana feminists; between Chicana feminists and the “Loyalists”—Chicanas who eschewed feminism or were ambivalent about organizing as feminists; between Chicana feminists and Chicano males whose cultural nationalist ideology continued to view Chicana feminism as a threat to *El Movimiento*; and between Chicana feminists and Chicano males who sympathized and supported a Chicana feminist agenda. Similarly, Chicana feminists engaged in contentious debates with white feminists whose feminism was often blinded by strands of racism directed at women of color feminists.

The writings of Chicana feminists represent a significant contribution to the history of feminist movements. Beginning in the late 1960s, Chicana feminist writings began to document the ideological debates that intensified throughout this period of social protest. The historical evolution of Chicana feminist discourse unfolds within the essays, speeches, newsletters, editorials, and conference proceedings, collected in this anthology.³¹ Although many Chicano publications, particularly newspapers, originated as an outgrowth of the Chicano movement and the Chicano cultural renaissance, Chicana feminists believed that these early publications did not provide adequate coverage of feminist issues, and did not have a representative number of women on their editorial boards. Chicana feminists believed that these publication units did *not* provide Chicanas with an adequate or appropriate outlet to voice their concerns.

Chicana feminists devised specific strategies in their efforts to overcome these constraints in order to reach a larger audience of Chicanas. First, Chicanas adopted a

strategy of submitting their works to Chicano publications which they then followed with a strategy of exerting pressure on editorial boards to publish their feminist writings. A few Chicano publications published Chicana feminist writings; some even printed special issues on Chicanas. The Berkeley-based Chicano journal, *El Grito*, issued a special volume on Chicanas in 1973. Chicana feminist writings also appeared in periodicals such as *Aztlán*, *El Magazín de Tejas*, *La Raza*, *Consafos*, *De Colores*, and *La Luz*.

A second strategy adopted by Chicana feminists, and one perhaps more important for the development of Chicana feminist discourse, was the development of their own small but influential feminist publications. One journal, *Regeneración*, edited by long-time activist Francisca Flores, appeared in 1970. In addition to its regular features on Chicanas, it printed a special issue on Chicanas in 1971 and 1973. Chicana feminists at California's Long Beach State also published a newspaper, *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*, that served as a major outlet for the discussion of feminist issues. In the spring of 1973, this newspaper was reorganized into the first feminist Chicana journal, *Encuentro Femenil*. Anna NietoGomez and Adelaida Del Castillo served as the journal's first editors. The first issue focused on the social and economic status of Chicanas; the second examined the historical and contemporary stereotypes of Chicanas.

Two Chicana feminists from New Mexico, Enriqueta Longeaux Vasquez and Elizabeth Martínez, edited the newspaper *El Grito Del Norte* from 1968 to 1973. Community organization newsletters such as the *Comisión Femenil Mexicana Newsletter* and the *Chicana Service Action Center Newsletter*, both published in Los Angeles, provided Chicana feminists with an additional important publishing outlet. Similarly, many colleges and universities witnessed the development of Chicana newsletters. *El Popo Femenil* came out of the Chicano student organization at California State—Northridge. The San Francisco Chicana feminist organization, Concilio Mujeres, began publication of its newspaper *La Razón Mestiza* in 1974 under the leadership of Dorinda Moreno: writer, poet and Chicana feminist activist. Moreno also published a 1973 anthology of Chicana feminist writings, *La Mujer—En Pie de Lucha*.³²

In 1976, Marta Cotera, a Chicana feminist from Texas, published two major monographs of Chicana feminist writings. Cotera wrote one of the earliest histories of Chicanas. Her book, *Diosa y Hembra: The History and Heritage of Chicanas in the United States*, was used widely in courses on "La Chicana" at several universities.³³ Cotera's *Profile on the Mexican-American Woman* contained additional historical writings by Cotera in addition to primary documents on Chicana feminism.³⁴ Cotera also compiled a series of her own essays and speeches on Chicanas in the historical anthology, *The Chicana Feminist*, published in 1977.³⁵

Chicana feminist publications served as a mobilizing tool for Chicanas. Their writings reflected a growing community of Chicana feminists and the widespread emergence of feminist activities within their communities. Chicana feminists organized conferences and workshops during the 1970s that served as critical forums for the development of Chicana feminist discourse. One of the earliest Chicana workshops was held in 1969 at the first National Youth Liberation Conference held in Denver and sponsored by the Crusade for Justice. The Chicana workshop's resolution that "Chicanas did want to be liberated" would become one of the conference's most controversial statements, and the one most open to conflicting interpretations. Marta Cotera was one among many Chicana feminists that later interpreted this resolution as indicating that Chicana feminists, finding themselves at a conference that was politically charged with intense cultural nationalism, decided not to take a stand on Anglo feminism within such a context. Resolutions passed by Chicana feminists at subse-

quent conferences and symposiums document the emergence of Chicana feminist discourse. Conferences included the Chicana Regional Conference held in Los Angeles in 1971, the National Chicana Conference held in Houston in 1971, the Chicana Caucus of the Texas Women's Political Caucus State Convention held in Texas in 1972, the Chicana Curriculum Workshop held in 1973 at UCLA, and the Chicana Identity Conference held in 1975 in Houston, Texas. The speeches, essays, conference proceedings and resolutions produced by Chicana feminists provide key historical documentation for tracing the social construction of a Chicana feminist ideology. As early as 1971, Chicana feminists assessed their hopes for the future contribution of a Chicana feminist movement:

We expect that this great force of women power will give the [Chicano] movement one great *empuje* [push] to raise it one giant step higher in the drive for liberation. . . . For peace and economic improvement for those who today are living in poverty and squalor, victims of a social and political system which is based on discrimination.³⁶

Documents from these conferences and workshops trace the development of ideological debates and differences that surfaced during this historical period. Chicana feminist thought evolved with several divergent, often competing, views. Chicana feminists confronted divisions based on social class, particularly the division between academic women and grass roots community women, sexual orientation, political strategies, political goals and objectives, the relationship between autonomous Chicana feminist organizations and white women's feminist organizations, and their relationships with Chicano organizations and Chicano men in general. Chicana feminists were aware of the diversity of views among Chicano men regarding their evolving feminist movement and organizations. Nevertheless, Chicana feminists generally agreed that the dominant attitude towards feminism among Chicanos, particularly among the most unyielding of Chicano cultural nationalists, was one of intolerance, if not disdain.

Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings

This anthology records the historical evolution of Chicana feminist writings beginning in the late 1960s and through the mid-1970s—the heyday of the Chicano movement. These feminist documents stand as a historical tribute to Chicana feminists whose activism represented lives of struggle and triumph. They are testimony that some Chicanas during the movement years did not simply decry their victimization, but more importantly displayed their agency in combating injustice. During this historical juncture, the gender contradictions that shaped their daily lives produced a feminist awakening that was ultimately channeled into a proliferation of feminist documents. *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings* brings together key historical feminist texts. This volume traces the development of a Chicana feminist discourse that, like other feminist discourses by women of color, is in the process of being recovered into the historical record.

Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings follows in the tradition of Gerda Lerner's *Black Women in White America*, originally published in 1972 and reprinted twenty years later in 1992³⁷. Lerner's objective was "to define major themes in the history of black women as suggested by source material available; to bring to light important unknown or little-known documents; and to focus on those women leaders whose influence was recognized and significant in their own time."³⁸ Similar to the work of other feminist historians such as Joan W. Scott, Lerner's anthology at-

tempted to rewrite women into history and reformulate historical investigations using gender as a "useful category of historical analysis."³⁹ Lerner's anthology answered the critical question raised by Scott: "Why (and since when) have women been invisible as historical subjects, when we know they participated in the great and small events of human history?"⁴⁰

Lerner's *Black Women in White America* traces the historical participation of African-American women: a moving testimony of courage under the most severe adversities. Maya Angelou commended Lerner for collecting "the thoughts and writings of this doubly jeopardized segment of America, and [holding] them up for all to see."⁴¹ Lerner concluded that:

American women have also been denied their history, but this denial has not yet been widely recognized. History, in the past largely written by white male historians, has simply failed to ask those questions which would elicit information about the female contribution, the female point of view. Women as a group have been denied knowledge of their legitimate past and have been profoundly affected individually by having to see the world through male eyes.⁴²

Since the 1972 publication of Lerner's *Black Women in White America*, African-American women have made significant contributions to the field of feminist thought. Anthologies and monographs by Angela Davis, Paula Giddings, bell hooks, Gloria "Akasha" Hull, Audre Lorde, Barbara Smith, Alice Walker, and others have succeeded in reconceptualizing feminist thought by placing the experiences of women of color at the center of feminist discourse.⁴³ More recently, Patricia Hill Collins' *Black Feminist Thought* traces the development of a feminist framework that combines an analysis of race, gender, and class.⁴⁴ Collins' theoretical and interpretive framework has been a valuable model in compiling this anthology on Chicana feminism.

This edited volume of the historical writings by Chicana feminists will allow the reader to see the world through the eyes of women who confronted the walls of racism and sexism with a nascent collective feminism. They struggled to achieve equality in the broadest sense. At the time of their publication, these writings represented the efforts of Chicana feminists to resolve the many problematic issues constraining their full participation in the Chicano movement. For many of these authors, their articles represented their "coming to voice" for the first time.⁴⁵ These writers included young college women, community activists, graduate students, academic women, professional women, and working class women. Some women were veteran activists in Chicano communities while others were experiencing their first politicalization. Some essays reveal all the problems and challenges that confront emerging writers. Many of the women whose works are collected in this anthology had never published and did not see themselves as writers. Their essays, primary documents in Chicana feminist thought, developed during a politically charged period of tumultuous protests, demonstrations, and conferences. Often times, their works represented first drafts written under urgent conditions of political struggle and short publication deadlines. Many publishing outlets, either at the university or community level, operated with limited editorial staffs. In some cases, the publishing unit consisted of little more than a mimeograph machine in the office of a student or community organization. Proofreading and other editorial assistance were often not available. In addition, several essays, written by Chicana feminists with limited writing experience, reveal distinct language patterns such as grammatical style; sentence construction; English and Spanish slang; specific Spanish syntax, grammar, and style often found among U.S. born Mexicans; and regional idiomatic expressions from California, Texas, and New Mexico. Other essays represent more expe-

rienced writers whose works had already appeared in various newspapers and journals. This anthology includes both in order to most accurately recreate the political climate within this era of Chicana feminism. Only minor editorial changes have been made, such as correcting typographical errors and errors in spelling and punctuation. Where necessary, Spanish words and phrases were translated for the reader and appear in brackets. If the translation appeared in the original text, italics are only used if the writer used them. Some documents were shortened, but only to the extent that the original intent of the writer was maintained.

Furthermore, the writings by this generation of Chicana feminists document divergent strands of feminism. Many writings adamantly identified all Chicano males as inherent oppressors of Chicanas. Similarly, another often recurring generalization inferred that white women were inherently racist and classist. Another common ideological trope of Chicana feminism thought consisted of a revised ethnic nationalism that incorporated gender equality as a basic foundation. Some Chicanas adopted a Marxist theoretical approach and reduced their conditions of oppression to a ruthless capitalist economic system. This particular approach often included support for the struggles of post-colonial, Third World women. By the late 1970s, Chicana feminist lesbians began to articulate their growing demands. Not surprisingly, Chicana feminist writings of this period often reveal strands of all these approaches within a single essay. Such ideological diversity became a significant issue at various conferences where Chicana feminists either viewed such differences as divisive or as a basis for the formation of a united coalition.

The voices of Chicana feminists emerged, strong and forceful, during a historical period of social protest within the United States. Any historical analysis of the Chicano movement and the women's movement and, indeed, of the social movements of the 1960s is seriously compromised without a systematic integration of the Chicana feminist movement and its ideological foundations.

Chicano Studies, as a particular field of scholarly inquiry which emerged out of the Chicano movement, is only now beginning to re-examine the movement itself. With increased distance in time, Chicano Studies historians as well as other scholars are attempting to better understand the character and impact of the Chicano movement. To date, however, little attention or focus has been given to the role of women and in particular Chicana feminists in the Movement. Ignacio García's fine study of La Raza Unida Party, *United We Win*, for example, fails to integrate the role of women in the party.⁴⁶ Carlos Muñoz, Jr.'s overview of the Chicano movement, *Youth Identity and Power*, likewise gives little attention to gender issues.⁴⁷ Armando Navarro's in-depth examination of MAYO (the Mexican-American Youth Organization) in Texas recognizes the participation of Chicanas in MAYO and the role of sexism in the organization but does not make these topics central to his otherwise excellent study.⁴⁸ As the Chicano movement becomes more of a major field of study, it is critical that the role of women and especially feminists not be once again marginalized. Our volume of the writings and documents of Chicana feminists is our attempt to prevent such marginalization and to encourage the centralization of gender issues in the developing scholarship on the Chicano movement.

Similarly, these historical writings by Chicanas will contribute to the process through which the historical development of contemporary feminism is recontextualized. Feminist women of color have been critical of historical studies of twentieth century feminist movements in the United States for generally neglecting to include the participation of women of color in feminist movements within their communities.⁴⁹ In their attempt to fill this historical gap, women of color have directed their at-

attention to rewriting the scholarship on feminist theory and history whose “exclusionary practices” have resulted in only limited attention, if any, to the differences among women regarding, race, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation.⁵⁰

Although several anthologies in feminist studies have made concerted efforts to include writing by women of color, a strong tendency to contextualize “the women’s movement” and “feminist thought” in terms that exclude women of color persists. Most recently, for example, Miriam Schnier’s *Feminism in Our Time: The Essential Writings, World War II to the Present (1994)*, claims to bring together “the major literature and documents that inspired and shaped modern feminism.”⁵¹ Schnier’s collection of essays includes six contributions by African-American women. All other women of color—Asian-Americans, Native-Americans, Chicanas and other Latinas—are invisible. Schneir’s comment on this exclusion is based on her view that women of color are only now beginning to engage in feminist discourse:

as the [women’s] contemporary movement enlarges its agenda to encompass a wider range of issues, it is certain to attract a broader constituency; we can anticipate valuable *new* feminist insights from Asian-American women and Latinas *in the coming years* [bold and italics ours].⁵²

Women of color feminists, critical of the persistent omission of feminist writings and anthologies, such as Schnier’s, have been advocating that feminist scholarship redefine the discipline’s views on gender by calling for feminist scholarship that integrates additional sources of women’s oppression such as race and ethnicity. Women of color have a rich, historical legacy of feminist activism and written records of feminist discourse. These historical documents are not invisible despite Schneir’s contention. They exist and are available for those with a desire to use them.

Thus, *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings* documents a feminist discourse that emerged from the struggles of Chicana feminists beginning in the late 1960s. The selections in this anthology are arranged thematically and chronologically. Part One, for example, concerns the initial expression by Chicana feminists about the role of patriarchy and sexism in Mexican-American culture. Part Two focuses on five core themes in Chicana feminist thought. These include: (1) Chicana feminism and the politics of the Chicano movement; (2) analyzing the dynamics of Chicana oppression; (3) mapping a Chicana feminist agenda; (4) the relationship between Chicana feminists and white feminists; and (5) Chicana feminists as an evolving future. Finally, Part Three reveals the influence that Chicana feminists in the movement had on post-movement Chicana feminists in the 1980s and 1990s.

The origins of this study lie, at one level, in the recognition that the roots of contemporary Chicana feminism are to be found in the crucial years of the Chicano movement and, at another level, in the evidence of these roots readily available in the existant newspapers and other documents generated by the movement. Our task was to bring together the historical record of Chicana feminist thought during the period of the Chicano movement. We did not have to strain to find sufficient documentation. Our dilemma was to select from a bounty of writings. Our selections were based on the following criteria: (1) the substance of the document; (2) the historical importance of a particular document; and (3) the historical importance of a particular writer. We want to stress that by no means is this collection of writings comprehensive. Such a volume would have resulted in one twice the size if not more than the present one. It is a selective volume of what we believe to be the basic and key documents to an understanding and appreciation of the roots and evolution of Chicana feminist thought. It should likewise be clear that the focus of this volume is historical.

It is not a collection of contemporary Chicana feminist writings which would obviously have included many more writers. Part Three of our volume contains a selection of more contemporary writings but only with the intent of suggesting the connection between Chicana feminists of the Chicano movement and Chicana feminists of the post-movement years. As a historical document our volume concentrates on the initial expression of Chicana feminist discourse during the late 1960s and the first part of the 1970s—the major years of the Chicano movement. Today, the writings of this generation of Chicana feminists stand as a legacy to their determination, bravery, and strength in struggling, often against all odds, to build a world free of racial, class, and gender oppression. Their vibrant voices resound in each of these essays and will echo for future generations of women and men who will experience their own feminist awakenings as they confront their own gender struggles.

NOTES

1. On the rise of the Chicano Movement, see Mario Barrera, "The Study of Politics and the Chicano," *Aztlán* 5 (1974): 9-26; Carlos Muñoz, Jr., *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement* (New York: Verso, 1989); Armando Navarro, "The Evolution of Chicano Politics," *Aztlán* 5 (1974): pp. 57-84; Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied American: A History of Chicanos*, 3rd ed. (New York: Harper-Collins, 1988); Ignacio M. García, *United We Win: The Rise of La Raza Unida Party* (Tucson: University of Arizona Mexican-American Studies & Research Center, 1989); Juan Gómez-Quinones, *Chicano Politics: Reality and Promise, 1940-1990* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990). Also see the four-part television documentary, *Chicano!* produced by the National Latino Communication Center in association with KCET-TV in Los Angeles and first aired in 1996. Also see the accompanying text of this documentary by F. Arturo Rosales, *Chicano: The History of the Mexican-American Civil Rights Movement* (Houston: Arte Publico Press, 1996).

2. See Peter Nabokov, *Tijerina and the Courthouse Raid* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1969).

3. See Eugene Nelson, *Huelga: The First Hundred Days of the Great Delano Grape Strike* (Delano, CA: Farmworkers Press, 1966); John Dunne, *Delano: Story of the California Grapestrike* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1967); Peter Matthiesen, *Sal Si Puedes: César Chávez and the New American Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1969); Sam Kushner, *Long Road to Delano* (New York: International Publishers, 1975); Richard Griswold Del Castillo and Richard A. García, *César Chávez: A Triumph of Spirit* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995).

4. See Christine Marín, *A Spokesman for the Mexican-American Movement: Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales and the Fight for Chicano Liberation, 1966-1972* (San Francisco: R. & E. Research Associates, 1977); Richard A. García, *Political Ideology: A Comparative Study of Three Chicano Youth Organizations* (San Francisco: R. & E. Research Associates, 1977); Richard A. García, "The Chicano Movement and the Mexican-American Community, 1972-1978: An Interpretive Essay," *Socialist Review* 8 (July, 1978): 117-136. Matt S. Meier and Feliciano Ribera, *Mexican-Americans/American Mexicans: From Conquistadors to Chicanos* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993).

5. See John Shockley, *Chicano Revolt in a Texas Town* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1974); García, *United We Win*.

6. Guadalupe San Miguel, *Let All of Them Take Heed: Mexican-Americans and the Campaign for Educational Equality in Texas, 1910-1981* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987).

7. Muñoz, Jr., *Youth, Identity, Power*.

8. For historical studies of an earlier generation of Mexican-American protest see Mario T. García, *Mexican-Americans: Leadership, Ideology, & Identity, 1930-1960* (New Haven: Yale University, 1989); Richard A. García, *Rise of the Mexican-American Middle Class: San Antonio, 1929-1941* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1990); Mario T. García, *Mem-*

ories of Chicano History: *The Life and Narrative of Bert Corona* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

9. Rodolfo Gonzales, *I Am Joaquín: An Epic Poem*, 1967.

10. Gonzales, *I Am Joaquín*, p. 3.

11. Muñoz Jr., *Youth, Identity, Politics*, p. 77.

12. For analyses of Chicano communities as an internal colony see Tomás Almaguer, "Historical Notes on Chicano Oppression," *Aztlán* 5 (1974): 27–56 and Mario Barrera, *Race and Class in the Southwest: A Theory of Racial Inequality* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979).

13. For one of first anthologies on Chicanas see Magdalena Mora and Adelaida R. Del Castillo, eds., *Mexican Women in the United States: Struggles Past and Present* (Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Publication, 1980). See also Alfredo Mirandé and Evangelina Enriquez, *La Chicana: The Mexican-American Woman* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979); Adelaida R. Del Castillo, ed., *Between Borders: Essays on Mexicana/Chicana History* (Encino, CA: Floricanto Press, 1990); Vicki L. Ruiz, *Cannery Women/Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1987). See also Mario T. García, "The Chicana in American History: The Mexican Women of El Paso, 1880–1920, A Case Study," *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 49, no. 2 (May, 1980): pp. 315–337.

14. For historical studies of some these communities see Mario T. García, *Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880–1920* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981); Richard A. García, *Rise of the Mexican-American Middle Class: San Antonio, 1929–1941* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1990); Richard Griswold del Castillo, *La Familia: Chicano Families in the Urban Southwest, 1848 to the Present* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984); Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848–930* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979); George Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican-American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

15. For a collection of Chicana Studies scholarship see Adela De La Torre and Beatrice M. Pesquera eds., *Building With Our Hands: New Directions in Chicana Studies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Norma Alarcón, et.al., *Chicana Critical Issues* (Berkeley: Third Woman Press, 1993).

16. For analyses of feminism among women of color see bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (Boston: South End Press, 1981); bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (Boston: South End Press); Lucie Cheng, "Asian-American Women and Feminism," *Sojourner* 10 (1984): pp. 11–12; Esther Ngan-Ling Chow, "The Development of Feminist Consciousness Among Asian-American Women," *Gender & Society* 1 (1987): pp. 284–299; Alma M. García, "The Development of Chicana Feminist Discourse, 1970–1980," *Gender & Society* 3 (June 1989): pp. 217–238.

17. See Angela Davis, *Women, Race and Class* (New York: Random House, 1983); Bonnie Thornton Dill, "Race, Class, and Gender: Prospects for an All-Inclusive Sisterhood," *Feminist Studies* 9 (1983): pp. 131–150; Frances White, "Listening to the Voices of Black Feminism," *Radical America* 18 (1984): pp. 7–25; Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Tradition* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986); Maxine Baca Zinn and Bonnie Thornton Dill, "Difference and Domination," in *Women of Color in U.S. Society*, ed. Maxine Baca Zinn and Bonnie Thornton Dill (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), pp. 3–12.

18. See Shiela Rowbotham, *Women, Resistance and Revolution: A History of Women and Revolution in the Modern World* (New York: Vintage, 1974); Anna Macias, *Against All Odds: The Feminist Movement in Mexico to 1940* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1982).

19. Jo Freeman, "On the Origins of Social Movements," in *Social Movements of the Sixties and Seventies*, ed. Jo Freeman (New York: Longman, 1983), pp. 8–30; Jo Freeman, "The Women's Liberation Movement: Its Origins, Structure, Activities, and Ideas," in *Women: A Feminist Perspective*, ed. Jo Freeman (Palo Alto, CA: Mayfield, 1984): pp. 543–556; Flora Davis, *Moving the Mountain: The Women's Movement in America Since 1960* (New York: Simon & Schuster,