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Una Guerra Contra La Mujer: Chicana Feminism and Vietnam War Protest

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On February 25, 1970, Gloria Arellanes sent a letter to the Minister of Education of the Brown Berets explaining that as the minister of correspondence and finance for the East Los Angeles chapter of the Chicano nationalist youth group, the Brown Berets, and that she was officially resigning from all her duties in the organization. The letter also stated, “ALL Brown Beret women have also resigned from further duties in the organization.” They argued that they had been treated as “nothings, and not as Revolutionary Sisters.” Their unity was a revolutionary act, and the sisterhood agreed, “that the Brown Beret men have oppressed us more than the pig system has…” Therefore, we have agreed and found it necessary to resign and probably do our own thing.” The women signed the letter “Con Che!” and declared themselves as “ex-members of the Brown Beret female segment.”

This letter of resignation marked the beginning of Chicana feminism and its roots in cultural nationalism. As the Brown Berets were working with the Chicano Moratorium Committee to protest the Vietnam War, women also wanted to actively participate in leadership positions for the cause of La Raza towards equal rights for latinos. Chicana women were also affected by the war, even if they were exempt from the draft. Aside from the domestic socioeconomic inequalities that affected women, their families were being torn apart as their brothers were dying in Vietnam. Their claim of resignation from the Brown Berets was not a signal to the end of their activism. These same women who resigned created a new women’s organization, Las Adelitas de Aztlan, named after las soldaderas of the Mexican Revolution. Las Adelitas worked exclusively with the

Chicano Moratorium Committee, but also had the independent goals to promote sisterhood, encourage education, and challenge Chicana women to take part in society outside of their family roles. Through their organization’s newspaper, *Las Hijas de Cuautemoc*, they aimed to have a continual commitment to the causes of La Raza, and to show the counter-revolutionary hypocrisy from men in the Chicano Movement because of the exclusion of women from leadership positions.

In the study of Vietnam antiwar efforts, the Chicano movement is often overlooked, as is the Chicana Movement that was born out of it. Scholars such as Lorena Oropeza study Chicano protest during the Vietnam in “Raza Si! Guerra No!: Chicano Protest and Patriotism During the Vietnam War Era”; however, this does not mention Chicana women’s efforts. The scholarship on women’s Vietnam antiwar efforts has focused on white women and mainstream feminist goals which were to challenge the men in the New Left organization. Some scholars, such as Benita Roth in her book *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America’s Second Wave*, frame the Chicana Movement within the context of other social movement at the time, such as the Black Power and Women’s Liberation struggles, but there is not an exclusive focus on former Brown Beret women’s antiwar efforts and development of Chicana feminism within cultural nationalism. The scholarship by Jaime Pelayo delineates the role of the Brown Berets within the National Chicano Moratorium Committee and acknowledges the role of women, particularly the female Brown Berets in the National Chicano Moratorium Committee, but does so in a short paragraph without any attention or focus on the goals of women in the movement. “Revolutionary Sisters” looks at the gender structures in place that contributed to the militant nature of the Brown Berets, the gender consciousness of the women who resigned from the Brown Berets, and the separate organization for Chicana women, especially in the *Adelitas*, but it does not focus on the cultural nationalism of Chicana feminism and the larger goal to overthrow the Anglo even without the support of men in the movement. Chicana feminism has always been as much about extinguishing racial supremacy and promoting the causes of La Raza as much as it has been about extinguishing patriarchy, and is ultimately a movement within a movement.

This paper is based on sources from the Gloria Arellanes Papers, which includes the letter of resignation from all the women of the Brown Berets, various letters from the Brown Berets, and notes from the Chicano Moratorium Committee which outlined the ideas of what could be done to end the draft for the Vietnam War. This paper also draws on a collection of poems, articles, and essays from the

3. This term is used by Latin American feminist scholars to characterize a particular Latin American brand of patriarchy. Its characteristics are culturally associated with the masculine, particularly aggression and violence, and a denigration of characteristics associated with the feminine.
newspaper *Las Hijas de Cuautemoc* which call for sisterhood, focus on the specific goals for the Chicana, and condemn the war and its distraction from domestic issues affecting La Raza. Included are posters, photographs, and ephemera which promote antiwar demonstration by the Chicano Moratorium Committee. In addition, Mirta Vidal’s publication in 1971, “Chicanas Speak Out, Women: Voice of La Raza” brings recognition to *Las Adelitas* and seeks to unify various Chicana groups with a unique nation-wide Chicana feminist ideology.

The title of this paper is reflective of the feminism-in-nationalism of Chicanas. The first part of the title, “*Una Guerra Contra La Mujer*”, translates to “A war against the woman.” It emphasizes the way in which the Vietnam War also affected women, even though exempt from the draft. The use of Spanish was one way in which Chicana women united La Raza and differentiated from white feminism. “*Chicana Feminism and Vietnam War Protest*” links cultural nationalism with Chicana women’s antiwar efforts.

Chicana feminism and Vietnam War protest begins with the Brown Berets. As a Chicano youth cultural nationalist group, the Brown Berets were active in Vietnam antiwar demonstrations, and were the same group from which all the women resigned because of the sexism within it. The Berets became active in antiwar efforts in 1969 when David Sanchez, Prime Minister of the Brown Berets, joined efforts with Rosalio Muñoz who initiated the national Chicano antiwar movement when he publicly refused induction into the United States military. The formation of the National Chicano Moratorium Committee made Vietnam War protest a top priority due to the alarmingly high casualty rates of Chicanos. Historian Jaime Pelayo determined, “[A]lthough Spanish surnamed individuals made up 11.8% of the Southwest’s population; they were dying abroad at a rate of 19%.”

As Muñoz visited high schools in Mexican American communities, he met many young men “who felt that the military remained a more viable option after high school than college.” However, his white middle class friends were open about how they had legally avoided the draft. With the realization that the main reason for a high Chicano casualty rate was the poor socioeconomic conditions of these youth, Muñoz related the Vietnam War to “institutional racism” and wrote, “I accuse the government of the United States of America of genocide against the Mexican people.”

With the goal to end the draft, the Brown Berets distributed leaflets dramatizing the deaths of Chicanos, also calling it “genocide,” and pressured

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4. The phrase Chicano/a is an identity promoted at this time to refer to Mexican-Americans. La Raza is a term which means “race” or “ethnicity” that Chicanos used to promote a unique cultural and even racial identity.


“Lawyers [to] coordinate pressure on politicians regarding Chicano genocide.”

Their intent was to gain mainstream support for their cause to end the draft for the sake of Chicanos, and was a grassroots effort from bottom to top.

Muñoz organized the antiwar effort on September 16, the same day as the anniversary of Mexican Independence, with the dual intention to “challenge not only the policies of the US government” and also “emphasize a more militant Mexican revolutionary tradition as expressed through the cross-class phenomenon of Chicano cultural nationalism.”

In the first Chicano Youth Liberation Conference, young Mexican American males (females were not mentioned) were encouraged to apply their courage and machismo to the Chicano Movement instead of joining military service. In note of women, Muñoz declared, “If Nixon wants war, let him send his daughters to fight it.” Antiwar efforts focused on men because its goals were centered on how to avoid the draft. However, the exclusion of women from the dialogue is not an accurate indication of women’s involvement in the efforts.

Following the first Chicano Youth Liberation Conference, Sanchez asked for progress reports during the movement’s inception and “one female Brown Beret, Hilda Reyes, responded attentively with a summary of her work so far.” Women were not only present in meetings, but in demonstrations as well. On December 20 1969, the first Chicano Moratorium protest occurred in which demonstrators shouted, “Chicano power!” or “Raza sí, Vietnam no!” At the demonstration, Alicia Escalante related Chicanos’ domestic social conditions to the war. She warned, “If Nixon doesn’t stop this war in Vietnam, he may have a war at home. I’d rather have my sons die for La Raza and La Causa than in Vietnam.”

Leaders of the committee realized through the words of women like Escalante that it was the socioeconomic conditions and not the draft that caused a large number of Chicanos to volunteer for the armed forces. They refocused the antiwar efforts around a unified concept of the story of the Chicano Moratorium which they were told “began with the Europeans’ arrival on the American continent and that the subsequent mixture between them and the indigenous people” is what had led to the present status of Mexicans in the United States.

The cultural nationalism of Chicano antiwar efforts appealed to many other Chicana women, such as Gloria Arellanes who had acquired the permit for the march that took place on December 20, but did not speak at the demonstration. As Gilberto Cano, leader in the NCMC recalled, “The men did all the talking and the women did all the work.” Arellanes became more involved with the Brown Berets after high school where she had experienced race riots in which police officers arrested the Chicanos, but not the whites. Her interest in cultural nationalism and social justice grew and she became a vital component to the administrative and diplomatic operations of the Brown Berets. She not only published the Brown Beret newspaper La Causa, but was also the head administrator for the East LA Free Clinic and was the only female Minister in the Brown Berets. As Arellanes worked more with Muñoz on national antiwar efforts, she clashed more with the Brown Berets’ sexist and exclusionary leadership. When she left the Brown Berets, all the women, including Hilda Reyes, followed. They formed a new group, Las Adelitas de Aztlan, which worked exclusively with the Chicano Moratorium Committee.12

As members of the National Chicano Moratorium Committee and as participants in a new women's organization, Las Adelitas prepared for a moratorium march on February 28, just three days after their collective resignation. They strategized about how they could communicate the urgency of the struggle against the war in Vietnam, and decided as a group to dress themselves as revolutionary women in mourning, wearing black and carrying crosses, which they made available to other March participants as well. The crosses bore the names of carnales—male cousins, brothers, and friends who had fallen in Vietnam. On that day, as they marched under the banner of Las Adelitas de Aztlan, they symbolically invited the community to mourn with them. Drawing upon cultural archetypes in a political context, their group demonstration was an effective and triumphant display of Chicana collective opposition to the war. It was in recognition of this bond that a flyer inviting women to join Las Adelitas invoked the phrase “porque somos una familia de hermanas” (because we are a family of sisters.) This phrase gathered several resonant cultural concepts and mobilized them for a women’s organization. As Chicanas reclaimed historical figures such as La Adelita, they praised the bravery and unity of women and men to fight for the rights and liberation of their people. The tribute to las soldaderas not only made a clear distinction between themselves and white mainstream feminism, but also unified men and women in the Chicano Movement, for the women were willing to protest the war alongside men in a joint effort for the liberation of La Raza, just as las soldaderas had fought alongside the men in the Mexican Revolution.13

13. Cantu, Norma, “Women, Then and Now: An Analysis of the Adelita Image versus the Chicana as Political Writer and Philosopher.” In Chicana Voices: Intersections of Class, Race and Gender, ed. Teresa Cordova, Norma Cantu, Gilberto Cardenas, Juan Garcia, and Christine M. Sierra, 8-10. N.P.: Nation-
An article in Las Adelitas newspaper, Las Hijas de Cuauhtemoc, by Marta Lopez titled “La Mexicana” spoke of the women who fought in the Mexican Revolution. She gave reasons for women’s lack of involvement in Mexican politics prior to the revolution and their reasons for joining the cause as female soldiers. Lopez notes that women were kept out of the affairs of the State for so long because Mexican tradition expected women to have “two loyalties to which she dedicates her existence, the family and the [Catholic] Church,” and that there was little opportunity for women to receive an education, which would help them be more politically engaged. However, during the Mexican Revolution, women had no choice but to be more involved when the men left to fight. Women filled the positions and “after the Revolution these women remained in these positions.” For the soldaderas, their bravery was praised and several were promoted to higher positions in the Revolution. Lopez argues that these women saw equality and aspired for it. She says, “The women removed from their traditional role were able to view all of Mexico and her different people. She learned to appreciate her Raza and the land she was fighting for. She and her man were able to meet at an equal level; as mates and partners in the Revolution.” This too was the goal of Las Adelitas de Aztlan during the Chicano Movement. Lopez pays tribute to Hijas de Cuatemoc, from which the newspaper’s name derived, as a political organization that participated steadily with political demands and civic problems, for this organization worked for full emancipation for women and was actively involved in the Revolution and commitment to the nation of Mexico. Lopez ends the article with hope and a call to action, “Chicanas have much to be proud of. Today there’s much work ahead of her and she must continue in the tradition of commitment to the betterment of La Raza.” Las Adelitas sought empowerment from revolutionary Mexican women from the past and saw parallels between the soldaderas and themselves.14

Another article, “Mexican American Woman” written by Enriqueta Longuenx y Vasquez in Las Hijas noted, “Out of the Mexican revolution came the revolutionary personage “Adelita” who wore her rebozo crossed at the bosom as a symbol of the revolutionary women in Mexico.” She argued that these women who fought bravely with their people should serve as examples to the Chicana fighting against machismo. In her plea for unity of La Raza, she wrote, “The Mexican-American movement demands are such that, with the liberation of La Raza, we must have total liberation. The woman must help liberate the man and the man must look upon this liberation with the woman at his side, not behind him, following, but alongside of him, leading.” She also distinguished Chicana

women from white women’s feminism because “Not only does she suffer the oppression that the Anglo woman suffers as a woman in the market of humanity, but she must also suffer the oppression of being a minority person with a different set of values.” The collective cultural identity had never vanished, for even when the Beret women had resigned, the letter was signed, “Con Che!” to capture the revolutionary spirit of cultural nationalism, for Chicanos and Chicanas were unified in this non-resistance models and used their images to promote La Causa.

As shown on the cover *Las Hijas de Cuauhtemoc*, there is a Chicana woman who is tied down by a net, struggling to free herself with the use of weapon at hand. Her face is covered as she serves as a symbol of the sisterhood, not of herself. Above her, an eagle is in a powerful position with its wings upright and its beak open to represent liberty and equality for La Raza. The bold print above, “HIJAS DE CUAHTEMOC” empowered Chicana women and makes additional parallels between themselves and Las Adelitas of the Mexican Revolution. The poem, in Spanish, was written by Leticia Hernandez, one of Las Adelitas and reads in translation:

“Daughters of Cuauhtemoc,
Are the values of our nation,
They gave birth to our Aztec people
Were sacrificed to God Huizilopochtli
Were raped by the Spanish
And gave birth our mestizo people.
Daughters of Cuauhtemoc
Las Adelitas of the Revolution,
Fighters for Liberty.
We thank you, our mothers,
Who have given us the sacred privilege
To also be Daughters of Cuauhtemoc
Fighters for liberty not only
For our race, but freedom for us, the daughters of Cuauhtemoc
For we are the queens and mothers of our nation.”

This poem captures the essence of the goals for “La Hermanidad” (The Sisterhood) outlined in the newspaper in which it stated, “The goal of ‘Hijas’ is to involve La Chicana with the struggle of her people by identifying and dealing with the problems of La Chicana.” As the poem states, “Fighters for liberty not only For our race, but freedom for us,” Las Hijas took on the shared responsibility to fight for the liberty of all Chicanos, just as Las Adelitas fought in the Mexican

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Revolution, as well as fight for the specific liberties of La Chicana, “the daughters of Cuauhtemoc.” In order to fight for the liberty of La Chicana, Las Hijas focused on education and declared, “A political educational program should be established for Chicanas by Chicanas to educate her people and to the specific problems of La Chicana.” Chicanas understood the power in education with recognition “that knowledge is a source of power and control. Therefore, we must constantly be transferring our knowledge to others. At the same time, we must always be seeking knowledge.” However, the language never strayed from keeping unity as it also stated, “We believe that the struggle is not with the male but with the existing system of oppression. But the Chicano must also be educated to the problems and oppression of La Chicana so that he may not be used as a tool to divide by keeping man against woman.” Las Adelitas argued that anyone, man or woman, “who condones or accepts the oppression of the Chicana and transfers this value to the children, works only to destroy the revolution. For is we condone oppression among our own people, we are no better than our oppressor.”

Las Adelitas drew criticism within the movement and were accused of creating a division, but they argued back that, “Chicanas were to remain oppressed while the movement would lead the other half of the population to liberation!” In a letter titled “The Adelitas Role en El Movimiento,” Las Adelitas asked if “[T]he girls in the Brown Beret movement have been given the opportunity of working for their Raza instead of just working for the Beret guys.” They argue that these sexist attitudes are “deep-macho hang-ups” which perpetuates disbelief “that women have the intelligence to do community work, to organize Chicano organizations, just as good as, if not better, than men.” However, this is contradictory of what Brown Beret Prime Minister, David Sanchez, had stated in “The Chicano-Gringo War,” Question #13, “The women can support the Brown Berets in every way possible. The woman can fight just as good as a man, if she wishes.” They boldly differentiate from white feminism in the statement, “[W]e’re not talking about women liberation....that’s a white thing—we’re talking about our Raza’s liberation and in order to get our Raza liberated we all have to work together within our Raza” The letter is signed with, “VIVA LA REVOLUCION!”

Anna Nieto-Gomez, one of the prominent founders of Las Hijas reinforced the continual declaration of unity of La Raza. On “Chicana Identity” Gomez writes, “Being compared with the Anglo women has been the greatest injustice and the strongest device to keep Chicanas quiet. Nobody likes to be called a traitor in a

cause she feels she would die for.” She continues her plea for unity in a poem titled, “Empieza La Revolucion Verdadera” (Begin the True Revolution):

“The struggle is longer
The struggle demands more
But seek the knowledge of all women
And seek the knowledge of all men
Now bring them together
Make them a union
Then we shall see the strength of La Raza
Then we shall see the success of El Movimiento.”

She declared, “First, Humanity and Freedom between men and women. Only then Empieza la revolucion verdadera.” (Gomez, Anna Nieto, Hijas)19 The poem shows that Gomez, as a prominent member of Las Hijas, was committed to unity and equality between the sexes in the endeavor for Chicano rights. She says, “Now bring them together/Make them a union” and through this unity, “Then we shall see the strength of La Raza/Then we shall see the success of El Movimiento.”

Her belief is that there must be unity for there to be strength and that the true revolution is destined to begin with the knowledge of all women and men as she states, “But seek the knowledge of all women/And seek the knowledge of all men” which demonstrates the need for all voices of La Raza for there to be true equality.

Gomez’s focus on seeking knowledge from all men and women of La Raza was supported by a primary goal of education outlined by Las Adelitas, and was a continuation of the goals set forth by the Brown Berets’ Ten Point Program which demanded “the right to bi-lingual education as guaranteed under the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo” and “that the true history of Mexican-Americans be taught in all schools in the five Southwest States.”20

The cultural nationalism in the movement identified the oppressors as Anglos in a letter titled “Written For and Understood by Chicanos ONLY” which contained anti-white supremacist language and sought to unify a cause against the “Anglo.” It read, “We invited the anglo into our house, and he took it. Our land taken away and the constant destroying of our people.” The militant nature of the Brown Berets was seen as the last option for Chicanos when considering Mexican and Anglo relations. The letter went on to say, “We have tried every peaceful channel in asking for our rights. And the greedy Anglo laughs at us. We have demanded and have demonstrated, and the anglo still laughs at us.” In order to unify the cause of La Raza, Chicanos needed to teach their history. The letter for Chicanos

specifically stated, “We must esculate the attack on all white citizens who do not recognize the southwest as our land…We must teach our young the history of the greedy anglo and how he is killing our people.” The importance of education for all Chicanos was pushed as part of the movement’s agenda to diminish the socioeconomic inequalities of Chicanos and create other options for young men other than the draft for Vietnam.

The long history of conflict continued, according to the Chicano, “[A]fter the Anglo had taken the country…in the [18]50’s there was a rash of anti-Mexican campaigns. All Anglos agreed that Mexico was the sick man of America…and ‘Americanization’ was the only solution.” The Brown Berets were vehemently opposed to ‘Americanization’ of the Chicano. They promoted rebellion as a reaction to the injustice and refused to assimilate. The letter by the Brown Berets continued, “We must teach our young to rebel, for it is better to have a rebellious people with spirit, than to have frightened putos who have given up to become white.”

In the refusal to assimilate, Chicanos and Chicanas were unified, but only the male half of La Raza was encouraged to pursue education. This was a violation of the Brown Berets Question #13 which also stated, “The women and children can educate the not yet educated people as to the critical need for the defense of La Raza.” Just as Las Adelitas had reclaimed the female Mexican revolutionary figure, they also reclaimed the historical Mexican nun, Sor Juana de la Cruz, as a model of empowerment. In an article by Sara Estrella, titled “Una Mujer que se llama Juana”, the brief history is given of Sor Juana’s activism in education. Estrella points to when Sor Juana challenged a sermon and wrote of “her concern for women’s rights.” She argues that, “She believed in education for women, administered by women. She understood that her only stagnating factor was that she was a woman.” She reclaimed Sor Juana for Chicanas, “Sor Juana still lives! the woman is still struggling for human liberation and freedom.” Examples of Mexican women who had challenged the system brought forth a continuing legacy of empowerment to the Chicana.

The newspaper featured articles for Chicanas who sought education. Cindy Honesto wrote, “In order for the Chicana to even begin to control her destiny she must have a high educational level” or “she will still continue to be at the mercy of the Anglo system of injustice.” Las Adelitas challenged Chicana women to be active in the movement through education. Honesto said, “It is time todas las mujeres [all of the women] stop playing a subservient role and reset their goals and priorities to meet the needs of her people.” It then listed “Student Services Available” which included “Educational Opportunities Program,” “Financial

Aid," “Bilingual Special Services,” and a “Woman's Clinic.” There was a need for the Chicana to “study and define the role of the revolutionary woman.” In response to the leaders in the movement that believed Las Adelitas created more division, they argued, “the continuation of education only half the people can do nothing but further the division it has already created.”

Las Hijas de Cuauhtemoc advertised the gathering of a nation-wide Chicana conference, “La Conferencia Nacional de Chicana, Mexican American and Spanish-Speaking women will be held May 28-30, 1971 in Houston, Tejas” with the goal to “unify to develop strength for La Raza and ourselves.” The conference included workshops such as “Machismo”, “What Are We Up Against?” “What is the Chicana’s Role in the Movimiento?” and “Women In Politics-La Raza Unida Party. The Feminist Movement-Do We Belong in It” and finally “Education Suppression and Exploitation of Women: The Chicana Perspective.” The anticipation of this nation-wide conference was much-needed since “there has been little or no contact between Chicanas from California…now that she is establishing a new identity.” The new identity, a Chicana feminism dedicated to the cause of La Raza, was supported by many Chicanas. In an interview with Minerva Castillo, a Chicana community activist was asked what her priority was in La Causa in which she answered,

“Organizing women, because I see a need for the Chicana to have an awareness of the movimiento…we have always been taught to obey our husband and protect our family [with] the time we could spend in helping liberate our people. At this time there are so few of us, that it is wrong to think the man can liberate los Chicanos alone. That’s why we need the Chicana working side by side with the man.”

Mirta Vidal, the national director of the Chicano and Latino work of the Young Socialist Alliance, wrote an article “Chicanas Speak Out Women: New Voice of La Raza”, as she aimed to organize the ideas of the Chicana identity and specific Chicana issues in order to unify Chicana feminism throughout the nation. She said, “The effort of Chicana/Mexican women in the Chicano Movement is generally obscured because women are not accepted as community leaders either by the Chicano movement or by the Anglo establishment.” Her statement does reflect the efforts of the women who were a part of the Brown Berets and excluded from leadership positions who then resigned as a result. She goes on to say, “[I]n the struggle for Chicano liberation and the emergence of the feminist movement, Chicanas are beginning to challenge every social institution which contributes to and is

Chicana feminists promoted education and challenged traditions, including the Catholic Church which kept them in institutionalized oppression. Vidal took her argument a step further—not only criticizing *machismo* culture and the patriarchy of the Catholic Church—but also blamed European colonizers for the oppressed position of Chicanas. She argued, “[B]efore the Europeans came to this part of the world women enjoyed a position of equality with men. The submission of women, along with institutions such as the church and the patriarchy, was imported by European colonizers, and remains to this day part of Anglo society.”

As she was critical of European and Anglo chauvinism, she aimed to make a separation between Chicanas and white mainstream feminists. She said, “[Women] are told to stay away from the women’s liberation movement because it is an “Anglo thing’”, but she argued that “Machismo in English, “male chauvinism” should be labeled an “Anglo thing’.” Her distinction between the Chicana and the white feminist creates a unity of La Raza instead of a separation. She pointed out the hypocrisy of the men in the Chicano movement, for they “are denying one half of La Raza this basic right” and “are doing just what the white male rulers of this country have done.” Vidal used this argument to invalidate the logic of the arguments of those who oppose Chicana liberation. She said, “The same problem arose when the masses of people in this country began to move in opposition to the war in Vietnam...the media went on a campaign to convince us that...the antiwar movement was a “white thing.”” This fight for liberation of La Raza included antiwar efforts, even on a nation-wide level. Vidal wrote, “While billions of dollars are spent yearly by this government on war, no money can be found to alleviate the plight of millions of women who, in addition to being forced to work, have families to care for.” Chicanas, especially those who had been Brown Berets, were unified in their fight for La Raza, including antiwar efforts, and wanted to be included. Their plea for women’s liberation was for the benefit of La Raza, not a traitorous act.

Vidal’s goal was to spread awareness of the Chicana goals within the Chicano Movement. She writes of women’s liberation in such a way that Chicanos understand that the women are still committed to La Raza. She makes reference to *Las Hijas de Cuauhtemoc* and says, “[The] newspaper [is] named after the feminist organization of Mexican women who fought for emancipation.”
ends with the promise, “In the spirit of Las Adelitas, Las Hijas de Cuauhtemoc, and all the unrecognized Mexican women who fought valiantly for their rights, who formed their own feminist organizations, and who fought and died in the Mexican revolution, Chicanas in this country will take the center stage in the advances of La Raza.” In her article, the Chicana recognizes the need to create a women’s organization focused on the specific goals of Chicanas, to challenge and question the culture of machismo, the Catholic Church, and any other institutions of oppression, to distinguish from mainstream white feminism, and stay unified in the cause of La Raza.26

In the effort for both men and women’s liberation, The National Chicano Moratorium Committee organized a demonstration in East Los Angeles for August 29, 1970. The poster advertised through flyers which stated the purposes for protest “to express their disgust at this country’s great number of youth [Chicanos] that die 10,000 miles away from their homeland.” The NCMC experienced internal problems as the Brown Berets dropped out of the moratorium right before the march. Approximately 25,000 people, most of them young Mexican Americans, marched the three-and-a-half mile route from Belvedere Park through Whittier Boulevard to Laguna Park. Las Adelitas had already helped plan and participated in two other marches prior to August 29. Muñoz recalled, “The Berets were not very active in the day to day work of the moratorium to build August 29.” He adds, “It was the women ex-Berets, Las Adelitas, who did all the work.”27 Yet not even Las Adelitas would anticipate the following events. Once the crowd settled down in the park after the march and the rally began, a small scuffle broke out between an unknown person and a police officer at a nearby liquor store. This soon erupted into a violent confrontation between the police and some protesters. Ruben Salazar, a columnist for the Los Angeles Times and new director for the Spanish language television station KMEX, was covering the events with his crew, but was killed by tear gas fired by a police officer. The events of August 29 were the climax of the Chicano Movement in Los Angeles and the police brutality attacks caused disunity for the movement, and it soon died out.28

Although Las Adelitas were short-lived, Chicana feminism continued on. Anna Nieto-Gomez, a founder and writer for the Las Hijas went on to found Encuentro Femenil in 1973, the first Chicana scholarly journal. The case of Chicana Brown Berets is only one of the many documented self-determining acts by women that began to resound throughout Aztlan in the 1960s and 1970s. Chicanas

27. Pelayo, Jaime, Muñoz interview.
in MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán) and La Raza Unida Party also found within these organizations an inability to imagine women as equal partners in the struggle for liberation. Many Chicanas formed autonomous women’s organizations, while others chose to develop women’s caucuses that would function to keep organizations accountable to Chicana interests. However they chose to respond, a Chicana feminist movement, capable of encompassing various levels of consciousness while incisively critical of women’s subordination, carried women forward in organizations such as Comision Femenil Mexicana, Hijas de Cuauhtemoc, Mujeres por la Raza Unida, and Las Chicanas.29

The Chicana is unique because she is at intersection of multiple allegiances and systems, so their interests and self-concept were often tied up in a doubling, or even tripling or quadrupling, process. As Las Hijas states, “As a minority she feels the oppression of the system. As a woman she feels the oppression of sexual politics within the dominant society and as a minority within a minority,”30 Chicana Brown Berets might be understood as “feminism-in-nationalism,” but such an articulation is contextualized as women remain, perhaps strategically, within the terms offered to them. Deniz Kandiyoti observed that nationalist movements “reaffirm the boundaries of culturally acceptable feminine conduct and exert pressure on women to articulate their gender interests within the terms of reference set by nationalist discourse.” As a result, Kandiyoti continued, “Feminism is not autonomous, but bound to the signifying context which produces it.”31 The critique of the cultural nationalism in Chicana feminism shifted the debate to go beyond the nationalist rhetoric of the Chicano Movement in the 1960s and 1970s, for many saw the failings of revolution and the inability to have a voice under the shadow of white middle-class feminism.

Over thirty years later, Chicana feminist Cherri Moraga wrote, “We have no organized movement to respond to our losses. For me, the movement has never been a thing of the past, it has retreated into subterranean uncontaminated soils awaiting resurrection in a ‘queerer’ more feminist generation.” Moraga dared to

imagine the mythic nation *Queer Atzlán* in her writings of prose and poetry, *The Last Generation*, and within it brought forth a more inclusive, intersectionalist view of gender, sexuality, race, nationalism, and the politics of liberation for the Chicana. She recognized that the Chicano Movement did suffer losses, but that meant that the work was not over. The need for all voices to be included was the goal of Chicana feminism in the 1960’s, and is still the goal today. Moraga learned from her Chicana foremothers to fight for unity, equality, and liberation and said, “The nationalism I seek is one that decolonizes the brown and female body as it decolonizes the brown and female earth.” The powerful idea is that gender roles, like the land itself, have historically been regarded as territories to be conquered, but are also territories to be liberated. She wrote, “But it is historically evident that the female body, like the Chicano people, has been colonized. And any movement to decolonize them must be sexually and culturally specific.” She maintains that nationalism and sexual oppression are connected as subjects of political resistance. Chicana women, especially those in the East Los Angeles chapter, began this autonomous feminist consciousness to challenge sexual oppression within cultural nationalism as they resigned from the Brown Berets, created their own organization, Las Adelitas, continued antiwar efforts with the National Chicano Moratorium Committee and fought for the social, economic, and political liberation and equality of the whole Raza.32

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