

Interview Descriptions: Corinne Sanchez Oral History, January 10, 1998

Record Information

Collection	The Virtual Oral/Aural History Archive
Subcollection	Women's History
Series	Chicana Feminists
Interviewee	Maylei Blackwell
Interviewer	Corinne Sanchez
Date	01/10/1998
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Original Interview Description

This is the second of two interviews with Corinne Sanchez conducted as part of a project on Hijas de Cuauhtemoc. The interview, which was conducted at her El Proyecto office, took place several years after the other Hijas interviews were conducted. Although it had been difficult to arrange the interview, she was forthcoming and helpful.

Original Audio Segment Descriptions

File: Corinne Sanchez Oral History (1/10/1998) - Part 1

- (0:00 - 3:24) Corrine Sanchez was not conscious about feminist issues until she experienced sexism firsthand in the student groups at CSULB. As a member of MEChA, she and other women would do much of the work, but when they spoke, their voices would be ignored. She tried to fight against sexism in a positive way that strengthened the greater movement rather than detracted from it.
- (3:24 - 6:20) Sanchez was raised in a traditional family with her father as head of the household. However, she and her siblings realized that their mother made most of the family decisions and disciplined the children. When Sanchez would voice her opposition to her parents, she was physically disciplined. Although she went to junior college, she was expected to get married rather than complete her education.

- (6:20 - 8:30) While in junior college, Sanchez joined the predominantly Anglo sororities. She felt that if she fit in with the white ideals, she would be considered valuable. She left when she realized that the sorority was not interested in the well-being of women and instead was focused on parties and meeting men.
- (8:30 - 10:31) Sanchez left San Bernardino to attend CSULB with the hopes of becoming a Physical Education and History teacher. The Physical Education Department introduced her to feminists and pro-women ideas. However, at that time, she identified more with the Chicano movement than the women's movement. Later, she would become more involved with the women's struggle within the Chicano movement.
- (10:31 - 16:12) At CSULB, Sanchez founded Chicano organizations such as the Educational Outreach Program, Upward Bound, and the student group UMAS. She reacted to the relatively low numbers of Chicano students at such a large campus. The Anglo professors at CSULB were very supportive of Chicano students, but there was a deeper problem of institutionalized racism hidden by subtlety. Realizing this, she felt she needed to become more involved.
- (16:12 - 19:33) Within the Chicano student groups, Sanchez fought against a variety of social problems, from the Vietnam War to oppression by religion. As she and other women became more vocal within the movement and more aware of each other, they realized a need for groups to help women. Many women's issues arose, including those related to sexually transmitted diseases.
- (19:33 - 23:31) Although groups like UMAS and MEChA were student-based, Sanchez and other student activists at CSULB fought for issues beyond the campus. CSULB served as a base, but they organized and participated in protests and marches off-campus. They were interested not only in campus issues, but problems in the community and the greater global world.
- (23:31 - 28:09) After gaining more experience in activism, Sanchez became involved in the creation of La Raza newspaper in the late 1960s. She would attend protests and write about whatever she chose. She and other students traveled around the nation to conferences and became aware of the struggles going on in other states. Some of the groups in other states, especially in Texas, were more nationalistic and felt that the California groups were more like assimilated Whites than Chicanos.
- (28:09 - 30:43) After attending Chicana conferences, Sanchez felt that her eyes were opened to how widespread her struggle was. She heard women from around the country speak on struggles as Chicanos and as women, and their stories were similar to hers. She met many vocal, radical women through her activities.

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File: Corinne Sanchez Oral History (1/10/1998) - Part 2

- (0:00 - 4:42) Through the national conferences, Corrine Sanchez met people from around the country involved in the Chicano movement. As the movement became more organized, there were splits between the different groups over goals. There was also a rivalry over who was “authentically” Latino or feminist and which issues were the most important.
- (4:42 - 6:55) The major split in the movement occurred around the time of the Houston conference, though Sanchez could not remember the details. Her particular group was seen by others as too feminist or philosophically in the minority. There was also concern about the conferences becoming too “white-washed.”
- (6:55 - 10:45) During her student activism, Sanchez and other students used the college campus as a meeting place for planning activity in the greater community. The women’s group was more informal than organizations like MEChA, and was bound together largely by friendship. They found a need to organize as women because they experienced discrimination within MEChA.
- (10:45 - 13:47) Sanchez and other Chicana students were loosely organized until the formation of the paper, Hijas. In response, men from MEChA began ridiculing and marching against them. Some men were very severe and put the women's names on tombstones in protest. After Sanchez moved to Washington, D.C., the conflict between the groups grew, and some women even rejoined the men to denounce Hijas.
- (13:47 - 15:45) Sanchez recalled that the name Hijas de Cuauhtemoc was suggested by Anna Nieto Gomez because of its ties to the Indians of Mexico. Symbolism and identity with historical role models such as Malinche were significant, but the Hijas women also challenged traditional gender concepts.
- (15:45 - 19:28) Sanchez describes some of her fellow Chicana activists, who were dedicated and hard-working. She felt that the women were much more productive and active than the men. The women stayed active in community issues, and were involved in fundraising and cultural art. They continued their feminist and community activism throughout their lives.
- (19:28 - 25:03) Sanchez felt that obtaining college a education was important for women and she earned degrees in Physical Education and History. She felt that power and opportunity was made possible through education. While in

China, Sanchez learned about the development of women's rights and felt the process in China might happen back in the United States. Her experience in China inspired her to go to law school so she could confront the problems facing women in a direct way.

(25:03 - 30:41) Sanchez left CSAC because Francisca Flores, the director, did not support her decision to enter law school. However, she continued her involvement with Chicana women's issues as well as other broader activist movements, including Black, Asian, and Anglo students activity. Women, more than men, were able to bridge the gaps between the different groups and did most of the organization.

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