

Interview Descriptions: Corinne Sanchez Oral History, September 3, 1997

Record Information

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Subcollection	Women's History
Series	Chicana Feminists
Interviewer	Maylei Blackwell
Interviewee	Corinne Sanchez
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Original Interview Description

This is the first 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 (9/3/1997) - Part 1

- (0:00 - 3:58) Corrine Sanchez was born in San Bernardino in 1947 and grew up in a family of ten. Her parents were second-generation Mexican immigrants. Sanchez attended San Bernardino Valley College from 1965-1968; and after obtaining her A.A. degree, went to California State University. In 1968, she dropped out temporarily because she was active in civil rights organizations, returning later to graduate in 1974.
- (3:58 - 6:17) At CSULB, Sanchez was involved in starting the first Latino group, the United Mexican American Students (UMAS) Association. UMAS was followed by the creation of Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan (MEChA) and the Chicano Studies Department. Her activity was not limited to the Long Beach campus, and she traveled up and down the state with her peers to conferences and other activities.
- (6:17 - 9:11) Some of the goals of the Chicano groups with which Sanchez was involved included: farmworkers rights, Vietnam War protests, fights against

oppression by religion, and women's rights. Sanchez felt that women especially were more multi-ethnic, working for causes for many different people. Instead of focusing on a specific group's struggle, Chicanas identified with and supported similar struggles waged by others.

- (9:11 - 14:32) During her work with activist groups, Sanchez noticed that women's voices would be ignored, while men were given attention. At that time, most men felt that women were valuable as sex objects, and were to be seen and not heard. Women who felt stifled became more vocal and demanding in response to this discrimination within the movement. Sanchez was among many women who found identity through their opposition to the mainstream.
- (14:32 - 18:16) The Chicana women's groups at CSULB developed from rap groups organized by women involved in organizations like MEChA. Sanchez and other Chicana students were long involved in protests and campus activism, and felt they were more dedicated to social change than the men. They found that more confrontational methods of protest were more effective than tactics such as fasting. As a result, they became more verbally and physically active during their marches.
- (18:16 - 20:59) Sanchez and other women across the campus banded together to start the newspaper Hijas de Cuauhtemoc. Some women organized, some wrote, and some provided access to printing equipment. El Alacran, a newspaper issued by the CSULB MEChA, served as the model for Hijas. Hijas, however, was created to focus specifically on women.
- (20:59 - 24:08) While Sanchez was mainly focused on issues, some women were also interested in gaining leadership. At times, men blamed ambitious women for creating splits within the Chicano movement. Feminism was labeled as a white women's issue. Ultimately, the divisiveness within the movement influenced Sanchez's decision to drop out of school from 1969-1970.
- (24:08 - 28:05) Sanchez explained that women's reproductive issues, such as abortion, emerged in the discussions because of the actual experiences of many of the women in the groups. These women were also concerned with education and leadership, and Hijas women became involved in more activities outside the range of MEChA's goals.
- (28:05 - 30:43) Sanchez described Hijas as a "phase" and many women shortly shifted to other issues and joined other, larger women's organizations. By the early 1970s, many of the activists moved on to other activist organizations or focused on their own careers. Sanchez became involved with the Chicana Service Action Center.

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File: Corinne Sanchez Oral History (9/3/1997) - Part 2

- (0:00 - 3:55) As the Comision Femenil Mexicana became an extension of male-dominated organizations, Corrine Sanchez and other Chicana activists broke away and began working for the Chicana Service Action Center (CSAC). CSAC was incorporated in 1974, with Comision co-founder Francisca Flores as Director and Sanchez as Associate Director. Outwardly they did not focus on political activity but rather focused on individual women by holding conferences on employment, leadership, and education.
- (3:55 - 6:55) In addition to Sanchez, many other women from CSULB joined CSAC. Many women activists in Los Angeles and East Los Angeles were previously involved in the civil rights struggles, and shared their experiences with the younger women. Women from CSAC traveled to Mexico City for the International Women's Year conference in 1975. With about thirty participants, they made up the largest contingency at the conference.
- (6:55 - 11:35) At the Women's Year Conference, Sanchez and the women from CSAC did not fit into the mainstream, because the Chicanas had different goals from the Anglo women. The Chicanas felt more aligned with other minority groups, such as African-American and Asian women. Sanchez's identity as a Chicana did not draw away from her identity as a feminist. Regardless of ethnicity, Sanchez felt it was important for women to be educated, have social consciousness, and understand their bodies.
- (11:35 - 15:27) While active in conscious-raising for women, Sanchez was aware of nationalist ideologies. However, she was more interested in women's rights and human rights as a greater goal, and felt that these issues transcended color lines. Sanchez was involved with international issues as well, and went to China in 1976 with others from CSAC to explore sexism and racism under Mao.
- (15:27 - 19:29) Sanchez felt that women were more accepting of other peoples and ideas due to their upbringing. In their understanding of feminist philosophies, they did not reject men, but instead wanted to be heard and respected just as men were. This generated struggle because sexism was deeply entrenched in society, especially within the Chicano or Latino culture.
- (19:29 - 21:30) Sanchez attended the Denver Youth Liberation Conference. Although literature refers to this conference as signifying the birth of the Chicana feminist movement, Sanchez did not recall the particular results of the caucuses formed at this conference.
- (21:30 - 25:06) Sanchez worked at the CSAC from 1974-1978, but left because she wanted to attend law school. Some of her colleagues thought that becoming a lawyer was a waste of time. Despite this, she earned her Juris Doctorate at the Sacramento School of Law. In 1978, she joined El

Projecto working for women's and children's programs; and then in 1992 began practicing family law , dealing mostly with domestic violence. It was a great struggle for her as a Chicana facing primarily male judges.

- (25:06 - 30:40) Sanchez felt that CSULB served as a training ground. She feels that she can recognize a difference between those who were activists in the 1970s and those who were not. 1970s activists tend to frame issues within a greater community struggle rather than in terms of individual struggle. Sanchez has also witnessed her colleagues from CSULB become successful professors, college counselors, attorneys, and other professionals.

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File: Corinne Sanchez Oral History (9/3/1997) - Part 3

- (0:00 - 4:01) To help transition Chicano Studies students from college into careers, Corrine Sanchez helped develop training internships; thirty women even went to Washington, D.C. Sanchez discusses Mary Lou Hernandez, an activist Chicana student who helped create MEChA. Sanchez describes her as a loyalist who was also a feminist. Hernandez married Frank Sandoval.
- (4:01 - 9:42) Sanchez left CSULB for Washington, D.C. in part to join her boyfriend, Frank Sanchez. It was during the Vietnam War and there were many issues in which they were involved. Sanchez witnessed great changes from her days at CSULB after the passage of Proposition 209 and anti-affirmative action campaigns. These changes created difficulties to MEChA, Chicano Studies, and Educational Outreach Programs.
- (9:42 - 13:57) Sanchez and other women activists continued their efforts for change long after they left college. Some women participated in the United Nations conference in Mexico and were involved in other conferences and campaigns on women's issues. They worked with women from around the nation in the mid-1970s and collaborated on creating the national Encuentro Femenil paper after the 1971 conference in Houston.
- (13:57 - 18:56) Sanchez recalled that many of her male friends disliked her fellow Chicana feminist activist, Anna Nieto Gomez. The men were threatened by her actions and ambitions and felt she was betraying them. Sanchez felt pressured to choose between her friends, but was able to escape such conflicts when she went to Washington, D.C. Most of her female friends, however, were supportive of each other in the struggle for change.

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