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Author(s): Lori A. Flores

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A Community of Limits and the Limits of Community: MALDEF's Chicana Rights Project, Empowering the "Typical Chicana," and the Question of Civil Rights, 1974–1983

LORI A. FLORES

To speak of Chicanas is to speak of a multitude of experiences, of histories, and of realities.

—Isabelle Navar¹

IN LATE MAY 1971, over six hundred Chicanas attended the first National Chicana Conference, La Conferencia de Mujeres por La Raza, in Houston, Texas.² The weekend-long gathering provided a forum for Mexican American women of all ages to discuss issues ranging from fair employment to higher education to healthy sexuality. The resolutions developed from the two largest workshops at the conference, "Sex and the Chicana" and "Marriage—Chicana Style," called for control by Chicanas over their own bodies and access to free legal abortions, birth control, and twenty-four-hour child care centers. The resolutions also called for Chicanas actively to question "machismo," educational discrimination, the double standard, and the repressive ideology of the Catholic Church.

Although almost half of the participants walked out of the conference, protesting that it did not focus sufficiently on racism, the meeting signified an important moment in Chicana history.³ It certainly carried a different tone than a women's workshop at the Chicano Youth Liberation Conference in Denver just two years before in March 1969. At that time the female workshop facilitator had reported to the conference, "It was the consensus of the group that the Chicana woman does not want to be liberated." In speaking of the workshop, Enriqueta Longeaux y Vásquez recalled, "I felt this [statement] as quite a blow. I could have cried. . . . Then I understood why the statement had been made and realized that going along with the feelings of the men at the convention was perhaps the best thing to do at the time."⁴ At that point, the desire for ethnic solidarity within the Chicano movement surpassed Chicanas' desire to break away as women and risk

being associated with Euro-American feminism. In contrast, as the first national gathering ever held for and by Chicanas in the United States, the 1971 Houston conference and its participants placed Mexican American women's demands, according to historian Vicki Ruiz, "very visibly on the [Chicano] movement table."⁵

The Houston conference remained in the memories of Latina activists across the country. Although fewer than ten articles about Chicana issues had been published before 1971, over seventy articles appeared in Chicano newspapers and journals that year alone, with almost one-fifth of them addressing the conference.⁶ "The conference as a whole reflected a rising consciousness of the Chicana about her special oppression in this society," wrote Argentine-born activist Mirta Vidal.⁷ Francisca Flores proclaimed, "[The conference] was the beginning of a *chubasco* (storm) to say the least . . . [it] represented such force and potential for a breakthrough against existing stumbling blocks and obstacles in the women's struggle for equality."⁸ Vilma Martinez, president of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), declared in a speech years later that "the period of 1970–1972 . . . [was] the time in which Chicana awareness truly began to emerge. . . . Chicanas realized that they were capable of organizing, that they were powerful. . . . With [the 1971 conference] the momentum for the Chicana movement was activated."⁹

Martinez, who was elected president of MALDEF in 1973, became the first woman to head a major civil rights organization in the United States. During her tenure, she worked to bring Chicana issues to the forefront of the previously male-dominated MALDEF agenda by instituting a Chicana Rights Project (CRP), which operated from 1974 to 1983. Believing that existing women's and civil rights groups had failed to address the racial, gendered, and class oppression of Mexican American women, Martinez and other MALDEF lawyers built an organization dedicated solely to creating and enforcing civil rights laws for Chicanas.¹⁰ Supervised successively by lawyers Patricia Vasquez (1974–1979), Carmen Estrada (1979–1980), and Virginia Martinez (1980–1983), the Chicana Rights Project defended Mexican American women's rights in employment, education, immigration, housing, reproductive rights, and child care through a level of litigation and community outreach never before seen in MALDEF or in other Chicano movement organizations.

The history of MALDEF remains an underresearched and underappreciated chapter in Mexican American social and political history. MALDEF's

efforts on behalf of women are even less understood, as is the larger relationship between gender and politics in U.S. Latina and Latino history. The literature on Mexican American organizations has acknowledged the importance of Chicana organizations such as the Comisión Femenil, the Chicana Service Action Center, the Mexican American Women's National Association (MANA), and Concilio Mujeres, yet no work has examined MALDEF's Chicana Rights Project specifically.¹¹ This study discusses the trajectory of the Chicana Rights Project over its lifespan and argues that the Project should be included in Mexican American history as an important but overlooked part of Chicana/o movement, MALDEF, and civil rights history.

At the same time, however, the Chicana Rights Project should be examined with a critical eye. Not only was the Project funded almost entirely by the Ford Foundation—which brought to bear its own agenda and conditions on the Project's future path—but the CRP was far from a grass-roots organization. Led by middle- and upper-class Mexican American women, the Chicana Rights Project demonstrated, in the words of Noemí Lorenzana, that there was “no one Chicana” but a multiplicity of activists and feminisms that made up the larger Chicana movement.¹² Ironically, the leaders of the Chicana Rights Project did believe that there was a “typical Chicana”—a disempowered, working-class woman—whom they were obligated to serve and empower. In determining who (and who did not) fit into this servable community, the CRP—in a seemingly romantic fashion—identified itself in solidarity with a lower-class group from which they were far removed. In deciding what defined empowerment and who needed to be empowered, the Chicana Rights Project encountered the limits of forging community and identity along lines of difference. This tension would be paralleled within MALDEF itself, as both organizations suffered from their use of older tactics in the changing political climate of the post-civil rights era and amidst complex demographic shifts within the Latino population during the early 1980s. Nevertheless, the Chicana Rights Project's end in 1983 should not be interpreted as a Chicana movement failure. Rather, the Project's Chicana leaders demonstrated a kind of feminist resistance unexpected in what has traditionally been considered a decade of conservatism and decline in Chicano politics. By assessing the Chicana Rights Project's efforts in its larger historical context, this study attempts to both recognize its accomplishments and complicate its little-known history.

MALDEF AND THE DECADE OF THE CHICANA: THE FOUNDING OF THE CHICANA RIGHTS PROJECT

The Chicano movement, which spread across the southwestern United States during the late 1960s through a variety of activist groups and individuals, aimed to fight discrimination against Mexican Americans and remedy the community's low socioeconomic status, lack of political power, and educational inequality. Yet the aspirations of the *movimiento*, in the words of historian Marisela Chávez, "were derived from a vision of ethnic solidarity based on the norm of Chicano male experiences."¹³ Relegated to traditional female roles such as cooking or clerical work, Chicana movement activists and their contributions often went unappreciated or ignored by the Chicano men leading the organizations. Facing discrimination within their community, Chicana feminists began pointing to the hypocrisy of a movement that maintained one form of oppression while claiming to be working to abolish another.¹⁴ "Chicana feminists began the search for a 'room of their own' by assessing their participation within the Chicano movement," observed Alma M. Garcia.¹⁵ Many Chicano men, and the women "loyalists" who believed ethnic oppression trumped gender, accused Chicana feminists of being *agringadas* (Anglicized) or *vendidas* (sellouts), attempting to fragment the larger Chicano movement by diverting attention from the "real" issues of racism and class exploitation. Meanwhile, long-term coalitions never developed between Chicana and Euro-American feminists, owing to the inability of most white women to recognize the class and race biases inherent in the structures of their own organizations.¹⁶ Marta Cotera, an early Chicana feminist, explained, "The Anglo women's movement showed itself to be indifferent to the unique needs of Chicanas, assuming that it could unite all women in the struggle against sexism but minimizing or neglecting the issues of racism and poverty."¹⁷ The late Chicana feminist writer-scholar Gloria Anzaldúa remembered her experience with Euro-American feminists: "They thought that all women were oppressed in the same way, and they tried to force me to accept their image of me and my experiences . . . they wanted me to give up my Chicananess and become part of them; I was asked to leave my race at the door."¹⁸

Disillusioned both by a male-dominated Chicano movement in which they were isolated to traditional female roles and denied decision-making power, and a white women's liberation movement that did not recognize the importance of race and class in addition to gender discrimination, many Chicanas began articulating their triple oppression as women, racial minori-

ties, and members of the working class through their own political movement.¹⁹ “If the sixties decade is seen as ‘the decade of the Chicano,’ the seventies is certainly the decade of the Chicana,” observed Marta Cotera.²⁰ Along with playing key roles in labor struggles in the Southwest and across the United States throughout the early 1970s, Chicanas formed a variety of important women’s groups and organizations, including the Comisión Femenil Mexicana Nacional, the Chicana Action Service Center, Concilio Mujeres, MANA, Las Hijas de Cuauhtemoc, and the Chicana Rights Project of MALDEF.

Incorporated in 1967, MALDEF was founded by Texas attorney Pete Tijerina, who believed that an organization was needed to monitor and enforce court rulings involving Mexican American civil rights. With a \$2.2 million grant from the Ford Foundation, MALDEF opened headquarters in San Antonio and a branch office in Los Angeles.²¹ Tijerina became MALDEF’s first president, and Harvard-educated Chicano lawyer Mario Obledo, who was then the assistant attorney general of Texas, was named general counsel. Chicano movement activists, including Albert Peña Jr., Willie Velásquez, and José Angel Gutierrez, came on board as researchers, and by June 1969 close to 150 lawyers were offering their services as corresponding attorneys.²² As the self-proclaimed legal arm of the Chicano movement, MALDEF focused on class-action litigation and test cases to formulate new legal principles securing greater equality for Mexican Americans. The organization’s early work included class-action suits protesting job discrimination against Mexican Americans in New Mexico, school testing practices in California, school segregation of Mexican American students in Texas, and Frito-Lay’s derogatory “Frito Bandito” ad campaign. *Serna v. Portales* (1972), which established bilingual education as constitutionally required for Mexican American children in New Mexico, was MALDEF’s most important early victory.²³

The militancy of some MALDEF personnel, however, produced tensions between MALDEF and its primary sponsor, the Ford Foundation.²⁴ One MALDEF staffer, for example, made widely reported “anti-gringo” statements that caused U.S. representative Henry B. Gonzalez of Texas to criticize Ford’s support of various radical Chicano organizations on the floor of Congress. These criticisms prompted Ford to reevaluate and place conditions on its sponsorship of MALDEF. Political scientist Benjamin Marquez argues that the Ford Foundation, by making funds available for social advocacy, hoped to draw Chicano activists away from disruptive politics and into institutionalized politics.²⁵ In 1970 the foundation informed

MALDEF that further funding was contingent on merging the positions of president and general counsel and on moving the organization's headquarters from San Antonio to a less politically charged, "neutral" location on the East Coast.²⁶ While MALDEF complied by naming Mario Obledo both president and general counsel, the organization fought to keep its locus in the West and moved its headquarters to San Francisco. It also opened new offices in Denver; Washington, D.C.; and Albuquerque. The early 1970s brought further changes when MALDEF lawyer, Vilma Martinez, at age twenty-nine, became the organization's president in September 1973 after Mario Obledo returned to private practice.²⁷

A construction worker's daughter, Martinez grew up within a Spanish-speaking family and learned English during her first years in San Antonio public schools. Her early experiences of discrimination and unfair treatment in school solidified her desire to empower Chicana/o communities:

One time some kids were putting me down in school because I was Mexican American. . . . I went to my mother crying, but she did not comfort me. She took me to a mirror and she forced me to look at myself . . . tears were all over my face, and then she said, "I want you to take a good, hard look, and see what you have let them do to you." And I decided, little girl that I was, that they would never do that to me, or other little girls or boys, again.²⁸

When high school counselors discouraged her from attending college, Martinez wrote a letter simply addressed "University of Texas at Austin" asking for information and received an application. After obtaining her undergraduate degree in less than three years, Martinez graduated from Columbia Law School in 1967, found a job with the NAACP's Legal Defense Fund, and tried early Title VII employment cases in the South. She later joined a New York law firm and was appointed to MALDEF's board of directors before becoming the organization's president.²⁹

As president, Martinez increased MALDEF's effectiveness by limiting its litigation to cases involving education, employment, and the vote and to test cases that would have "broad implications" for the Mexican American community.³⁰ Martinez also acknowledged that MALDEF needed to stop being a "Ford Foundation baby." To that end, she began working to diversify MALDEF's funding base by approaching private individuals and Chicano organizations for financial support, hosting fund-raisers in cities across the Southwest, and making funding appeals after every media appearance. "Under Vilma, MALDEF has achieved the sophistication of a first-class

legal firm,” stated a writer from the Chicano publication *La Luz. Nuestro* magazine agreed, raving, “Vilma Martinez may very well be the most powerful Chicana in the United States.”³¹

Initially, some male MALDEF staffers, and even male leaders of the American G.I. Forum and the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), opposed Martinez’s selection as president, arguing that a Chicana could not hold such a position. “The national leaders [of these organizations] were very skeptical,” Martinez said, “[but] once they saw me and heard me, they thought . . . this is somebody that’s got good ideas.”³² To others, Martinez immediately made a strong impression. At five feet tall, wrote one journalist:

Vilma Martinez at first gives the impression of a mild-mannered, smiling schoolmarm, but she is an operator—in the best sense of the word—who brings to her work considerable charm and poise supported by a backbone of steel . . . whether she’s gliding through a cocktail party of New York liberals or talking to poor folks in a community center in San Bernardino, California Watching Martinez operate is like watching a virtuoso pianist go from a jazz jam session to a chamber ensemble to an orchestra-backed solo.³³

Martinez began developing a Chicana Rights Project immediately after becoming president, envisioning the project as a crucial response to the dismal record of civil rights efforts on behalf of Chicanas. Taking advantage of 1970s philanthropic trends, Martinez packaged the Chicana Rights Project as a women’s rights rather than civil rights initiative to the Ford Foundation, which granted twenty-five thousand dollars for the Project’s first year, promising a renewal of funds upon its future success.³⁴

Thus, while technically an in-house project of MALDEF, the Chicana Rights Project possessed a separate funding base to ensure that Chicanas’ specific needs and the issue of sexism received attention, while MALDEF’s primary concern would remain the elimination of discrimination on the basis of national origin and race. Despite the skepticism that accompanied her transition into the MALDEF presidency, Vilma Martinez affirmed that male MALDEF staffers reacted positively to the inception of the Chicana Rights Project. “They were very supportive. Everyone thought it was a great idea,” she said. In fact, the first private donor to the Chicana Rights Project was a Chicano father of several daughters who applauded the Project’s focus on women’s rights. “It wasn’t a big contribution, but it was very encouraging that our community welcomed it that way,” Martinez remarked.³⁵

In June 1974 Martinez hired lawyer Patricia Vasquez to head the CRP from MALDEF's San Antonio office. Vasquez had worked for seven years as secretary to U.S. Representative Gonzalez. "For a Chicana this was unheard of in the sixties," Vasquez said, remembering how much Chicano politics were dominated by men:

The few "successful" Chicanos in Washington at that time made it abundantly clear that the focus of the movement meant seeking equality for Chicanos. The few Chicanas who might have [had] similar aspirations were expected to suppress them . . . for to seek equality for Chicanas would detract from the goals of the *movimiento*. I can vividly recall being one of the two Chicanas on Capitol Hill (the other was my roommate and cousin who also went on to become an attorney) who were viewed with hostility, suspicion or sex symbols by Chicano men.³⁶

Recognizing the limited effect she could have as a woman in her governmental position, Vasquez entered American University's Washington College of Law and served as an attorney with Washington's Migrant Legal Action Program before joining MALDEF.³⁷ "When Vilma asked me to head the Project, I was just beginning to be really conscious of the feminist movement and wondering whether we as Mexican American women had a role to play," Vasquez recalled.³⁸ She immediately threw herself into the Project, sending information to interested individuals; community groups; and Chicana law students, attorneys, and professors. The Project also connected with other Latina organizations including Las Hijas de Cuauhtemoc, Spanish American Feminists in New York, the National Conference on Puerto Rican Women, the Chicana Service Action Center, Concilio Mujeres, and Mujeres en Acción. Essentially, the CRP spearheaded the formation of an elaborate communications network through which Latina activists could share research and resources. And even though the Project was in part created to do for Chicanas what white feminist organizations would not, Vasquez shared information with Euro-American women's groups such as the League of Women Voters and the Texas Women's Political Caucus. By offering information, legal representation, and advice to these diverse groups, the Chicana Rights Project situated itself as a prominent legal voice in the evolving Chicana movement.³⁹

Before undertaking litigation, however, CRP staff created the first statistical "portrait" of the average Chicana in April 1974 by collecting data on the extent of employment and educational discrimination suffered by Chicanas across the country.⁴⁰ The Project then used this data to create

subsequent public relations literature and funding proposals sent to other foundations. In addition, the CRP used Chicana feminist rhetoric in its literature, an intriguing fact considering it did so under the auspices of the male-dominated, middle-class organization of MALDEF. Identified as a project “designed to deal with the intricacies of a truly forgotten group—the Chicana woman,” the Chicana Rights Project argued that “central to the advancement of the Mexican American community is the advancement of the Chicana.”⁴¹ Echoing rhetoric from the early years of the Chicana movement, CRP staff affirmed the triple oppression that Mexican American women experienced on a daily basis. “Chicanas are confronted with the triple burden of discrimination, racism and sexism,” wrote Patricia Vasquez in a MALDEF newsletter.⁴² In the eyes of its leaders, the Chicana Rights Project was the first institution officially to secure legal rights for Mexican American women, something that neither the Chicano movement nor the larger women’s movement had yet accomplished. MALDEF staffer Virginia Martinez, who directed the CRP during its final years, explained: “Chicanas are affected differently than women in general and differently than Chicanos. This is why it became necessary to establish the Chicana Rights Project, to ensure that Chicanas as a distinct group are defended and protected. The simple fact is that the issues that are most pressing among Chicanas are generally not among the priorities of the Anglo feminist.”⁴³ Vilma Martinez added, “I felt we as Latinas had far more basic concerns that sometimes weren’t addressed by the women’s rights movement.”⁴⁴ The Chicana Rights Project thus became the legal vehicle through which Chicanas could voice their demands in ways that worked outside of, yet could be heard by, the male-dominated Chicano movement and the Euro-American-dominated feminist movement. “We must dare to raise Chicana issues even among those Hispanics and women advocates who say that to do so is to be ‘divisive,’” Vilma Martinez declared in a speech to the Comisión Femenil in Los Angeles.⁴⁵

Chicana Rights Project staff also felt the responsibility to educate the “ordinary,” working-class Chicana woman about her plight and legal rights. Only then, when she had been made aware of her triple oppression, could the Chicana fight back for herself. In a letter to Ford Foundation program officer Esther Schachter, Patricia Vasquez wrote: “Too many of us [Chicanas] did not and still don’t realize or acknowledge the extent of discrimination or oppression. . . . As Chicanas continue to increase their awareness . . . they will undoubtedly pursue their rights for institutional changes with the same vigor and enthusiasm which is evidenced in other groups.”⁴⁶ Vilma Martinez

expounded, "In effect, we will try to make the gains won by the Black Civil Rights Movement and the Women's Rights Movement available to the Chicana Woman in the Southwest."⁴⁷ Yet CRP leaders believed the influence of the larger Chicana movement could already be felt. Speaking of "the emergence of a consciousness totally unique to Spanish-surnamed women of the Southwest," Patricia Vasquez wrote to the Ford Foundation that "Chicanas everywhere are beginning to realize that changes in the traditional roles of Chicanas are imperative in order to achieve equality."⁴⁸ In another letter, she restated, "the contemporary Chicana has an emerging and untested identity. . . . [She] is seeking to affirm her identity as a Mexican American and a woman."⁴⁹ It would be the power of this emerging identity, Vasquez continued, that would encourage Chicanas to begin using the American justice system to their advantage. Realistically, the leaders of the Chicana Rights Project had to affirm the ordinary Mexican American woman's readiness to take advantage of its services in order to obtain continued funding from Ford and other sponsors. At the same time, their projections of identity onto a community from which they were far removed expose the obstacle of class difference that the Project would have to continue encountering and negotiating during its lifespan.

News about the Chicana Rights Project often spread by word of mouth, with staff explaining the project to women's auxiliaries of LULAC and the American G.I. Forum and to Chicana groups like the Comisión Femenil and Concilio de Mujeres. In local communities, Chicana Rights Project staff distributed brochures about the project to public libraries and community centers serving Mexican American women. Soon, the CRP was generating great amounts of interest. Women from Mesa, Arizona, to Providence, Rhode Island, wrote letters to the CRP asking about the project, along with other Chicana organizations, school libraries, and Spanish-language radio stations and magazines. Several Chicana law students signed up to assist with CRP research as part of their women's rights seminars. The National Chicana Foundation pledged three hundred dollars toward law clerk assistance.⁵⁰ "The tremendous response we have received is indicative of the need for a legal facility beneficial to Chicanas everywhere," said Patricia Vasquez.⁵¹ In a letter to CRP staff member Carmen Estrada, Dolores de la Torre Bartning of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights celebrated the Project's inception: "It was with great enthusiasm and pride that I received your letter informing me of the Chicana Rights Project. This is a long-awaited project and I join the countless other Chicanas who welcome this event."⁵² Evidently, the

civil rights struggle was only just beginning for Mexican American women. Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) Department representative Pauline Jacobo praised the Chicana Rights Project for existing in a time when “there is no other voice to speak for the Chicana in this Country.”⁵³ Describing the excitement surrounding the project to Esther Schachter, Vasquez wrote, “The enthusiasm among Chicanas all over the country which has been manifested to us by letters, telephone calls, and word of mouth has been highly encouraging. . . . With such widespread support, the Chicana Rights Project will work toward generating change through legal means to benefit not only the Chicana, but other women as well.”⁵⁴ “The response to the Project was positive [throughout the larger Chicano community] . . . and it was extremely positive among women,” remembered CRP staffer and future director Carmen Estrada.⁵⁵

In 1975 the Chicana Rights Project began undertaking litigation in three interest areas—employment, health care, and prison reform—which resulted in important early victories.⁵⁶ Along with winning summer unemployment benefits for hundreds of Mexican American women Head Start workers in Texas, the CRP filed and won a complaint against San Antonio’s Comprehensive Employment Training Act (CETA) program for sex discrimination in hiring and obtained job promotions for five Chicanas who filed Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) complaints against multiple San Antonio military bases for failure to promote Chicanas.⁵⁷ In the area of health care, Chicana Rights Project staff intervened in several sterilization abuse cases and wrote reports on the lack of informed consent. Some medical doctors had pressured Spanish-speaking female patients to agree to sterilization while under extreme stress in labor, under the influence of drugs, or just before an emergency cesarean section operation. Sometimes doctors performed sterilization operations with no consent at all. Patients in California were threatened with termination of welfare payments or disclosure of illegal alien status to immigration authorities if they did not agree to sign sterilization consent forms. In San Antonio, doctors and researchers had misled several Chicana patients by giving them placebo pills instead of birth control pills without their knowledge or consent.⁵⁸ In May 1975 Chicana Rights staff in San Francisco joined other women’s legal and medical organizations in filing a petition with the California Department of Health ensuring informed consent for sterilizations and greater accessibility to information about birth control.⁵⁹ The CRP also advocated access to legal abortions for Chicanas. “I had to take quite a bit of insults

from some people who thought we shouldn't do that, [like] church leaders who were offended, but we took the insults and moved on," recalled Vilma Martinez.⁶⁰ San Francisco CRP staffers paid attention to prison reform and negotiated with prison officials at the California Institution for Women to hire bilingual medical staff and Spanish-language translators for Chicana inmates.⁶¹ The Chicana Rights Project also did much to preserve rights to child care for Chicanas in Texas and California.⁶²

As knowledge of the Chicana Rights Project spread, staff began receiving individual requests from working-class Chicanas to act as their legal representative in sex- or race-based discrimination grievances. "Case referrals to the CRP are rapidly increasing as the CRP continues to gain visibility as the only legal project for Chicanas in the country," Patricia Vasquez wrote in a quarterly report for MALDEF.⁶³ Mexican American women from all socioeconomic backgrounds came to the Chicana Rights Project for help. A school cafeteria dishwasher in Runge, Texas, wrote to the CRP believing she had been wrongly fired. Ria Hammer, an executive director at a Spanish-language television station who was fired because the station's male employees were unwilling to work under a woman, asked for legal representation.⁶⁴ Eloise Tamez, a University of Texas nursing student, requested help after being dismissed from her program subsequent to failing her oral examination, while two white male students who had also failed were allowed to remain.⁶⁵

Chicanas were not the only ones who approached the Chicana Rights Project for help. Black and white women, and even Chicano men, believed the Project could provide the legal assistance they needed. In September 1976 the CRP filed an *amicus curiae* brief on behalf of Margaret Miller, a black woman who was fired from the Bank of America after rejecting her white supervisor's sexual advances. A Euro-American woman married to a Chicano asked the CRP to help her claim race discrimination when her employer, a local Safeway grocery store, cut her work hours and demoted her after discovering her Spanish surname. A group of male Chicano barbers approached the CRP for assistance when they believed their boss was stealing money received from their haircuts. A Chicano prisoner who believed he was wrongfully accused of robbery wrote a desperate letter to the Chicana Rights Project asking for legal representation.⁶⁶ Clearly, the CRP's publicity efforts had been successful, filtering down not only to the ordinary Mexican American woman, but to other communities for whom the Project was not intended.

IMAGINING THE “TYPICAL CHICANA”: LIMITS OF CLASS AND COMMUNITY IN THE CRP

Despite its increasing national visibility, the Chicana Rights Project had to continue proving to the East Coast-based Ford Foundation that there was indeed a demand for a legal defense organization to serve Mexican American women in the Southwest. Specifically, Ford program officers Esther Schachter and Susan Berresford were concerned that the Project had been taking on too many individual complaints rather than class actions. In reaction to the CRP's 1975 funding proposal requesting \$233,450 over three years, Schachter insisted that it be “re-thought and entirely revised to correspond with the Ford Foundation's notions of a more directed project with a very limited number of foci.”⁶⁷ As a result, the CRP revised its funding proposal multiple times to make the project more attractive to the foundation. In the final draft, Patricia Vasquez made sure to address the foundation's concerns but assured it of the project's significance. “Although we at the Project realize the importance and practicality of focusing on a limited number of manageable targets, we cannot ignore the fact that the need for a legal facility for Chicanas continues to expand as more and more Chicanas are becoming aware of their civil rights,” she wrote.⁶⁸ The foundation finally agreed to give the project \$100,000 over twenty months beginning in January 1976, on the condition that the CRP clarify its goals and set limits on its number of interest areas.⁶⁹

To that end, the Chicana Rights Project decided to set up a Task Force, a group of women that could provide concrete suggestions for the Project's direction.⁷⁰ The seven women appointed were Francisca Flores of the Chicana Service Action Center, Pauline Jacobo, Professor Teresa Aragon de Shepro, Centro de Mental Salud director Dr. Carmen Carrillo, CRP strategist Drucilla Ramey, U.S. Department of Labor economist Elizabeth Waldman, and NAACP lawyer Jean Fairfax.⁷¹ At its first meeting in April 1976, the Task Force came to an impasse when deciding whether research or litigation would be the project's biggest priority. Some members, including Flores, argued for placing litigation above research and working more closely with community groups. Others such as Vasquez thought that adequate research was essential before trying to take on important cases.⁷² Carmen Carrillo had a different concern: Who was the Chicana that the CRP was trying to serve? Was she poor or was she middle class? How old was she? How educated would she be?⁷³

Since statistical data on Chicana women was almost nonexistent, Carrillo suggested that an official "Profile of the Chicana" be created to help the Task Force determine the CRP's next direction.⁷⁴ Using U.S. Census data of March 1975, Elizabeth Waldman produced the first statistical study focusing on the circumstances of the 3.3 million Mexican American women living in the United States. Younger on average than other American women, Chicanas aged 25 years and older completed an average of only 8.4 years of school, compared to 12.3 years by other women. In 1974 median earnings for Chicanas were \$2,690, about 75 percent of the national average for women, and their unemployment rate was 11.9 percent compared with a 9.5 percent rate for all women. At its second meeting, the Task Force determined from Waldman's study that employment and education should become the two interrelated priorities for the CRP.⁷⁵

By the next year, CRP staff had a clearer image of the Chicana they wanted to help, an image that became central in their subsequent funding proposals to the Ford Foundation and other organizations. A 1977 Chicana Rights Project proposal to the Trull Foundation included a detailed profile of the Mexican American woman in need:

The Chicana can be found in every corner of our country, but mainly she resides in large numbers in the southwestern states. The Mexican American woman exhibits consistent patterns of high unemployment, low income, and little education which, in addition to her sex and national origin, lead to a crucial lack of experience in maneuvering through the channels of the American social, political, and economic system. Her traditionally unequal social and economic position results in a lack of political participation and perpetuates her low social status. When her racial and sexual counterparts are enjoying productive years and comfortable lives, the Chicana woman is often broken in health and spirit and is faced with insurmountable obstacles in her attempt to enter the labor force. Confronting both sexism and racism on the job and in other areas, the Mexican American woman must begin testing her emerging identity in order to achieve equality in our society.

This particular document, the first of many more that the Chicana Rights Project would produce, included assertive language regarding the vicious cycle of poverty that oppressed Mexican American women. "This society's institutions are overlooking the economic stagnation and blatant physical and psychological abuse which is too often visited upon the low-income Mexican American woman," the proposal declared, concluding that the CRP would be the vanguard of this new Chicana civil rights movement. "CRP's

continued efforts are urgently needed at this point to establish the legal rights of Chicanas, to bring national attention to their cause, and to begin to teach women how they can fight for themselves,” it read.⁷⁶

With a clear image of the Chicana it wanted to serve—a low-income, disempowered woman who nonetheless possessed the potential to discover her feminist identity and fight for her legal rights—the Chicana Rights Project invoked this image of the “typical Chicana” in its presentations to sponsors and the public. The Project also began privileging legal cases on behalf of women who embodied this particular profile. For example, in a memo to director Patricia Vasquez, CRP strategist Drucilla Ramey cautioned against taking the case of Rosemary Rivas, a woman accusing a bank of sex discrimination, because Rivas seemed financially well-off and therefore not a “typical Chicana.” Ramey continued, “Although I agree with you that Ms. Rivas has an appealing [*sic*] case, and she was blatantly discriminated against, the question here seems to be the extent to which Chicanas generally would benefit through a favorable decision.”⁷⁷ Evidently, even though the CRP would have likely won Rivas’s case, staff rejected it because of the complainant’s middle-class status. Project staff eventually notified Rivas in a letter that her case was not “CRP material” and did the same to several others because of their socioeconomic status or because their case lacked the potential for a larger “ripple effect” in the Mexican American community.⁷⁸ The case of Miriam Anaya, however, who claimed she was not hired by the Redwood City, California, fire department because of her gender, seemed to be an ideal case for its potential to help other Chicanas pursue nontraditional career paths.⁷⁹ The CRP also undertook the case of a Chicana versus the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) because it raised the multiple issues of employment, immigration, and women’s rights.⁸⁰

Initially, the Chicana Rights Project ran into trouble because it simply had cast too wide a net—by devoting its time and resources to every Chicana who asked for help, the project seemed unfocused to its primary financial sponsor, the Ford Foundation. Yet by narrowing down its clientele to the “typical Chicana”—and in determining who exactly fit that profile—the leaders of the CRP developed a romantic notion of cross-class solidarity with an imagined working-class Chicana community from which they were, in fact, far removed economically and politically. The highly educated status of the Chicana Rights Project’s leadership was a concern to some Chicana organization leaders, who may have mentally linked up CRP leaders with white feminists because of the former’s professional class position.⁸¹ In a letter to CRP staffer Carmen Estrada, Alicia Escalante De Gandara of the

National Chicana Welfare Rights Organization questioned the ability of CRP staff to truly relate to the ordinary Mexican American woman. "Our issues are far too important to just be researched, studied and then shelved as has been done too many times by our Anglo counterparts," De Gandara wrote to Estrada. "We sincerely hope our Raza shows more sensitivity, by meeting with us face to face . . . and seeing for themselves what our 'Causa' is all about."⁸² In a way, De Gandara had accused the Chicana Rights Project of calling itself a Chicana feminist organization while its leadership and development had not been of grassroots origin. Feeling pressure to integrate itself successfully into the Chicana feminist community, the Chicana Rights Project began actively collaborating with groups such as Comisión Femenil, the Chicana Service Action Center, Mujeres Unidas, and MANA by the summer of 1978.⁸³

Simultaneously, this reminder of class difference between Chicano political leaders and their constituents had struck a nerve within MALDEF at large. In a presentation to the organization's Board of Directors, staffer José Medina argued that MALDEF had "little if any correct prospective [*sic*] for the Chicano struggle needs," and had "consolidate[d] itself with the liberal elite, rather than the constituency it professes to serve."⁸⁴ In order to revamp its public image, MALDEF hired publicists to arrange speaking engagements for Vilma Martinez in Chicano communities. In at least one incident, when Martinez spoke at an East Los Angeles opening of a MALDEF-sponsored photo exhibit, public relations director Liz Benedict criticized Martinez's difficulty in relating to "ordinary" Chicanos. "In your remarks," Benedict wrote to Martinez afterward, "You . . . [said] you were 'a lawyer and litigator by profession and predilection' . . . with all due respect . . . [do not] use such high-flown language. . . . Using 'big words' has the effect, in a community setting, of setting you apart from 'the people' and, in the extreme, of alienating them."⁸⁵ Benedict made sure to guide Martinez in subsequent media appearances, keeping the latter's statements about MALDEF both accessible and attractive to a wide audience. Between 1974 and 1982, Martinez delivered approximately sixty speeches, dedicating several to explaining the oppression of the Chicana and the need for collaboration and unity between Chicana feminist organizations. "No one is going to organize Chicanas but Chicanas themselves," Martinez declared at the Chicana Caucus of the Texas Women's Political Caucus in Austin, situating Chicanas of the 1970s in a long line of ethnic Mexican women who had fought in the Mexican Revolution, created political organizations

on both sides of the border, participated in labor protests, and worked in the fields and factories of the United States.⁸⁶

Meanwhile, the staff members of the Chicana Rights Project worked to give their rhetoric the same accessibility to ordinary Chicanas. Taking advantage of the media, CRP staff created thirty-second, bilingual public service announcements to be broadcast on television and radio stations in Los Angeles, Denver, and San Antonio.⁸⁷ Along with publicizing the CRP, these announcements informed Chicanas about their rights to equal education, housing, and employment. "Some people think a pregnant teenager shouldn't attend school. She has every right to attend school if her doctor consents. . . . Women have the right to education and employment while pregnant," one ad read. Another informed, "It is against the law either to refuse to hire, or to fire a woman merely because she is a woman; or to pay a woman less wages than those paid to a man for substantially the same work."⁸⁸ CRP director Patricia Vasquez concentrated on revising the language of the Project's monograph series—a collection of informational pamphlets addressing Chicanas' health issues and employment rights, along with immigration, domestic violence, and other topics—that would be distributed through community centers and public libraries.⁸⁹ In speaking of the immigration monograph, Vasquez remarked to her staff, "I can't help but feel that, as it reads, the text is aimed not at the Chicana with little or limited education but to the student or someone with definitely more education," and pointed out to Carmen Estrada that the mental health monograph "appear[s] to be aimed at educating the Anglo woman as to the problems experienced by Chicanas in this area rather than to Hispanas . . . the content is good, but the language and terminology are misdirected." Vasquez's consciousness of her audience was reflected particularly strongly in the CRP's monograph on battered women. "In my opinion, it stresses divorce as an alternative a little too much—given the cultural attitudes of many Chicanas, I think it would be a good idea to expand on the counselling [*sic*] part," she wrote to authors Linda Hanten and Lillie Spitz.⁹⁰

The multiple drafts of CRP monographs left behind in MALDEF records reveal the amount of consideration given to designing these handbooks to be validating, rather than intimidating, to the ordinary Chicana. They also reveal the deep concern that CRP leaders had about relating to their imagined clientele on both social and cultural levels. In addition, the CRP compiled the first bilingual *Chicana Legal Rights Handbook* in the country under a grant from the Levi Strauss Foundation.⁹¹ Addressing employment,

housing, health, sexual assault, divorce, education, and legal assistance, the *Handbook* answered many questions, including, "What can I do if I feel if I have been discriminated against?" and "Do I need my husband's consent to be sterilized?" Although legal rights handbooks had been created for women in some southwestern states, none had been published in Spanish or directed toward Chicanas. The *Handbook* was completed in 1980 and distributed in Texas, Arizona, Colorado, California, and New Mexico, where it was in great demand.⁹²

After four years of operation, the Chicana Rights Project had succeeded in its attempts at community outreach and collaboration with other Chicana and women's groups. Yet the Project's reach into many issues, including housing, immigration, employment, and reproductive rights, kept the Ford Foundation concerned about what Esther Schachter called the project's "scattergun approach."⁹³ Patricia Vasquez considered reenvisioning the Chicana Rights Project as an information center that would leave litigation entirely to its parent organization, MALDEF, in order to help the project live longer.⁹⁴ Unfortunately, any future path the Chicana Rights Project would take was predicated on scarce outside funding.

Funding was not the only problem in keeping the Chicana Rights Project afloat. Beneath the surface of what appeared to be a unified project, conflict and tension among staff were sometimes present. After its second meeting, the CRP Task Force quickly deteriorated, with very few members offering additional help.⁹⁵ A widely publicized MALDEF controversy erupted when Vilma Martinez fired regional counsel George Korbel who, she claimed among other things, expressed "a childlike displeasure" with the Chicana Rights Project and reportedly told Patricia Vasquez that her work on the Project "was not important."⁹⁶ Finally, Martinez's desire to streamline MALDEF's organizational structure by closing regional offices may have played a part in the clash between herself and Vasquez in 1979, which resulted in the latter's resignation from the CRP. In a letter to Susan Berresford, Vasquez announced her resignation, but did not go into further detail. "I can only say that I leave with mixed feelings," she wrote. "Undoubtedly there remains much to be done. On the other hand . . . I feel very strongly about where the project is now. . . . There is no doubt in my mind that the Chicana Rights Project of MALDEF has become an integral part of the Chicano community and is becoming more so in many areas."⁹⁷ In letters to then-INS director Lionel Castillo and former MALDEF president Mario Obledo the next month, Vasquez revealed more: "I am leaving MALDEF at the end of this week (primarily due to incompatible differences between

Vilma and myself). As this was rather sudden my future plans are quite indefinite.”⁹⁸

The exact reason for Vasquez’s resignation remains unclear. However, Vasquez left the Chicana Rights Project with an optimistic view of its future. “The first quarter of 1979 saw the Chicana Rights Project ‘Come of Age.’ Exciting and positive results from some of our litigation, educational, and legislative activities have earned the CRP the reputation and respect of a professional ‘doer’ by proud Chicanas and Anglo women,” Vasquez claimed in her quarterly report. She also pointed out how the CRP was different from Euro-American women’s organizations: “In Texas we have done what Anglo women had failed to do—produce a precedent setting case like CETA; draft and produce meaningful legislation; and provide educational tools which can be effectively utilized by all women regardless of ethnicity.”⁹⁹ Soon Carmen Estrada, who worked in the CRP San Francisco office, replaced Vasquez as the Project’s new director.¹⁰⁰

Under Estrada’s leadership, the CRP continued filing lawsuits involving employment discrimination, reproductive rights, and access to health care on behalf of low-income Chicanas.¹⁰¹ However, when Estrada became the director of MALDEF’s Employment Litigation Project in 1980, almost a year passed before MALDEF hired former intern and Chicago lawyer Virginia Martinez to take over as the new director of the CRP, slowing down its momentum. During Virginia Martinez’s tenure the Chicana Rights Project continued to develop contacts with over one hundred other Chicana, legal, and women’s organizations and created a national Chicana advocacy network linking Chicana groups in the Midwest and Southwest for support and information sharing. In 1982 the CRP won the right to affordable prenatal and general health care for poor women in California, obtained an injunction preventing the deportation of indigent medical patients in Texas, and won women easier access to apprenticeship programs in New Mexico.¹⁰²

That same year, when CRP staff requested more funds from the Ford Foundation for the following year, the foundation refused, requesting the CRP eliminate its efforts in the areas of domestic abuse and education and instead concentrate on health and employment.¹⁰³ By pushing the Chicana Rights Project to narrow its scope further, the Ford Foundation made its grant giving contingent on even more conditions, some of which the CRP perhaps found too difficult to accommodate. The Project then lost its creator and biggest supporter when Vilma Martinez resigned as MALDEF president in April 1982. During Martinez’s tenure, MALDEF’s budget had increased from less than \$800,000 in 1973 to over \$2.6 million in 1982, and

MALDEF had become involved in several landmark cases, including *Lau v. Nichols* (1974), *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* (1978), and *Plyler v. Doe* (1982).¹⁰⁴ Eventually, a variety of factors—budget constraints; several turnovers in leadership; the dispersal of a small staff across Texas, California, and Illinois; and the Project's inability to come to a consensus with the Ford Foundation about its future direction—all contributed to the shutdown of the Chicana Rights Project in March 1983.

During its nine years of operation, the Chicana Rights Project brought national attention to the marginalized legal status of Chicanas and made significant steps in securing equal opportunity for Mexican American women in employment, health care, housing, and child care through individual and class-action suits. The CRP also created a body of informational literature for Mexican American women unprecedented among other Chicana/o organizations. "In fairness, I think [Chicana issues] were always on MALDEF's agenda . . . [but] I think the Chicana Rights Project gave it a push," said Vilma Martinez. "[It] gave the visibility to that issue that perhaps wouldn't have happened [otherwise]."¹⁰⁵ Carmen Estrada agreed: "More was done as a result of the Chicana Rights Project, above and beyond what MALDEF was working in. We were able to raise the [Chicana] issue not just for MALDEF but in other women's groups or minority litigation groups. . . . It definitely was part and parcel of [the Chicana movement]."¹⁰⁶ For all its limitations, the Chicana Rights Project insisted on fighting battles for Mexican American women in multiple arenas—at times in the face of losing its primary funding—until its demise, demonstrating a measure of feminist resistance from its Chicana leaders during what has traditionally been considered a conservative decade in Latino politics.

A CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN A POST-CIVIL RIGHTS ERA

In a way, the story of the Chicana Rights Project could be interpreted as one of declension, tied to MALDEF's drift from being a "radical" 1960s civil rights organization to what Vilma Martinez called a "Ford Foundation baby" by the late 1970s and early 1980s. During MALDEF's early years, the militancy of some of its staffers resulted in the Ford Foundation placing conditions on its future funding. In a similar fashion, when Chicana Rights Project leaders initially worked to help Mexican American women of multiple classes with a variety of grievances, the Ford Foundation placed

limits on its reach and scope to which the Project then had to accommodate to receive continued funding.

In the larger historical context of the early 1980s, a new political conservatism had emerged that, along with economic recession, stifled and contributed to the decline of civil rights-era alliances and social justice movements and organizations, including Chicano-Latino political organizations. The decade also brought with it continuing changes in the demographics of the Latina/o populations living in the United States, to which the Chicana Rights Project attempted to respond. Despite warnings from the Ford Foundation to focus solely on employment and health care, the Project began taking on individual cases in the areas of immigration, reproductive rights, and domestic violence, precisely because these legal services were being demanded by U.S.-born and immigrant Mexican women alike.¹⁰⁷ Yet these attempts were overshadowed by the fact that the Chicana Rights Project—and MALDEF more generally—were ideologically and economically limited to pursuing legal strategies based on national notions of citizenship. With the Chicano movement waning and the country's Mexican-Latino immigrant population steadily growing along with anti-immigrant sentiment, MALDEF and the CRP encountered a very different reality than the one in which MALDEF had been founded. This new reality consisted of a larger Latino population that was becoming ever more demographically complex than running along simple lines of citizenship. The old “civil rights” paradigm of the Chicano movement era no longer made sense in meeting Mexican Americans' needs by the early 1980s.

By the same token, the Chicana Rights Project helps us to rethink the history of civil rights itself. As an organization—and still the only one to date—dedicated solely to creating and enforcing civil rights laws for Mexican American women, the CRP reminds us that the civil rights movement (or movements) did not benefit all marginalized groups if Mexican American women still had to fight for their legal rights during the 1980s.¹⁰⁸ In shifting attention to the U.S. West and Southwest, the history and time span of the “civil rights era” changes as we include the struggles of Latinos, Asians, and other marginalized groups to gain access to public space and equal treatment in society and before the law. The history of gender and civil rights also changes as we include histories of organizations like the Chicana Rights Project, which fought to meet the special needs of Mexican American women under its male-dominated parent organization, MALDEF. The mainstream civil rights paradigm largely remains a black-and-white, southern story. By

moving this story west, and exploring regional differentiation in terms of demographics, goals, and gender relations, historians can further question, enlarge, or reperiodize what is currently considered the era of civil rights.

Indisputably, MALDEF has proved to be one of the most long lasting, important advocacy organizations in Mexican American and U.S. Latino politics. This study's examination of the Chicana Rights Project attempts to enrich and complicate the history of MALDEF through the lenses of gender, class, and community. Both internal and external factors can explain why the Chicana Rights Project had a limited duration. Externally, Ford's vision of what constituted Chicana legal aid and empowerment forced CRP leaders to limit the Project's servable community to those who they imagined were "typical Chicanas" and to narrow further its areas of litigation. Internally, class differences between the Project's leadership and clientele, as well as MALDEF's use of older tactics in a changing political climate, contributed to the Chicana Rights Project's end in 1983. Yet the Chicana Rights Project's demise should not be viewed as a Chicana movement failure. By setting itself apart from male-dominated Chicano advocacy organizations, Euro-American women's groups, and even from other Chicana organizations through its legal focus, the CRP distinguished itself as a unique effort to correct the racial, gender, and socioeconomic marginalization of Mexican American women that had long been ignored by American law and policy makers. While the leadership of the Chicana Rights Project did not reflect, or always effectively relate to, the "ordinary" Chicana whose image the CRP used so often, its victories in securing Chicanas' legal rights remain significant.

As a pioneering legal representative for Mexican American women, the Chicana Rights Project should no longer be overlooked in Chicana/o movement, MALDEF, and civil rights history. One could ask whether the Chicana Rights Project could have salvaged itself in a different form near its end: did its leaders miss an opportunity to turn the Project's struggle for civil rights into one for human rights? Perhaps, but the Chicana Rights Project leaders must be credited for trying to forge and empower communities in the face of obstacles that they believed should have been done away with in an earlier era.

NOTES

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1. Isabelle Navar, "The Psychology of Chicana Identity," speech transcript, February 1, 1974, 1, Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund Records, M0673, Department of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, California (hereafter MALDEF Records), RG 5, Box 1: Folder 19.

2. Mirta Vidal, *Chicanas Speak Out: Women: New Voice of La Raza* (New York, 1971). The general term "Mexican American" denotes residents of Mexican descent born in the United States. "Chicana" and "Chicano" refer to those Mexican Americans who embraced the desire for social justice and ethnic pride espoused by the Chicano movement. The term "ethnic Mexican," following historian David G. Gutiérrez's usage, refers to those with Mexican ancestry or heritage who live in the U.S. regardless of citizenship, generation, or immigrant status. The term "Euro-American" refers to persons of European origin who are classified as white Americans. The terms "white" and "Anglo" will be used interchangeably with Euro-American in this paper.

3. One group of women also staged a walkout because the conference was being held in a "gringo" (white) institution (a Houston YWCA) and should have been held in the "barrio." Marta Cotera, "La Conferencia de Mujeres Por La Raza: Houston, Texas, 1971," in *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings*, ed. Alma M. Garcia (New York, 1997), 156; Marisela Chávez, "Despierten hermanas y hermanos! Women, the Chicano Movement, and Chicana Feminisms in California, 1966–1981" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2005); Teresa Palomo Acosta and Ruthe Winegarten, *Las Tejanas: 300 Years of History* (Austin, TX, 2003), 239.

4. Enriqueta Longeaux y Vázquez, "The Mexican-American Woman," in *Sisterhood is Powerful*, ed. Robin Morgan (New York, 1970), 379, cited in Vicki L. Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* (Oxford, 1998), 108.

5. Ibid.

6. Chávez, "Despierten hermanas y hermanos!," 52. These articles include Marta Cotera, "La Conferencia de Mujeres"; Francisca Flores, "Conference of Mexican Women in Houston—Un Remolino [A Whirlwind]" and Anna NietoGomez and Elma Barrera, "Chicana Encounter," all in Garcia, ed., *Chicana Feminist Thought*, 155–64.

7. Vidal, *Chicanas Speak Out*, 3.

8. Flores, "Conference of Mexican Women in Houston," 157.

9. Vilma Martinez, speech to Second Annual Chicana Training Conference, sponsored by the Mexican American Women's National Association (MANA), Washington, D.C., February 27, 1978, MALDEF Records, RG 2, Box 37: Folder 7.

10. Vilma Martinez, speech to Tenth National Conference on Women and the Law, San Antonio, Tex., March 30, 1979, MALDEF Records, RG 2, Box 37: Folder 14.

11. Only two studies mention the CRP, and just briefly: Chávez, "Despierten hermanas y hermanos!," 141, and Acosta and Winegarten, *Las Tejanas*, 246. One piece of evidence produces a conflict as to the exact date of the Chicana Rights Project's shutdown. In MALDEF's

January 1985 newsletter, an article, "Latinas Gain Access to Job Training in Los Angeles," claims that María Rodríguez is the director of the Chicana Rights Project. Perhaps by 1985 the CRP still existed, but not in its original form as its own organization, separate from MALDEF.

12. Noemí Lorenzana, "Hijas de Aztlán," *De Colores: Journal of Emerging Raza Philosophies* 1, no. 3 (Summer 1974): 39. The article is an adapted version of the presentation by the author at Weber State College at Ogden, Utah, May 1974.

13. Chávez, "Despierten hermanas y hermanos!," 2.

14. Alma M. García, "Introduction," in *Chicana Feminist Thought*, 3.

15. Alma M. García, "The Development of Chicana Feminist Discourse, 1970–1980," *Gender and Society* 3, no. 2 (June 1989): 219.

16. Ibid, 229; Anna NietoGomez, "La Feminista," in García, ed. *Chicana Feminist Thought*, 87; Paula M. L. Moya, "Postmodernism, 'Realism,' and the Politics of Identity: Cherrie Moraga and Chicana Feminism," in *Reclaiming Identity: Realist Theory and the Predicament of Postmodernism*, ed. Paula M. L. Moya and Michael R. Hames García (Berkeley, CA, 2000), 89–90; Irene Blea, *La Chicana and the Intersection of Race, Class, and Gender* (New York, 1992), 13.

17. Alfredo Mirandé and Evangelina Enriquez, *La Chicana: The Mexican-American Woman* (Chicago, 1979), 239; Marta Cotera, "Feminism: The Chicana and Anglo Versions," in *Twice a Minority: Mexican American Women*, ed. Margarita B. Melville (St. Louis, MO, 1980), 217–34.

18. Gloria Anzaldúa, interview with Karin Ika, in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco, 1987), 230–31.

19. Moya, "Postmodernism," 89–90; Acosta and Winegarten, *Las Tejanas*, 234; Chávez, "Despierten hermanas y hermanos!," 2.

20. Marta Cotera, *Diosa y Hembra: The History and Heritage of Chicanas in the U.S.* (Austin, TX, 1976), 157; Benjamin Márquez, *Constructing Identities in Mexican-American Political Organizations: Choosing Issues, Taking Sides* (Austin, TX, 2003).

21. María B. Velez, "The Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF): An Historical Documentation and Political Analysis" (honors thesis, St. Mary's University, 1992); Guadalupe San Miguel Jr., "Let All of Them Take Heed": *Mexican Americans and the Campaign for Educational Equality in Texas, 1910–1981* (Austin, TX, 1987), 170.

22. Annette Oliviera, *MALDEF: Diez Anos* (San Francisco, 1978).

23. Velez, "MALDEF: An Historical Documentation and Political Analysis," 24; Oliviera, *MALDEF: Diez Anos*, 21.

24. Although the Ford Foundation provided a large portion of MALDEF's funding, MALDEF was sponsored over time by a variety of sources, including but not limited to the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the Henry Luce Foundation, Howard University, Walt Disney, Kaiser, General Electric, AT&T, Anheiser-Busch, Bank of America, Chevron, Coca-Cola, IBM, NBC, Sears Roebuck, the United Steelworkers of America, the Teamsters Union, the United Auto Workers of America, and many individuals.

25. Benjamin Márquez, "Mexican American Political Organizations and Philanthropy: Bankrolling a Social Movement," *Social Service Review* 77, no. 3 (September 2003): 333–34.

26. Peter Skerry, *Mexican Americans: The Ambivalent Minority* (Cambridge, 1993), 49;

Armando Navarro, *The Cristal Experiment: A Chicano Struggle for Community Control* (Madison, WI, 1998), 65.

27. Oliviera, *MALDEF: Diez Años*.

28. Skerry, *The Ambivalent Minority*, 116.

29. Martinez served on MALDEF's board along with another Chicana lawyer, Graciela Olivarez, the first Latina to graduate from Notre Dame Law School. This biographical sketch of Martinez is based on several sources: Vilma Martinez, interview with the author, San Francisco, California, August 15, 2006; "Vilma Socorro Martinez, Activist," biographical essay by the author, *The Latina/o History Project*, available from <http://www.latinohistory.com> (accessed August 8, 2006); "Vilma Martinez: A Continuing Advocacy of Justice through Law," *La Luz* 8, no. 4 (October–November 1979): 24–25; David Broder, *Changing of the Guard: Power and Leadership in America* (New York, 1980), 283; *Las Primeras: An Historical Presentation of the First Latina Attorneys Licensed in the United States*, videorecording researched, written, produced, directed, and narrated by Dolores S. Atencio (Washington, DC: Hispanic National Bar Association [HNBA] Productions, 1994). Title VII makes it illegal for employers who employ over fifteen employees to discriminate with respect to any condition of employment, or against any applicant for employment, because of race, color, sex, religion, or national origin. The law requires that all persons be treated the same in hiring practices, pensions, retirement, and vacation time. Insurance must also cover pregnancy costs.

30. Karen O'Conner and Lee Epstein, "A Legal Voice for the Chicano Community: The Activities of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, 1968–82," *Social Science Quarterly* 65, no. 2 (1984): 251; Mario Evangelista, "Advocate for La Raza," *Nuestro* 1, no. 7 (October 1977): 40.

31. Fundraising Department Report, April 1977, MALDEF Records, RG 4, Box 119: Folder 6; Martinez, interview; "Mexican-American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF)," *La Luz* 8, no. 6 (February–March 1980): 17; Al Carlos Hernandez, "Vilma Martinez: Una Chicana Ejemplar," *Nuestro* 5, no. 6 (August–September 1981): 13.

32. "Profile," *Los Angeles Daily Journal*, February 26, 1981.

33. Grace Lichtenstein, "Chicana with a Backbone of Steel," *Quest* 80 (1979): 29.

34. Letter to Ford Programs Officer Esther Schachter from Patricia Vasquez, November 3, 1977, 3, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 18: Folder 1; Letter to Susan Berresford from Vilma Martinez, May 16, 1975, 2, MALDEF Records, RG 4, Box 48: Folder 10.

35. Martinez interview.

36. Letter to Esther Schachter from Patricia Vasquez, December 2, 1977, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 18: Folder 2. I tried multiple times to obtain an interview with Patricia Vasquez but never received a response.

37. "Chicana Rights: A Major MALDEF Issue," *Comadre* 3 (Fall 1978): 30–35, reprinted from *MALDEF Newsletter* 7, no. 4 (Fall 1977): 1, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 15: Folder 1.

38. Letter to Esther Schachter from Patricia Vasquez, December 2, 1977, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 18: Folder 2.

39. The Chicana Rights Project database showed fifty-three Chicana organizations, eighty-six Chicana law students, and eighty-six Spanish-surnamed attorneys existing at this time. See Chicana Rights Project Year End Progress Report, 1974, 1, MALDEF Records, RG 4, Box 48: Folder 10. Although the CRP anticipated collaborating with white women's feminist

groups, the organization never officially affiliated with any. Correspondence of the Chicana Rights Project, MALDEF Records, RG 4, Boxes 71–72, and RG 5 Boxes 4, 12–17.

40. Letter to Susan Berresford from Vilma Martinez, May 16, 1975, 1, MALDEF Records, RG 4, Box 48: Folder 10; MALDEF Annual Report, 1974, 11, Ethnic Studies Library Serials Collection, University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, California.

41. Proposal to Trull Foundation, September 1977, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 19: Folder 3.

42. *MALDEF Newsletter* 7, no. 4 (Fall 1977): 2, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 15: Folder 1.

43. Virginia Martinez, "Chicanas and Law," in *La Chicana: Building for the Future: An Action Plan for the 80's* (Oakland, CA, 1981), 138.

44. Martinez interview.

45. Letter to Esther Schachter from Patricia Vasquez, December 2, 1977, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 18: Folder 2; Virginia Martinez, "Chicanas and Law," 138; Martinez interview; Vilma Martinez, speech to Comision Femenil, Los Angeles, California, November 1, 1980, MALDEF Records, RG 2, Box 37: Folder 27.

46. Letter to Esther Schachter from Patricia Vasquez, November 3, 1977, 5–6, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 18: Folder 1.

47. Letter to Roni Eldridge (MS Foundation) from Vilma Martinez, April 15, 1974, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 19: Folder 1.

48. Letter to Esther Schachter from Patricia Vasquez, November 3, 1977, 10–11, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 18: Folder 1.

49. Letter to Esther Schachter and Susan Berresford from Patricia Vasquez, undated, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 9: Folder 7, and RG 5, Box 13: Folder 1.

50. Letter from Rosalie Aguila, Mesa, Arizona, to the Chicana Rights Project, February 4, 1980, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 17: Folder 2; Letter from Rosemary Morales, Providence, Rhode Island, MALDEF Records, Box 48: Folder 10; Chicana Rights Project Year End Progress Report, 1974, 2, and Letter to Comptroller Ed Hernandez from Patricia Vasquez, September 24, 1976, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 13: Folder 6; Survey completed by Patricia Vasquez for the National Council of La Raza, July 1974, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 12: Folder 2.

51. Letter to Bernadette Chavez from Patricia Vasquez, September 12, 1974, 1, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 12: Folder 1.

52. Letter to Carmen Estrada from Dolores de la Torre Bartning, July 2, 1974, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 12: Folder 1.

53. "RE: Chicana Rights Project," memo to Patricia Vasquez from Paulina M. Jacobo, June 13, 1977, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 16: Folder 5.

54. Letter to Esther Rodditi Schachter from Patricia Vasquez, July 22, 1974, 2, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 12: Folder 2.

55. Carmen Estrada, interview with the author, August 27, 2006.

56. Letter to Esther Roditti Schachter from Patricia Vasquez, August 8, 1975, 1, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 4: Folder 2.

57. Draft of goals and objectives of the Chicana Rights Project, 32, MALDEF Records, RG 2, Box 36: Folder 29, and Letter to Esther Schachter from Patricia Vasquez, August 29, 1975, 2, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 4: Folder 2; "Docket Update SA 76/10," memo to Tyler Kelly from Rebecca Garcia of the Chicana Rights Project, March 1, 1978, MALDEF

Records, RG 5, Box 16: Folder 1; Proposal to Ford Foundation, 1977, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 19: Folder 2; CRP Funding Proposal to Ford Foundation, September 1977, 16, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 18: Folder 3.

58. Chicanas and Mental Health Monograph, 12, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 57: Folder 12.

59. Sandra Salazar, "Absence of Informed Consent in Female Sterilization Procedures: California and Cobbs v. Grant," Chicana Rights Project Report, 15, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 4: Folder 8; Proposal to Ford Foundation, 1977, 7, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 19: Folder 2.

60. Martinez interview.

61. MS Foundation Grant Report, May 1977, 2–3, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 19: Folder 1.

62. In *Lee v. State Board of Health, San Francisco* (1974), the CRP helped preserve day care access for impoverished families in California, while in Texas, the CRP forced the State Commission on Childcare to correct unfair standards that purposely excluded many San Antonio Chicano homes from becoming registered as day care centers. Proposal to Ford Foundation, 1977, 5, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 19: Folder 2.

63. Chicana Rights Project Quarterly Report, January 1, 1979–March 30, 1979, 7, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 16: Folder 7.

64. Chicana Rights Project Quarterly Report, January 1, 1979–March 30, 1979, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 16: Folder 7; "Catherine Lazaro," case description document, July 10, 1979, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 22: Folder 6; Proposal to Ford Foundation, 1977, 4–5, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 19: Folder 2.

65. Letter to John Bell from the Chicana Rights Project Staff, October 5, 1978, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 16: Folder 2, and RG 5, Box 19: Folder 7; "Re: File on Sandra Kay Morin," memo written by CRP paralegal Elsa Girón Nava, December 4, 1978, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 21: Folder 1; CRP document dated January 2, 1978, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 21: Folder 1, and RG 5, Box 13: Folder 2; "Eloisa Tamez," file memo by Patricia Vasquez, January 9, 1976, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 19: Folder 6; Letter to Eloise Tamez from Patricia Vasquez, November 24, 1976, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 19: Folder 6; Letter to Mr. Lorenzo Patino, Attorney, Sacramento, California, from CRP law clerk Maria Elena Morales, July 23, 1976, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 19: Folder 6.

66. Chicana Rights Project Quarterly Report, January 1, 1979–March 30, 1979, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 16: Folder 7, RG 5, Box 22: Folder 2, and RG 5, Box 21: Folder 4; Letter to the Chicana Rights Project from Oscar C. Garay, May 28, 1980, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 25: Folder 6.

67. Letter to Patricia Vasquez from Drucilla Ramey, July 23, 1975, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 18: Folder 7; Letter to Esther Schachter from Patricia Vasquez, August 21, 1975, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 18: Folder 1.

68. Letter to Esther Schachter from Patricia Vasquez, August 29, 1975, 2, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 4: Folder 2.

69. Memo to MALDEF's Board of Directors from Patricia Vasquez, April 24, 1976, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 14: Folder 1.

70. Letter to Ann Seton (MS Foundation) from Vilma Martinez, July 2, 1975, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 19: Folder 1.

71. MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 10: Folder 10.

72. Letter to Francisca Flores from Patricia Vasquez, July 8, 1976, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 4: Folder 2.

73. "Re: Statement of the Role and Function of the Members of the Chicana Rights Task Force," letter to Patricia Vasquez from Carmen Carrillo, July 7, 1976, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 4: Folder 2.

74. Letter to Elizabeth Waldman from Patricia Vasquez, August 26, 1976, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 10: Folder 10.

75. Draft of Goals and Objectives of the Chicana Rights Project, 35, MALDEF Records, RG 2, Box 36: Folder 29; Letter to Esther Schachter from Patricia Vasquez, December 2, 1977, 7, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 18: Folder 2.

76. Chicana Rights Project Proposal to the Trull Foundation, September 1977, 1, 3, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 19: Folder 3.

77. "Re: Rosemary Rivas' Case," memo to Patricia Vasquez from Drucilla Ramey, June 25, 1975, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 20: Folder 3, and RG 5 Box 13: Folder 1.

78. "Re: Vivian Sanchez—Referral to Private Attorney," memo written by Elsa Girón Nava, November 27, 1978, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 21: Folder 8.

79. Miriam Anaya to the Chicana Rights Project, MALDEF Records, RG 5 Box 17: Folder 1; Memo to Linda Hanten from Patricia Vasquez, March 23, 1978, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 16: Folder 1.

80. Letter from Carmen Estrada to Vilma Martinez and Mike Baller, "Proposed Chicana Rights Case: Lopez v. Immigration and Naturalization Service," August 28, 1979, 2–3, MALDEF Records, RG 2, Box 13: Folder 1. On rare occasions, the Chicana Rights Project took on a Chicana professional client if winning her case would be a landmark victory. Dr. Soledad Coronel, who was suddenly terminated from a Texas school district despite being the only minority and Mexican American female administrator, seemed a desirable client for her intelligence and prominent work position. "Re: Possible Suit by the Chicana Rights Project Against the Hayward School District," memo to Patricia Vasquez from Sandra Salazar, November 14, 1975, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 17: Folder 1.

81. "Throughout the 1970s, Chicana feminists viewed the white feminist movement as a middle-class movement," argues Alma M. Garcia in "The Development of Chicana Feminist Discourse," 231.

82. Letter to Carmen Estrada from Alicia Escalante De Gandara, August 6, 1974, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 12: Folder 2.

83. "Chicana Rights Project—Outreach," report to Vilma Martinez from Patricia Vasquez, August 17, 1978, 5, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 15: Folder 5.

84. "MALDEF Goals and Priorities," presentation by Jose Medina to MALDEF's Board of Directors, April 24, 1976, San Francisco, California, 1–3, MALDEF Records, RG 2, Box 28: Folder 9.

85. Memo to Vilma Martinez from Liz Benedict, "Re: Goetz Gallery Opening, 1/14/79," January 16, 1979, MALDEF Records, RG 6, Box 68: Folder 4.

86. Vilma Martinez, speech to Chicana Caucus of the Texas Women's Political Caucus, February 23, 1974, Austin, Texas, MALDEF Records, RG 2, Box 36: Folder 9; Vilma Martinez, speech to Second Annual Chicana Training Conference.

87. Letter to Vilma Martinez, Jane Couch, Linda Hanten, and Esther Estrada from Patricia Vasquez, April 7, 1978, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 15: Folder 2.

88. "Re: CRP Public Service Announcements," memo to Carmen Estrada from Patricia Vasquez, July 21, 1978, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 16: Folder 3.

89. Letter to Colleen Claybourn of the Trull Foundation from Patricia Vasquez, January 20, 1978, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 19: Folder 3; Estrada interview; Chicanas and Mental Health Monograph, 12, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 57, Folder 12; "Hispanic Women: Immigration Issues," Chicana Rights Project Immigration Monograph, MALDEF Records, RG 9, Box 336: Folder 17; Cynthia Orozco, "The Chicana Rights Project," *The Handbook of Texas Online*, <<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/CC/pqc2.html>> (accessed June 19, 2006); "The 1980 Census: Impact on Hispanics and Women," Census Monograph of the Chicana Rights Project, 7, MALDEF Records, RG 9, Box 336: Folder 17. The CRP testified before the Texas legislature's House Criminal Jurisprudence Committee on House Bill 1312, which established the offenses of domestic violence and aggravated domestic violence. See Chicana Rights Project Quarterly Report, January 1, 1970–March 30, 1979; Letter to Patricia Vasquez and Elsa Girón Nava from Texas state representative Irma Rangel, March 15, 1979, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 16: Folder 7.

90. "Re: CRP-Monograph-Female Aliens," memo to Carmen Estrada from Patricia Vasquez, January 24, 1979, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 57: Folder 10; "Re: Monograph: Chicanas and Mental Health," memo to Carmen Estrada from Patricia Vasquez, February 15, 1979, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 57: Folder 3; "Re: Handbook on Battered Wives," note to Linda Hanten and Lillie Spitz from Patricia Vasquez, December 1976, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 19: Folder 1, and RG 5, Box 26: Folder 3.

91. Letter to Karen Bowerman from the Chicana Rights Project, July 24, 1978, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 17: Folder 1.

92. Chicana Legal Rights Handbook, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 15: Folder 4, and RG 5, Box 57: Folder 7.

93. Summary of the Chicana Rights Project's Quarterly Meeting, January 31, 1978, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 15: Folder 2.

94. "RE: Chicana Rights Project," memo to Patricia Vasquez from Paulina M. Jacobo, June 13, 1977, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 16: Folder 5; Letter to Patricia Vasquez from Elizabeth Waldman, September 16, 1976, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 9: Folder 14; Memo to Vilma Martinez, Linda Hanten, Lydia Sanchez, and Jane Couch from Patricia Vasquez, January 10, 1977, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 17: Folder 1.

95. Letter to Esther Schachter from Patricia Vasquez, December 2, 1977, 6–7, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 18: Folder 2.

96. "MALDEF Attorney Sues to Keep His Job," *San Antonio Express*, March 5, 1976; Memo to Investigating Committee from Vilma Martinez, 1, 4, MALDEF Records, RG 2, Box 27: Folder 4; Western Union Mailgram to Vilma Martinez from Ruben Sandoval and Father Edmundo Rodriguez, February 16, 1976, MALDEF Records, RG 2, Box 25: Folder 3; Letter to Vilma Martinez from Representative Gonzalo Barrientos, March 4, 1976, MALDEF Records, RG 2, Box 25: Folder 3; Letter to Vilma Martinez from Joe Bernal, February 20, 1976, MALDEF Records, RG 2, Box 25: Folder 3.

97. Letter to Susan Berresford from Patricia Vasquez, March 26, 1979, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 16: Folder 6.

98. Letters to Mario Obledo and Lionel Castillo, April 5, 1979 and April 13, 1979, respectively, MALDEF Records, RG 5: Box 16, Folder 7.

99. Chicana Rights Project Quarterly Report, January 1, 1979–March 30, 1979, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 16: Folder 7.

100. Estrada interview.

101. “Re: Developing Cases Status Report 1/20/81,” memo to Norma Solis from Elsa Girón Nava, MALDEF Records, RG 9, Box 335: Folder 12; Letter to Vilma Martínez from Ford Foundation Program Officer Amy Vance, February 3, 1982, MALDEF Records, RG 9, Box 335: Folder 10; “Chicana Rights Suits Filed,” *MALDEF Newsletter* 9, no. 4 (Fall 1979): 4, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 15: Folder 1; “Victories for Latinas,” *MALDEF Newsletter* 11, no. 3 (Summer 1981), 4, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 15: Folder 1; “CETA: Services to Hispanics and Women Summary Report,” July 1980, MALDEF Records, RG 4, Box 119: Folder 8.

102. “Legal Interns Hail from Texas and Illinois,” *MALDEF Newsletter* 7, no. 3 (July 1977): 7, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 15: Folder 1; MALDEF Annual Report, 1982–1983, 15, Ethnic Studies Library Serials Collection, University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, California; 1981 Proposal to Ford Foundation, 26, MALDEF Records, RG 4, Box 49: Folder 5.

103. Memo to MALDEF’s Board of Directors from Patricia Vazquez, April 24, 1976, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 14: Folder 1; MALDEF financial statement for year ending April 30, 1980, 5, MALDEF Records, RG 2, Box 13: Folder 1; Fiscal year reports, MALDEF Records, RG 4, Box 49: Folder 5; “RE: Chicana Rights Project,” memo from Mike Baller and Jane Couch to Virginia Martínez, March 3, 1982, MALDEF Records, RG 4, Box 49: Folder 5.

104. Vilma Martínez’s resignation letter to MALDEF founders, MALDEF Records, RG 4, Box 93: Folder 2. *Lau v. Nichols* was a case initiated by Chinese American students in San Francisco who claimed they were not receiving adequate bilingual education in school, which they argued they were entitled to under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. MALDEF collaborated with the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Educational Fund (PRLDEF) and the NAACP to urge the U.S. Supreme Court to uphold minority affirmative action admissions policies in the *Bakke* case. *Plyler v. Doe*, a ruling from the Supreme Court that declared undocumented children constitutionally guaranteed an education under the Fourteenth Amendment, was a major MALDEF victory. Velez, “MALDEF: An Historical Documentation and Political Analysis”; Mark Brilliant, “Color Lines: Civil Rights Struggles on America’s ‘Racial Frontier,’ 1945–1975” (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2002); “MALDEF’s Goal: A Fair Opportunity for Hispanics to Compete,” *Nuestro* 7, no. 6 (August 1983): 28; Evangelista, “Advocate for La Raza,” 38.

105. Martínez interview.

106. Estrada interview.

107. Chicana Rights Project Quarterly Report, January 1, 1979–March 30, 1979; Letter to Patricia Vazquez and Elsa Girón Nava from Texas state representative Irma Rangel, March 15, 1979, MALDEF Records, RG 5, Box 16: Folder 7.

108. See Mark Brilliant, “Color Lines,” and Zaragoza Vargas, *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton, NJ, 2005), for examples of how civil rights history can be revised and expanded when discussing the U.S. West and Southwest.