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CHICANA POWER AND PEDAGOGY

BY

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

This dissertation focuses on the impact of social movement participation in the lives of Chicana youth who participated in the March 2000 student mobilization against Proposition 21 in Los Angeles, California. In keeping with radical traditions in education, the research contextualizes Chicanas within a wider historical context by using a materialist theory of consciousness, culture and politics. Critical narrative interviews are used to document the pedagogical power of non-alienated social formations in the context of movement labor. The analysis points to the centrality of struggle in the political formation of identity and reasserts the political vision of Chicana pedagogy as the practice of social movement linked to the feminist evolution of Chicana youth.

*Dedicated to Kirina, Paloma, Aurora, Elena, Sara
and all the youth who made the 2000 No on 21 Campaign possible*

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Chapter 1

Introduction

*If situations cannot be created that enable the young to deal with feelings of being manipulated by outside forces, there will be far too little sense of agency among them. Without a sense of agency, young people are unlikely to pose significant questions, the existentially rooted questions in which learning begins---*Maxine Green, *The Dialectic of Freedom*

During the week of February 21st, 2000, thousands of high school students across California walked-out of school in protest against Proposition 21. This anti-gang initiative raised the level of surveillance and criminalization for urban youth of color to unprecedented new heights. The weeklong series of walkouts, known by youth organizers as “The Week of Rage,” challenged Californians to vote against the proposition by calling attention to the historical roots of the state’s education crisis and its fundamental connection to the growing prison-industrial complex.

Urban youth of color under the age of 18 were the backbone of anti-Proposition 21 resistance. Armed with the knowledge and experience from activism ranging from the War on Kuwait, the "No on 187" fight for immigrant rights, and the "No on 209 & 227" fights for affirmative action and bilingual education in California during the early 1990's, California youth were able to mobilize in ways that organized teachers were not. Thus, after weeks of planning, the Week of Rage stunned school personnel as thousands of students walked out of class, demanding a future with better schools not jails.

Anti-Proposition 21 youth actions first ranged from banner walks to cultural events in the summer and fall of 1999 by Third Eye Movement, a youth organization in San Francisco, which

channeled the energy of hip hop youth into the fight against police brutality.¹ Another youth organization in Concord, California, known as C-beyond, picketed Chevron and Hilton corporate offices, demanding an end to all funding for the initiative. Chevron pledged to give no additional support and the lack of response from Hilton promoted Third Eye Movement to follow up by occupying Hilton's Hotel lobbies in San Francisco ("History of the Youth," March 2000).

Conferences were another vital strategy in the anti-Proposition 21 campaign. "Upset the Setup," for example, organized by Critical Resistance Youth Force at the University of California at Berkeley, brought hundreds of south and bay area youth together to plan and strategize together. Then, in a show of strength, participants bused over to a Hilton Hotel in Oakland and insisted that the night manager deliver a letter to the hotel owner, stating the demands which were made persistently throughout the campaign: money for schools instead of prisons, prevention instead of incarceration, and higher pay for teachers instead of prison guards (ibid; Martínez, 2000).

In San Francisco and San Jose, Third Eye Movement, Youth United for Community Action (YUCA) and Critical Resistance Youth Force occupied the office buildings of yet another Proposition 21 funder, Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) while C-Beyond members delivered a brick to the manager in a symbolic action against the prisons its contribution would build. Not until hundreds of youth clogged PG&E phone lines, however, did the company pledge to donate to the No on 21 campaign (Pintado-Vertner, Fall 1999).

As voting day came nearer, calls for a series of statewide high-school walkouts began to emerge. Coordinating the walkouts and preparing youth to mobilize for them was thus the central aim of the January 29, 2000 "Schools Not Jails" conference at California Polytechnic University

¹ For footage of San Francisco's anti-Proposition 21 actions, visit: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dadsaBzOjYE>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uPkFvABs9HU>

in Pomona, California. Organized by LA-based Youth Organizing Communities (YOC), Ollin and the New Raza Left, an estimated 600 youth from all over the state converged for necessary trainings in community outreach, media, and security. The conference also provided extensive educational workshops, teach-ins, lectures, documentary viewings, discussions, art exhibits, and other creative forms of resistance, including the opportunity to protest at Governor Wilson's home in Century City² (See Appendix A).

Proposition 21

Officially known as the Gang Violence and Juvenile Crime Prevention Act, Proposition 21 was essentially a reintroduction of then Governor Pete Wilson's failed crime package bill of 1998. With key support from David LaBahn, then deputy director of California District Attorney's Association and former gang prosecutor in the traditionally republican stronghold of Orange County, California, Proposition 21 proposed significant changes to both the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems by increasing situations clearly linked to poor and working class youth of color.

Aside from adding longer sentences and new life terms for new offenses by adults, Proposition 21 required the imprisonment of 16 and 17 year olds convicted in adult courts to be sentenced in adult prisons. Even minors as young as 14 could be tried as adults for the crime of murder or enumerated sex offenses. Thus, if convicted, minors would not only be subject to the death penalty but sentenced to adult prisons where they are five times more likely to be raped,

² For footage of this protest, visit: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x5mED4ukNCg>

eight times more likely to commit suicide and fifty percent more likely to be attacked with a weapon (“Myths vs. Facts,” 2000; Kolhatkar, March 2000)

In addition, under Proposition 21, prosecutors rather than judges would have the power to decide whether or not to charge minors with crimes that required trial in adult courts. This put youth in a particularly vulnerable situation given that: (1) prosecutors are elected officials who capitalize on a “tough on crime” attitude for reelection and (2) prosecutors rely on official police reports to determine the charges waged against youth.

The measure also reduced the probation options available to young people and made it easier to jail those already on probation for crimes like theft, loitering, assault, and possession or sale of drugs. It also increased penalties for gang-related crimes, including death penalties for new gang offenses and year-long prison sentences for non-violent offenders convicted of vandalism, shoplifting and other non-threatening acts.

Central to the criminalization of urban youth of color was Proposition 21’s redefinition of gang-membership. According to the ballot initiative:

[C]riminal street gang’ means any ongoing organization, association, or group of three or more persons, whether formal or informal,...having a common name or common identifying sign or symbol, and whose members individually or collectively engage in or have engaged in a pattern of criminal gang activity [as determined by police] (California Secretary of State, 2008).

This provision, along with the reduced dollar threshold for felony vandalism like graffiti from \$50,000 worth of damage to \$400, was key to the criminalization of resistance by urban youth of color, already subject to intense racism by police. The Los Angeles Police Department’s notorious CRASH unit, for example, had by now been exposed for excessive abuse of powers on racialized youth. Yet Proposition 21 worsened racism against them by authorizing police to wire tap the homes of *suspected* gang members (Kolhatkar, March 2000). Those convicted of crimes,

including misdemeanor gang offenses, would also be required to register with police wherever they move. Moreover, they would be unable to petition to keep their records sealed thus disabling them from living a life free of association with crimes committed as young people (Pintado-Vertner, Fall 1999)

When Proposition 21 was introduced, the national incarceration rate had just reached 2 million—the highest in any industrialized country. The California penal system had the particular distinction of being home to the largest youth incarceration population in the nation. In fact, 80 percent of youth offenders of serious crimes in LA County were already being sent to the adult judicial system prior to Proposition 21 and twenty percent of juveniles were already being sentenced to adult prisons at Corcoran and Pelican Bay (“Myths vs. Facts,” 2000)

Yet, despite all this, the rate of juvenile violence had also been decreasing for more than eight years in California. Indeed, crimes by minors in California declined 30 percent over a ten-year period prior to the ballot initiative and arrests for juveniles for murder declined by nearly 50 percent (League of Women Voters, March 2000). Yet news reporting of crime stories committed by youth skyrocketed, perpetuating the image of juveniles as ruthless predators and in particular, urban culture as criminal (Giroux, 2006). The following lines from the opening paragraphs of Proposition 21 are a case in point:

The problem of youth and gang violence will, without active intervention, increase, because the juvenile population is projected to grow substantially by the next decade. According to the California Department of Finance, the number of juveniles in the crime-prone ages between 12 and 17, until recently long stagnant, is expected to rise 36 percent between 1997 and 2007 (an increase of more than one million juveniles) (California Secretary of State, 2008).

Thus, together with millions of dollars from corporations like Hilton, Chevron, Unocal, TransAmerica, Union Oil, Boeing, and Microsoft—all corporations with an interest in expanding

prison labor—supporters of Proposition 21 mounted an aggressive campaign that racialized a new generation of youth as perpetual suspects in the minds of California voters (Kolhatkar, March 2000).

Teaching From the Inside Out

I think the role of a consciously progressive educator is to testify constantly to his or her students his or her competence, love, political clarity, the coherence between what he or she says and does, his or her tolerance, his or her ability to lie with the different to fight against the antagonistic. It is to stimulate doubt, criticism, curiosity, questioning, a taste for risk taking, the adventure of creating” –Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the City

Six years prior to the No on 21 campaign, at the age of 20, I receive an emergency teaching credential and begin teaching in a bilingual third grade classroom with first and second generation Chicana(o)/Latina(o) children in Los Angeles. Eight weeks later, I found myself struggling to communicate to them an understanding of Proposition 187. Two years later, in the midst of Proposition 209, I was asked to coordinate a series of progressive staff development efforts in literacy. By 1998, when Proposition 227 appeared on the ballot, I authored a successful Title VII grant to help nurture a more critical understanding of teaching and learning school-wide. This included immersing myself completely in the preservation of our bilingual program. I look to the California Association for Bilingual Educators (CABE) for leadership, and found myself frustrated by their constant appeals for money to launch a media campaign designed to reach white voters. Angered by their incapacity to mobilize their own base and disconnected from any organized political groups in the city, I went local supermarkets with students and stood on the corner of every busy intersection, holding No on 227 signs and cheering wildly at the smallest show of public support.

The intensity of that time was magnified by the power of identity with my students, as I began to witness how my empowerment as a young Chicana was directly related to theirs. Yet no matter how hard I worked to provide a meaningful education, the onslaught of repressive policies proved no less brutal. In the end, I grew increasingly isolated and unable to grasp a solid reading of the complexities of power to explain not only the erosion of social provisions for the young but also the rising tide of repressive teaching policies and practices and my changing relationship with school administrators.

The power of that experience taught me that education alone will not change the world. One thing, however, remained clear: my struggle to change the material conditions of teaching had changed me. This told me that the depth of my own pedagogy was fundamentally tied to the political character of my subjectivity and that in order to continue teaching and learning in urban schools, I had to begin to make sense of the material, ideological, and subjective battles I encountered (Delissovoy & McLaren, 2006). And so I learned the meaning of leaving to stay (Freire, 1998).

In the Spring of 1999, after receiving my full credential in the mail, I resigned from teaching and began studying under the guidance of Dr. Antonia Darder. Within days of my first class, I found myself in a meeting with 50 other educators from across the city who recognized “Propositions 187, 209, and 227, were won because there was no significant social movement in education to unite the work of progressive educators [against] these measures” (California Consortium of Critical Educators, November 1988, p. 1). This was the California Consortium for Critical Educators (CCCE)—a group Dr. Darder had recently convened. Its formation was significant in that it helped disrupt the marginalization of oppositional teachers in CAFE, by

providing an ongoing forum to connect the work of progressive classroom teachers, teacher educators, and critical researchers in the field (See Appendix B).

That same semester, I was inspired by the words “multiracial united front” used by Robin Kelley (1997) to describe the work of LA’s Labor Community Strategy Center/Bus Rider’s Union. A few weeks later, in the summer of 1999, I interned with the organization and spent my days working toward the escalation of fare strikes against LA’s transportation authority in East Los Angeles. My participation there exposed me to a vast network of organized groups across the city, including the Coalition for Educational Justice (CEJ), whose initial work against high-stakes standardized exams in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) I was able to support with various colleagues from CCCE.

It was a simple email announcement on CCCE’s listserv that connected me to two youth organizers, both of whom participated in the coordination of various high school walkouts in the Bay Area, during the late 1990’s. By coincidence, one of the organizers, whose knowledge and skills were instrumental to the success of LA’s No on 21 campaign was enrolled at the same university where I was studying. We began an informal conversation as he cut stickers from a series of Xeroxed images on adhesive paper with a portable paper cutter. He handed me one, and immediately I was struck not just by the original artwork but also by the sheer ingenuity of its production.

Over the course of the next several months, Youth Organizing Communities (YOC) emerged from meetings with high school students in Whittier, East Los Angeles, Montebello and MidCity LA (See Appendix B). I became heavily involved with the work in South Whittier, where I lived for over 10 years. Regional meetings also gave me an opportunity to develop relationships with students from other areas.

The initial absence of institutional support for YOC gave new meaning to the resources my partner and I were able to afford as teachers. Our home in Northeast Los Angeles became a gathering place for late night work sessions, a place to host organizers from outside the area, a place to convene before and after marches, events or meetings. Our car became a vital resource as students across the city struggled with transportation. Our laptop and dial-up internet connection were valuable tools for production and our cell phone was one of YOC's media contact numbers throughout the Week of Rage.

My presence as an educator was instrumental for youth who were struggling with their parents' concerns over their children's political involvement. My participation in the group helped legitimize the tremendous amount of time and energy students were spending away from home. Home visits, phone calls and frequent communication with the families of core students became an important part of my everyday activity.

My relationship with other organizations also became key to the work. I presented the work of CEJ at the "Schools Not Jails" conference in Pomona. YOC students attend CCCE study groups and general meetings. Another YOC student intern presented at the Labor/Community Strategy Center and delivered a major address at the Democratic National Convention (DNC) protest later that year. YOC also started attending BRU and CEJ rallies, and vice-versa, eventually creating a network of organizations vital to the political development of YOC-involved youth.

For the most part, however, my involvement in YOC was much like that of the students: learning the nuts-n-bolts of grassroots organizing on a shoe-string budget. This included attending meetings, making banners, painting signs, coordinating cultural events, providing

logistical support for protests, marching, fundraising, banner-dropping and wheat-pasting throughout the city.

Lessons From the No on 21 Campaign

The details of my participation, however, pale in comparison to the feeling of that moment. I remember the sheer excitement of meaningful work with youth, who brought a powerful degree of agency and creativity to the work. I remember the thrill of connection that came with seeing No on 21 images splashed across freeway underpasses, telephone poles, bus benches, trash cans, street signs, and school property that gave new life to the urban territory so familiar to me.

There was also the deep satisfaction of seeing over a thousand students pour out of their schoolyards during The Week of Rage. The enormous will students put forth to break free was itself a powerful lesson. There were stories of endless threats and tactics by administrators and teachers to prevent students from leaving school grounds. Middle school students in East Los Angeles, in fact, dug with their hands and nails to crawl beneath the barbed wire fences that kept them trapped.

The entire experience gave me a taste of freedom that I have never forgotten. Indeed, such meaningful, embodied activity enabled all those involved, including myself, to break the alienation of schooling by creating the opportunity to “battle with schools” (Delissovoy & McLaren, 2006). The confrontation effectively unleashed a suppressed discourse that legitimized the rage of thousands of urban youth across the state, as well as created the conditions not only to examine the ideological and material conditions that had a negative impact on their lives and communities, but more importantly, the chance to do something about it.

Hence, it is the pedagogical dimensions of that work that are of interest to this study. Indeed, as Paulo Freire argues, “it is impossible to organize without educating and *being* educated by the very process of organizing” (Holst, 2002, p. 80). Meetings, for example, became alternative pedagogical sites where questions pertinent to the lives of students mattered. The political work students engaged with on their own campuses became educational problems for dialogue. Their engagement with knowledge-producing processes effectively revealed the capacity of youth to labor and produce knowledge, thereby empowering social agency in the service of social change.

The No on 21 campaign also disrupted the segregated social environments in which many of the students were immersed. While distinct youth subcultures existed within YOC alone, it was work done in coalition with other organizations that created meaningful opportunities for different students to learn from one another. In this way, social movement space, unlike schools, provided the important opportunity for collective labor among people of different classes, genders, sexualities, and ages.

Part of the desegregating impact included the opportunity for teachers and students to overcome the student/teacher contradiction. The No on 21 campaign made cooperation between students and teachers as co-participants in the creation of a democratically organized solidarity with the potential to inform “new collectivities, commitments and...mobility that critical teachers should study and take their cues from” (Delissovoy, 2008, p. 175). This was certainly the case as I experienced it. Indeed, it was students who often countered the bourgeois outlook of adult organizers and illuminated the path toward lateral social arrangements. Thus, while my relationship with students may have challenged their own notions of what it meant to be a

teacher, their powerful degree of agency and fundamentally new way of conceiving the world challenged me.

Consistent with Armando Trujillo's notion that the Chicano walkouts of 1968 were a "watershed moment for identity construction," the Week of Rage created an opportunity for post-movement Chicana/os to critically appropriate the term for themselves. In so doing, students were able tie the construction of their own identity with historical meaning. The youth were historical actors, within a particular political moment; one in which they their collective strength generated renewed expressions of Chicana/o Power.

And as a consequence of their political actions against schools, students were able to develop a reading of power that facilitated their survival as students. The ability to appropriate information critically, for example, enabled students to take control of their learning and see new opportunities not only in schools but in their own lives. Their empowered sense of social agency and subjectivity thus allowed students to see themselves *in* social situations "rather than as the material of a purely instrumental procedure" (Delissovoy & McLaren, 2006, p. 80). For some, this meant the difference between dropping out and graduating. For others, it meant continuing with their education beyond high school. In either case, positivist readings of success and achievement were disrupted with collective notions of identity and community well-being.

The entire experience convinced me that even the briefest engagement with social movement work can do what a lifetime of schooling cannot, no matter how critical the content. The lasting impact of the experience on me is certainly undeniable given that, as a consequence of my own participation in the No on 21 campaign and politically organized activity in general, I evolved as a critical educator with a democratic imperative tied to the construction of my own identity as a Chicana (Delissovoy & McLaren, 2006). Instead of chasing the illusion of equal

education, I learned to focus now on developing my own revolutionary praxis, where theory in action produces knowledge in the interest of working class struggle (Allman et al., 2008).

Participation in social movement work also made clear that while education is a significant part of social change, it is what education does in the service of social movement that gives it meaning. Thus, it is the actions of the movements that are radical, not the education itself (Holst, 2002). Had I a clearer understanding of this relationship during the No on 21 campaign, I would have seized the opportunity to teach the theoretical language I was developing as a first year graduate student. This could have helped anchor students' politics in an ideology of critique that would have served them well beyond the life of the campaign (Darder, 1991). Nevertheless, my role as an educator in active collaboration with students, who continue to be on the "leading edge not merely of social movements but also of critical pedagogy," has never been clearer (Delissovoy, 2008, p. 175).

For one, having learned the costs of acting alone, I knew the search for political comradeship as a graduate student would be an essential first task. The difference this time was that I had acquired not only enough knowledge and skills to help create new communities of action and support, but enough experience to recognize my own sites of fear and courage in the process of organizing. Thus, when conditions on campus suddenly warranted the activation of organized student activity, I knew I would have to navigate the familiar territory of interior struggle with new strength. Externally, it meant reengaging social movement differently by taking an active role in the construction of knowledge and movement practices.

The power of such lived experiences has given me the opportunity to see myself subjectively, as a collective being in a world that changes as a consequence of my own activity in it. In this way, "...the emergence of human beings as authentic historical subjects is at the same

time the emergence of the world itself” (Freire as cited in Delissovoy, 2008, p. 443). Hence, I also learned to think differently about the world, as a result of the change that I had undergone through participation in movement work.

The privilege of sustained political mentorship throughout these years has also deepened my awareness for the different ways we enter the terrain of social struggle. The key for me is that we that we keep evolving as political beings by engaging continually in forms of collective resistance to challenge the horizon of our praxis. Thus, in the same way Chicanas historically have made their own self-determination the object of a political practice they called Chicana Power! In similar ways, I saw was that the youth were leading the way to future understandings of ourselves, as individual and collective beings (Blackwell, 2003; Garcia, 1989).

Significance of the Study

While the declining support for social provisions like education and an increase in punitive social policies to address poverty (which rely on police, courts and the prison system) clearly signal the systematic disempowerment of youth, they also reveal the recognition that any significant challenge to the existing order can be most vigorously advanced by them—particularly those subject to some of the deepest socioeconomic contradictions in the nation. California’s recent approval of the Safe Neighborhoods Act, known as Proposition 6 is a telling example. Not only does Proposition 6 take youth criminalization to new heights by increasing penalties and creating new crimes for gang participation beyond Proposition 21, it does so at a time in history when Chicana/o student activism is on the rise (Cho & Gorman, 2006; Delissovoy, 2008).

Yet little attention has been given to the impact of changing material conditions in the lives of today's Chicana³ youth. For one, the global market imperatives of advanced capitalism have intensified US assimilationist efforts. During the 1980's, for example, the homogenization of all people of Latin American descent via ethnic labels like Hispanic or Latina were promoted extensively by the US Census Bureau and corporate-owned media. According to Marta Gimenez, these labels "work not only to solidify the negative stereotyping associated with that group but also to hide and deemphasize both the differences and similarities across enclaves" (as cited in McLaren & Jaramillo, 2007, p. 101). The inorganic nature of such labels thus alienates Chicana youth from their local culture and history.

Today's Chicana youth population also represents a wider variation across class and other social dimensions than ever before. As Maxine Baca Zinn (1980) predicted nearly 30 years ago, "we can speculate that occupation, residence, education, and all of the components of socioeconomic status will contribute to differences in total social identity configurations of Chicanos and Chicanas" (p. 23). This includes the enormous impact of generational differences with respect to cultural knowledge, language use and identification processes (Zavella, 1991).

Indeed, heterogeneity is critical to understanding the experiences of Chicana youth today (Arredondo, 2003). Aside from the complex cultural forces perpetuated by corporate-owned media, more varied settlement patterns among Chicanas and increased immigration rates among poor and middle class women of Mexican/Latin-American descent, there exists a growing population of Chicanas in the professional ranks of the labor force including business, politics, and higher education.

³ While the term Chicana is used women of Latin American descent throughout the US who recognize a shared history of US imperial and colonial domination with women of Mexican ancestry, its use throughout this study refers specifically to women of Mexican descent.

Still, Chicanas are twice as likely to live in poverty as non-Hispanic women (Gonzalez, F., May 8, 2008). In fact, poverty among Chicanas is more prevalent today than when the first shouts of Chicana Power! were heard. They also continue to serve as surplus sources for cheap labor particularly in areas such as building and grounds cleaning, maintenance, and food preparation (ibid). Yet unlike the Chicanas of yesterday, 23 percent of Chicana youth today drop-out of school (Denner & Guzman, 2006). Their labor power, moreover, is increasingly exploited by a growing for-profit prison system and the expanding military reach of US empire.

The material impact of such conditions has not only reorganized the subjection of Chicana youth, it has regenerated powerful discourses resulting in specific forms of internalized oppression. Thus, while there are more Chicanas than ever before (15.2 percent of the US population), their rate of attempted suicide exceeds that of any other group (Editorial, “Young Latinas,” July 21, 2006). This is particularly true of Chicana youth with at least one immigrant parent.

Research, however, has largely overlooked what one New York Times editorial called “the national phenomenon of...the misunderstood and endangered young Latina” (ibid, p. 1). In fact, according to Richard Frye (October 7, 2009), “the labor market and schooling difficulties of young black men have received much more public attention than have those of young Hispanic women” despite the fact that Chicana/Latina youth are more likely to be out of school and/or work (19 percent versus 16 percent) (p. 2). This is not to engage in a senseless battle over oppressions, but it does underscore the extent to which the lives of young Chicanas are largely ignored.

Fortunately, Chicana/Latina feminist scholars have attempted to overcome the invisibility of contemporary Chicanas, particularly in relationship to schooling (Bernal 2001; Elenes, A.

1997, 2001, 2002; Elenes, A., et al, 2001; Villenas, 2006a). These scholars have contributed greatly to the field of Chicana/Latina feminism and education by (1) documenting the unique schooling experiences of Chicanas/Latinas (2) challenging deficit notions of Chicanas in schools and (3) helping develop educational borderland scholarship in the hopes of transforming the educational experience of Chicanas today (Villenas, et al., 2006b).

Much of this work attempts to identify the cultural resources Chicanas use to navigate oppression and succeed academically. The term “Chicana feminist pedagogies,” in fact, largely refers to pedagogical designs that “embrace Chicana and *Mexicana* ways of knowing” (Bernal 2001, p. 623). These “pedagogies of the home,” Bernal argues, “allow Chicanas to draw on their own cultures and sense of self to resist domination along the axes of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation” (ibid). Notions such as *la facultad* (intuition) (Anzaldua, 1987), *educación* (moral education) (Godinez, 2006), *consejos* (advice) (Villenas, 2006b), *pensadoras* (active thinkers) (Godinez, 2006), and *sobrevivencia* (Villenas, 2006a), for example, are then used to challenge assimilationist paradigms and highlight culturally-specific modes of Chicana resistance. This includes the concept of the borderlands as an agentic terrain that enables Chicanas to transform oppressive educational environments (Elenes, 1997, 2002; Villenas, 2006a; Bernal, 2001).

While such conceptualizations have indeed proven useful to the construction of counter-narratives within the literature of Chicana/o schooling, the current discourse of Chicana pedagogy fails to recognize that inequality in education takes place within the larger context of class struggle. It is instead rooted in a postmodern vision where the gendered subjectivity and border existence of Chicanas is largely limited to private constructions, rather than public outcomes (Deutsch, 1994). For one, it fails to link the experience of social movement to the

feminist evolution of Chicanas, thereby ignoring the pedagogical processes inherent in social movement work. It also mistakes the condition of social fragmentation as inherently revolutionary, rather than theorizing a viable response to the conditions that produce it (González, M. 2004). The result is a lack of historical vision that abstracts Chicanas from the very anti-capitalist struggle in which the identity was born.

Given such limitations, this study attempts to situate the discourse of Chicana pedagogy within a historical materialist framework that upholds Chicana Power! as a *lived* anti-colonial, anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist force. It thus resituates Chicana-centered practices of resistance in history. This makes emphasizing the fundamentally pedagogical dimensions of Chicana feminism as the *practice* of social movement possible. It also reclaims the revolutionary intent of Chicana identity. Thus, unlike the existing literature on Chicana pedagogy, the focus of this research is on a collective sense of identity and agency in the historical moment versus individual academic achievements or coping mechanisms used to make oppressive situations bearable.

This does not signal any opposition to past interventions or support services informed by the work of Chicana feminists in education. Nor am I dismissing the impact of such work on the lives of Chicana educators or students like myself. On the contrary, what I am trying to advance here is a recommitment to Chicana Power! as a transformative political project that prepares, in this case, Chicanas to engage in social transformation, through an embodied sense of co-creation in history (Allman et al., 2008; Allman, 2001; Delissovoy, 2008). Hence, the following questions are central to this dissertation:

1. How does the process of political organizing function as a critical pedagogy?
2. How does social movement participation empower the social agency of Chicana youth?

3. How does Chicana feminism as a product of social movement inform a pedagogy for young Chicanas?

It is my hope then that this study will provide not only a glimpse into the kind of pedagogical processes that are fundamental to the political formation of Chicana youth but also revitalize our commitment to a vision where Chicanas can again change a world that has already changed them.

Chapter 2

The Condition of Contemporary Chicana Youth

The conditions of contemporary Chicana youth are directly linked to the historical conditions of advanced capitalism and its objectifying force in the everyday life of Chicanas and their community. Increasingly complex economic, cultural, and social forms within this arrangement, distort opportunities for meaningful collective engagement which ensures not only the continued subordination of Chicanas within a globally stratified system of labor but the estrangement of Chicana youth from their own political and intellectual agency (Mohanty, 2006).

This chapter attempts to situate Chicanas historically by providing a sustained analysis of dehumanizing processes in the lives of Chicana youth. Particular focus is given to the educational policies and practices that pervade the everyday life of Chicanas and perpetuate their alienation—a condition that necessitates the ongoing construction of an anti-capitalist critique linked to the existential experience of Chicanas and the general well being of the Chicana/o community.

Contemporary Demographics of Chicana Youth

Of the estimated 46 million Latinos in the United States, over two thirds (66%) are of Mexican origin or descent (Pew, 2010). This includes Chicanas/os living in the southwest prior to forced incorporation at the end of the Mexican-American War in 1848 (Anzaldúa, 1987). Since then, Mexican immigration patterns to the US have fueled the growth of the Chicana(o) population. These immigration patterns have been shaped by (1) the insatiable appetite of the U.S. labor market for immigrant workers in areas such as railroads, agriculture, mines, farms, stockyards and more recently slaughterhouses, poultry plants and restaurants; and (2) global

economic restructuring efforts by the US that have intensified class divisions on both sides of the border (Acuña, 2003; Suarez-Orozco, M. & Pérez, 2002). More than 25 percent of Mexican immigrants in the US, for example, arrived in the first half of the 1990's when NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) effectively liberalized trade between the US, Mexico, and Canada.

Currently, over a third (35 percent) of the Chicana(o)/Latina(o)⁴ (ChCh/LL) population, is under the age of 18 (Llagas, 2003; Ramirez & de la Cruz, June 2002). In fact, this accounts for most of the growth in the US youth population, with 20 percent of youth between the age of 10-20 forecasted to be ChCh/LL by the end of this year (Rodriguez, M. & Morrobel, D., 2004). This is quadruple their five percent share in 1970 (Frye, October 7, 2009). By 2050, that number is expected to increase to 31 percent (Synyder & Sigmund, 2006).

While the vast majority (80 percent) of ChCh/LL youth are US born, 18 percent are immigrants (Brindis et al., 2002e). Indeed, 48 percent of these are children with at least one immigrant parent. Another 35 percent are the US-born offspring of US-born parents (Brindis et al., 2002b). Moreover, undocumented ChCh/LL youth under the age of 24 are estimated to constitute 20 percent of the total undocumented population (Gonzalez, R., 2009).

Regardless of legal status, however, Chicana(o) youth have the youngest median age of all Latino groups (Brindis et al., 2002d; Ramirez & de la Cruz, June 2002). Over half of their population is under the age of 24 and 37 percent is under the age of 18. Thus, they are both the largest and youngest racialized group in the US today (Llagas, 2003; Ramirez & de la Cruz, June 2002). This effectively makes Chicana youth the largest group of racialized women.

According to Denner & Guzman (2006), 15.2 percent of the country's female youth population is

⁴ The term Chicana(o)/Latina(o), appearing hereafter as ChCh/LL, is used in cases when the data for Chicanas has been conflated with that of Chicanos or Latinas/Latinos in general.

Chicana/Latina. Twenty-two percent of Chicanas/Latinas under the age of 24 are native born. Another 12 percent are immigrants, 33 percent of which arrived between 1990-1999 (Gonzalez, F., May 8, 2008).

Chicanas and Youth Development

Regrettably, research in youth development has largely ignored the reality of such demographic trends. Thus the particular impact of objectifying forces in the development of racialized youth from poor and working class backgrounds are largely excluded (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002). What is generalizable, however, are the dramatic physical, social and cognitive changes youth across cultures experience as they transition from childhood to adulthood (Eccles & Gootman, 2002).

For one, physical sexual maturity has generally been achieved by this age, with girls maturing approximately two years before boys (Diver, 1990). The basis for intellectual functioning is also complete as youth develop the capacity for abstract reasoning. While intellectual growth continues throughout adulthood, the ability to perceive oneself historically by understanding how the past, present and future are related begins to unfold. According to Diver (ibid), “[m]uch of the political activism often found in later adolescence is attributable to the fact that adolescents can not only perceive that things could be better, but they are equipped to perceive that changes initiated now could perhaps make life better in the future” (p. 191). Hence, the capacity of youth to engage political thought and conceptualize history as possibility.

Relationships also take on new significance during this stage. As bonds with parents begin to loosen, youth begin to strengthen their attachment to peers in attempt to push beyond the family and enter the world of adults. Friends thus become important support systems for

youth, providing spaces where they can engage conflicting values and issues. This does not, however, preclude the need for meaningful interaction with adults in the lives of youth. On the contrary, supportive relationships with adults can begin to open up a world of life-affirming possibilities for young people and is an essential feature of healthy youth development.

It is this process of individuation that makes youth a particularly precarious experience. As youth struggle to become unique individuals, they are forced to build a future for themselves based on whatever foundation they have inherited. This includes the particular conditions of history in which they are born. According to developmental psychologist Erik Erikson (1967), the consolidation of an identity that successfully “links the actuality of a living past with that of a promising future” is the primary challenge of youth (p. 310). Until “all earlier identifications are assembled,” Erikson argues, “and the young person meets [her] society and [her] historical era,” the process of identity consolidation is complete (p. 312). Hence, all youth are confronted with the challenge of understanding who they are, from where they originated, and where they are headed.

Yet the persistence of racism and intensifying social divisions based on class, gender, sexuality, physical abilities, and citizenship complicate the process of individuation for Chicana youth. While undocumented Chicanas, for example, are entitled to a free K-12 public education in the US, they are essentially barred from participation in society as adults. Graduation from high school, thus, presents considerable challenges for undocumented youth. Unlike their native-born peers who enter the legal threshold of adulthood at age 18, for example, legal challenges for undocumented Chicanas begin at around age 16 when work permits and driving licenses are denied. Consider also the inability to vote and perform such mundane activities like going to bars, clubs, renting a movie, or purchasing a cell phone (Gonzalez, R., 2009).

Life after high school, moreover, often disconnects undocumented Chicanas from the very social support systems that cultivated their early development. Unable to work legally, or receive financial assistance for college after high school, despite having higher rates of achievement, leadership, and civic participation than their native-born peers, undocumented Chicanas are often left to choose from a limited range of undesirable options—one of which is to work under the same exploitable conditions as their parents. Also significant is the ever-present threat of deportation, which obligates undocumented Chicanas to avoid trouble at all costs and negotiate risky situations carefully (ibid; Perez, 2009).

Given that social identity is a key aspect of youth development, disconnection from key institutions and social systems only aggravate the issues and contradictions Chicana youth experience. This includes conflicting cultural definitions for bicultural subjects in a field of struggle described by Darder (1995b) as “a contested terrain of difference” (p. 2) where Chicanas must engage relations of power in order to challenge “definitions of truth, rules of normalcy, and notions of legitimacy which often defy and denigrate the cultural existence and lived experiences” of Chicana youth (ibid). When the challenge of identity is unsuccessfully met, they are susceptible to commodified forms of identity.

As the sites of entertainment, advertising and education converge, youth occupy an entirely new place in the social order. Once proclaimed as innocent and in need of protection, they are now viewed as one of the central pillars of the consumer economy and increasingly are exposed to market concepts and relations in public spheres and areas of life that were once typically heralded as a safe haven from market values (Giroux, 2009, 35).

The challenge of wrestling with the issues and contradictions of this particular historical period makes the question of purpose particularly salient for Chicana youth. According to Damon, Memom and Bronk (2003), the development of purpose, or “generalized intention to

accomplish something that is at once meaningful to the self and of consequence to the world...” is essential for healthy youth development (p. 121). In fact, they argue that the need to transcend the self through meaningful social activity is a defining need in the lives of young people. Those who have the opportunity to do so, they note, exhibit an array of pro-social behaviors, including deep moral commitment and high self-esteem. Those who don’t, on the other hand, can experience a profound sense of disconnection, isolation, and alienation.

The role of meaningful purpose in self-development also entails generative consequences for society (ibid, p. 126). In other words, every generation of youth has regenerative significance by choosing either to remain loyal to the social order they inherit or “submit to revolutionary correction” the abuses of the existing social system (Erikson, 1967, p. 134). Hence the experience of youth today sets the stage for the future.

Racialization and Chicanas

One of the most violent consequences of racialization for Chicanas throughout their history in the US has been segregation (Suarez-Orozco & Páez, 2002). Although traditional settlement areas are beginning to change, 57 percent of all Chicana/o youth continue to live in the West (Brindis et al., 2002e). In 1999, half of all ChCh/LL youth between the ages of 15 and 19 were, indeed, concentrated in California (34%) and Texas (22%) alone (ibid). Unlike their parent’s generation, however, the majority (54%) of ChCh/LL youth now reside in suburbs (ibid). Another forty-five percent reside in urban centers (US Census Bureau, 2000).

Another consequence is the concentration of Chicana adults in low-wage, low-skilled jobs (Alemán, 2006; US Census Bureau, 2000). In 2003, 22 percent of ChCh/LL adults reported working in service occupations (Ramirez & de la Cruz, June 2002). Adult Chicanas/Latinas,

moreover, are more likely than non-Chicanas/Latinas to be employed in blue-collar occupations such as building, grounds cleaning and maintenance (10% versus 2%); food preparation and serving related jobs (9% versus 6%); production (8% versus 4%); and personal care and service occupations (7% versus 5%). Most Chicanas/Latinas (21 percent), however, continue to work in office and administrative support positions—a figure similar to that of non-Chicana/Latina women (22 percent) (Gonzalez, F., May 8, 2008).

Most striking is the fact that while ChCh/LL have one of the highest labor force participation rates across groups; yet, they still have the lowest median wage (Kochhar, 2006). In 2000, for example, poverty among the ChCh/LL community heightened despite an 80 percent labor participation rate (Acuña, 2003). More recently, in 2006, ChCh/LL made no significant gains in wages, despite their historically low unemployment rate of 5.2 percent (Kochhar, 2006).

With regard to Chicanas/Latinas specifically, labor force participation rates are highest among those who are native-born (64% versus 59 %). The total labor force participation rate among Chicanas/Latinas (59%), however, is slightly less than that of other women (61%) (Gonzalez, F., May 8, 2008). Still, full time Chicana/Latina workers earn less than non-Chicanas/Latinas who work full time, averaging \$460 per week compared to \$615. Native-born Chicanas/Latinas, on the other hand, earn an average of \$540 per week compared to an average \$400 per week by Chicana/Latina immigrants (ibid). Still, Chicanas/Latinas (20%) are twice as likely to live in poverty as non-Chicanas/Latinas (11%) (ibid).

The material impact of such gendered exploitation rests on the backs of Chicana(o) children--the fastest growing population of poor children today. Of the 35.7 percent of US children living in poverty (the highest rate of any industrialized nation)—31 percent are Latino (Wright, Chau, & Aratani, January 2010). Of these, 35 percent are Chicana(o) (Alemán, 2006).

Not surprisingly, immigrant ChCh/LL families have higher rates of poverty than non-ChCh/LL families headed by native born parents (Fry, November 2003). Nonetheless, poverty rates are high for US born ChCh/LL as well. Third and subsequent generation ChCh/LL children, for example, are shown to have a poverty rate of 28 percent (Brindis et al., 2002c). Those in two-parent families also have the highest poverty rate (21 percent) across all ethnic groups (ibid).

The economic situation for Chicano families thus compels Chicana youth to work (Cammarota, 2008). According to Richard Frye (October 7, 2009) of the Pew Hispanic Center, the percentage of working Chicana/Latina youth between the ages of 16-29 has gone from 40 percent in 1970 to 54 percent in 2007. Within those 30 years, Chicana/Latina youth employment (including employment by the military) has propelled the increase in the number of working ChCh/LL youth in general. This effectively makes schooling a subsidiary activity for a significant number of Chicanas, many of whom are traditionally expected to assume responsibilities for domestic work at an early age. Thus, whether paid or unpaid, the pressure for many Chicanas to contribute economically to the family can be overwhelming (Cammarota, 2004).

Again, generational differences are significant here. For one, thirty-eight percent of all immigrant ChCh/LL youth in the 1990's worked more than 34 hours a week. This effectively made immigrant ChCh/LLs the highest paid workers in the youth labor market by the turn of the century (Fry & Lowell, May 28, 2002). Indeed, forty-four percent of first-generation ChCh/LL, ages 16-19, worked full-time in the 90's compared to less than 13 percent of second-generation ChCh/LLs—a figure that is similar to that of white youth. The consequence is such that while

immigrant ChCh/LL youth constitute the highest paid workers in the teen labor market, less than a quarter manage to enroll in school (Fry, November 2003).

Native-born ChCh/LL, on the other hand, enter the youth job market in significantly fewer numbers. As a whole, they are paid less and experience higher rates of unemployment than first-generation ChCh/LL (ibid). Unlike the first-generation, however, 70 percent of native-born ChCh/LL teens are in school and a quarter of them are working and studying at the same time (Fry & Lowell, May 28, 2002).

The tendency for higher levels of education among second generation ChCh/LL youth means that by the age of 25 they are earning substantially more than their immigrant counterparts (Fry, November 2003). Nevertheless, their earnings still lag behind those of other native born, second-generation adults with similar education levels. Earnings for third and later generations of ChCh/LL, for example, are no more significant, when compared with second-generation workers (Fry & Lowell, May 28, 2002). What the lack of education and skills among ChCh/LL immigrants does is systematically reproduce a constant supply of youthful, low-skilled immigrant labor.

The current recession has only intensified Chicana(o) youth's struggle for economic survival. The general youth unemployment rate, for example, is 25.5 percent—the highest unemployment rate for youth since the government began collecting such information in 1948 (Rampell, 2009). With unemployment almost triple that of the general population (9 percent), Chicana youth find themselves competing for jobs with higher-skilled, more experienced workers. Half of college graduates under the age of 25, for example, are currently employed in jobs that do not require college degrees (ibid). Moreover, the unwillingness or inability of older workers to retire from the job market only worsens the situation. Thus, Chicanas today face

grueling competition in a shrinking job market where youth job seekers exceed openings by record ratios.

Policies and Practices of Chicana Schooling

Critical education theorists have consistently argued that while schools have traditionally been promoted as equalizing institutions, they function primarily as sites for the reproduction of class divisions (Aronowitz, 2004, 2008; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; McLaren, 2007; Willis, 1977). Much of this research shows that one of the implications of inequality for subordinate populations is the construction of racialized subjectivities, through the production of educational discourses that naturalize the unequal distribution of economic and social rewards (Aronowitz, Summer 2004, 2008; Darder & Torres, 2004; McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005). The guise of schools as neutral allocators of future rewards also creates a situation where Chicanas and other marginalized youth populations are scapegoated as the cause of institutional failure (Williams, 1986). What's more, racialized interpretations of policy outcomes is itself part of a patriarchal discourse that perpetuates the economic and cultural violence of neocolonial relations. Noah Delissovoy (2008) argues that these masculinist formations

...depend on a sense of the right and good as the property of the strict father, the image of whom is projected into the institutional authority of the school itself. Crucially, then, the gendered nature of these school processes is not separate from their class or racial dimensions—instead the very masculinism of these formations is the key to their operation as class-racial offenses (p. 75).

Hence, the institutional reality of schools is intrinsically tied to the gendered restratification of labor that continues to render the lives of Chicanas meaningless.

Historical Overview

Historically, the reproduction of gendered class relations among Chicanas in schools has been operationalized through “Americanization” programs that claim to remedy academic underachievement of students from subordinate cultures. In reality, however, the patriotic intent of “Americanization” works to suppress class-consciousness and self-guided political action among oppressed groups by assimilating poor and nonwhite students into a socially divided labor system (Galicía, 2007)

Efforts to “Americanize” Mexican children in segregated schools during the early twentieth century, for example, effectively silenced arguments related to the exploitive economic conditions shaping their lives (Fernández & Schauffler, 2004). In Los Angeles alone, the value of manufacturing goods rose from \$15 million in 1899 to \$417 million in 1923. Substantial growth was also taking place in areas such as agriculture, real estate, construction and transportation (Gonzalez, G., 1974). Mexican students were thus tracked within the education system and districts built programs to teach or train students for gendered labor. Chicanas, for instance, were taught sewing, home-making, childcare or knitting while males were taught how to work with wood, repair cars or do farm work. Only a few were allowed to take the academic courses available to Anglo children (Ruiz, 2003)

By the mid-1930's, the segregation of Mexican students was under attack. As labor shortages began to grow and tensions like those of the Zoot Suit Riots in California intensified, a new generation of Mexicanos, many of them distinguished World War II veterans, began demanding equal rights and economic opportunities (Wollenberg, 1974). Added to this was the increased presence of formal organizations like George Sanchez' American Council of Spanish-Speaking people (ACSSP), the GI Forum, the Community Service Organization (CSO), and the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) as well as the important work of El

Congreso de Pueblos de Hablan Española, a working class Chicana(o) civil rights assembly organized by two foremothers of the Chicana Movement, Luisa Morena and Josefina Fierro de Bright (Acuña, 2004; Ruíz, 1998).

By the end of World War II, however, Mexican parents began to take action in order to desegregate public schools on the mainland. Many of these protests took place in California, where the Mexican population was significant. Cities like Riverside, Mendota, San Bernardino, Santa Ana and Ontario thus began dealing with growing protests against segregation (Gonzalez, G., 1974).

Several of these community struggles were waged in court. In the case of *Alvarez v. Owen* (1931), 75 Mexican students gained the legal right to attend school with 95 Anglo students in the Lemon Grove School District, near the San Diego/Mexico border. In 1947, Felicitas Mendez, a native woman of Puerto Rico and her husband Gonzalo Mendez, a tenant farmer in Westminster, along with five other parents decided to challenge the segregation of Mexican students in Westminster, Garden Grove, El Modeno and Santa Ana. The *Mendez v. Westminster School District* ruling not only ended legal segregation in California, it also proved valuable to desegregation cases in Texas (*Delgado v. Bastrop Independent School District*, 1948) and Arizona (*Gonzalez vs. Sheely*, 1951). In addition, much of Judge McCormick's ideas were reflected several years later in Judge Earl Warren's 1954 landmark *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision.

Nevertheless, large urban districts like Los Angeles continued to circumvent the law and operate separate schools. The situation intensified in the years after the Mendez decision as the Chicana(o) population grew and became increasingly urbanized. Consequently, the number of Chicana(o) children attending de facto segregated schools steadily increased.

By 1960, Chicana(o) continued to encounter dismal educational and economic opportunities. Only 13 percent of all Chicana(o) in 1960 had a high school education and less than 6 percent attended college (Ramirez, I., 1997). The majority of schools attended by Chicana(o) were poor with inadequate facilities and an inferior curriculum, which confined Chicanas(os) into a rigid tracking system away from college prep courses and toward gendered vocational training or military enrollment. As a consequence, Chicana(o) youth were systematically barred from accessing the knowledge and skills necessary for their self and social empowerment.

With the Civil Rights Movements in full swing, however, Chicana(o) communities in the US began to challenge the assimilative politics of “Americanization” directly. This emerging militancy of Chicana(o) youth primarily in the southwest emphasized self-determination and empowerment through working class community struggles. Together, they exposed the limits of “Americanization” ideals by voicing their collective experiences as an internally colonized population. Thus, Chicana(o) youth challenged notions of “equal access,” “freedom,” and “democracy,” with direct demands for cultural freedom, integrity and equal educational rights (Ramirez, I., 1997).

Since 1968, the ChCh/LL student population has soared from 2 million to 6.9 million in forty years—a growth rate of 245 percent (Orfield & Lee, August 2007). California’s ChCh/LL student population alone increased by 2 million, while Florida experienced an unparalleled 614 percent growth in its ChCh/LL student enrollment rate (Frankenburg et al., 2003). Already, ChCh/LLs comprise 19.2 percent of the US public school population (Snyder, 2006b). The majority of ChCh/LL in Grades K-12 are from immigrant backgrounds (Suarez-Orozco, C., et

al., 2004). By 2030, ChCh/LL youth are expected to comprise at least a quarter of the high school population nationwide (Lara & Gitanjali, 2001; Orfield, 2002).

Such demographic shifts have intensified the segregation of Chicana youth. For instance, since 1993 the number of public schools with a 90-95 percent racialized student population increased from 5,498 to 10,135 (Fry, August 30, 2007). According to Gary Orfield and Lee Chungmei (January 2005) of the Harvard Civil Rights Project, more than 60 percent of ChCh/LL students attend high poverty schools. In fact, schools with 90 percent poverty rates or more are 76 percent ChCh/LL and more than one-third of ChCh/LL youth are reported to attend intensely segregated schools (Orfield, 2001). This phenomenon is especially true in the West and Northeastern states of the country. In Western states, 37 percent of ChCh/LL students are in 90 to 100 percent minority schools. In the Northeast, that figure is over 45 percent (Frankenburg et al., 2003).

Worsening matters is an accompanying growth in the segregation of ChCh/LL students by language. ChCh/LL are not only isolated by both ethnicity and poverty, but “showing significant isolation by language status creating three dimensions of separation and isolation for those children” (Orfield & Lee, January 2005). The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) is a prime example. Here, seventy percent of the entire student body is ChCh/LL (Suarez-Orozco, M. & Pérez, 2002). Of these, seventy four percent are eligible for free or reduced cost lunches and ninety-five percent of those students are English Language Learners (ELL) (Moll & Ruiz, 2002).

Accordingly, all states with significant ChCh/LL populations have seen increased resegregation since 1980 (Orfield & Lee, August 2007; Orfield, 2001). Chicana youth are, therefore, more likely to attend poor and overcrowded schools, with high mobility rates,

unqualified teachers and inadequate instructional resources, particularly for English Language Learners (ELLs) (Lara & Gitanjali, 2001). Indeed, the ability to forge alternative paths for self and social empowerment are systematically more difficult for today's Chicana youth given the unprecedented degree to which they are isolated from students of diverse cultural and economic backgrounds.

Bilingual Education

When bilingual education programs are contextualized within the larger framework of racialized constructions of the nation-state, their destruction threatens the survival of language-minority populations. As a productive force, "language is one of the most important social practices through which [people] experience [themselves] as subjects" thus enabling the capacity for collective and self-determination (Macedo, 2005). As such, it also carries the capacity to produce antagonistic relations between groups in ways that reproduce material subjugation (Delissovoy, 2008). Language policies also bear a direct relationship to the lived material conditions of native bilingual and language minority immigrant populations across the globe (Darder & Torres, 2004).

Chicana English Language Learners (ELL) are no exception. For instance, ChCh/LL ELL students drop out of school in part because their language needs are rarely met. Hence, they are known to drop out at rates higher than their English-speaking peers (Suarez-Orozco, C. et al., 2004). Nonetheless, contemporary economic conditions and military expansion efforts by the US have spurred a national backlash on bilingual education programs. Economic insecurity among the "middle class" in California (the state with the highest concentration of Spanish-speaking ELL students), for example, began to rise in 1996 unleashing a fierce anti-immigrant/anti-bilingual education campaign despite the fact that a mere 30 percent of

California's ELL population were actually enrolled in programs designed to meet their language needs (Crawford, 1998). Still, Proposition 227's association of Spanish with the failure of ChCh/LL students effectively racialized the Spanish language (Cummins, 2000; Schmid, 2000) creating a context for the "linguistic racialization" Chicana(o) youth experience today (Darder & Torres, 2004).

As with all attacks on non-dominant languages, fierce class antagonisms disguised as nationalist rhetoric were central components of those attacks (McLaren, 1998). Antibilingual education initiatives in Arizona and Colorado – all states with high concentrations of ChCh/LL students—were no different. Ultimately, these measures institutionalized "a pedagogy of exclusion that views the learning of English as education itself" (Macedo, 2005, p. 376). Although it's naïve to think that the emancipatory interests of ChCh/LLs could be met solely by the use of their primary language, when bilingual education was linked to a liberatory ideology, it did provide critical educators an opportunity to use it as a vehicle for academic development and political empowerment (Citrin et al., August 2003). Unfortunately, what ChCh/LL youth must contend with today is "bottom line" literacy instruction aimed at yielding short-term gains on statewide tests (Moll & Ruiz, 2002).

The institutionalization of assimilative practices like English-only instruction, furthermore, disables young Chicanas from mobilizing their own linguistic and cultural resources, fracturing not only communal cohesion among the Chicana(o) population but disabling Chicana youth from the very means to achieve academically (Stanton-Salazar, 2004). Maintaining and encouraging bilingualism is thus key to the successful integration of ChCh/LLs in US schools. One significant study by Alejandro Portes and Rubén Rumbaut (as cited in C. Suarez-Orozco, C. et al., 2004), for example, found that students classified as highly bilingual

had better grades and lower drop-out rates, than their monolingual English-speaking peers. Another study by Ricardo Stanton-Salazar (2004) found that bilingual students tend to earn higher grades and are more academically motivated than their English-only counterparts, regardless of their lower socioeconomic status. Such students, he argues, have the ability to benefit from the support structures available in their home communities and are therefore less likely to become disaffected.

Additional research by Carola and Marcelo Suarez-Orozco (1995) support such findings. Their investigation into the achievement motivation of ChCh/LL youth shows a decline in academic outcomes with each successive immigrant generation—a claim that runs counter to the assimilationist drive of US education policies. While they attempt to account for variability in the academic trajectory of Chicana(o) students, by contextualizing the behavioral and cognitive dispositions conducive to learning within the framework of structural constraints like poverty, documentation status, parental education, and neighborhood characteristics, bilingualism remains a distinctively positive feature in the academic outcome of Chicana youth.

High-Stakes Testing

Another exclusionary practice in the education of Chicana youth is that of standardized testing. As one of the most promoted social technologies today, particularly when tied to high-stakes consequences, standardized tests classify and group populations in ways that reproduce a class-stratified society (Darder & Torres, 2004; McLaren, 2007). As such, they function as gatekeepers to the relatively few positions of privilege that exist within capitalist societies and naturalize the idea that higher rewarded positions will be scarce and should be reserved for those with higher intellect and skills. In this manner, tests perpetuate a racialized discourse that sustains meritocracy and reifies racist definitions of social reality (ibid).

During the height of desegregation, for example, minority high school graduation rates rose sharply and the gap in test scores began to narrow (Frankenburg et al., 2003; Orfield & Lee, January 2005). Yet despite today's segregation patterns, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act signed by President Bush in 2002 federally mandated norm-referenced, high-stakes standardized exams in reading and math for students in grades 3-8 and at least once in high school. While appearing to be sympathetic with the demands of poor families for better schools, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) had a distinctive racializing impact on the Chicana(o) student population.

Referred to by critics as No Child Left Untested, the NCLB's system of rewards for "high achieving" schools and sanctions for those that "fail." This significantly worsened the already dismal situation for poor students who are already three times more likely to be taught by uncertified or out-of-field teachers, particularly in English and Science (Frankenburg et al., 2003). Two-thirds of ChCh/LL eighth-grade math students, for example, have teachers without degrees in mathematics (Alemán, 2006). Moreover, the segregated schools that Chicanas(os) attend are more likely to be classified as "failing." This is true particularly for those with high concentrations of language minority students who are unlikely to make the required test score gains in English-language tests. To make matters worse, the law required poor schools with culturally and linguistically diverse student populations to make far larger yearly gains than affluent suburban schools. There is also no evidence that the tutoring-based support provided under NCLB helped the most affected (Sunderman & Orfield, February 2006).

This situation has only worsened under the Obama administration's 4.35 billion dollar education initiative, Race to the Top (RTTT). Despite having been inaugurated with the overwhelming support from educators and their unions to undo Bush's educational agenda, the

initiative not only links test scores to teacher evaluations and compensation, it accelerates the already rapid rate of charter school expansions and includes aggressive interventions or “take overs” of schools with low test scores.

According to Stan Karp (April 5, 2010), the combination of school closings, staff firings, deregulated charters and private management companies within public school districts “erode[s] the civic common ground and local political structures (e.g., school districts, locally elected schools boards, collective bargaining) that US public education has been built on” (ibid, p. 4) and it does so under the continued guise of improved teacher quality and higher education standards for the poor.

The continued focus on improving test scores inevitably entails enormous negative pedagogical implications. For one, high stakes exams lead to a lack of meaningful learning opportunities in schools, thus marginalizing the possibility for oppositional discourses to surface. This in turn stunts the development of critical social understandings, with its potential to transform the act of reading into a political act by redefining text within the larger struggle for representation. When meaning is rigidly defined within the parameters of right or wrong, meaning is fixed creating an antidialogical relationship between the written word and one’s lived experience (Giroux, 2005).

According to Angela Valenzuela (2005a), the focus on a single standard like high stakes exams comes at the cost of assessing broader abilities and competencies. ‘Accountability,’ in this instance, she argues, discounts diverse ways of knowing and attacks the very conditions of connecting the curriculum meaningfully to the lives of students. The lack of meaningful curriculum for those struggling to survive under such competitive conditions is what 47 percent of the general dropout population report as their primary reason for leaving school (Bridgeland et

al., March 2006). Nevertheless, the immediate results obtained through tests, their supposed efficiency and concrete, quantifiable measures give the instruments the illusion of scientific objectivity, thereby perpetuating racialized assumptions about the intellectual deficiency of poor, Chicana students as compared to those who do “achieve.”

Drop Out & Expulsion

In the specific case of Chicana students, the high-stakes testing culture has been shown to have a disproportionate impact, especially when tied to consequences like graduation, tracking, special education or retention. Coupled with the fact that 89 percent of states with ChCh/LL populations greater than the national average have high-stakes testing policies (Alemán, 2006), a significant number of today’s Chicana youth are finding themselves disenfranchised at an early age. When Texas, for example, implemented the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) in 1988, the ChCh/LL dropout rate increased dramatically (Suarez-Orozco, C. et al., 2004).

According to the National Council of Education Statistics, the ChCh/LL dropout rate in 2005, for youth between the ages of 16-24, is 22.5 percent. This is equivalent to roughly 530,000 high-school aged youth (Fry, Noember 2003). Although less than the 32.4 percent dropout rate of 1990, the figure is still twice the national average of 10 percent (PEW Hispanic Center, 2004). In LAUSD, the high school drop out rate exceeds 20 percent; and in New York, the dropout rate for ChCh/LL immigrant youth increased from 17 percent in 1998 to 31 percent in 2001 (Moll & Ruiz, 2002).

New statistics on the experience of Chicanas/Latinas in schools, however, indicate an alarming dropout rate of 24 percent—a figure surpassed only by their male counterparts. Moreover, half of all Chicanas/Latinas who do drop out are native-born (PEW Hispanic Center,

2004). The non-completion rate is even higher for Chicanas/Latinas with children before the age of 20 (Denner & Guzman, 2006).

What cannot be neglected here is the fact that the problem of dropouts is concentrated in highly segregated and high poverty schools—the schools that 60 percent of ChCh/LL youth are currently attending (Orfield & Lee, January 2005). With an average dropout rate of over 40 percent, its no wonder graduation rates among Chicana youth are so dismal. The reality is Chicana youth are trapped in schools where graduation is simply not the norm!

It follows then that the economic trajectory for dropouts is bleak. Not only do high school dropouts find themselves in jobs that pay only half as much as a quarter century ago, they are also three times as likely to be unemployed (Orfield, 2001). The 2000 Census, for example, shows that among the total adult working age population, high school dropouts made 35 percent less than the national average and only 52 percent had jobs (Orfield & Lee, January 2005). While many ChCh/LLs are encouraged to take the GED and remove themselves from the dropout count, their pass rate is only 40 percent (Fry, November 2003). Research also demonstrates that those with GEDs have wages similar to those of high school dropouts, making it difficult to justify encouraging Chicana youth to exit school with a GED, rather than a high school diploma (Romo & Falbo, 1996).

Thus, while the dropout rate is ultimately “the end product of a long process of being disengaged” (Valenzuela as cited in Adam, 2003) within the context of schooling, the consequence often brings a lifetime of serious socioeconomic deprivation, including eight times more likely to be incarcerated (Bridgeland et al., March 2006).

Exit Exams and College Enrollment

The situation for Chicana youth beyond K-12 is also increasingly grim, particularly for the undocumented. Numerous studies have shown that US born Ch/Ch have far lower rates of higher education participation and completion than any other US-born population (Brindis et al., 2002a; Chapa & Schink, 2006). With 36 percent of Chicanas/Latinas having less than a high school education, Chicanas are already the least educated group of women (Gonzalez, F., May 8, 2008). Still, Chicanas/Latinas are leading the Chicana(o)/Latina(o) college enrollment, which has increased from 3.9 percent in 1980 to 10.8 percent in 2005. While this marks a historic shift in the educational attainment of Chicanas in general, the overall increase is in no way proportional to the changes in Chicana(o) population growth (Snyder, 2006a).

For example, unlike Chicanos whose economic integration was facilitated by such government support initiatives as the GI Bill of Rights, Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 and the Civil Rights Act of 1965 (Aguirre, A. & Martinez, R., 1994), today's Chicana faces a brutal anti-affirmative action backlash while being relegated to the poorest, most segregated schools (Chapa, 2002). Additionally, they are concentrated in states like California, Texas and Florida where such programs have been made illegal (Orfield, 2001). Thus, those who do manage to graduate, despite the great obstacles, have no guarantee they will be admitted into college or a university.

In California, for example, where the disparity between the percentage of college-age ChCh/LL (42.5) and ChCh/LL with bachelor's degrees (7.7) is the highest, falling entry rates for undergraduates in 1990 worsened between 1997 and 1998, when Proposition 209 eliminated affirmative action programs in the state's public universities. Reports by the University of California (UC)—the state's top-tier university system—indicate 53 percent fewer ChCh/LL enrolled in the freshman class of 1998 at UC Berkeley and 33 percent fewer at UC Los Angeles,

the state's two flagship schools (Chapa & Schink, 2006). More recent statistics indicate that while ChCh/LL comprised 32 percent of California's high school graduates in 2002, only 13 percent of UC freshmen that year were ChCh/LL (Tomas Rivera Policy Institute, June 2004). Even more disconcerting is that fact that California State Universities (CSU's), the state's second-tier university system, have consistently reported no significant changes in entry rates for ChCh/LL over the last several years (California Postsecondary Education Commission, March 2005a).

An important point to remember here is that, because a lower proportion of Chicana(o) ninth graders complete high school and graduate, the gap in access to a university education is wider than indicated by eligibility rates, based on high school graduates (California Postsecondary Education Commission, March 2005b). Thus, not only are Chicana youth clearly relegated to segregated schools with poor college advisement and abysmal graduation rates (Stern, May 2004), they are seriously missing from the very institutions that claim to be the key to social mobility.

Access to higher education for poor and working class Chicanas is further complicated by rising tuition costs and declining amounts of federal student aid. Just last year, for example, the UC Board of Regents ratified a 32 percent increase in student fees for the Fall of 2010, bringing the total cost of a UC education to more than \$10,000 per year for the first time in history (Lewin, November 20, 2009). Thus, in less than ten years, the cost of a UC education has tripled, effectively making "what was once an educational bargain...one of the nation's higher-priced public universities" (ibid, p. 1).

Worsening matters is that while the percentage of ChCh/LL receiving financial aid is at the highest ever (63 percent in 2003), they receive the lowest average federal aid awards than

any other ethnic group (McGlynn, January 2004). In addition, merit based financial aid (traditionally based on entrance exam scores and GPA's) is now the largest trend among educational institutions. While such awards are meant to keep high achieving high school graduates in state colleges, they funnel money to more affluent students who (1) are not subject to the material conditions in which the majority of Chicana(o) students are forced to achieve and (2) would otherwise be able to afford college costs. Meanwhile, low income and minority students are effectively excluded from enrolling.

For poor and working class students already struggling to survive, accruing such enormous debt is justifiably unwanted. Thus, because ChCh/LLs tend to borrow at lower rates and work more hours a week, few have the luxury of concentrating solely on their studies. Instead, most Chicana(o) students have a complicated set of responsibilities and end up paying more for their degree than those who can afford it (League of Latin American Citizens, 2006).

The subordinate status of Chicanas in higher education is further evidenced by their disproportionate representation in 2-year institutions with low transfer and high attrition rates. Indeed, "Latino students are more likely than students from other racial or ethnic groups to begin their postsecondary education at a community college" (Kurlaender, Spring 2006, p. 7). This is true not only of poor and working class Chicanas(os), but more socioeconomically advantaged Chicanas(os) as well.

According to researchers in the field, over half of those who do enroll in community colleges are unlikely to complete their programs successfully or transfer to a baccalaureate institution within the first six years (McGlynn, January 2004; Rodriguez, P. et al., 2000). However, because Chicana(o) community college students tend to live at home, contribute to the family earning pot, and work full or part time, the lower tuition rates and flexible schedules at

community colleges make them the only viable option for higher education (McGlynn, January 2004). So, although community colleges may serve as important entryways to higher education for many Chicanas, it is more probable that this avenue too will prove academically futile.

Criminalization, Zero Tolerance and the Rise of Gangs

While the notion of “underachievement” racializes educational inequality among Chicanas(os), social control measures like the expansion of law enforcement policies within the mostly poor and urban schools that Chicana(o) youth attend also generate racialized discourses around violence. Thus, rather than contextualizing the behaviors and responses of racialized populations in schools within the larger context of unemployment, segregation, inadequate health care and tax cuts in education, for example, schools have taken on the function of repressive state powers by criminalizing poor youth in urban schools.

Here the work of Stuart Hall, et al. (1978) and David Theo Goldberg (1997) among others is especially helpful for they argue that ‘race’ in discourses about crime, deviance, and violence is connected to deeper assumptions about the nature of groups in the context of asymmetrical power relationships within the larger society. As such, ‘race’ in the context of crime perpetuate racist assumptions about the social and material conditions of subordinated groups.

In this case, increasing police presence in poor and working class schools constructs a false unity out of the very different social conditions under which schooling is experienced. The powerful signifying processes involved in the active production of images by media of youth as “super predators” over the last 20 years—despite national declines in youth crimes—enables the effective construction of cross-class alliances under the banner of “school safety”(Giroux, 2002)

Zero-tolerance measures, for example, have especially been found to have a negative impact on ChCh/LL youth. As the new accountability measure to ensure students do not commit even the most minor of infractions, zero tolerance policies disproportionately push students from racialized communities out of schools and into prisons (Skiba & Leone, 2002). What's more, such policies have justified intense surveillance measures ranging from cameras, metal detectors, cops, security guards, barbed wire fences, and lockdown procedures. Even more disturbing here is that no credible evidence exists that supports zero tolerance measures as an effective means for improving classroom management or student behavior (Stevens, 2006). Worsening matters is the fact that those receiving punishment in school are often placed in classes for educationally mentally retarded (EMR) or trainable mentally retarded (TMR) students (Noguera, 1992).

The “school to prison pipeline,” as it is often referred to, is made easier with the escalating trend of states to criminalize youth. “All fifty states in fact have passed laws that allow juveniles—in some cases as young as eleven, to be tried as adults, and forty-three states have laws on the books making it easier to transfer children charged with crimes to adult courts” (Giroux, 2002, p. 36). Between 1983 and 1991 alone, the national percentage of ChCh/LL youth in public detention facilities increased by 84 percent (Villarruel & Walker, July 2002).

ChCh/LL youth charged with violent offenses are five times more likely to be found unfit for juvenile detention than similarly charged white youth (Mirabal-Colon & Velez, 2006). In Los Angeles between 1996-1998, for instance, ChCh/LL youth arrest rates, were 7.3 times that of Anglo youth. Chicana involvement in the National Juvenile Justice system has also been rising steadily since the 1990's. While approximately two-thirds of the female youth in the juvenile and adult justice systems are women of color, 13 percent of them are Chicana/Latina (Lin, 2005).

Equally disturbing is the average daily detention rate of 5,000 ChCh/LL youth held by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), frequently under punitive conditions. The majority of these cases do not involve charges of crime, other than that of being undocumented in the US (Lahn & Ballesteros, July 18, 2002). If other states follow the lead of the new “Show Your Papers” anti-immigration legislation in Arizona, the number of detentions may very well be on the rise.

The larger economic and political context of rising incarceration rates and for-profit prisons may well explain the intensifying racialization of violence. Not only has the US prison population skyrocketed over 200 percent since 1980, “[b]y the close of the millennium, 6.3 million people were on probation, in jail or prison, or on parole” in the US (Leistyna, 2003, p. 105). Moreover, ChCh/LLs account for 31 percent of those incarcerated in the federal criminal justice system, although they comprise only 13 percent of the US population. ChCh/LLs also accounted for nearly half (43 percent) of the individuals convicted of drug offenses and were disproportionately charged with nonviolent, low-level drug offenses in 2000 and arrested at a rate of almost three times higher than their proportion within the general population in 2001 (Mirabal-Colon and Velez, 2006).

Equally alarming is the 138 percent increase in the incarceration rates for women over the past ten years (Prison Activist, 2007). Of these women, 54 percent are women from racialized communities (ibid). Between 1990 and 1996, for example, the national incarceration rate for Chicanas/Latinas increased 71 percent. Chicanas/Latinas also represent 26.6 percent of the current prison population in California—the state with the largest number of female prisoners and the largest women’s prison in the world (California Coalition for Women Prisoners, 2007, March).

The problem of school violence is compounded by the fact that schools continue to be idealized as “temple[s] of learning,” i.e., sanitized spaces unaffected by student’s experiences (Jose-Kampfner, April 1994, p. 6). While it is true that schools may indeed be safer than certain surrounding neighborhoods for some students, the reality is that many poor, working class Chicanas are profoundly impacted by the violence that not only directly affects them but the violent acts they witness—especially those committed against adults in their lives (ibid).

In many cases, the violent rejection that Chicana(o) youth experience in schools compounds the violence of poverty and racism. The situation is such that one in six young Chicana/Latinas ages 12-19 attempts suicide (“Young Latinas,” 2006). A 2007 Center for Disease Control and Prevention survey of high school students estimates the percentage is closer to 14 percent (Yager, 2009). In either case, Chicana/Latina high school students have higher rates of attempted suicides than white (7.7) or Black (9.9) female youth their age. The numbers are even more dramatic for Chicanas/Latinas living in poverty with immigrant parents (ibid).

According to Carola and Marcelo Suarez-Orozco (1995) as well as Diego Vigil (2002), one effective acculturative strategy is to create a separate, oppositional culture like gangs. Moreover,,Vigil contends this is largely a second (US-born) generation phenomenon. Gangs, he insists, are a creative cultural form spawning from several key factors including: “low socioeconomic status, urban poverty and limited economic mobility; ethnic minority status and discrimination; lack of training, education and other constructive opportunities; and a breakdown in the social institutions of school and family (p. 106).” They function primarily as “a compensatory social structure” for many disenfranchised Chicana(o) youth, essentially becoming “surrogate families” that offer camaraderie and protection in the absence of consistent social networks.

In 2000, the National Youth Gang Center reported gang membership among ChCh/LLs at 47 percent, compared to 31 percent among African Americans, 13 percent among Caucasians and 7 percent Asian Americans (Mirabal-Colon & Velez, 2006). While ChCh/LLs constitute the majority of all gang members, most ChCh/LL gangs are concentrated along the Southwest. Many of these, in fact, have a long, multigenerational history, where family ties to the same gang are not uncommon. La Eme, a Mexican prison gang, for instance, influences street activity today, as is the newer Mara Salvatrucha linked to Central America (McLaren, 2007). Still, the gendered and racialized image of gang members gets over-generalized and applied to non-gang affiliated ChCh/LL students living in poor communities, perpetuating a vicious cycle that makes them targets of unjust punishments (Lopez, et al., 2006).

Armed Forces Recruitment and JROTC

Aside from a growing for-profit prison system, the labor power of Chicana youth is also increasingly exploited by the expanding military reach of the US empire. Enlistment into the Armed Forces, in fact, is often perceived by many Chicana youth to be the sole avenue for a future with income, job training, and educational benefits. Indeed, the effort to recruit Chicana youth is at an all time record high.

To be sure, the current war in Afghanistan is but the latest chapter of a long history of enlistment in the US military where young Chicana(o)s continue to be over-represented in positions directly related to combat (Mariscal, J., 2004). While ChCh/LL currently make up 10.8 percent of the Army's active duty force, they represent 22 percent of the Pentagon's market for new recruits—a figure higher than the proportion of ChCh/LL in the general population (ibid). Chicanas/Latinas, in fact, represent 14.67 percent of all females in the enlisted ranks. They also make up 9.35 percent of all female enlisted personnel (Pew, March 27, 2003).

More significant, however, is that ChCh/LLs are the fastest-growing pool of military age people (Alvarez, 2006). This includes an estimated 750,000 undocumented residents (Association of Raza Educators, July 2007). According to a 2004 study on Marine recruitment, ChCh/LLs are more likely than any other group to complete their boot camp training and finish military service. Thus, in the face of declining African-American enlistment, Chicana(o) youth are rendered prime targets of military recruitment (Alvarez, 2006; Lovato, 2005). Already, between 2001 and 2005, the number of ChCh/LL enlistments in the Army rose 26 percent, and 18 percent in the military as a whole (Alvarez, 2006).

Spanish language advertisements on Univision and Telemundo (the country's two largest Spanish-language networks), as well as radio broadcasts and publications catering to Chicanas(os), are participating in the effort. To finance the expansion of vast marketing campaigns the military has increased its ChCh/LL recruitment budget by \$55 million in four years (Alvarez, 2006). Also expanded are small pilot projects, allowing 200 ChCh/LL to enroll in English intensive classes each year in order to pass the Army qualification tests in ten (up from 5) cities (ibid). According to Roberto Lovato (2005) of *The Nation Magazine*, pentagon officials have declared a recruitment goal increase of 22 percent for ChCh/LL by the year 2025. Cities like Los Angeles, Phoenix and Sacramento are considered to be the top three markets for new Chicana(o)/Latina(o) recruits (Mariscal, J., 2004).

In stark contrast to education policies, incentives for immigrant Chicana(o) youth to join the military have been a consistent feature of the Bush and Obama administration. A 2002 executive order, for instance, permits legal residents in the military to apply for citizenship in one year, as opposed to three years (Alvarez, 2006). Currently, an estimated 37,000 undocumented ChCh/LL immigrants are actively serving under such promises (Acuña, 2003).

The current version of the proposed bipartisan Development Relief and Education for Alien Minors (also known as the DREAM ACT) also promises in-state tuition rates to undocumented students, as well as the ability to finance a college education through Pell grants, student loans and work-study programs on the same basis as other students. The Act also protects undocumented students 12 years and older from deportation, with a conditional legal resident status for six years. One of the two criteria for lifting conditionality, however, is a minimum two years of service in the US Armed Forces. The other is completion of a degree at a two or four year institution of higher education or two years of good standing while working on at least a Bachelor's degree. Given the absence of educational policies that would otherwise support immigrant students throughout their education, critics charge the Act is a backdoor entrance for undocumented youth to enlist, (Association of Raza Educators, April 2008).

Meanwhile, NCLB Section 9528 required school districts to release the names, addresses and telephone numbers of high school juniors and seniors across the country to military recruiters upon request. Provisions to opt-out of the program were available, but critics charged the information was poorly communicated (Los Angeles Coalition Against Militarism in Our Schools, 2003). Moreover, students were unable to opt-out without the signature of a parent. Section 9528 also stipulated that military recruiters must have the same access granted to other college and job recruiters. The problem, unfortunately, is that many poor schools already have many more military recruiters, than on most high school campuses. For instance, the Los Angeles Coalition Against Militarism in Our Schools (ibid) recently reported to LAUSD officials that Roosevelt High School students (one of the nation's most overcrowded, segregated schools) were five times more likely to be approached by a military recruiter, than a college recruiter. This is in addition to regular military marketing campaigns and home visits.

Disciplinary schools like JROTC are also on the rise in heavily populated ChCh/LL cities. According to the Washington Post, the amount of JROTC high schools has risen from 1,454 to 2,267 in the past ten years (as cited in Berlowitz & Long, 2003). Los Angeles and Chicago are particularly well known for their JROTC programs. The Los Angeles Unified School District alone has 29 JROTC units on its campuses, while Chicago Public Schools (CPS) has a total of 8 public military academies (Cheeseman, 2007).

While JROTC programs promise to reduce violence and drug abuse in schools, their primary objective is military recruitment. Indeed, 45 percent of cadets who complete a JROTC program end up enlisting (ibid). Once there, the vast majority of ChCh/LLs find themselves concentrated in the low ranks of the Marines and Army, serving in high-casualty, high-risk jobs as front-line troops (Lovato, 2005). In fact, Rodolfo Acuña (2003) argues that the level of combat casualties among Chicanas(os)/Latinas(os) constitutes, in essence, a genocidal manifestation of racism. In the War in Iraq, for example, ChCh/LLs accounted for about 11 percent of military deaths through Dec. 3, 2005 (Alvarez, 2006). In addition, 9 of the 21 women killed within the first 18 months of the war were Chicana (Aguirre, F. & Aguirre, L., November 6, 2004).

Chicana Youth and Alienation

According to Valenzuela (2005b) the alienation of many ChCh/LLs is a direct result of the schooling process. Schools, she argues, are “powerful, state-sanctioned instrument[s] of cultural de-identification,” which in turn, disrupts the potential for solidarity between native-born and immigrant ChCh/LLs (p. 356). Thus, rather than enabling Chicana youth, for example, to retain and develop both the cultural and academic competences required across the varied

contexts of their existence, Chicanas are actively socialized to succeed academically, by withdrawing from their communities and families of origin.

The cost of losing significant cultural resources presents a major dilemma for racialized urban youth like Chicanas. Jeffrey M.R. Andrade-Duncan and Ernest Morrell (2008), for example, argue that the focus on enabling students to “escape” poverty and pursue a higher education by “better[ing] themselves” presents urban youth with a false choice: “that of choosing between staying behind as a failure and ‘getting out’ as a success” (p. 7). Hence, the grounds under which “academic achievement” is often constructed is itself alienating, causing in this case, a growing number of Chicanas to retain their urban and cultural identity despite schools.

Similarly, Stanton-Salazar (2001a) argues that oppressive school practices disable ChCh/LL students from developing positive help-seeking behaviors. Chicanas, for instance, may begin to deny themselves opportunities to experience resources and relationships that could potentially be empowering in order to shield themselves from further emotional/psychological damage. Thus, while Chicana youth are deeply immersed in diverse social relationships in and out of schools, hierarchical arrangements effectively create a situation of “alienated embeddedness” that prepares Chicanas for a future as alienated labor (Stanton-Salazar, 2001b).

Still, some scholars have theorized the phenomenon of rising Chicana achievement in schools as oppositional acts against patriarchy (Cammarota 2004, p. 54; Cammarota, 2008; Solórzano & Bernal, 2001; Fine & Weis, 1998). Julio Cammarota (2008), for example, argues that “[t]he foundation of Latina’s perseverance is a feminist drive for cultural, generational and social change,” (p. 147). According to Cammarota, this feminist resolve enables Chicanas/Latinas to endure the oppressive educational processes they are subject to. Thus, while Chicano youth may respond to the pressures of criminal treatment in schools by

drawing on urban, masculine forms of rebellion, many Chicanas adopt positive orientations toward schools in the hopes of achieving social mobility.

The dangers of such responses, however, reside in patriarchal notions of “good behavior.” In other words, regular attendance, good conduct and quiet disposition among seemingly well-integrated Chicana youth can mask profound disconnection with schools. Moreover, because school authorities reinforce these behaviors, they generate even deeper isolation and at times repressed anger among Chicana youth (Stanton-Salazar, 2001b). Nancy Lopez’ (2003) study of Dominican and Haitian females in high school confirms such findings. According to Lopez, “good students” are often quiet and “ladylike.” In fact, she found that teacher’s preference for female students was often based on the belief that girls are less threatening than males. Moreover, “as low-income urban public schools became more authoritarian, [Latinas] begin to prize so-called feminine traits, such as conformity, silence, and passivity.” (p. 54). Thus, while more Latinas reported positive experiences with teachers, they also learned to equate learning and academic success in general with good behavior.

Daniel Solórzano and Dolores Delgado Bernal (2001) use the term “conformist resistance” to describe such responses. According to their classification scheme, the desire for individualized achievement is oppositional because it is motivated by a desire for social justice. Yet while some social change is possible, “without a critique of the social, cultural, or economic forms of oppression,” they admit, “[conformist resistance] does not offer the greatest possibility for social justice” (p. 13). Instead, the lack of social critique often leads students to “blame themselves, their families, or their culture for negative personal and social conditions” (p. 12). Hence the cost of academic success for Chicanas can be enormous.

Conclusion: Overcoming Chicana Youth Alienation

While such authors may indeed acknowledge the limits of such accommodating strategies, they fail to question at length the very premise that (a) schooling is equal to education (b) that schools will continually deliver on their promise of upward mobility and (c) that more schooling is the key to Chicana empowerment. My intent here is not to devalue the historic educational achievements of Chicanas nor the very real struggle to survive in the limited contexts we are afforded. Rather, my aim is to recognize that such dehumanizing processes are inseparable from the power relations and unequal economic arrangements in which schools themselves are situated. This includes the undemocratic practices of schooling that undermine the capacity of bicultural students to think and act critically (Darder, 1995).

Thus, the constellation of disempowering forces which impact the lives of Chicana youth is no accident. It is instead fundamentally tied to the production of alienated being, linking Chicana formation to the imperatives of globalized capital. Hence, the overcoming of Chicana youth alienation will require that Chicanas “immerse themselves ‘materially’ within the practice of education and the struggle for a new world” (Darder, 2002, p. 95), in order to revitalize the formation of a Chicana consciousness—one focused on the critical and necessary project of Chicana self-determination.

Chapter 3

The Emergence of Chicana Consciousness and Its Implications in the Education of Chicana Youth

Introduction

The years 1968-1972 marked a significant period of redefinition in Mexican-American communities particularly in the southwest as the ethnic consciousness of its youth fueled mobilizations that challenged the parameters of political life in the US. Armed with a new political project tied to the cultural, linguistic, and historical heritage of Chicano identity, Chicana/o youth began mobilizing against racism in schools with an emerging militancy that emphasized self-determination and empowerment through working class community struggles (Acuña, 1998; Muñoz, 2007).

The dominant discourses and material practices within the Chicano and feminist movement of the time, however, contradicted the personal and collective empowerment of the women involved. This situation compelled Chicanas to take action by engaging meanings over gender and sexuality within the immediate contexts of both movements. In so doing, Chicanas generated power through the formation of their own feminist identity and revealed pedagogical dimensions of agency in ways that reaffirmed the centrality of struggle in the formation of consciousness. Hence, the significance of movement participation in the education of Chicana youth and its connection to the continued formation of a class-based, revolutionary conception of Chicana cultural identity was first established.

Material Conditions for Mexican-Americans in the 1960s

In 1960, the Mexican-American population in the US was 2 percent (4 million) of the total population, making them the second largest racialized group after Blacks, whose population at the time was estimated at 10 percent or 19 million (Rosen, 1975). In the southwest, however, Mexican-Americans were the largest racialized community, representing 12 percent (3.5 million) of the population, over 80 percent of which were concentrated in the state of Texas (40.9 percent) and California (41.2 percent). Mexican-Americans made up 9.1 percent (1.5 million) of the population in California. In 1965, seventy six percent of the residents in East Los Angeles, which was to become a major mobilization site of the Chicano movement, were Mexican American (ibid).

Similarly in the 1960s, other cities in the southwest like Denver, Phoenix, San José, and Houston were being negatively affected by the economic devastation of white flight from the inner cities (Acuña, 2004). In Los Angeles County, the white population fell from 71.9 percent in 1960 to 59 percent in 1970 (ibid). The resulting class divide, between the more affluent metropolitan periphery and the poor, nonwhite communities in the central portion of the cities, left barrios in the Southwest with high levels of unemployment. Already, 50 percent of Mexican-Americans worked in low-skill jobs, earning 47 cents for every dollar made by white workers (García, I., 1997). Another 16 percent of the Mexican American population in 1960 worked in the fields (ibid). Unemployment rates for Mexican-American youth were particularly high. In East Los Angeles alone, 23 percent of the youth population in 1960 was either unemployed or not attending school (Rosen, 1975).

Thus, by the end of the 1960s, the inequalities facing the Mexican-American community worsened despite the rising prosperity of the US and the liberal rhetoric of President Johnson's War on Poverty. The national figure of four out of every ten Mexican-Americans living below

the poverty level in 1960, in fact, went largely unchanged. In East Los Angeles, the median income in 1959 was \$5,094. By 1965 that figure changed by .2 percent to \$5,106—a drop of 7.4 percent in actual 1965 dollars (García, I., 1997). The situation was even worse for Mexican-American women over the age of 16. With a median income of \$2,313 in 1970, Mexican-American women were working for wages that kept them at nearly half the US poverty line of \$4,200 (Acuña, 2004).

The economic condition within the Mexican-American community could not be blamed on immigration status. In 1960, only 15 percent of the Mexican population living in the US was born in Mexico. Another 30 percent of Mexican-American youth had only one foreign-born parent. This figure rose to 35 percent by 1970 when the Mexican-American population increased to 4.5 million. Nonetheless, an overwhelming 82 percent of the Mexican-American population in 1970 was native born at the time (ibid).

The realities of racialization for residents of the inner city, including Mexican Americans, also involved contending with hostile law enforcement. While over 40 percent of the arrests made in LA alone involved Blacks, another 28 percent involved people of Mexican origin. In July 1968, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) investigated 205 police abuse cases in Los Angeles dating back to September 1966. Over 152 of these were filed by Mexican-Americans (ibid).

Mexican American youth in 1968 were also contending with the impact of the Americanization movement of the early 20th century in their educational experience. Designed largely to break the class and ethnic consciousness of subordinate populations, the ethos of Americanization essentially promoted the acculturation of Mexican-American youth into the political ideology of patriotism and allegiance toward American values and symbols. This

included the suppression of all languages other than English and the extensive use of psychometrics tests that continued to entrench Mexican-American students into a rigid tracking system that locked students into vocational courses or military enlistment at a time when Mexican-American soldiers were disproportionately dying in the war on Vietnam (Galicia, 2007). Indeed, only 13 percent of Mexican-Americans obtained a high school education in 1960 and less than 6 percent went on to attend college (García, I., 1997).

By 1968, 45 percent of Mexican-American youth in the southwest were attending poor schools with inadequate facilities and alienating curriculums (ibid). In addition, the segregation of Mexican-American students worsened despite the historic *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision in 1954. The situation intensified as the Mexican-American population grew and became increasingly urbanized. As such, the number of Mexican-American children attending de facto segregated schools steadily increased.

In Los Angeles County, for example, the Mexican-American student population increased 113 percent during the 1960s. Yet despite representing over 20 percent of LA's student body, nearly 80 percent of the teachers and 90 percent of school administrators in Los Angeles were white (Acuña, 2004). Mexican-American students in all five of the major high schools in East Los Angeles were intensely segregated and overrepresented in special education courses. This contributed to the abysmal 50 percent drop out rate among Mexican-Americans (Bernal, 1998). The situation was even worse in Crystal City, Texas, where Mexican American students averaged 2.3 years of schooling in 1969. That same year, seventy percent of all Mexican-American students in Crystal City dropped out of school (Acuña, 2004).

The Chicano Movement and the Struggle for Education

According to Francisco Rosales (1996), it was the ghettoization of Mexican-American communities that created a new generation of poor and working class youth unwilling to adopt the integrationist politics of their parents. While such strategies may have ended *de jure* methods of segregated schooling for Mexican-Americans, large segments of Mexican-American youth in the late 1960s refused to pursue their civil rights through court actions or government institutions. Instead, they began what Muñoz (2007) characterizes as a “quest for identity,” by exposing the limits of Americanization ideals such as “equal access,” “freedom,” and “democracy” with direct demands for cultural freedom, integrity, and equal rights in education.

Inspired by the Black Power movement and third world liberation struggles in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, the Mexican-American struggle for liberation known as the Chicano movement was composed largely of working class youth, many of whom were high school or first generation college students (Garcia, A., 1989; Muñoz, 2007; Rosales, 1996; San Miguel, 1996). While “youth, and especially students, were not the only or primary actors in this political and cultural movement...they were an integral and important component” (San Miguel, 1996, p. 159). In fact, according to Muñoz (2007), it was their direct confrontation with social institutions, particularly high schools and universities, which generated Chicano movement culture.

The general spirit of active resistance against oppression among Mexican-American youth was connected to various local and participatory struggles in both urban and rural contexts. Under the leadership of César Chavez and Dolores Huerta (who co-founded the union with Chávez in 1962) for example, farmworker communities in rural areas of the southwest were organized in struggle for decent working conditions. Reies López Tijerina’s *Alianza de las Mercedes* movement in New Mexico, on the other hand, focused on the reappropriation of land

taken from Mexican farmers after the Mexican-US War. Meanwhile, the fight against the realities of poverty and racism in urban centers, including the death toll of the Vietnam War on the Chicano population, was spearheaded by Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzalez’ Crusade for Justice and La Raza Unida Party chaired by José Angel Gutierrez.

Nevertheless, it was largely the presence of distinct Mexican-American student groups that fueled these mobilizations into a full-blown Movement. Thus, at a time when Mexican-Americans represented less than 2 percent of the entire college student population, first-generation Mexican-American college students began organizing themselves across university campuses (Acuña, 2004; Muñoz, 2007; Ruíz, 1998). The first of these was the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO) founded by José Angel Gutierrez in 1967 at Mt. St. Mary’s in San Antonio, Texas followed by the United Mexican American Students (UMAS) at Loyola University and various UMAS chapters throughout Los Angeles, California. By the late 1960’s, over thirty five Mexican American student organizations with almost two thousand members existed at a time in history when campuses in general were radicalizing (Acuña, 2004).

Inevitably, the socialization processes in US schools became a pressing issue for youth in urban areas, where the majority of Mexican-Americans were concentrated. Here the work of Corky Gonzalez and The Crusade for Justice is especially significant. Indeed, Gonzalez is often credited with popularizing the term Chicano, a critical appropriation of the Spanish pejorative for Mexicans. His 1967 epic poem *I am Joaquin*, distributed widely among existing Mexican-American student organizations “captured both the agony and the jubilation permeating the identity crisis faced by Mexican-American youth in the process of assimilation” (Muñoz, 2007, p. 76). Thus, while the militant actions of Tijerina and the nonviolent direct actions of Chavez

provided inspiration for both students and barrio youth, it was Gonzalez' Crusade for Justice that appealed directly to issues pertinent to urban Mexican-Americans (Mariscal, G., 2005).

The agony and jubilation that Muñoz (2007) describes soon materialized in the form of school boycotts across the southwest in states like California, Texas, Colorado and New Mexico. These boycotts (or "blowouts" as they became known outside of Texas) were inseparable from the work of college student organizations that helped high school students mobilize and coordinate the strikes. They also provided much of the leadership in tense situations, in addition to formulating demands which included the firing of racist teachers, an end to punitive measures for speaking Spanish in schools, bilingual education, culturally relevant courses, smaller classrooms, college preparatory classes, and control of local school boards.

The first boycott was organized by MAYO in 1967 in San Antonio, Texas. School boycotts, in fact, became the hallmark of MAYO's radical political activity, the most dramatic in Crystal City, Texas, where over 1,700 students walked out in December 1969 and took control of the school board in the spring election of 1970 (Acuña, 2004). This citizen's revolt eventually led to the formation of La Raza Unida Party, a Mexican-American third party movement that supported candidates for elective office in Texas, California, and other areas of the Southwestern and Midwestern United States. According to the young Gutierrez:

Education in this kind of society is mandatory if not a prerequisite for survival. It is also the fountain of socialization where our values get distorted and cultural imposition takes place. Not only do we want to reject that, but we want to substitute that with our own values which are just as dear and important. Education, finally, is important for us because from that kind of leadership that will emerge from those schools we will have the leaders for tomorrow to build a greater Aztlán (Trujillo, 1996, p. 120)

In California, the militant Chicano youth organization the Brown Berets also garnered support for school boycotts among East Los Angeles high school students. On the morning of March 3, 1968, after various failed attempts among students to work within the existing channels

of power, over 1,000 students from Lincoln High School walked out. What followed was a ten day boycott eventually known as the ELA Blowouts, where over 10,000 high school students across East Los Angeles high schools walked out of school in protest against the inferior quality of education they were receiving (Acuña, 2004; Bernal 1998; Muñoz 2007; Martínez, 2008; Rosales, 1996; García, I., 1997) .

The ELA blowouts, according to Arturo Rosales (1996), was “the key...to usher[ing] the movimiento in Los Angeles, and to a great degree elsewhere” (p. 184). Indeed, the morning after the blowouts the Los Angeles Times proclaimed “The birth of brown power” (ibid, 185). Remembered today as the largest Chicano mobilization against racism in US history, the blowouts far exceeded even the expectations of its young organizers who not only managed to draw mass public attention to the education of Mexican-American students and their communities, but also initiated thousands of Mexican-American youth into Chicano counterculture (Martínez, 2008; Muñoz, 2007).

Exactly one year later, in March of 1969, over 1,000 community and student activists from across the country gathered at the National Chicano Youth Liberation Conference hosted by the Crusade for Justice in Denver, Colorado to discuss the issue of Chicano self-determination. The conference to a large extent helped solidify the politics of cultural nationalism and separatism with ideals of *carnalismo* (brotherhood), *familia* and the concept of Aztlán--the mythic homeland of Native Aztec ancestry. Resolutions from the conference became known as *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán*—the Chicano nationalist program that urged the Mexican-American community to reject all vestiges of the US political system for the sake of cultural survival. *El Plan* called for “total liberation from oppression, exploitation, [and] racism” as well as “restitution for past economic slavery” through a separatist program that involved the

creation of cooperatives, barrio defense committees, and community-controlled schools (Mariscal, G., 2005, p. 64).

Many of these participants went on to draft *El Plan de Santa Barbara* one month later at a conference sponsored by the Coordinating Council of Higher Education at California's Santa Barbara University. *El Plan de Santa Barbara* essentially outlines higher education's relationship to Chicano community empowerment, by calling for student and community control in higher education and the creation of Chicano Studies programs to preserve the cultural integrity of Chicana/o students. *El Plan* also created M.E.Ch.A. (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán) as an umbrella organization for all existing Chicano student organizations across the southwest.

The student strikes, thus, catapulted the formation of a militant Chicano student movement unafraid to assume a direct political role in their communities. As Carlos Muñoz (2007) argues:

The student strikes in the community and on the college campus in conjunction with the political upheavals of the late sixties, thus generated the framework for the eventual transformation of student activist organizations into a full-blown student movement and a larger civil rights movement with clear social and political goals and an ethnic nationalist ideology that came to be known as cultural nationalism (p. 88).

Hence the strikes integrated Chicanos into a larger civil rights movement that included participation in the 1969 Third World Strike at Berkley University, as well as the creation of the Chicano Moratorium--the largest antiwar protest ever staged by a working class ethnic group in the US (Mariscal, G., 2005).

The Formation of Chicana Consciousness

Struggles of identity, ethnicity and class inevitably involve group struggles related to gender (Deutsch, 1994). In the case of the Chicano movement, for example, the unequal

relations of production with respect to gender profoundly affected the interests, strategies and agendas of the women involved. “I just believe we started to see our own strength,” says LA Brown Beret Minister Gloria Arellanes. “We had not recognized it [before]” (Espinoza, 2001, p. 43). Hence conflicts over labor, sexuality and gender roles within the movement helped generate the awakening of Chicana consciousness and the production of a discourse that engaged the class subjectivity of Chicana women.

In the process of organizational work, for example, Chicanas across movement sectors began to openly question the reproduction of gendered labor practices. A major source of tension involved the unequal power relations that assigned traditional public roles for men and supportive private roles for women (Roth, 2007).

When a freshman male comes to MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán—a Chicano student organization in California) he is approached and welcomed. He is taught by observation that the Chicanas are only useful in areas of clerical and sexual activities. When something must be done there is always a Chicana there to do the work. ‘It is her place and duty to stand behind and back up her Macho!’...Another aspect of the MACHO attitude is their lack of respect for Chicanas. They play their games, plotting girl against girl for their own benefit...They use the movement and Chicanismo to take her to bed. And when she refuses, she is a *vendida* [*sell out*] because she is not looking after the welfare of her men (Vidal, 1971, p. 5).

Tensions like these intensified when women across movement organizations found themselves having to “work three times harder than the men” to prove their loyalty (Espinoza, 2001, p. 31). Chicanas were thus struggling to organize social relations within the movement in ways that actually reflected the movement’s revolutionary vision. According to Ana Nieto-Gomez (2003), all Chicanas wanted “was some accountability from the men...[to] be consistent with their ideology because the women weren’t treated with respect” despite public claims of collective empowerment (p. 63).

The fundamental contradiction of gendered exclusion within the Chicano movement revealed itself dramatically during the 1st Chicano National Youth Conference in March 1969, when the public proclamation “Chicanas d[o] not want to be liberated” silenced the ongoing, unresolved work of women’s caucuses dealing precisely with the question of women’s fuller participation in the movement (Mariscal, G., 2005; Muñoz, 2007; Roth, 2007; Ruíz, 1998). The Chicano nationalist program *El Plan de Aztlán*, moreover, clearly defined brotherhood as the path to Chicano liberation. Ethnic subjectivity was further gendered male at the historic conference when the Chicano national anthem *Yo Soy Joaquín* was revealed. Still, one month later, *El Plan de Santa Barbara* never once made reference to Chicanas or Chicana Studies (Orozco, 1986). In fact, neither plan “mentions women (much less gays or lesbians) as inhabiting a unique space worthy of examination and political action” (Segura, 2001, p. 543).

In the process of centering Chicano subjectivity, the iconography and cultural production of the movement also rendered Chicanas objects by constructing them as “not fully embodied, elusive or downright dishonored” (Chabram-Dernersesian, 2006b). The “us” of Chicano nationalist discourse was, therefore, more often than not “he”. There were the literary figures of El Pachuco, El Cholo, Villa, Ché, and Zapata, for example, whose struggles against racism and economic exploitation were constructed against the backdrop of women as non-agents. Armando Rendon’s (1971) *Chicano Manifesto* also polarized the Chicano struggle for liberation in mutually exclusive categories of machismo (i.e, male) and malinchismo (i.e., female)—the former synonymous with revolutionary struggle and the latter with betrayal and conquest (Chabram-Dernersesian, 1993).

The generative discourse of Chicano nationalism failed to inscribe even the empowered subjectivity of Chicanas who fought with some of the movements most venerated heroes. Rose

Tijerina, for instance, daughter of Reies Lopez Tijerina, spent 28 days in solitary confinement with no formal charges pressed against her after participating in the takeover of Tierra Amarillo courthouse in June of 1967 (Martínez, 2008). There was also Helen Chavez, who's diligent work acting as the UFW's credit union manager enabled the successful development of the union in its early years; as well as Luz Gutierrez, cofounder of La Raza Unida Party who helped sustain the organization throughout its lifetime (Oboler, 1995). Luz was also elected to serve as the first Raza Unida Party Chair in the state of Texas in 1970, the same year that Nita Gonzalez, daughter of Corky Gonzalez, began teaching for La Escuela Tlatelolco, the Crusade's ongoing liberatory education school for Chicanos in Denver, Colorado which Nita continues to direct (Martínez, 2008). Meanwhile in California, Gloria Arellanes, the Minister of Correspondence and Finance for the East Los Angeles Chapter of the Brown Berets, who despite being erased from the organization's public self-representations, helped form the administrative backbone of the National Chicano Moratorium Committee, where over 20 young women Brown Berets marched prominently in a crowd of over 30,000 people.

Also important is the contribution of Chicanas to the development of Chicano student mobilizations (Bernal, 1998; Blackwell, 2003; Roth, 2007). In fact, the emergence of the Brown Berets, composed of working class and poor youth, grew out of an educational reform group headed by Vicky Castro in Los Angeles in 1967. Without the organizing efforts and persistent educational outreach by young Chicanas like Cassandra Zacarías, Paula Crisóstomo, Mirta Cuarón, and Tanya Luna Mount, "the [ELA] blowouts probably would not have taken place" (Bernal, 1998, p. 152).

Hence, contrary to the dominant narratives of Chicano history, Chicanas were among the primary labor force of the movement (Blackwell, 2003; Dicochea, 2004; Martínez, 2008; A.

Nieto-Gomez, 2003; Ruíz, 1998). Not only were Chicanas present as striking laborers in the fields, canneries, steel mills and factories throughout the southwest in the 1960s, they also began organizing tirelessly against police abuse, deportation, involuntary sterilization, and the Vietnam War. Such was the work of Alicia Escalante, for example, who founder of the Chicana Welfare Rights Organization in East Los Angeles for Spanish speaking poor people who fought in alliance with Blacks against police brutality and organized a major campaign against the passage of the “Talmadge” Right to Work in 1973.

Also remembered is Francisca Flores, editor of *Regeneración*, the first Chicana publication and founder of the Chicana Action Service Center, a living antipoverty organization for LA Chicanas as well as *La Comisión Femenil Mexicana*, one of the first organizations founded by young Chicana professionals. There was also the work of Elizabeth “Betita” Martinez, whose participation in Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) activities contributed immensely to movement building efforts in the southwest; as did the work of numerous Chicana artists like members Ester Hernández, Patricia Rodriguez, and Graciela Carillo—all members of the women’s muralist art group *Las Mujeres Muralistas*—whose artistic public depictions of Chicana feminist spirit contributed significantly to the evolution of Chicana feminist discourse.

The oppositional actions of Chicanas in response to the disparities within the movement, therefore, created a consciousness of social being. This enabled the question of self-determination to become the object of political praxis among Chicanas. Thus, they began to critically appraise their situation collectively and define their own politics through a feminist agenda that included control of their own bodies through safe and affordable birth control, legal abortions, an end to forced sterilization and domestic violence, the right to sexual pleasure, and a

recognition of the oppressive role of the Catholic Church within Chicano culture. Chicana feminists also fought to end forced labor practices among welfare recipients. Their efforts called attention to the mistreatment of Chicana prisoners and demanded equal opportunity for Chicanas in education and employment (Arredondo, 2003; Córdova, 2005; García, A., 1997; Oboler, 1995).

Moreover, because actions are situated within concrete cultural settings, by the end of 1968, it became clear to many Chicanas that their struggle for liberation would also involve contesting some of the very values within Chicano culture that movement practices declared empowering. To insist on the same right as men to expose the oppressive elements in their lives, for example, was to challenge deeply held notions of *marianismo* for women—the self-sacrificing virgin-mother who’s quiet long-suffering formed the basis of Chicano family strength. Matters pertaining to birth control and abortion were particularly contentious issues, being touted by movement leaders as the liberal discourse of white women. As Chicana feminist Mirta Vidal (1971) argues:

While it is true that the unity of La Raza is the basic foundation of the Chicano movement, when Chicano men talk about maintaining La Familia and the “cultural heritage” of La Raza, they are in fact talking about maintaining the age-old concept of keeping the woman barefoot, pregnant and in the kitchen (p. 8).

Thus, with cries of “¡El problema es el gabacho, No el macho!” Chicanas emphasized that sexist practices in the name of culture, which strengthened the oppressor by relegating women to docile roles and, in turn, stunted the possibility of Chicana/o liberation as a whole (García, A. 1997).

Chicana feminists also contested the interpretation of meaning in the formation of their own identities by strategically deconstructing dominant movement discourse around sixteenth century Indian princess Malintzin Tenepal. Invoked to accuse Chicanas of “selling out” and violating Chicano manhood, Chicana feminists recast Malintzin as “always already betrayed,

rather than simply betrayer” (Deutsch, 1994, p. 11). Adelaida del Castillo (1995) was among the first, for example, to reframe Malintzin as a gifted and brilliant linguist, whose bold assertions of agency within the margins of Aztec and Spanish rule made the Chicano nation possible. This interpretation struck at the core of the virgin/whore dichotomy prevalent in Chicano nationalist culture.

Early Chicana feminists also exposed the consistent and active participation of women in Chicano history in an effort to reinterpret feminism as an oppositional force indigenous to Chicano culture, rather than a new, anti-Chicano disruption.

The truth is that we need to reexamine and redefine our culture. Some of us do not believe that in our culture, femininity has always meant: weak, passive, delicate looking...in other words, qualities that inflate the male ego. The women of La Raza is traditionally a fighter and revolutionary. In the history of Mexico, the nation closest to us, we find a long line of heroines—from the war of independence against Spain through the 1910 revolution and including the rebellions of the Yaqui Indians. The same holds true for other nations (Martínez, 1997, p. 34).

Chicanas, thus, chafed at images or roles that relegated them to the category of ‘traditional’ helpmate” (Ruíz, 1998, p. 109). Instead, they saw themselves as continuing in the tradition of Mexican revolutionary women and groups such as the Mexican suffragists Las Hijas de Cuauhtémoc, or Las Adelitas of 1910 Mexican Revolution, and Juana Gallo and Petra Ruiz, two Mexican Revolutionary commanders that led brigades of both men and women. Women in the Brown Berets, for example, were seen as contemporary *soldaderas*, or female revolutionary soldiers.

For many Chicanas, “picking up a pen...became a ‘political act’” (ibid, p. 107). Indeed, there were over 40 different newspapers and 11 magazines at the time of the Chicano movement—several of which were edited by women and all of which engaged the political insights grounded in their daily experiences with movement building (Blackwell, 2003). One of

the longest lasting publications was *El Grito del Norte*, published from 1968-1973 in northern New Mexico, in which veteran Chicana activist Enriqueta Vásquez Longeaux's column *Despierten! Hermanos* became one of the most forceful efforts to combat sexism in the movement. In Los Angeles, both Francisca Flores' *Regeneración* and *Encuentro Femenil* edited by Adelaide del Castillo and Anna Nieto Gomez were published between 1970-1975 were dedicated entirely to the engagement of Chicana concerns (Mártinez, 2008).

Meylei Blackwell's (2003) argues that these publications helped create a "chicana counterpublic," through the development of a gendered print community where position papers, debates, editorials, conference proceedings, etc. were circulated throughout the southwest (p. 77). This print culture strengthened the formation of Chicana feminism as an identity, across regional communities and movement sectors. It also gave Chicana movement a sense of collective female leadership and ultimately enabled the production of collective knowledge, forming the basis of today's Chicana feminist thought (Blackwell 2003; Garcia, A. 1997).

Engagement in cultural production processes like the kinds described above enabled Chicanas to know themselves better and use their agency as politically educative acts. By the early 1970s, evidence of rising Chicana consciousness was increasingly evident as a growing number of Chicanas began defining the terms on which their own intellectual and political agency could take root, by creating autonomous women's groups and women's caucuses within Chicano organizations.

In February of 1970, for example, just three days before the second Chicano Moratorium, women Berets in Los Angeles formally resigned to create a "familia de hermanas" under the name *Las Adelitas de Aztlan* (Espinoza, 2001). Women in La Raza Unida Party also organized to promote women's leadership and ultimately created a party platform on Chicanas in 1972

(Ruíz, 1998). Similarly, *Las Hijas de Cuahatemoc* emerged in 1971, after female members of the California State University Long Beach chapter of MEChA grew increasingly concerned over the inattention male leaders gave to issues confronting female students (Blackwell, 2003). Several other Chicana organizations and informal collectives were also created for similar reasons between 1970 and 1972, particularly across universities in California like Fresno State College, San Diego State, California State University Los Angeles and Stanford University (ibid). Such acts stimulated the creation of spaces that enabled Chicana political agency and voice to flourish.

Yet the conditioning impact of patriarchy that has long informed the lives of Chicanas cannot be underestimated when examining the participation of Chicana loyalists, who revolted against the notion of a separate Chicana feminist movement on the grounds that it was politically divisive, self-centered, and an Anglo inspired strategy. This clearly demonstrates the contradictory perceptions that exist within cultural communities when oppressive relations and conditions are unnaturalized. Both men and their “loyalist” female supporters in the movement, for example, argued that if Chicanos oppressed Chicanas, it was because they were victims of a racist, economic system. Chicanas were, thus, urged to advocate for their cause at a later moment in time because racism “was the greater issue of survival” (Nieto-Gomez, 1989, p. 87).

Such “feminist baiting” effectively suppressed the radical vision of feminism Chicanas were espousing (Orozco, 1986). Instead, charges of sexism were met with sexist responses, ultimately creating a hostile discourse of exclusion and betrayal against Chicana feminists (Chabram-Dernersesian, 2006a; García, A., 1997; Roth, 2007).

The fiercest hostility in the struggle for public recognition within the Chicano movement was projected toward lesbians. In fact, early Chicana feminists often distanced themselves from

their lesbian sisters, so as to remain within the parameters of Chicano nationalist discourse. The following quote by Nieto-Gomez is a case in point:

Being compared with the Anglo women has been the greatest injustice and the strongest device used to keep Chicanas quiet. Nobody liked to be called a traitor in a caucus she feels she would die for. And no Chicana who has worked in the movement deserved to be compared with any Anglo woman or Gay Liberation. These comparisons are divisive and threatening to the strength of the movement” (as cited in Dicochea, 2004, p. 83).

Lesbianism was thus frequently reduced to militant feminism; or both feminism and lesbianism were collapsed in ways that made all feminists lesbians and lesbians feminists (Córdova, 1994). According to Chicana feminist historian Alma Garcia (1989), “in a political climate that already viewed feminist ideology with suspicion, lesbianism as a sexual lifestyle and political ideology came under even more attack” (p. 226). To be an out lesbian in the movement, therefore, was essentially reason enough to be labeled a “vendid[a]” or sellout (García, A., 1997; Moraga, 2003; Roth, 2007).

Thus, while early Chicana feminists struggled readily against male privilege, the boundaries of Chicano nationalist discourse suppressed any feminist position that appeared anti-family (Pesquera & Segura, 1999). As a consequence, the revolutionary familia of the Chicano movement never acknowledged the presence and politics of its female and queer leaders (Moraga, 2003).

Hegemonic Feminism

To choose between nationalism and feminism, however, was not an option for Early Chicana feminists: “[O]n the basis of subordination of women,” they declared, “there can be no real unity” (Vidal, 1971, p. 8). Still, Chicana feminists’ attempts at building solidarity with organizations involved in the dominant feminist movement of the early 1970’s led to experiences of profound political impact. While many Chicanas recognized that the movement’s critique of

patriarchy helped to influence their own development as feminists and to embrace the struggle against women's oppression as their own, Chicanas, like other women of color, found the politics of US dominant feminism reductive and exclusionary in its elitist and racist practices (Hurtado, 1996; Pesquera & Segura, 1999; Saldívar-Hull, 2000).

Much of this experience was connected to the manner in which dominant feminism confined women's oppression within the limits of gender as experienced by privileged/middle class, white women. This ignored the specific histories of racialization, sex, and class exploitation amongst women of color involved. While there were overlapping issues of concern like abortion, birth control, day care, and sex discrimination between white and women of color feminists, Chicanas experienced the dominant cultural values of competition and privilege among white women as antagonistic to Chicano working class politics of community empowerment:

Many Chicanas find the Women's Liberation movement largely irrelevant because more often than not it is a move for strictly women's rights. While women's rights advocates are asking for a parity share of the "American pie, Chicanas (and Chicanos) are asking for something other than parity. The end which is desired by Chicanas is the restoration of control over a way of life, a culture, an existence. For a Chicana to break with this goal is to break with her past, her present and her people (Sosa-Riddell, 1995, p. 162).

In such a context, the middle class orientation of white feminists was directly at odds with the working class movement of Chicanas. According to Patricia Zavella (1989) some of the strongest contradictions that emerged as a consequence of class differences between Chicana and white feminists concerned issues of reproductive rights and traditional families. While the right to abortion and birth control formed a central part of white feminists' struggle for reproductive rights, for example, Chicanas were also involved in the struggle against forced sterilization. While white feminists began to expound on the tyranny of the traditional family, Chicana feminists were celebrating traditional Chicano families as the bedrock of Chicana/o

empowerment. Thus, the failure of dominant feminism to account for “the raced, classed and sexed bodies of Chicanas” led many to conclude that they “could in no way fight for feminism without it being an effort on behalf of our people as well” (Dicochea 2004, p. 79).

The attempt to work with white feminists also included the challenge of struggling against exclusionary practices in the forms of racist attitudes. Conversations about racism, for example, were often dichotomized as the relationship between white and black women alone (davenport, 2002; Lorde, 1984). Attempts to hold white women accountable for the internal racism within the movement were often “kept intact in the form of guilt” (Moraga, 1981, p. 61). This convinced feminists of color that to perceive them as “more sensual, but less cerebral; more interesting, perhaps, but less intellectual; and more oppressed, but less political” was directly connected to the protection of privileges amongst white women (davenport, 2002, p. 86).

These same sentiments were echoed by Chicana feminist Marta Cotera (2003), who as a result of her efforts to work in coalition with white feminists, identified a number of classist behavior. These include:

1. The belief that lower class women are less together, personally [and] politically
2. That [Chicanas] are not as ‘articulate’
3. That [Chicanas] tend to be hostile and emotional so their judgment can’t be trusted
4. Unlike [white women], [Chicanas] can’t check their emotions [and] be reasonable and
5. That [Chicanas] don’t have what [white women] have because they haven’t worked for it (p. 218).

Thus, the unwillingness to dialogue across class boundaries prevented the “universal woman” of this particular movement from engaging the social and material realities of racialized relations: “Experience has proven that the Anglo’s feminist movement will only incidentally (if at all) achieve [feminist] goals for the Mujer Chicana—a woman of a particular and culturally

different ethnic group—just because she is a woman” (Nieto-Gomez, 1974, p. 7). To do so, would require dealing with the core of different socio-political philosophies among the distinct women involved by acknowledging the impact of class relations within the movement and challenging its racist practices, by confronting the very institutions that afforded many white and privileged women considerable status.

Given the relations of power in both struggles, the need to foment Chicana consciousness and catalyze the Chicana movement became a pressing concern. Thus, at the Los Angeles Chicana Educational Conference in April 1971, members from various Chicana student organizations in California invited Chicana community members, students, and former prisoners to meet in preparation for the first national Chicana Conference, *La Conferencia de Mujeres por la Raza*, in Houston the following year, with the hope of exposing one another to the various discourses of Chicana feminism throughout the country and identify themselves with clear objectives (Blackwell, 2003)

The Houston conference took place at the end of May 1971 and marked the first time Chicanas were able to dialogue with each other across regional and state lines. Expecting no more than 300 participants, conference organizers were overwhelmed by the powerful presence of over 600 Chicanas from 23 states across the country. Most of the participants were students. Marta Cotera, one of the conference organizers, noted “approximately 80 percent of the women were in the 18-23 age bracket from various universities across the US” (as cited in Muñoz 2007, p. 109).

Much of the conference proceedings in Houston were disrupted by what conference organizers feel was a well-organized splinter group that claimed their hosts were “not barrio enough” or that internal matters were not relevant to the well-being of the movement (Nieto-

Gomez, 1989, p. 162). A walkout from the conference ensued in which approximately half of those in attendance participated—a situation that del Castillo argues vividly characterizes the rift between feminists and non-feminists within the Chicana community (Blackwell, 2003).

Despite the demoralizing incident, remaining participants continued to work on identifying concrete resolutions. Among these were:

1. Free, legal abortions and birth control for the Chicano community, controlled by the Chicanas and
2. Recognition of the Catholic Church as an instrument of oppression and egalitarian relationships in marriage
3. 24 hour child care arrangements so women can participate in movement activities
4. An end to forced sterilization practices (Vidal, 1971).

All participants agreed to share these resolutions with their own communities and meet again the following year. While that particular gathering never actualized as a consequence of a general decline in student activism, many of those in attendance formed part of a new generation of Chicana feminists who continued to organize on the basis of gender equality and the establishment of Chicana Studies programs across high school and college campuses (Muñoz, 2007).

The formation of Chicana consciousness also marked the path toward redefining the various social dimensions of Chicana subjectivity. Chicana theorists, many of whom grew up during the movements of the 1960's, for example, helped sustain the collective voice of Chicana empowerment in their struggle to develop a more complex Chicana feminist discourse that could not only combat the ongoing misrepresentation or invisibility of Chicanas in scholarly work, but continually expand the limitations of Chicano nationalist discourse in the interest of broadening Chicana feminist struggle.

The boundaries of such nationalist rhetoric have since been most fiercely contested by the writings of lesbian Chicana feminists in the 1980's who rightfully questioned "traditional" values of Chicano nationalism, which inscribes women only as wives, mothers and/or nurturers by preserving male-order and reproducing heterosexism (Anzaldúa, 1987; Moraga, 2003; Pérez, 2003). Here, *familia* is understood as centering the father whose obligation it is to oversee Chicana private and political life. In the process, issues pertaining to "female sexuality generally and male homosexuality and lesbianism specifically, as well as incest and violence against women" are effectively silenced (Moraga, 2003, p. 264).

According to Emma Perez (2003), only feminism can disrupt the colonial relations inscribed in Chicano nationalism. She uses the Oedipal arrangement as metaphor to argue that the space of Chicano nationalism essentially becomes the "return to the mother" who, unlike the father, can only exist as a pre-sexual, pure object (p. 410). She cannot, in other words, exist as Malintzin Tenepal, who was sexually stigmatized as "La Chingada" for consorting with the enemy, Hernán Cortéz. She must instead be the desexualized Indian mother represented by La Virgen de Guadalupe. As a consequence, "only men may have their Oedipal moment [in Aztlán]," she says, "their castration fantasy, [and] hence their sex" (ibid).

The racist misogyny of colonial relations inscribed in Chicano nationalism is challenged further by feminist deconstructions and reconstructions of female myths and symbols like La Virgen de Guadalupe, La Malinche, and La Llorona. Significant here is the manner in which Chicana feminists embrace the corporal history of the dark, native woman. In the words of Gloria Anzaldúa (1987),

The worse kind of betrayal lies in making us believe that the Indian woman in us is the betrayer. We, indias y mestizas, police the Indian in us, brutalize and condemn her. Male culture has done a good job on us. *Son los costumbres que traicionan. La india en mi es la sombra: La Chingada, Tlazolteotl, Coatlicue. Son ellas que oyemos lamentando*

a sus hijas perdidas (p. 22).

Discursively constituting Chicanas as powerful by engaging such meaning-making processes helped to disentangle the ideological web that sustains oppressive social relations.

It is in this spirit that Chicana feminists begin articulating a post-nationalist political project that includes queers, feminists, and the racially impure, displaced by Chicano nationalism. These visions, moreover, encompass a fluid understanding of power that opposes dominant ideologies and social structures attempting to construct consistent and closed subjectivities. Rather than the fixed identity proposed by Chicano nationalism, Chicana feminists conceptualize the subject as plural, even contradictory and thus annihilate the boundary between oppressed/oppressor: “Now us and them are interchangeable. Now there’s no such thing as an ‘other.’ The other is in you, the other is in me” (Anzaldúa as cited in Keating (Ed.), 2000, p. 254). As beings within an oppressive social structure and in mutually dependent relationships, Chicana feminists conceptualize processes of oppression and liberation as intertwined (Alarcón, 1990; Anzaldúa, 1987)

For Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), such processes within Chicanas are a product of life on the US/Mexican border, the place where “two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy” (preface). As a metaphor that helps represent the dynamic of bicultural subjectivity, the border captures the violence and hostility of subordinate life, without extinguishing fertile ground for resistance. Thus, *La Nueva Mestiza*, as conceptualized by Anzaldúa (ibid), constructs herself in opposition to monoculture, by learning to navigate between conflicting frames of reference. She commits herself to straddling cultures, languages, nations, and sexualities by going beyond a simple counter stance

and transcending duality by “occupying both shores at once” and seeing the world simultaneously through “serpent and eagle eyes” (ibid, 100). Her work then is to break with dichotomies that keep her locked in a duel with the oppressor and give flesh to a radical new subject capable of breaking with dualistic forms of being.

Educational Implications

Yet it is precisely the formation of such consciousness that US schools prevent. As institutions whose function it is to incorporate youth into a commodity centered economy based on the social division of labor, schools continue to homogenize youth by either denying or obscuring class relations via assimilationist myths like democracy, freedom, individualism, and equality. According to Alejandra Elenes (1997), the construction of these ideals as attainable supports racist notions inherent in cultural deprivation theories which insist that marginalized populations must conform to the dominant (i.e., “neutral”) cultural norms of US society, in order to function well within its institutional life. “No matter how subtle or direct,” Elenes (ibid) argues, “these...ideologies are detrimental to the educational advancement of Chican[as] and other minorities” (p. 3).

A deeper analysis, however, suggests that its not only the academic achievement of Chicanas that is at stake, but rather the very question of Chicana self-determination given that education involves not only the production of knowledge but political subjects as well (Darder, 1991; Giroux, 1991). Moreover, the absence of democratic, critically informed educative processes in US public schools systematically keeps Chicanas from learning to question the effects of power, including the discursive construction of their own subjectivity.

That assimilative ideologies continue to comprise the foundation of Chicana education in the US is not surprising. What is significant in the present moment is the ongoing necessity to

disrupt the oppression that such ideologies enable by forging, once again, a class-based conceptualization of Chicana subjectivity. If schools are effectively suppressing the development of a Chicana feminist political vision of emancipation and public life by representing culture (which is always a gendered discourse) as determinant and more specifically, Chicana/o culture as defective, then the substance of Chicana education must come from a larger struggle against the material conditions perpetuating their objectification.

Already, Chicana feminists have unnaturalized the social formations in which Chicanas are immersed and helped provide a set of tools for making sense of shared experience (Giroux, 2005). Nonetheless, there exists the need to use that self-consciousness strategically by engaging in a type of education that corresponds with the historically specific mode of being for Chicana youth (Freire, 1970). This is not to claim a kind of idealism that suggests education alone is sufficient to change society but rather, as a fundamentally pedagogical process, Chicana feminism as lived through movement participation can enable the formation of a substantive Chicana identity. It also preserves Chicana feminism's lasting legacy as an "epistemology of practice" (Hernandez, 1997, p. xii) that provides Chicanas the opportunity to ground themselves historically and engage in a politically conscious process of identity formation anchored in material matters.

Conclusion

Thus, since subjectivity is continuously shaped by the changing historical conditions of material life produced within asymmetrical class relations, there now exists a pressing need to recontextualize Chicana subjectivity within existing material relations of production, if the revolutionary political intent of Chicana feminism is to be sustained. This is not to argue that the politicized deconstruction of Chicana subjectivity, including the emancipatory potential of her

bicultural existence, does not already offer Chicana youth significant representations of resistance, but rather that there exists the need to reestablish the primacy of praxis from which the collective knowledge and development of Chicana feminism first emerged.

A Chicana feminist interpretation of identity rooted in a critical understanding of Chicanas as material beings would, therefore, renew the anti-capitalist spirit in which Chicana feminism was born. It would also help advance the development of a concrete Chicana feminist identity that speaks to the diverse relations among contemporary Chicana youth, while honoring the powerful legacy of Chicana identity as the basis for solidarity. Moreover, this would enable the very process of Chicana identity construction and resistance to move beyond the discursive realm and return to the actual realities of social relations in history. With this in mind, I turn to an explanation of the methodology of the study—a study in which I critically explore the critical narratives of five young Chicanas who speak about their movement experiences, in order to understand more fully the pedagogical power of political participation.

Chapter 4

METHODOLOGY

The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it—Karl Marx, Theses on Feuerbach

This study draws largely from a historical materialist conception of consciousness as formulated by Marx and Engels, in that it restores the primacy of human activity. This conceptualization of consciousness challenged two of the reigning philosophical paradigms of the time: Idealism, which effectively reduced history to “imagined activity” by positing the existence of ideas as separate from the material world and ahistorical Materialism, which naturalized the world as given, by conceptualizing thoughts as mere projections of material phenomenon. In an effort to counter such static views, Marx theorized the relationship between the two paradigms dialectically, by apprehending reality as the product of dynamic interaction between material activity (i.e, human labor) and the natural world. Hence, human consciousness, or the formulation of ideas develop from active engagement with the world. This includes nature, people, objects and the processes we produce (Allman, 2001).

The relationship between material reality and consciousness, moreover, is always historically specific. This is because distinct economic arrangements or forms of organized human production alter the social relations in which we are immersed.

As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with *what* they produce and *how* they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production (Marx and Engels quoted in Allman 1999, p. 15).

This explains, in large part, Marx’ concern with the processes of production under capitalism, which he argued create the condition of alienation, or estranged being, by not only separating workers from each other but removing their power to control how their work is planned and

used. This effectively disables the capacity of workers to be creatively self-directed (Russell, 1980). Hence, alienation is never the product of thinking alone but rather, the product of alienated activity.

Like Marx, Paulo Freire also believed that alienation is a condition of oppression linked to larger structures of capitalist society where material forces make it difficult for people to transcend their immediate reality. Capitalism, he argued, attempts to turn the oppressed “from potentially active subjects to dominated objects; from critically reflective actors who participate in society to passive instruments of elite authoritarian control” (Freire as cited in Frymer 2005, p. 4). He therefore argued for a kind of humanizing praxis, or reflexive activity that engaged the oppressed in the struggle for their own liberation. Only then, Freire (1970) argued, could the oppressed move from “beings for others” to “beings for themselves” (p. 55). He writes:

Alienated [beings]...cannot overcome their dependency by ‘incorporation’ into the very structure responsible for their dependency. There is no other road to humanization—theirs as well as everyone else’s—but authentic transformation of the dehumanizing structure itself (p. 11).

This revolutionary praxis, as described by Marx and Engels, is inconceivable both as an individualistic and ahistorical enterprise. It is instead the historically intentioned struggle for our full humanity carried out in solidarity with others (Frymer, 2005). Thus, both Freire and Marx believed in the power of political projects tied to the materiality of social relations and revolutionary dreams to alter human consciousness and ultimately people’s understanding of themselves and the world.

Because oppression under capitalism is then both an impermanent and changing historical reality alterable by human action, the possibility of conceptualizing history as “the time and space of possibility” exists (Darder, 2002, p. x). This, in turn, points to a creative role in the development of consciousness. In other words, “human consciousness is able to think about the

conditions that influence its construction” (ibid). This is why Paulo Freire (1994) insists that education can either condition or decondition, depending on the degree to which it deconstructs the relationship between material conditions and subjectivity formation.

There is no such thing as a *neutral* educational process. Education either functions as an instrument that is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, *or* it becomes “the practice of freedom,” the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world (p. 16).

What Freire offers then is “a praxis of knowledge production” that creates the conditions for oppressed people to recognize themselves as active producers of knowledge capable of collectively transforming their societies and assuming their rightful place as subjects of their own history (Conway, 2006, p. 35; Foley, 1999).

Thus, Freire and the critical pedagogues he helped inspire aim to build a counterculture through an educational process that problematizes, or calls into question, the ideologies and practices rooted in actual conditions of every day life, so that people recognize not just their own conditioning but the conditioning power of culture itself. Here the definition of pedagogy proposed by Henry Giroux and Roger Simon (1989) is most useful:

Pedagogy refers to a deliberate attempt to influence how and what knowledge and identities are produced within and among particular sets of social relations. It can be understood as a practice through which people are incited to acquire a particular “moral character.” As both a political and practical activity, it attempts to influence the occurrence and qualities of experiences. When one practices pedagogy, one acts with the intent of creating experiences that will organize and disorganize a variety of understandings of our natural and social world in particular ways. (p. 239)

As a form of cultural politics, therefore, pedagogy brings attention to the relations of production involved in the creation of knowledge. This brings a necessary focus to the power relations involved in knowledge production processes.

It also makes dialogue—a dialogical process of exchange and transformative interaction between people that develops critical consciousness—a central feature of critical education. Important here is that dialogue does not separate the act of naming from concrete intervention. On the contrary, it upholds the body as vital to knowledge construction and the development of consciousness by creating the space to “study and struggle” in solidarity with one another (Darder, 2002, p. 104).

In naming the world and constructing meaning, students begin to experience what it means to be subjects of their own lives; and through acting upon their world and changing its configuration in some meaningful manner, they become familiar with the experience of social agency (ibid).

The obstacles or barriers inherent in such praxis, moreover, represent significant moments in the development of consciousness. In other words, the very tensions involved in practical activity inform our understanding of the structural and ideological dynamics that structure oppression. When these “limit-situations,” as Freire (1992) referred to them, are engaged by “limit acts,” the “untested feasibility” (p. 9) or possible futures of life beyond our existing reality emerge. Thus, “hope as an ontological need demands an anchoring in practice” (ibid).

Democratic cultures are then essential to create the conditions conducive to critical forms of education for bicultural students (Darder, 1991). In other words, knowledge as the sole property of teachers, or what Freire called banking education, can only be undone by socializing the production of knowledge. According to John Holst (2002), “the practice of dialogical educational social relations prefigures socialist relations and is essential to the creation of a new hegemony” (p. 93). Shared power over knowledge is thus shared power in the construction of the future (Aronowitz, 2008).

This explains the link between critical pedagogical work and class struggle. Indeed, the non-alienated social formations inherent in revolutionary praxis are what make education, in the midst of struggle, so powerful (Foley, 1999). Thus, class consciousness as the power and will of the exploited “to *share* in the formulation of the conditions of knowledge and futurity” via the process of humanized labor (Aronowitz, 2008, p. 176).

Racialization

The materialist emphasis on historical conditions and the production of meanings also influences understanding of ‘race’ throughout this study. The term racialization is used here to contextualize racisms within the changing context of global class formations (Darder & Torres, 2004; McLaren, 2006; Miles, 1993; San Juan, 2003). Unlike theories that situate ‘race’ as an active subject in history, naturalizing social relations based on somatic or cultural differences, theories of racialization reinscribe the Marxian notion that all social relationships are socially (re)constructed in specific historical circumstances alterable by human agency (Miles, 1993). Thus, while ‘race’ as a unit of analysis reifies the very construct used to divide populations worldwide, racialization situates racism historically and materially within the context of capitalist expansion (Bonilla-Silva, December 1999; Macedo & Gounari, 2006).

Superficial readings of racialization theories equate the concept with the notion that ‘race’ has no social reality. Nothing could be further from the truth. What racialization theorists such as Antonia Darder and Rodolfo Torres (2004) argue is that the “intractability of race” poses serious limits when used for social science theorizing: “Hence, there is no need for a distinct (critical) theory of ‘race’; instead what is required is an earnest endeavor to theorize the commitment to the interrogation of racism as an ideology of social exclusion” (p. 12). For this

reason, the tendency to frame material inequities as “racial” obscures the imperatives of capitalist accumulations and class divisions within, in this case, Chicana/o communities.

Framing social phenomenon as a problem of ‘race’ also reproduces racialized discourses and practices. While racialization theorists recognize this as part of the common-sense language by which social actors reinscribe themselves within different social and economic positions, they are critical of the use of ‘race’ as an organizing principle, given the historical limits of identity politics. The essentializing dynamic of ‘race’ as an identity devoid of historical or materialist grounding, lends itself well to the larger project of neoliberal pluralism where identities are not only easily commodified but endlessly fragmented—an inherent feature of identity politics that fails to challenge capitalism’s totalizing force (Darder & Torres, 2004).

Far from being an identity, therefore, class is a social relation exploited by the use of ‘race.’ Rather than reifying those relations with the use of physical or cultural traits, racialization theories attempt to expose the reproduction of such relations in material terms. Thus, “class exploitation cannot replace or stand for racism because it is the condition of possibility for it” (San Juan, 2003, p. 9). This is to say that power relations are reproduced in part when culture, biology, and sexual preference, for instance, are used as ideological and political signifiers in the interest of preserving the power of capital (Darder & Torres, 2004)

Materialist Feminism

Like racialization theorists, materialist feminists reinscribe the Marxian notion that all social relationships are socially (re)constructed in specific historical circumstances alterable by human agency (Miles, 1993; Ebert, 2005; Guillaumin, 1995; Juteau-Lee, 1995; Newton & Rosenfelt, 1985b). While gender for materialist feminists is understood in the context of other

relations of power like class, racism, and sexual identity, it does so in a way that interprets sexism, racism and homophobia “not so much [as] instances of oppression but cases of exploitation” (Ebert, 2005, p. 40). According to Jueau-Lee (1995), “[i]t is because certain humans are appropriated that they are constructed as females and as women” (p. 10). Thus, materialist feminist situate sexism historically and materially within the context of capitalist expansion.

Multiply constituted subjects like Chicanas, therefore, whose name simultaneously invokes both gender and ethnicity, are shaped by material conditions produced within asymmetrical class relations that all subordinate cultures must contend with. This requires an understanding of cultures as existing within relations of domination/subordination where the struggle over material conditions and the meaning of lived experience takes place within conditions of power that function in the interest of capitalist relations (Darder, 1991). The social relations in which Chicanas are forced to survive thus connect intimately with the cultural processes shaping their existence.

Because the multiple subjectivity of marginalized women like Chicanas requires an explanatory framework powerful enough to convey the changing forms of her exploitation, totalizing in ways that recognize “the diverse relations that produce the social” is politically necessary (Ebert, 2005, p. 54). Rather than culturalizing the social divisions of labor, cultures must be understood as “always and ultimately social articulations[s] of the material relations of production” (ibid). Materialist feminists, thus, caution against ahistorizing subjectivities and reducing them to mere “events” in performativities which, in this case, abstract Chicanas from labor and thus ultimately from history itself. The key here is to focus on the different *usages*, or modes of exploitation, women are put to.

This is not to say that localizing gender and sexuality is politically useless. On the contrary, our multiple positions as gendered and racialized subjects can powerfully “inform the differentiated ‘we’ in the context of exploitive social relations” (Juteau-Lee, 1995, p. 19). What is important is recognizing that there exists a fine line between struggling for our differences and fighting for our subordination (Guillaumin, 1995). Thus, gender, sexuality and race must be seen as socially significant within the history of socially divided labor. In so doing, there exists the implicit recognition that while the mode of capitalist exploitation has changed, the question of its existence has not (Ebert, 2005).

Ideology as Material

The material impact of such categories, moreover, occurs not only via the appropriation of women’s physical being (i.e., her body and labor power) but within the realm of the ideological-discursive. As modes of perception, ideologies help maintain particular social and economic arrangements in history and thus deeply affect the way subjectivities are constructed. According to Guillaumin (2005), for example, discourse about women’s “nature” makes it possible for women to be thought of as objects. “Naturalism,” she argues, ahistoricizes women and thus conceals their subordination by “hiding the fact that the association between the social category and the signifier is born in the context of specific social relations” (Juteau-Lee, 2005, p. 7). In other words, our experiences in relation to each other and the social structure in which we are immersed are significantly shaped by ideology.

Identity

Yet, rather than rendering oneself “society’s object,” there exists the capacity for subjects to define themselves for themselves. This is a moment of consciousness for the subject—the active mental and moral self-production of identity. In line with this view, Deena Gonzalez (1997) asserts,

The moment you answer ‘who/what are you?’ the moment marks consciousness of the most intimate and powerful kind...the moment configures itself distinctively and becomes not only a space for empowerment, but a space for departure... (p. 51).

Identities thus signal historical presence and constitute acts of agency that reclaim a subject’s place in history (Freire, 1994). Identities are thus never ahistorical or fixed but rather, both creative and oppositional responses to power, which require ongoing processes of reconstruction (Romero, 1995). As historical being, therefore, identities are not limited to private constructions but rather, as with the case of Chicana feminism, tied to public outcomes (Deutsch, 1994). That is, they are produced in the cultural actions of communities in struggle. In other words, they generate force through “the production of signs, of signifying systems, of ideology, representations, and discourses is itself a material activity with material effects” (Ebert, 1996, p. 31). Hence, notions of agency must be linked to the emergence of political subjects within historical struggle, where concrete interventions function as critiques of existing social relations (McLaren & Giroux, 1997).

Chicana Feminist Lens

Given that this project ultimately concerns the question of Chicana critical pedagogy and its relationship to self-determination, a Chicana feminist lens grounded in historical materialism will provide the basis for my analysis. Hence, the following theoretical assumptions, rooted in the scholarship of Chicana feminists theorists, are also centrally integrated into my analysis:

- The recognition that the substantive formation of Chicana consciousness emerges as a product of social movement tied to struggles around our ethnicity, our identity and our social class (Anzaldua, 1987; Moraga, 2003)
- The recognition of history as the struggle of social class and the relations of production (Martínez 2008; Apodaca, 2003)
- An understanding of gender in relationship to class, racism, and sexual identity within the context of capitalist expansion (Apodaca, 2003)
- A commitment to the struggle against patriarchy (Anzaldua & Moraga, 1983; Córdova, 2001; Orozco, 1986; Perez, 2003)
- An emphasis on community-based action as practical activity rooted within existing social relations (Martínez 2008; Córdova 2001, 2005)

Critical Narrative Methodology

Critical narrative research is a methodological approach that uses personal narrative as a starting point for social inquiry (McLaren, 1998). As such, it gives political and historical significance to stories often deemed anecdotal (Carr, 1986).

This method draws largely from complex debates within the second wave feminist movement on the relationship between patriarchy and the character of knowledge. Like Marx, who attributed epistemic privilege to the proletariat on the basis that their marginality made them central to the development of capitalism, second wave feminists began to generate knowledge production processes that reclaimed the centrality of women's experience, in order to challenge patriarchal claims of knowledge as detached, objective, universal and value-free.

It is the dialectical approach toward subjective ways of knowing and objective, historical moments that makes personal experience a legitimate and powerful terrain for feminist interpretation. As constructed narrative, experience helps explain how the personal is connected

to the social. This connecting process, or “sense-making” according to Bannerji (1991), is an interpretive relation that reclaims the agency of marginalized subjects. In other words, the process of dis-covering oneself within relations of power is pedagogically empowering. In a similar fashion, Elenes (2000) declares the act of retelling one’s lived experience a political event in which the conditions that enable subjects to move from victimhood to agency are created. Hence, the personal as political is rooted in the interpretation of experience as concrete example of objective social forces.

This is not to argue that identities and political identifications are coterminous (Shohat, 1998). On the contrary, reifying identities by equating experience with politics gives rise to the kind of egocentric essentialist politics that claims “I am, therefore I resist” (Chandra Mohanty as cited in Shohat, 1998, p. 4). In line with materialist feminists who “have long understood that the ideas and structures we wish to transform are not just ‘out there’ but also within our movement and within ourselves,” therefore, it is necessary to theorize dialectically in ways that acknowledge women, simultaneously, as victims and agents within history (Newton & Rosenfelt, 1985a, p. xxviii).

To identify within the same subject “the forces of oppression and the seeds of resistance,” is to analyze from the perspective of historical materialism (ibid). To this end, critical narrative methodology engages the relationship between individual narratives and the larger cultural political and economic conditions by keeping notions of the self linked to history and social organization. Each narrative is then a representation of the world that positions the speaker as both the subject and object of social research (Bannerji, 1995).

Ultimately, a historical materialist approach to critical narratives attempts to connect with others in time and space by illuminating how “different aspects of the same social relations are

visible at different intersections, from different social locations” (ibid, p. 95). Totalizing in this way extends social analysis beyond the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality by recognizing the diverse relations that produce the social world in which we are all implicated (Mohanty, 2006). Hence, from the particular experience emerges an expanded vision of justice that aims to transform racist, patriarchal, and heterosexist relations.

This kind of interpretive relation coincides with the kind of “activist praxis” involved in the unrelenting effort to represent the complexity of the whole from multiple perspectives (Conway, 2006, p. 31). In other words, the epistemologies on which critical narratives and oppositional movements are rooted depend precisely on the partial positions inherent in situated knowledges to negotiate political positions and modes of action.

Description of Research Design

The data presented here derives from research conducted in August of 2008 with 5 Chicana women from the Los Angeles area who participated in the 2000 No on 21 campaign as high school students. All were between the ages of 14-17 during the time of their involvement. Levels of participation in the mobilization ranged from conference attendance and participation in a single protest to political strategizing for organized youth actions at the 2000 Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles. All but one of the participants were active members of YOC. While the duration of their membership in the organization varied, the campaign against Proposition 21 marked their first experience with organized political activity.

As a co-participant in the mobilization, I identified the first 4 participants based on continued personal contact. One additional participant was identified by a member of the initial sample set. All participants were guaranteed a confidential and secure conversation. Interviews were recorded on a digital audio recorder and stored directly onto a password protected

computer. All but one participant self-selected a pseudonym. All subjects were given ample time to read and consider consent letters carefully prior to signing. Additional information about the research project was provided upon request.

The interviews were semi-structured in attempt to allow participants ample room to discover the impact of their political participation in ways that structured interviews or categorical answers do not allow. In fact, given that this was the first time all participants reconstructed their experience, the semi-structured nature of provided ample room for participants to clarify, recontextualize or elaborate on their responses. This enabled participants the space required to make connections between their participation in the movement and their lives as Chicana youth. Indeed, semi-structured interviewing has been a methodological tool useful to the study of social movements, particularly those concerned with assessing the intangible motivations and experience of movement actors (Blee and Taylor, 2002).

The interview questions were formulated with the intent to capture the complexity of participant experiences as well as the social relations in which they were immersed. Since the research is concerned with the impact of participation in organized political work, questions were arranged thematically in a way that enabled me to guide the construction of their narrative from beginning to end. Only occasional prompting was necessary.

Interview Questions

Before

Who were you before entering the movement work?

Where did you grow up?

What was the community you lived in like?

What was happening in your family?

How were you feeling about school?

What was your life like and how were you thinking about it?

During

How did you get involved in the No on 21 campaign?
What was your participation like in the No on 21 campaign?
Were you involved formally or informally?
For example, were you involved in leadership activities?
Core group activities? Were you a part of the general membership?
What kinds of things do you remember doing?
What were you involved in?

After

How would you describe your experience?
What were some significant moments for you?
What kinds of things do you remember learning?
How do you think you changed as a result of your participation?
How do you see what you learned then reflected in your life now?

Interviews with participants took an average of 60-90 minutes each. All interviews were conducted in English with occasional code-switching in Spanish. All interviews were audio taped and transcribed into text for analysis. Each transcript was then labeled by pseudonym and imported into NVivo8, a computer software program that facilitates the management of data involved in qualitative analysis. The initial themes (i.e., “free nodes”) of Before/During/After provided preliminary frameworks of analysis. Subsequent narrative themes were identified by carefully examining the following aspects in each interview:

1. The recurrence of ideas (i.e., ideas with similar meaning but different wording)
2. Repetition (the same idea using the same wording)
3. Forcefulness (verbal or nonverbal cues that reinforce a concept) (Owen, 1984)

This process was repeated until a list of themes, many of which emerged from phrases within the narratives themselves, was identified. These were distilled further until the general outlines of a conceptual model emerged. This was facilitated again by the use of NVivo8 where several “free-nodes” can be organized to form conceptual categories known as “tree nodes.” These nodes were then labeled according to the major themes guiding this study: Critical Pedagogy, Social Agency, and Chicana Feminisms as Social Movement.

My ability to give meaning to the data is also influenced by my own identity as a Chicana, bilingual teacher, community organizer, and active participant in the No on 21 campaign. Thus, like Renato Rosaldo (1989), I am a “connected critic” who “work[s] outward from in-depth knowledge of a specific form of life” as a knower “rather than work[ing] downward from abstract principals” (p. 194). Such “theoretical sensitivity” also comprises a Chicana feminist epistemology where “Chicanas become agents of knowledge who participate in intellectual discourse that links experience, research, community and social change” (ibid, p. 305)—hence, retaining the study’s intent to remain consistent with the ethical and moral aims of materialist analysis.

Chapter 5

CHICANA YOUTH SPEAK OUT

*It is important to keep in mind that many of the misunderstandings that have arisen so far in the Chicano movement regarding Chicanas are due primarily to the newness of this development, and many will be resolved through the course of events. One thing, however, is clear—Chicanas are determined to fight.---*Mirta Vidal, *Women, New Voice of La Raza: Chicanas Speak Out*

It was almost forty years ago today that Chicana activist Mirta Vidal, as national director of the Chicano and Latino work of the Youth Socialist Alliance, published her coverage of the first national Chicana feminist conference for the Socialist Workers Party magazine, *The Militant*. Under the title “Chicanas Speak Out: New Voice of La Raza”, Vidal (1971) spoke of the conference resolutions as the articulation of a growing self-awareness among Chicanas and the particular oppression she was facing within US society.

In keeping with this spirit of Vidal’s “Chicanas Speak Out.” this chapter focuses on the voices of five young Chicanas who, as high school student, participated in the fight against Proposition 21.. All were between the ages of 14-17. One participant was undocumented. The rest were born and raised by immigrant parents in working class communities throughout Los Angeles. The 2000 No on 21 campaign was their first experience with social movement work. Nine years after the campaign, in the Summer of 2008, they were asked to speak for the first time about that experience and its continuing impact on their lives as Chicana women in the US.

Introductory Profiles

Kirina

Kirina is a US born Chicana, raised in the working class city of Bell Gardens, California. Kirina is the youngest of 3 sisters, the eldest of which is 10 years older than her. Kirina’s mother immigrated to the US from Zacatecas, Mexico in 1980. Since that time, Kirina’s mother has

“always been sort of like the care of other people,” first as a babysitter and then as a hospice provider for the elderly, which has proven to be an unreliable source of employment. According to Kirina, her mother has “always [been] on and off” work. Kirina’s father is from Ensenada, Baja California and has worked his entire life as an auto mechanic. His presence in Kirina’s life, however, has been at best sporadic. “[My parents] separated when I was [in] 1st grade, 2nd grade, 3rd grade,” she says laughing. “They were just like that,” she says. In fact, it wasn’t until Kirina was 10 years old that her parents separated “for good.” When Kirina saw her father for the first time again during her junior year in high school, she ran inside her home and locked herself in. “I was like: I don’t wanna see him!” she says. “And then he would call and I would just [hangup].”

According to Kirina, the absence of any father in her home made her “so antimarriage” throughout high school. “My sister didn’t...have contact with *her* dad and my mom...had no help from *my* dad...so I wasn’t really used to seeing like a couple—a *surviving* couple!” she explains. Thus, by the time Kirina was in high school, she decided marriage “was totally bullshit.”

The same year Kirina’s parents separated, she moved to a “really, really tiny” one bedroom apartment in north Montebello where, compared to her old neighborhood, “nobody came out of their house or anything like that.” Three years later, her mother decided to move again, this time to an apartment on the south side of town. “My mom almost didn’t want to move down here because *‘ta feo* or whatever,” but because the apartments were managed by a familiar acquaintance, her mother decided the 2 bedroom apartment was worth the extra dollars in rent. Laughing at the memory of a cholo hitting on her sister the day of the move, Kirina was well aware “there was more like gang activity” in the area. “[T]here was never any like any

crazy-crazy violence,” she remembers “but there was like raids n’ stuff and boarded up buildings on my street...[just] typical tagging and stuff like that.”

Still, there was no space in the apartment for Kirina to claim herself. Now a freshman in high school, Kirina shared the 2 bedroom apartment with 7 other people: her mother, her 2 sisters, and her 4 nephews. “I was just there. I didn’t have a room. I didn’t have like privacy,” she remembers. Moreover, Kirina felt that as “the youngest [and] the most obedient one,” she was often left to care for the kids. “*You’re* not going out on Fridays so you can take care of the kids,” her sisters would tell her. Thus, by the time Kirina was a senior, she avoided home as much as possible.

When asked how her family managed to make ends meet, Kirina responded by saying that it was her sister’s welfare benefits that made survival possible. “[W]e got like our food mainly from like WIC and...food stamps,” she remembered. Otherwise, she continued, “I don’t think we would have been as well off.”

When prompted to describe herself during high school, Kirina responded almost immediately by saying “I was lost!” Although she laughed as she spoke, she continued by saying “I think I was just going to gigs...I was just doing like nothing, you know?” She adds her time in school as part of this meaningless activity:

KIRINA: [School] was interesting at times but it wasn’t really important to me. It wasn’t, really. I mean I was going there because I had to and I think the only thing... expected [of me] was that I graduate high school and hopefully on time. And that was it! After that like, I don’t think I took it seriously or [it] wasn’t important to me because I didn’t see schooling after high school or after a certain point, you know?...I was just thinking, “I’m having fun” or whatever but like school was *not* important at all to me.

It follows then that Kirina put little effort into improving her “one-point something” grade point average senior year, especially since she imagined her future going “nowhere” she says—or at least nowhere beyond Montebello.

KIRINA: Seriously! I figured I’m probably gonna end up working at the mall or something like that, which is--I *hated* the mall so I was like “Augh!” But that’s where all the jobs were or I mean that’s where most likely right after high school the only thing you could find is probably something at the mall because it’s right during summer time.

Thus, Kirina remembered “[not] even *thinking* about what was gonna happen after high school” her senior year. “I’ll just work” she told herself or at the very least, “I’ll just do something” she said. The only certainty “at that point,” she explained, “was looking for who I was.”

Hungry for yet another gig, Kirina remembered getting word at school that the Chicano hip hop group Aztlan Underground was going to perform for \$5 at East Los Angeles College one weekend. Having never seen the band play live before, Kirina decided to go: “I was gonna hang out with my friends on the weekend anyways” she remembers thinking and the cost of admission was well within her budget. “I was just like, ‘Hey, perfect for me!,’” she said. “And then we just ended up going.”

What Kirina did not know was that the Aztlan Underground performance was part of a larger fundraising effort for the No on 21 campaign which was gearing up for its culminating action the following Tuesday. The fundraiser was hosted by students from Roosevelt and Garfield High School, two classic rival schools in East Los Angeles. “*That* was very powerful in itself,” Kirina remarked.

KIRINA: And that’s why I was like “Whoa, wait a minute!” I remember last year they like were toilet papering their schools and doing stupid things like that, you know? I just thought, “Wow! You could do something *really* dumb or something really meaningful.” I just saw [them together] and was like “Wow!”

The sight of two students from rival schools sharing information about the upcoming walkouts along with the politically charged environment created by Aztlan's music, compelled Kirina to do something against the initiative. "I just felt it in me that I had to reach out. Kinda like *do* something," she said.

[I]t was so eye opening for me that I did something I've never done before. I went up to [one of the M.C.'s] and was like, "Hey!...How do we get *our school* involved? 'Cause like, you know, Roosevelt's doing this and Garfield's doing this and Wilson and all these schools are doing it. And I was like, "Why are we not doing anything?" And then Whittier had just walked out...I would never go up to anybody I didn't know and just start talking to 'em but I was just like, "Yeah! Give me your number." And I gave her my number. I don't know. It was just weird! It just happened!

Aurora

Aurora is also a US born Chicana raised in the Estrada Courts projects in East Los Angeles (ELA) for 12 years before moving to a single family dwelling "behind the railroad tracks" near the city of Commerce. She is the oldest of three children; her two brothers being 9 and 6 years apart.

Aurora's mother immigrated to the US from Mexico City in 1980. For over 20 years she has been working for the LA County Library, first as a part-time literacy tutor and later a full-time assistant librarian. "Really, she should be the librarian cause she does everything," Aurora explains. "[B]ut she's not 'cause she doesn't have university."

Nevertheless, Aurora credits her mother with teaching her and her siblings an appreciation for books and works of art. "When she was growing up she loved to read and she loved books so she instilled that in us," she says, including the notion that "books were for rich people." Thus, Aurora grew up feeling strongly that all works of art, including books, should

also be accessible to everyone: “Not like if you’re rich then you can see and experience art. For me that’s important.”

In spite of such views, it is also “really important [for my mom] to be in the mainstream” Aurora says. “[She] would always say she didn’t want to live on the side lines.” Part of Aurora’s adolescence thus involved learning to tolerate her mother’s conservative tendencies. “Like my mom would always say, ‘¡Ay, *tu y tus ideas!*!’” she said laughing as she recalled “com[ing] up with stuff that to her seemed...kinda odd.”

Aurora’s father, on the other hand, has been consistently less willing to understand his daughter’s point of view. A steel welder by trade, he came to the US from Mexico in 1988. For over 20 years now, he has worked for the same industrial equipment manufacturer in the city of Commerce, first as a forklift driver in the warehouse and later as the sales person for the company store. “Me and my dad don’t have a great relationship,” Aurora admitted. “I can say that in high school,” she continued, “we didn’t have a close relationship at all because he’s conservative and I’m liberal.”

Like, I remember...my thing was that I wasn’t gonna like pledge allegiance....[L]ike as a kid I thought, “That’s so stupid!” Like, in the 8th grade, like, “I don’t wanna pledge allegiance to *anything!*”...I feel like ‘cause I was raised in a religious home, I pledged allegiance to my religion, to the faith that I was raised with. To God....and I pledged that and that was it. Like, why did I have to make a plea or a pledge to anything other than that? And so to my parent’s that was like so disrespectful and dumb...[M]y mom, she would try to understand sometimes. It’s not that she agreed but she would try to understand whereas my dad was just like, “No. That’s stupid!” You know what I mean? He’d be like “Dónde crees que vives?” You know, like “You live here, right?”

Aurora's resentment against her father, moreover, is made worse by what she feels is his unrelenting habit to be anywhere but home:

AURORA: He's real *callejero*, like he's always out. He was always out. He was always doing things....I can say that my dad, in honest truth, my dad was a provider. He did like pay our bills and he paid our rent and the mortgage and everything but he wasn't around a lot. Like, I didn't feel him a lot as a present thing *except* when we were in really big trouble or something was happening, *then* he'd be around.

In spite of it all, Aurora spoke fondly of her memories as a child. Growing up in East Los Angeles was especially exciting for her: "[Y]ou would run and get your dollars and run out *sin zapatos* and just like get your *elote*" she says smiling. "Of course, it was 99% Mexican/Latino" she added but all that changed when, at the age of 12, Aurora's mother tired of renting and decided to purchase a condo in nearby Montebello.

AURORA: There it's like you're sorta in your own little thing. Like, you probably know the neighbor down below and that's it or the neighbor to the side or whatever whereas in East LA, in that area we lived in, you kinda knew everyone. You know, like the *vecinas* would come out and you knew people that lived by you and you play over with the kids in your street, or whatever. Here, it wasn't like that...[I]t's more diverse [but] it's sorta like, that bubble....I can't say that like I had many relationships with many people there....So all that was a marked change...[it] was like, "This is boring! No one passes!"

The only good news for Aurora was that she could continue to attend school within the same district. "My mom thought Montebello would [have] better school[s] for us [when we were in ELA] so she put my grandma's address on our stuff back before you had to like prove it," she says. Thus, by the time Aurora befriended Kirina in Junior High, her family had already been given a permanent transfer to schools in the area. Montebello High was then simply a matter of attending what Aurora felt was "the next logical school."

Aside from growing up in East Los Angeles, Aurora cites regular trips to Mexico during the summer as a significant part of her childhood experience. She remembers "falling in love" with Mexico City and spending time with family members "en el mero centro." She remembers

too the lasting impact of visiting Frida Kahlo's home in Coyoacán and the power of Diego Rivera's murals in El Palacio de Educación where the enormity of every detail paled in comparison to the postcards she took home: "To see it all in real life [was like] seeing the pictures in front of your face," she says. "[T]hat's all a part of being young [for me]," she adds. "And like the love that I had for [art]."

Aurora also refers to her relationship with her grandmother as another important aspect of childhood. "She was a big part of the forming of my thoughts," Aurora explains. She then added:

AURORA: I love my abuelita. My abuelita passed away last year. But I loved her so much and she was so much a part of my life that, I mean, you know, like *platicando* with her, talking with her about ideas and things from that side of the world, from a different perspective than what I would hear on television or from people.

As a Middle School student, Aurora remembered sympathizing with high school students from Montebello High who walked out of their schools in protest against Proposition 187. Still "a kid," Aurora remembered feeling powerless to do anything herself. Yet, the impression of seeing students take action, for something she "remember[s] thinking [was] horribly unfair," clearly remained.

At the age of 14, Aurora's mother grew unexpectedly ill. "She had a problem with walking on one of her legs," Aurora explains and being that "I'm the oldest and I'm a girl," she continued, "I was always there with my mom to help her." Thus, in addition to having to do more household chores and provide more care than usual for her two younger siblings, Aurora now began to work for less than minimum wage, through a youth employment program where she organized tickets for the Los Angeles Police Department at the LA County Records building downtown. By the time Aurora turned 16, however, her mother asked her to find "real" work—

employment that paid *at least* the minimum wage. That's when Aurora began what she referred to as her "main job," working part-time at McDonald's her senior year in high school.

Aurora takes extreme pride in her work history as a young woman. "My mom's always worked so I always liked the fact that I always worked and helped my family," she says. School, on the other hand, proved less satisfying. She found it boring and unmotivating. In fact, she remembers "not really wanting to go and wanting to miss." She preferred "hanging out" and being amongst friends. Thus, she admits to never doing well in school:

AURORA: I can say honestly that for many, many, many years, I wasn't good in school. I like didn't have a motivation for that. Like, I mean, I know I'm smart but I just really wasn't—I never put myself up to doing school work so I would always say like, "This year's the year!" Like, you know? When you start in September, like, "I wanna do good this year," but I mean, really I never did that well...

Reflecting further on her performance as a student, Aurora continued:

AURORA: 'Cause I can tell you that [school] wasn't the thing that we talked about at my house. It wasn't like "Hija, when you get older, you're going to go to college, okay?" (Laughing) That's *not* something my mom said to me. It was, you know, "You work hard" and "Oh, did you get okay grades?" You know? "Oh, okay." I guess whatever reason—I'm not criticizing my mom but we weren't like—it wasn't like school was our life. It wasn't like school was a big thing...I mean I know my mom cared about me being OK in school but she certainly wasn't like, "You better keep studying so you can go to college." I mean, it was like, "Uh, mija. I need you to go back to work. It'd be a good idea." "Okay, mom." You know?

Having never excelled in school, Aurora felt nervous about her future. "Since I never got good grades in school, I was never really sure what I was good at," she says. "So it was kinda an insecurity for me not to really know exactly what I was meant to do." Clearly the sciences "were too much" she says and "no one freakin' pays you to talk to them. So what could I do?" she would ask herself. She knew she was interested in the arts and would often entertain the thought of becoming a writer or a photographer, but she was unsure as to how one goes about making

either field a viable option. Instead, nothing in her future was as clear as getting married and raising children.

AURORA: So that was always an issue in my head like, ‘Will I ever--when I grow up, like, what will I do?’ So I always did honestly think: ‘If I ever need to, I’ll just get married when I leave school and maybe that would be a good idea.’...But, that was something, too. I would think ‘Well, I guess you get married and you have kids.’ You know what I mean? ‘Cause I wasn’t sure what I could do...So yeah...I knew that I wanted to have kids. That I have always known that like I love being with kids.... So I mean, I knew that I wanted to be a mom like my mom. But other than that, I can’t say that I was really sure.

Compounding the unease was Aurora’s increasingly difficult relationship with her father. According to Aurora, the relationship deteriorated significantly when he discovered that both she and her brother had developed a habit for substance abuse toward the end of her senior year.

AURORA: There was a lot of drama with my dad and me and my brother [during that time]...I had substance issues, my brother did [too] and my father was seeing that, as sort of like, we were becoming a problem for him. So it wasn’t like maybe my kids have substance issues. It was like we were a pain in the ass.

Thus, by the time Aurora was a senior in high school, tensions at home were escalating. “I always felt that...I was a good daughter,” Aurora declared. “I was a good family member.” Yet apparent to her was that neither her willingness to comply with the obligation of schooling nor her ability to hold a steady job and contribute to the family’s economy was enough.

When asked how she became involved in the No on 21 campaign, Aurora admitted that it was as simple as “[Kirina] hear[ing] about it first and then [coming] to me.” In fact, from Aurora’s perspective, “[Kirina] started it.” She started explaining [Y.O.C.] to me and said, “Oh, look! Yeah! They do these meetings [and] they get together” and then I just started going and looking at it and seeing what they had to say. So it really started I can say from her...and then I was like, “Oh, OK. Cool!” Thus, Aurora was among the first people Kirina contacted after

attending the fundraiser at ELAC. As a consequence, she became involved in all the last minute preparations for Montebello's walkout.

Paloma

Paloma was born and raised by her maternal grandparents in Guadalajara, Mexico. She is the oldest of four children. She remembers crossing the US-Mexico border as a child at least 3 times to reunite with both her parents in California. The last time Paloma crossed the border was in 1991.

As single adults, Paloma's parents lived only two blocks away from each other in Mexico. Yet, according to Paloma, they were worlds apart when it came to social class. Paloma's father, for instance, was disowned by his parents at a very young age. Thus, he had to forgo school in favor of work: "My dad's always been a laborer," she says. "You know, sold purses"... He's worked all his life." In fact, with his labor, Paloma's father supported not just his own siblings but his grandfather as well. His economic contribution to the family thus earned him a significant amount of respect: "He was never really around but everybody always talked about him...[because] he used to bring in money," she explains. The same held true for Paloma in high school when her father cut and delivered metal for a local steel manufacturer to earn himself and his family a living.

Paloma's mother, on the other hand, was socialized within Guadalajara's business class and worked as a young woman. "She worked with lawyers, dentists, [and] universities," Paloma began. "It was that kind of lifestyle for her...You know, nice shoes all the time and tight skirts and the pretty shirts," including driving her own Delorian! Her background, in fact, was so distinct from that of her father's that Paloma's "grandpa offered [her] money so she could walk away the day of her wedding!" Paloma laughs. "I mean, they've come a long way--- 25 years.

Apparently, there's something there" she says. "But now [my mom's] at home miserable because my dad won't let her work." As far as Paloma could remember, "she's never had a job... since we lived here." Her only recollection of her mother working was during a brief stint at a JCPenney warehouse. "But that didn't last long 'cause my dad was always complaining," she says. "He's like, 'I don't get enough money back [from taxes] because you're working,' which doesn't make any sense to me," she adds. Questioning her father's reasoning and even more so, her mother's consent, she concludes: "It's like a couple's thing I guess. You'll never understand. They got their own thing going."

Most of Paloma's life in the US has been spent in the working class city of South Whittier where her parents continue to rent the same 2 bedroom apartment she lived in during the time of the campaign. As Paloma got older, however, she felt unjustifiably singled-out by her parents in ways that made her feel unwanted at home. She explains:

PALOMA: I don't know why [but] it was like visibly clear and everybody knew it and everybody saw it [and] nobody every questioned it but I always got like the worst of it, you know?...I was expected to pay bills and they would watch like when I would eat and stuff. Like, it was crazy! Like, I would try to grab something and they're like, "No! That's your dad's." It was like, "What?!" And they're like, "No, that's your dad's!" or "That's your brother's!" and it was like, "Oh, OK." You know? "I just won't grab it then. Whatever!" But those were the kinds of things that were just--it just wasn't good, you know?

Paloma's undocumented status, however, only compounded the pressure to contribute economically. Fortunately, at the suggestion of a friend, Paloma enrolled in Rio Hondo Community College's Upward Bound program, where "if you did really good you'd get 2-300 bucks [and i]f you just showed up you got 100." Thus, at the age of 15, Paloma was relieved to have secured a source of income, no matter how nominal or how temporary.

PALOMA: So I would always get my money and just save it and that's pretty much how [I got by] because everything was cheaper back then, too. So, you know, clothes I would go to the thrift store. That was no biggy. You know, its high school. Who cares?! And my bus, it was what? 60 cents? And food, you

know, you grab whatever. You grab a snack. Whatever you find in the snack machines (laughs). You know, and just drink water, I guess. I don't know. Plus, I had really good friends. So [they] would always be like, "Oh, you want something?" So I never had like a bad day with friends. They were always like hooking me up with stuff.

The living arrangements her parent's provided for their children also signaled for Paloma a lack of attention to her needs as a young woman. Perhaps more distressing, however, was that it served as a painful reminder of her father's preference for his sons:

PALOMA: My brother had his own room. I mean we lived in a 2 bedroom apartment [and] my brothers had their own room! [My parents] had a walk-in closet so they made the walk-in closet into a bedroom. My [younger] sister slept in there. I was on the couch with my stuff in my bag--in like a big plastic trash bag because I didn't have any drawers. I didn't have anywhere to put my stuff! But yet I paid 100 bucks for rent!....Like, I don't like living on the couch, you know? I was a girl for goodness sakes! [But] my dad would always secure his guys. You know, whatever the guys needed they guys would get.

Yet the unequal treatment Paloma experienced at home went beyond the disparities in sleeping arrangements. At times, the reminder she was born a girl would be anything but subtle: "You know like my dad would always say like, 'Ah, you're just gonna end up pregnant. You're a waste of money.'" Other times, the difference would manifest itself in her father's response to simple requests:

PALOMA: You know, my brother needed a ride, it didn't matter *where* he needed a ride to, [my dad] would go. He would be like, "Alright, I gotta go." He would make *time* for them. And for me it was, "There's the bus." "OK, well I need change." "Well, then ask your mom." You know, my mom doesn't have a job. Where's my mom gonna give me money from? Like that. Like, "Find your own money," you know? I'd be like, "Well, it's cause I need to get here" or "I need to go there," and it'd be like, "Well go catch the bus." So I'd be walking like in the middle of the night trying to catch a bus or sometimes I'd be stuck. Like I would miss the bus and I'd call my dad and my dad would get pissed. Like he'd be like, "Well, why did you want to go? That's your fault. Well walk." And then he would just hang up on me. So, it was just like ridiculous. It was like, "What?!" Like it just made no sense but it was just that.

Yet despite feeling less valued at home, Paloma never resorted to the kind of alcohol or drug abuse she felt surrounded her. “I was never that person,” she says. “I was more of like: How can I pave the way so that when I get out of here, I’m set and I don’t have to look back?” Again, the answer to that question was far from easy:

PALOMA: I couldn’t go to college because I didn’t have my papers. I didn’t have my green card. So it’s not like I could be like, “Oh, I’m gonna work towards college and then I’m going to go to college and get away from home.” I didn’t have that option, you know? Even though I was going to college and I was getting some college credits it just wasn’t that. You know, some kids that’s what they have to look forward too. They’re like, “I’m gonna turn 18 and I’m gonna go to school and I’m gonna get away,” you know. I just didn’t have that option....”

Still, even if for the time being, school was a place where Paloma went to gain not only a sense of accomplishment and delight in her triumphs as a student but more so the reassurance that one day her future would be different because of it:

PALOMA: I knew that education was a must. I *had* to go to school. It wasn’t an option. It wasn’t something where I was like, “I’m gonna drop out and get a job” because I knew that minimum wage 3 or 4 years down the line wasn’t going to get me anywhere. So I *had* to go to school. I had to get some type of credibility I guess you could call it because if I was gonna get a job eventually I had to have--you know, some college education looks better than just a high school diploma. So...I *wanted* to go to school. That’s one thing I always looked forward to. Going to school and just working at school and you know, getting the honors and passing all the tests, doing the SATs. That was always a pleasure to do for me. It was never anything negative and it was never an option. It was always something I had to do.

Thus, fulfilling her obligations as a student gave Paloma a sense that she was “on the right track” and “doing what [she] had to.” It was also one of the few sources of approval from her parents, particularly her father:

PALOMA: I went to school and I think that put ‘em at ease. You know ‘cause coming from like a neighborhood like ours, where nothing but gangsters and stuff. And all the kids would be at home because they would always ditch and I was always going to school. And that’s something that my dad never stopped talking about so that was good. You could tell that it was something that they, you know, that made them happy.

Training to become an Aztec Dancer at the time also provided Paloma a resource from which she continues to draw strength from in her adult life:

PALOMA: [T]o this day I'm still going [to Danza], you know? It's just—ah, it's such a relief, you know? *I love going!* I think I would compare it to how people feel about going to church, you know? It's prayer. You kind of let everything out, you know. You know everything that you think is bad and you wish would get better. You go there, you wish for something better, and you pray, and you hope. But it's, you know, its cleansing. It's good! You sweat a lot and you feel good after, you know? You're like re-energized. Like, "Alright. I could go through another week," or "Alright, definitely. I could do this!" So, it's been good for me.

Yet the reality of Paloma's situation at home during high school was never far behind. "I just remember thinking, 'I need out of here!'" she admits. "I don't know how it's gonna work but I just gotta...get away from the problems, get away from all this mess." She recalls feeling "I didn't wanna end up in a home like my mom."

PALOMA: So I just remember thinking to myself like I just have to do something. I don't know what but I'm gonna do something and I'm gonna show everybody that I can. Make the most of what I got. You know, *be* somebody. I'm not just gonna end up on the streets like my dad would always say...like that wasn't my thing. So, even before [the No on 21 campaign] I was always like, "I gotta find dedication in something." I gotta find something to, you know, just to help me work through the years so that I can get to whatever—18; 'till I find the opportunity to just be myself.

In fact, Paloma remembers her high school years as "a time when I was trying to find myself," she says. "You know, what I liked, what I don't like...what makes me happy." She thus remembers setting out to find what she described as "outlets" or "positive things" during high school to help steady her navigation through that time. In order to do so, Paloma felt she had to find that which would help counteract the harmful reality of her situation back home:

PALOMA: [I was] like a lost kid, you know? Trying to find a medium, trying to find something other than just gangs. I'm sure I didn't want to end up pregnant or something. I just figured if I met positive people and hung out with positive people then my outlook in life would be positive. So I think that's the kind of person I was at that time. I was just trying to be as positive as I could and try to make the most of what I had because apparently home wasn't the best you

know. So [I was] a little lost but on the right track. That's the kind of teenager that I was.

It was at Upward Bound where Paloma had the chance to deepen her friendship with Javier and Jesse, two friends from high school who were already active in Y.O.C. "We would just have these really long conversations about just stuff going on," she remembers. "So we talked about community stuff...[and] definitely immigration 'cause I was going through that and you know, just how the system works," she continues. "So then one day they just invited me [to a meeting]." Feeling "more interested in talking about stuff," she decides to attend. Besides, Paloma says, "[Politics] was always an interest of mine."

Elena

Elena is a US born Chicana raised in the working class neighborhood of Pico in Santa Monica, California. Her father migrated to the US at the age of 18. His integration into the country was facilitated by family members who had settled previously throughout the Los Angeles area. After years of work as a baker and factory worker for PaperMate, Elena's father began studying auto mechanics and has been doing auto repair work for the past 20 years.

Elena's mother is from Guatemala. She migrated to the US in her twenties, without the support of family or friends in the US. She met Elena's father while working for PaperMate. Most of her life in this country, however, has been spent doing housekeeping work for the parishioners of her church. "[G]iven that we were in Santa Monica, the church where she would go was mostly white so there was a lot of people that would ask her to clean their house," Elena says half-chuckling. Eventually, Elena's mother became certified as a nurse assistant and began working the night shift by the time Elena became involved in the No on 21 campaign.

Elena grew up feeling "a sense of pride" in her community. "You could walk down the street and know people [and] their families," she says. "But the neighborhood was changing a

little bit [during Proposition 21] because of rising rents,” she remembered. “[And] there was like about a month or two of like 5 people losing their lives to gang violence.” The presence of police also increased. “But it was *still* a close community,” she says proudly.

Elena has two older siblings: a brother and a sister. Her brother Frank, whom she was particularly close to, was incarcerated when Elena was 10 years old. “That’s when the prison system became a part of my life because during that period, [my 18 year old brother] was wrongly incarcerated and sentenced with three years in prison and 2 strikes.” Asked to describe her relationship with him, Elena responds: “[W]e were really close. I felt like he always took care of me and I always was his little sister and what not.” His incarceration, therefore, made adolescence particularly challenging for Elena.

ELENA: Then [Frank’s] incarceration was during that time of middle school where it was a lot harder to figure out where you wanted to be, in what groups and what social networks and what way you wanted to mature, I guess. Him being locked up during that time was a little difficult because I didn’t really have that person, besides my sister. But I didn’t have him watching out and saying, “You’re going out too late,” or “You’re coming home too late,” or “You shouldn’t be going to these places because it’s dangerous...” So I didn’t have this person who before use to watch me like that.

At the same time, Elena’s sister is struggling with her own challenges as a recent transfer student to UCLA. While she attempted to fill the void her brother left behind, life as a first-generation college student, financing herself through school, consumed most of her time. Thus, Elena believes she would have been spared many difficult lessons as a young woman if only her brother were there to help guide her. Frank’s trial, moreover, infuriated Elena. She felt the public defenders assigned to his case exerted little effort to give her brother a fair representation in court.

ELENA: When my brother, you know, got incarcerated and I saw that the public defenders that had his case didn’t really do anything for him. They didn’t meet with him. They didn’t talk to him about his rights, they didn’t pursue any of the witnesses, they just sat around and I mean—I really don’t know

what they were going through but it seemed like they were just trying to get through that case and not really doing much of the work needed for a case that had, you know, potential witnesses and what not.

Finally, his conviction “and all of those feelings of missing him and seeing my mom in tears because he was gonna now be part of the system” prompted Elena to become a public defender for poor youth of color at an early age. This way, she says, “other families [don’t] have to go through that experience.”

Still, her brother’s absence affected Elena and her family profoundly. “[E]xperiencing the pain and the hurt of losing somebody to the system and not being able to bring that person back home,” she says, emotionally strained every member of her family. While regular visits to see Frank in prison pulled the family closer, there is no doubt in Elena’s mind that his incarceration “also strained some of our relationships because we were dealing with it in different ways.” According to Elena, “My family was...experiencing the pain and the hurt of losing somebody to the system and not being able to bring that person back home. There was a lot of letter writing to him and trying to sustain relationship somebody who you’re not constantly seeing.”

Given that the family was “emotionally in different places,” Elena had to find her own way of coping. She finally did so by resolving to do well in school. She figured at least this way, she could give her brother reason to be proud knowing she was “on the right path” to a better future. “[H]is incarceration...made me feel like I wanted to be in college and do all these things with my life *for* him--to inspire him and to try to give him the strength to do OK there and try to come out well, mentally and physically.”

Nevertheless, without her brother’s presence, Elena found her years in middle school increasingly difficult to navigate. She felt conflicted between her resolve to do well academically and take part in the social world of her peers, which Elena felt “was pulling [her]

another way.” Not wanting to give her friends reason to think she was “better than them in any way,” Elena struggled to keep her friends close when the demands of doing well in school required she make less time for them.

Worsening matters for Elena was the lack of clear direction on how to become the lawyer she knew she wanted to be. Thinking back to her freshman year in high school, Elena remembers:

ELENA: I was kind of confused. I knew I wanted to be a lawyer at one point but I didn’t have the means to like really know what I need—I knew I needed to go to college but I didn’t really have people around me who had gone to college and my family was like, you know, each dealing with...[my brother’s] situation... So, I was like just—I felt like a little confused. A little like all over the place. Not knowing what my circle was because I wanted to do all these things with my life but all my friends from the neighborhood were doing other things and I didn’t want to lose my friends. I was trying to find the best way to like balance those out.

That same year, Elena’s brother was finally released. His return home, however, proved not to be the solution to Elena’s problems. “I was no longer that little girl that he could tell what to do or that would take advice lightly,” she explains. “I was doing more things. I was talking back.”

As a freshman in high school, Elena had to also grapple with feelings of responsibility and obligation toward her community. Feelings of gratitude for her relatively fortunate circumstances were at the core of her mounting desire to affect change:

ELENA: I wanted to be somebody that would try to change the way that I saw things that have affected other people in my community. So I wanted to be that person because of the place that I was fortunate to be in. I was fortunate not to be incarcerated or, you know, like some of my peers during that time or like I was the person that wasn’t involved with other things and so I felt like...other people [were] looking to me to become that person and I felt like it was a responsibility or something like that because I was fortunate enough to be in a place in like my education and in my home life where...I *could* do more with myself than just existing, I guess. I *wanted* to do more!

Finally, as Frank adjusted to life outside of prison, Elena and her sister shared the only bedroom in the apartment with her parents, while Frank, his girlfriend, and their two children slept on the living room floor. This arrangement continued for several years until Frank found stable work in construction and could afford a place of his own.

That same year, Elena's cousin introduced her to Cristina and Sylvia, two schoolmates from UCLA working on their teacher's credential. They were also members of the New Raza Left, which is spearheaded by veteran Chicano activist, Carlos Montes. As members of the organization, they "had particular networks of people who were already organizing, who were older or around their age," says Elena. "And I don't even remember what got us started," she continues, "but *something* got us to talk more; and then, I started to hang out with them...and they took me to some events."

Part of "hanging out" with her new friends involved attending organizing meetings with students from Whittier High School. This gave her a sense of place within the No on 21 campaign. Elena recalls that "Going with [Cristina and Sylvia] to these meetings and meeting other youth that were participating in [the No on 21 campaign]...made me feel like I should get more involved."

One of the first events Elena attended was the New Raza Left's march Against Proposition 21, in downtown Los Angeles. The principle stop along the route was in front of Twin Towers City Jail, where Elena's brother had been incarcerated. At the event, Elena and other students from Whittier and East Los Angeles stood up on a make-shift stage to speak out against Proposition 21. "I remember the first thing [Marta and Sylvia] asked me to do was to speak...at a rally in front of the Twin Towers Jail and that was the first time I spoke about Prop

21 and how important it was to communities of color and to youth in the state of California that we not let this pass because it was going to affect us so much.”

Sara

Sara was born and raised in South Central Los Angeles. Both her parents are from Mexico. Her father Reynaldo is from Tecualtitan, Jalisco. He is the eldest in his family and immigrated to the US in 1975. For as long as Sara can remember, he has been a maintenance worker for restaurants and shopping plazas throughout Los Angeles city. “My dad also drinks a lot,” Sara says. “He has since we were little.” Reynaldo’s alcoholism, in fact, has created what Sara feels is a “weird relationship” between them. “It’s like I wanted him in my life and then I didn’t,” she explains. Sara also expressed frustration over her father’s complacent attitude with work. “To this day,” Sara explains, “he says he’s going to look for a better job but never has.”

Sara’s mother, Soledad, on the other hand, is from Pueblo Nuevo, Colima. She has been consistently employed as a schoolyard supervisor at Sara’s former Elementary School for over 20 years. “So she’s always been involved with PTA and all these things,” Sara explains. As a member of the school’s staff, moreover, Soledad has always been privy to information about the school’s educational opportunities. Thus, she made sure that Sara and her sister be placed in classrooms with veteran teachers. She also arranged to have Sara tested for the school’s Gifted Education and Magnet Program when Sara was in the fourth grade. Still, Sara explains, “my house experience...wasn’t the greatest.” In fact, Sara continues, “I remember just knowing that I didn’t want to do whatever [my parents] were doing because I saw [how] we just lived check by check,” she says. “No savings. No health insurance. No vacations.”

When asked to describe her neighborhood, Sara responds: “I live where Primera Flats and Ghetto Boys are at and I know that ‘cause [its] written all over the neighborhood.” As a child,

she recalls being instructed to avoid the neighborhood park at all costs. “Just keep doing your business and you’ll survive,” she was told. “So that’s what I did. I would just go from school to the house, from the house to the school,” she says. “I wouldn’t talk to anybody.” Thus, Sara grew up feeling that “there’s always that fear” something dangerous can happen. Indeed, by the age of 7, Sara had seen her mother mugged twice. During one particular incident, Sara recalls:

SARA: I was probably 7 [and my brother Rogelio] was probably 12 or something like that and my little sister was in the stroller. I remember my brother going after the guy---I don’t know what he was thinking---and then my mom was running after my brother. She thinks they saw when she bought the syringes for the insulin for my brother...but she ran because she had all the money from the rent in her purse...Luckily, the [police] got the guys...and they didn’t do anything to my brother ‘cause [the guys] kicked my brother, [too]. So things like that [would happen]. That’s the neighborhood I grew up in. I’m not that proud of my neighborhood.

Sara’s exposure to violence also involved that which her brother was subjected to. “I don’t know if it was because I was a girl,” Sara says “but [my brother] was *always* targeted.” She remembers:

SARA: My brother got jumped a couple of times just because he looked a certain way. Just walking from school, too. Walking to school he got mugged, or you know, the police always stopped him just because the way he looked. And it wasn’t because he was bald ‘cause he wasn’t even bald...But when he was younger like Junior High...he would get pulled over [by police]...I think it was because he was a male and where he was hanging out, too. But, you know, he was a good student...[But still, he’d] be jumped by other gangs [or] tagging groups...for a couple of bucks. And my mom was always scared because he was diabetic.

Still, Sara grew up feeling relatively well-off compared to friends and relatives. Despite having to live in a converted single family home and share one bedroom with her two other siblings, “I felt like I was rich when I was growing up,” Sara explains.

SARA: We live in a very small place which I *never ever* complained about...because I thought, “We own a house. None of my friends own a house. None of my friends have a back yard. None of my friends just live with their parents. They have to share with an uncle or an aunt [or] other families.” So I felt

like...I had the best, you know, because I didn't have to live in the projects or I didn't have to live in...apartments.

In fact, if anything gave Sara a sense of injustice, it was the disparities in educational opportunities she experienced throughout her schooling. In first grade, for example, Sara remembers being shamed for her limited English. "It's not that I was embarrassed [to speak Spanish] 'cause that's how I communicated with *all* my friends and my family, but teachers *made* you embarrassed" she says. She remembers read-aloud time in class as a particularly dreadful moment. She also resented being pulled out of her classroom for English instruction (ESL). Thus, by the time Sara was in the 2nd grade, she denied being an ESL student in order to remain in the company of friends and avoid the embarrassment of being repeatedly singled-out.

"Struggling but surviving" as a bilingual student in South Central L.A., Sara managed to successfully pass the exam for Gifted Education in the 4th grade. "All my classmates....could've taken that test and maybe passed it even with higher points," she says, "...but [teachers] just choose...one person who they like or *que le caen bien*, you know." As a gifted student, Sara was forced to enroll in the very track she once resented:

SARA: [S]o then I got pulled out form Track B...to go into track D where the gifted program was housed. And again, we had special treatment and I was always conscious of that special treatment because my brother wasn't in gifted so he didn't have the special treatment and I was in Track B *before* [and] I didn't like Track D when I was in Track B. I really didn't like Track D! Why? Because I felt that they...were [always] going, you know, to visit museums and this and that...and I would always ask, "Well, why aren't we going?" or "Why are we considered the bad kids?" because that's what we were considered. But then I moved.

The switch in education tracks made Sara feel as if she "live[d] in both worlds in elementary." She went from "[Y]ou need to be fixed kinda deal" to the "Hooray! Hurrah!...You're the star student[t]!" Cognizant of the unjust distribution of school privileges,

Sara felt compelled to be a teacher at an early age. “So probably since second grade,” she says, “I wanted to be a teacher because I didn't want other kids to go through things [I] went through.”

Despite her old resentment, Sara continued to be tracked in the Magnet Program (i.e., college-bound) throughout her four years at Roosevelt High—one of the largest, most segregated secondary school in the country. “That’s where [my brother] wanted me to go” Sara explains, after he transferred there in search of safety from the violence at his local school. “So that’s why I ended up being bussed to Roosevelt High School from South Central LA.” Still, Sara says, her relationship with friends outside the Magnet Program made her “very conscious” that the education and resources she was getting was not there for everyone to enjoy.

SARA: I had friends in other tracks and they would ask, “Well, how do you that? or “How did you get a flyer for attending such and such event?” and I was like, “Well, aren’t your teachers telling you to go here or there?” and they’re like, “No. They don’t tell us anything. We just go to class and they don’t talk about college or anything.”

Her brother Rogelio’s graduation from high school and eventual enrollment at a California State University impacted Sara’s life significantly. As “the first one from like my mom’s family to ever go to a college,” Sara says, “it was *really* exciting...[and] I was always looking up to him.” Her brother’s successful transition to college, therefore, only reinforced the expectation that Sara do the same: “He went to college, *I* have to go to college,” she says. Prior to the No on 21 campaign, Sara remembers herself as being “on that bandwagon.”

SARA: Like, you go to elementary, you go to junior high, you go to high school and then you go to college and then you get a profession. [M]y parents kept on saying, “Well that’s why you have to go to school. That’s why you have to do good because we don’t want you to live like we’re living now. We want you to be able to give the best to *your* children.” [I was] just thinking like, “Okay, *I need* to do good in school to get out of here. Whatever it takes, I don’t care. This subject--” you know, “sucks” or “I don’t like it. It’s too boring.” I mean I just knew I had to do it. Pass the class because that was my only way out. To graduate from high school and apply to, you know, a school. And when I started learning that it wasn’t just like *passing* and graduating from high school, like you had to really get good grades in order to apply and be

accepted to college then I—*como que le heche mas ganas*. You know, like, “Okay, I *have to* get an A.” I don’t care what I do. If I have to do this, I’ll do it, you know. Knowing that that was the *only* way I would be able to get out from that situation. So, and that’s what I did.

The pressure not to deviate from this “trajectory” intensified when Rogelio was incarcerated during Sara’s senior year. This “trajectory flip,” according to Sara,, bewildered the entire family. “He went from being everybody who the family talked about because he went to college...[to] “I can’t believe he’s in prison,” she says.

Disoriented by the sudden change, Sara began to feel overwhelmed by the pressures of testing, good grades and college applications. “I was applying to undergrad at that point [s]o it was like a lot like moments of my life where I was like, “Am I doing the right thing?” And [I was] without my brother there to tell me if I was or not,” Sara says. Moreover, the family’s sudden focus on Rogelio, moreover, began to make Sara feel invisible: “[E]verybody was like concerned about my brother and then I’m over here trying to apply to schools.” Along with Rogelio’s imprisonment came the added responsibility of helping her family care for Rogelio’s 3 month-old daughter. “And then we have our little niece who’s 3 months, who stayed at our house so I was taking care of her while, you know, my mom had to go to court to visit my brother or [stuff like] this” she remembers. “Sometimes,” she says, “I would end up just taking her to school with me.”

School, nevertheless, provided little respite from the stress Sara was experiencing back home. The school’s militarized environment only worsened matters for Sara. “During that time I started *hating* cops more because of what happened to my brother,” she says. Incidents like the following only contributed to her growing contempt:

SARA: [My friends and I] would just get harassed...and we would...get pulled over and you know, “Can you show me your ID? You need to prove that you’re on vacation and if you’re on vacation what are you doing around school?”...and just *all* this just like—interrogation! We would be eating our hamburgers,

you know around in a restaurant and cops would just go in and, “Show me your IDs.” Just like immigration at this point, you know? Like, “Show me your ID! ...[A]nd they would have *all* our names already...Like they had *so* much power over us and we would get scared! We were like, “What are we doing? Are we in the wrong place?” or “What’s going on?”

Thus, at the time of the No on 21 campaign, Sara tried to divert her attention away from home by getting involved in after-school programs. “I think that just not wanting to be at home with that kind of environment,” she says, “*made* me do all these after school activities.” She joined the school’s track team and then later became a member of her school’s Aztec Dance (i.e., Danza) group. “I learned that this teacher was going to have [Danza] in our high school [and] I was like, ‘Oh, that would be so cool!’ ...And, you know, *yo era siempre* like, ‘Well, the only way I can see if it’s gonna happen [is] I have to try it.’ So one of my friends [was] like, ‘Oh, let’s try it!,’ you know? [And] I was like, “Okay!”

The Danza group at Roosevelt, it turns out, was central to mobilization efforts in the No on 21 campaign. In fact, the faculty sponsor was an active member of Y.O.C., along with other student dancers. “It was...mostly women who were *very* conscious,” Sara says. “Most of [the other dancers] were from East LA. So they had this other different way of looking at life.”

SARA: I felt like East LA youth had...very different venues to go to. Like, they have like established people. Like established centers, very close to—you know, the whole history of just like *there* like East LA, Roosevelt and Garfield, and even ELAC and we didn’t have that in South Central. At least I didn’t see it as vibrant as in East LA and that’s why I liked East LA....[Some] people didn’t take advantage of that. But those women did.

Sara explains that it was fellow dancers that first exposed her to the politics of Proposition 21 and related youth organizing activities. “Like I remember they were talking about so and so and “there’s gonna be an open” no se que—“mic.” I was like, “What is that? What are you guys talking about?” “Oh, it’s cause—you know, the center of I-don’t-know-what is gonna have this” and you know like, “That’s really cool!”

Although her involvement was opening up a new world, her transportation back and forth from her South Central home, however, was a constant preoccupation for Sara. “I can’t stay that late over here in East LA ‘cause either my dad has to pick me up or...I would have to take 2 buses to go back home” Sara would explain. “But I can be here,” she remembers saying. “I can dance [and] I can learn.”

The Major Themes

Many issues significant issues and themes that were raised by these young Chicanas, in the course of retelling their stories for this study. The following is a discussion of the major themes raised, each of which adds valuable insight to the central questions posed in this study.

“This is totally different!”

As a student in the Magnet Program, Sara was familiar with college and professional conferences aimed at high school youth. Yet unlike any other event, the No on 21 Youth Conference in Pomona, which she attended as a member of Roosevelt’s Aztec dance group, was Sara’s first exposure to oppositional youth culture. “It was *really* different,” she says. “It was my first time going to anything like that.”

One of the first things Sara remembers noticing was the casualness of people’s attire:

SARA: Even the way they dressed. That’s what I noticed! I was like, “There’s no suits!” You know, it *is* a college campus but there’s no suits! Like, maybe there was some kind of suits or whatever but I remember everybody was like laid back, you know? Just common people not trying to put up a front or anything. *That’s* what I remember! Everyone was like, “Whoah! That’s how people dress? Isn’t this a conference?” (Laughs) You know and things like that so I remember that.

Sara also remembers being overwhelmed by the feeling that “so many people know what the hell is going on.” The use of the word colonization particularly struck her. “I knew colonization in another sense,” she says, “but they were talking ‘Yeah! Students are being colonized. Their minds are being colonized,’ you know?”

Sara also remembers being struck by a very different notion of the purpose of education. She explains:

SARA: I remember “They don’t learn their history ‘til they go to the university” and you’re like, “Whoah!” Like *that’s* the first time that I was learning that because all the other conferences that *I* had gone to were like “Well, you have to go to college to get a good job,” you know. “You have to learn English.” You know, for a career, for a profession, rather than social change and transformation.

Like Sara, Kirina also remembers being struck by the power of youth culture at her first No on 21 event. In addition to the symbolic power of two rival high school students MCing the fundraiser, Kirina was taken aback by “all the bands and all the speakers and all the poetry that was going on” because unlike any other art form she had been exposed to, “This” she said, “was Chicano art to me.”

KIRINA: I remember feeling like, “Wow! This is...totally different from anything that I experienced. Just being in a place where it was mainly about art with a certain message that...made a lot of sense and it was mainly youth and the main message going out was about Prop 21 and about youth having their rights. And that’s when I was like, “That’s right! We *do* have these rights!”

As a consequence of her participation in the event, the initiative had come alive for Kirina. She remembered feeling “pretty stupid...kinda like, “Wow! I barely realized this?!” The thought of this made her angry and exposure to the idea of youth rights captured her attention: “And that’s when I started feeling like...we’re sort of like forced *into* those policies or the policies were forced on *us* because we were sort of just here and we didn’t have like a voice or a vote...that specific experience made me realize that “Wow! We really *don’t* have a voice!”

Walking Out

This awakening prompted Kirina to make contact with one of the fundraiser's MC's. "You gotta get your people ready," she told her. "And I was like, 'Your people?' What is she talking about?! I'm only gonna go to school *Monday* and be able to [organize] Monday and then Tuesday we're gonna walk out" she thought. Karina admitted feeling frightened but her participation in an all night vigil for incarcerated youth and a banner making session the following day "just reinforced th[e] information." Kirina's determination was set: "Like, you know, we *need* to do this. We need to get some attention here," she remembers thinking.

And so, with the help of Aurora, Kirina began to modify hundreds of flyers that Garfield High School students had designed for their Tuesday walkout. With black marker in hand, the youth group proceeded to change "meet at the front gate" to "meet at the back gate" where they felt it was easier for Montebello students to converge. The next morning, word of Tuesday's walkout "got out *so* fast," Kirina says, that "by lunch the principal knew...and he said that anybody who walks out is not gonna graduate."

KIRINA: And I was like, "That's bullshit! That's bullshit! People fight 3 times a year here and you don't tell them that if you get into a violent fight that their not gonna get their diploma. I know there's no policy for walking out because people don't expect [it]...He's just pulling that out of his asshole!"

After that, the walkout "just sorta happened" and Montebello High School went on to become part of No on 21 history.

The same Monday that Kirina and Aurora frantically organized their school's walkout, Elena and hundreds of other students at Santa Monica High walked out in protest against Proposition 21. Elena had already ditched school the week before to participate in Whittier's walkout. This emboldened her to do the same at Santa Monica High, where she was already a member of student government.

ELENA: I was in student government and the president [Alex Molina]—we had barely known each other—and then I was like, “Oh! You know, I went to this and this meeting. Do you think we could have this speaker?” And so I tried to get him in the loop of what was going on and then I think he ended up coming to some of the meetings that we had in East LA and then we were like, “We should do this at SaMo High” and then we just got a couple other students that we knew were really interested in it and we were just working together to figure out when and where and how we would do it.

Together with Alex, Elena began organizing a student assembly featuring Chicana activist, Elizabeth [Betita] Martinez, who had begun touring southern California high schools as part of the No on 21 campaign. The two also relied on the support of two counselors: Ron Wilkins and Oscar de la Torre. Ron knew Betita personally and helped Elena and Alex arrange for her visit. “So it was actually a lot easier for us to get her to come and speak on campus,” she says. “[T]hat was like the first thing we did together.”

Betita’s visit to Santa Monica was an overwhelming success. Attended by 400 students, Betita helped fuel the news about Proposition 21 and the need for organized student resistance. Elena shared that “[Betita] spoke about some of her days in organizing...but particularly she spoke about how important it was for us to get involved with Prop 21...and she basically said there was a war on youth and that was happening and we needed to do something about it.”

Counselor de la Torre, on the other hand, provided valuable mentorship. As a former student of Santa Monica High during the 1990’s, he helped stage Santa Monica High School’s first walk out against Proposition 187.

ELENA: I mean, he didn’t like specifically tell us what to do but we kind of pitched some of our ideas to him to see what he thought ‘cause we had never done anything like this before [so] we didn’t know what the boundaries were and I knew he had been at SaMo High in the 90’s during the Prop 187 stuff so we were trying to get some of his experience. He grew up in the neighborhood as well. So he knew what we were trying to do and how important it was for us to do it. So we talked to him...and then the walkout happened on Monday, the day before the elections.

The following is Elena’s description of the day’s events:

ELENA: We planned to walk out after lunch so we told people to stay in the quad area and we would be walking out. And then we had legal observers there already...when we got to the gate, the principal came out and they had locked the gates so we were kind of stuck there and she came out and said that like what we were doing was wrong and that's not the way to do these things and that, you know, we would have to face the repercussions of cutting classes but that they weren't going to be able to do anything to hold us or to restrain us. So then they let the gates open and we just marched down Pico Boulevard and marched down to City Hall. And then that's where we had the rally. But when we got down there, I mean, there was already police everywhere. They had been following us and they had cameras—video cameras out and they were trying to , you know, harass us a little bit but we were in front of City Hall and then we even had some city counsel members come out and speak to us and we just held a rally there and did some chants.

Despite being nervous about the consequences for students the following day, Elena was relieved to know “people just got detention for missing those [last two] periods.” However, in retrospect, had Elena had the time and the experience, she says, she would have preferred to march a longer route, occupy the streets, and interact with the public more by taking advantage of the Promenade and nearby pier. “But I think we were kinda nervous about splitting the group because we didn't want the police to...like give students citations for being truant,” she says. Besides, “we kinda threw [the walkout] together a couple days before it happened [so] we were kind of on that last leg of organizing actions.” Nevertheless, Elena “felt good [afterward]!” Then, with a smile, she added, “It was like the first time we had organized something and it happened!”

“Too Much on My Plate”

While Kirina, Aurora and Elena actively organized and participated in their high school's walkout against Proposition 21, both Paloma and Sara chose to remain in school for distinct reasons, despite their previous participation in pre-walkout events and/or organizing activities. Paloma, for example, was involved in organizing her high school's walkout: “I came in before

the walkouts so by the time the walkouts happened I actually kinda knew everything as far as what to do and how to do it. So I wasn't that new to it," she says. Yet her undocumented status compromised the extent to which she was willing to make herself visible. Thus Paloma qualified her involvement in the campaign as one of being "in the lead but not [really] there." When asked to describe her motives for non-participation in the walkout, Paloma explained:

PALOMA: Because I didn't have my green card, I didn't want my face on newspapers or my name really anywhere 'cause I knew that was gonna become like a big deal if the immigration found out. I didn't want them to think I was a big rebel...plus if I got a record or got arrested, then they're gonna look at that, too 'cause I didn't have my green card at that time. I only had a work permit.

Hence, Paloma knew to anticipate the very moment when she would remain seated, despite the loud calls from fellow students in the hall to get up and walk out of school.

Sara, on the other hand, agonized over her decision to participate. Despite having participated in a pre-conference protest against Pete Wilson in Century City just two months before, Sara struggled with the question of participation in the midst of her school's walkout. When asked to describe that particular moment, she said:

SARA: I perfectly remember that day. I remember people banging on the doors and at a certain time people had to walk out. And it was my English course...[T]he *whole* time my heart was just beating. I remember I was like, "Should I go? Should I not go? Should I go? Should I not go? Should I go? If I go this is going to happen to me. If I don't go, then I'm going to have to live with it my whole life.

Only one other student in Sara's class, in fact, stood up to join the walk out:

SARA: I remember him getting up and the teacher said, "You know what's going to happen to you if you walk out that door,"...and he's like, "Yeah and I know what's gonna happen if I keep sitting here." And he left!

Still, the enormous fears teachers were instilling in students from inside the classroom was enough to frighten Sara into staying. When asked what kinds of messages teachers were communicating, Sara remembered several threats related to grades:

SARA: [Things] like, “If you go,... Those points, blah, blah, blah---Away!” Or “You’re not gonna go to college” or, you know, “You’re gonna mess up” and “You’re gonna get a B in the class,” or “Your GPA is going to go.” Like, things like you did not want to leave because you didn’t know *how* powerful they were.

When asked if any of her teachers bothered to engage the issue of Proposition 21 throughout the day, Sara remembered only instances where teachers stigmatized walkout participants as ignorant students who cared little about tarnishing the image of their school:

SARA: [The walkout was] engaged in the way of “*O, mira*. Look at all those people,” you know? “They don’t even know why they’re walking out,” [or] “Oh, they don’t even know what the hell they’re doing out there. It’s gonna look so bad on the school.” Like *that* was the engagement. But engagement in a *real* way of like, “What is Proposition 21? What’s gonna happen to the students?” or “What’s gonna happen to *you* guys?” and “What can you do?” Like, nuh-uh. No!

In the end, “the way teachers were telling us not to go,” Sara says, “...was like, “You’re gonna fuck up your whole life if you go. And I wasn’t at a point where I wanted that so I sat there.” She explains her decision further by saying “[T]here was too much...on my plate and on the line for me to be like, “Okay, I’m gonna walk out.” Yet, the decision continues to haunt Sara. “At this point,” Sara says, “I’m like “Man, I shoulda just walked out!” You know, “Why didn’t I walk out?” she asks herself. She then continues, “I regret not getting up and leaving. The whole time I was like, ‘Man, I shoulda walked out,’ you know? But not a lot of my friends walked out. A lot of them stayed.”

“Getting Out There”

Sara’s decision to remain seated during Roosevelt’s Walk-Out marked the end of her political participation in the No on 21 campaign. All other participants, however, remained active well beyond their graduation from high school. Kirina, for example, remained an active

member of Y.O.C. until the group's participation in the Democratic National Convention (DNC) later that summer. During that time, Kirina was trained in civil disobedience and emergency medicine. She also remembers learning how to silkscreen her own shirts and become part of "the whole Do-It-Yourself network," where she learned "what a rip off" band t-shirts can be. Most of all, however, she remembered an onslaught of "meetings and meetings and meetings."

Aside "meeting up," Aurora remembers handling logistics for the Oakland Youth Conference, despite her mother's refusal to let her go. "My mom's like, 'Shh—you're crazy! You ain't going! ¿*Con Quién?* What?!'" she laughs. She also attended the October 22nd Coalition's Against Police Brutality march with Kirina later that year.

And the DNC also stands out as a vivid memory for Aurora:

AURORA: I know the DNC thing took a long time and *that* was like a big thing. I mean there was like months of that," she declares. Then she remembered being primarily responsible for "more organizational stuff like where [Y.O.C.] would meet, what they would do, some posters, flyer stuff. You know, getting all that together" she explains.

Elena remembers a shift in her participation after the walkouts: "[T]hat's when I took on a more, I guess, organizing role," she says, as she described herself monitoring marches, creating banners, posterizing, creating chants, flyers, and then, as the interview continued, silk screening, providing security, undergoing legal training and creating media with digital production tools.

Paloma's recollection of her activities after the walkout were also quite extensive:

PALOMA: I remember doing [workshops]. I remember doing posters. I remember doing strategies [and] putting together conferences. [I also remember] teaching people...print screening shirts [and] writing letters for the events [and] for like donations and stuff [and p]assing them out. Definitely getting out there, you know? Networking. Meeting new friends. Pretty much everything!

Paloma also remembers being extensively involved in Y.O.C.'s preparations for the DNC, which proved to be "just a good ol' life changing moment" for her. In addition to "helping

do a lot of the puppets,” Paloma provided extensive outreach to youth, enabling them to understand the significance of the event beyond that of “a free Rage [Against the Machine] concert.” She also remembers participating in two events in the San Francisco area: One was the Upset the SetUp Youth Conference in Oakland and the other was a film festival where Paloma participated as a panelist for a video on the No on 21 campaign. Yet her proudest contribution as a member of Y.O.C. was creating the flyer used against CENCO, an oil refinery near Paloma’s home town:

PALOMA: I was doing GPS at [Rio Hondo] at that time so...[I made] a map showing the perimeters that the pollution affected and kind of pin-pointing like major apartment buildings and just kind of giving a big picture to people as to why we didn’t want CENCO there” she remembers. “I can’t believe I didn’t *keep* a flyer,” she adds later. “Cause I totally did it! It was like *totally* my work, you know? And it was out there,” she adds with a smile.

Social Activity

Aside from such skills, each participant remembers learning extensively as organizers in high school. The countless meetings Kirina attended, for example, taught her the meaning of new words like *consensus* and *minutes*. While the content of these meetings have largely been erased from Kirina’s mind, the feeling of participation in dialogue with other students her age clearly remains:

KIRINA: [E]ven being at a meeting, like in the beginning it did make me like, you know, “We’re all kids and we’re at a meeting.” Like, that’s *crazy! That’s fucken crazy!* ‘Cause if we’re just hanging out [we’d] be all “Ah! Blah! Fuck you!” and you know what I mean? It would just be all like—I don’t know, but I mean we were like sitting there. Like *listening* to each other which was *really* weird. It was just—I *was not used to that!* I was *not* used to people cooperating and I don’t know, talking about progress and making the world better. I don’t know, it was just things like that [that I remember].

Thinking more about the things she learned as an organizer in high school, Kirina remembered a debate on Proposition 21 in her English class one week before Super Tuesday's walkouts. "It was like a shitty-ass debate" she recalls.

KIRINA: It was not a debate at all! It was just like, everybody totally BS'ed it, you know? And...whatever team...got [Proposition 21], they went up there, they did little pros and cons and afterwards...most everybody said, "Yes! Pass Prop 21."

The day after the walkouts, however, "that same teacher held the little debate again," she says. "[B]ut it was only on Prop 21" this time.

KIRINA: [And] it was like a *big deal* where like everybody was talking about it and it was just *crazy*...like the *whole* class was spent on just Prop 21 and everybody...had a lot to say, you know? And then after in each period they would vote. "What do you think? Yes or no?" And this is *after* it had already passed and most everybody was voting "No," like when they actually *knew* about it, you know? So it was just like, "Wow!" I mean not that we could have voted but maybe...if we had been informed...we mighta played a bigger influence on adults or [could have] at least reach[ed] out to our parents or families who could vote, you know what I mean?

The events of that week profoundly impacted Kirina's attitude toward schooling. Her description of the power of those experiences merits quoting in full:

KIRINA: So that right there like—like that whole experience—that whole weekend with that show and the walk out and then those debates that day after that. I was just like, "Wow! We're really ignorant. We don't know *anything*!" Like, we're just here trying to go to a concert, in like lala land basically. So, it kind of felt like, I don't know--I kind of took it out on school sorta. Like I sorta felt like this is just bullshit! This is just--we're just in here to be like, I don't know, institutionalized and not really encouraged to think critically, you know? Even though we had *critical thinking* in English and all these things. It was just like—it was just to fill in a requirement...it wasn't like *real*. Yeah, it wasn't *real*.

This echoed Sara's recollection of the power of the walkouts to force the conversation of Proposition 21 on campus:

SARA: The next period [after the walkout], people were just talking about it. Like the *whole* school was just talking about it. Like, "Well, we didn't go. What are we going to do? What does that mean? Then we're for it, you know. If you

didn't walk out you're for it..." [S]o there was like a *big* split of all those people that walked out [and] those who did stay.

Paloma, on the other hand, felt her participation was "opening a lot of career options" for her. "College wasn't really an option for me but I could totally see myself doing something that could get me in the college range pay," she says. "I mean, with all the experience I was getting, I was like: 'I could do that!'" This feeling enabled Paloma to begin envisioning a future that involved well compensated work. A job that can "give me a good life," she says was suddenly within reach. "I could totally work in an office [now] because there was office work being done," she thought.

PALOMA: I learned good posture and good talking and, you know, how to type letters. Business letters. I learned that there. I didn't learn it at school. By the time I went to type business letters I already knew 'cause I had done 'em in Y.O.C. And simple gestures, you know, like a thank you note. I learned [that] from Y.O.C., too! It wasn't my friends at work, you know...or even at like at work now, like, "Hey can you do a PowerPoint?" "Yeah," you know? And I'll throw it together 'cause it's stuff that I learned in Y.O.C., you know? Or how to get a flyer together.

Thus, compared to the uncertainty she had experienced just a year prior to her involvement, Paloma now felt confident that she had the organizational skills to make a decent living.

Roadblocks

Aurora, on the other hand, drew most of her lessons from the opposition she experienced as an organizer. Her attempt to establish a MECHA at Montebello High with Kirina after the walkouts, in fact, taught her "[t]hat they're not gonna just let you change things sometimes." She explained her experience:

AURORA: [The administration] said that MEChA was political and that we would bring political issues to the school and they didn't want that. And that, you know, it had negative connotations and they didn't want that. They suggested that we join a group called A.L.M.A., I think was the name of it, and tell them if

we could do 30 minutes of history a day. Like do a 30 minute blog thing, like a little thing, right? On history and how you feel about it. And I'm like, "I don't wanna do that!" I told [the principal], "Are you *serious*?" Like, "That's your compromise? From *this* to that? That's not fair!" Like, "That's not right!" And so he was *so* against it and found a way to fight it. Like [he] really resisted. So that I mean, it was like horrific. Like...I asked one [faculty] sponsor and he said, "No." That they had already called him. I finally found one that would do it and she said, "Yes" and then like a week later she's like, "Oh, it turns out I can't do it." Well, why do you think? Like, they were telling her, "Don't do it! It's a bad idea." So all that really was eye opening of seeing that it isn't that easy...sometimes they're not gonna allow [change like] that.

Thus the realization that there was "a network of people that were calling to put the *frenos* on [M.E.Ch.A.]" was startling. "I never actually experienced people like finding a way to push you down and tell you, "You can't do it!" you know what I mean? Other than my mom telling me I can't do something [laughs] but I had never experienced that! So that was *very* hard. That was hard for me."

At another point in the interview, Aurora also expressed frustration over the principal's refusal to take her and the idea of a M.E.Ch.A. chapter at Montebello High seriously:

AURORA: And to have to go into the meetings with the principal and here's this guy and he's looking at me like I'm a nut job. I mean it was hard. It was difficult. It's disheartening. I mean you want people to really see your vision and what you feel and how you believe in and go with it. And when people are looking at you like, "No!" It's hard. So I mean, I can say that it...stung a little that people weren't with it. You know what I mean? Like the ideas you had, they weren't with it.

Indeed the struggle to establish a MEChA chapter on campus with Kirina proved to be "a *very* big deal in our life," Aurora explained

AURORA: I kind of thought in my head that [organizing against Proposition 21] was not gonna be so—you weren't gonna hit so many roadblocks. It was gonna be kinda you're doing your thing. So when I hit resistance it was kind of like, you know, a shock to your system. You were feeling so empowered by [the organizing] and good about what you're doing [and then] someone will come around and tell you that it's not right or that it's wrong—it's really shocking!

In addition to the opposition at school, Aurora was also contending with serious disapproval from her parents throughout the organizing. “It was frustrating on the family front,” she says because “there was pressure that I wasn’t making the right choices.”

AURORA: [My parents felt] the way I was thinking and the way I was feeling about [Proposition 21] were not right. So there was a lot of pressure on that end, too....It came across to them as being so ungrateful that I wanted to complain about something. To them that’s how it was. So that was certainly a turning point. That I would be met in both fronts with resistance. That what you’re doing is wrong. What you’re doing is dumb.

Kirina also remembered the attempt to establish a MEChA chapter on campus as a significant part of her experience. She focused more, however, on the impact of sudden changes among teachers who were initially supportive of the walkout. “There were teachers at our school who had supported what we had done [and also] what we were trying to do [which was to] get a [MEChA] after the whole walkout, but they wouldn’t come out. Everybody was too afraid,” she remembered. “[T]here was talk amongst the teachers about...how they couldn’t contradict...[the] administrators because that would demonstrate...[t]hat we didn’t have to have respect for them,” she says. She later went on to recount how the principal telephoned the one teacher who had already agreed to sign the sponsorship form required to establish student groups on campus. As Kirina and Aurora made their way to her classroom, the teacher had already been instructed to withdraw her support. Kirina recalls: “I saw that [teachers] *were* very afraid and that there are repercussions for supporting students on certain things and so...I remember thinking...“This is bigger than just like some kids,” you know?”

“I See How it is Now”

Like the coordinated effort to prevent Aurora and Kirina from establishing a MEChA chapter on their campus, the presence of police at direct actions, particularly the DNC, unveiled

the powers of the state in ways that many of the participants had never seen. The October 22nd mobilization against Police Brutality, for example, was a particularly “crazy experience” for

Aurora:

AURORA: I’ve never like been like in it like that. Like, that was like nuts, you know? Like cops riding up on you and stuff. Like, Oh my God! I couldn’t say that I had experienced it like *that* close to me. Like I’d seen cops before in my neighborhood, but not like at that point where they’re like on horses like riding up to kick your ass! (Laughs) That was the first time for me, I could say. *For reals!*

Later in the interview, Aurora referred to the same experience again:

AURORA: See ‘cause in my head I’m thinking that [protest] is not that hard and that you can just sorta go and express what you wanna say and do what you wanna do. And you kinda [don’t] picture the resistance to it. So [at the Police Brutality March] you felt that element of danger, I guess. So that was a turning point [for me].

Realizing the potential danger involved in protest applies to Kirina as well. In fact, the medical training she received in preparation for the DNC was itself “eye opening” she says, because “[it] got me thinking more of like how dangerous [protesting] can be.” Aside from that “*the cops* are the ones who are holding all these weapons...and I saw it in action, too!” Indeed the degree of police repression at the DNC deepened Kirina’s understanding of the role of police beyond individual acts of discrimination.

KIRINA: That was another thing that made me more like, “Wow!” you know? The cops aren’t necessarily there for protection or—I mean they’re there for protection but we really don’t know *what* they’re protecting. You know, are they protecting us? Or are they protecting this building? Or this convention center?.... Like, I never saw the use of cops like a military, I guess, you know? Like I always heard of experiences with [1 or 2] cops...pull[ing] you over and racial profiling in that sense but to round ‘em up and to put ‘em in all this gear?! It was freaky to see that, you know? To see that that’s what they *could* be used for.

Fully aware that the presence of police would be overwhelming, Paloma decided to remain home the day of the DNC protest. What she remembers instead is “seeing what people were seeing” about the protest she helped organized on television.

“I was seeing the other side,” she says, as she described images of rioting protesters flashing on TV. The media “made it look like it was one big riot but it wasn’t. You know, our people were marching peacefully on another part [and] there were these dudes over there just rioting but somehow [they] made a relationship between [the two] and married it and then just put it on TV that way, you know?”

The image was enough to provoke strong reactions against the protestors by her parents, particularly her father who was watching news coverage of the DNC with her. “My dad would be like, ‘Look! They’re getting shot!’ [and] I would be like, ‘Dude, they’re not even with us!’ she remembers screaming. “I mean, ‘I could *tell* you who’s with us’, you know?” At another point in the interview, Paloma recalls her parents being so convinced that protestors were responsible for instigating the violence at the DNC that she found herself having to defend their activities: “I was like, ‘Don’t say that about those people! You have no idea what we went through to try to get through this day.’”

The experience of seeing media representations for a protest she was closely connected to proved remarkable in Paloma’s life: “I think like the DNC kinda like, Whoah! Like opened my eyes! Like reality check, you know?” She continues:

PALOMA: It was one of those times where you know people are being judged unfairly. When you know that those are your friends and you hear people like watching the news and saying, “*Ay gentes locas!*” and like, “*Puros drogadictos!*” or “Get them arrested! And it’s like, “Dude!” [It’s] like you learn how to see *beyond* what the media is showing you...That’s one of the moments where I was like, “Wow! Okay,” you know? “I see how it work now. I see how it is now.”

“Fascinating People”

Participants in the study also found the opportunity to meet a broad range of people from various political and educational backgrounds a significant part of their organizing experience. Paloma, for example, said the chance to meet “fascinating people” at such a young age enabled her “to find out what [I] like and...see who [I] wanna be.” She described her encounters thus:

PALOMA: I would meet like some hardcore people who came from Texas and called it Mexico and they were like, “I come from Mexico,” you know? I’m like, “Really? Where you from?” and they’re like, “Brownville, Texas.” And I’m like, “WOW!” Like, I met people that were like *really* hardcore. Like vegan clothes, vegan shoes, vegan socks, vegan everything! You know? And then there was people who were like, “Ah, I don’t eat that because of this,” and “I don’t wear that because of that.” Just meeting people from all over the country. Really! I remember shaking a lot of hands. I met big executive people when we were trying to get the [grant]. Yeah, I totally was there and like talking to them...[I met] women who wanted to make a change and women who didn’t care, you know? Women who were just there because they needed a voice....I met guys who felt like they didn’t have a voice and definitely wanted to be there for that and I met guys who were *always* on TV, you know. It’s just--it was interesting.

This experience, Paloma feels, “kind of shaped who I am now.” She explains how “it made [her] kinda be like, ‘Oh, okay! Maybe that’s what I want to do. Maybe that’s *not* what I want to do,’” she says. Similarly, Aurora remembers “[meeting] a lot of people and [getting] turned on to things” throughout her community organizing experience. This included the opportunity to “thro[w] around ideas with people older than me that had perspective,” she says.

One of the most significant aspects in the experience for most of the participants was that it resulted in their first exposure to college students. Contact with those from working class backgrounds proved particularly important. Kirina, for example, believes exposure to “educated people” during this time was the primary reason she decided to enroll in college. “That was the first time I had been around *any* college student ever. Ever!” she explains. Prior to that, she says, “[college] was something that they did on television and that was not a part of me.” In fact,

prior to the No on 21 fundraiser, Kirina had never set foot on a college campus: “I never even knew where [ELAC] was.”

Another reason college “felt more relevant” to Kirina was that she got to see Chicanas “like going to school and stuff.” Her relationship with Diana, a Y.O.C. organizer with close ties to Montebello youth, was particularly transformative.

KIRINA: That really helped. Like, [Diana] told me all her stories. I mean, she was worse than *I* was in high school! I mean, she was like more wild, you know? [With] all her teenage things going on n’ stuff...and *she* was going to school. I was just like “You could *totally* do that?!” I mean, just because you did horrible in high school it’s not like the end of your life, you know? Or the end of your education or the end of your professional career or whatever. So I think *that* really impacted me there. Yeah, ‘cause nobody in my family had ever gone to school...so I had nobody that I knew personally that went to college.

Aurora echoed these sentiments, as well:

AURORA: Like...in the life that I had, my Tía, you know, she was a clerk. My mom, worked in the library. Like more entry level, right? My dad, like sells things. My Tío worked in a factory, you know? I mean, that’s the type—people like that... You know, working as a forklift driver or working in a warehouse or you know, stuff like that. So to meet people that were of the same back ground as my family and “I’m a teacher,” and “I’m studying to be a lawyer.” *That* was, like, “Oh! Okay.” You know what I mean? I never met people, really that were all in the university, that were going “Oh, I’m going to this school,” or whatever. So that certainly was...at that age...something that sticks out in my head. Like “Wow!”I mean these people come from the same areas as me and everybody else and they’re going to *that* school? You know what I mean? It made it so that [college] is now in your head that it’s more possible.

Increased exposure to college students also allowed Elena to “get more clarity into my path” as an aspiring lawyer. Paloma, on the other hand, felt her exposure to college-educated students as an organizer with Y.O.C. gave her the kind of “college experience” she could not have had otherwise. “It was kind of cool because it was kind of like the college experience without going to college,” she says. In fact, according to her, it seemed as if “*everyone*’s like in college.”

Ready to Learn/Ready to Teach

From her experience with the campaign, Paloma's appreciation for school also grew. She explained:

PALOMA: Definitely, I appreciated school more. That's for sure. You know, because regardless of what you're being taught, it's still an education. I think [school] is more of maybe a foundation of some kind of knowledge, you know? So that you *can* question it and move on and find the other side of the story and educate yourself more, you know? Because if you see how somebody educates you, then you know a little bit more as far as where you want to go and what you want to educate yourself in and that kind of thing.

Elena also began "see[ing] how important higher education was" during her involvement and meeting so many active college students made Kirina "really star[t] seeing the value of education."

Several participants also felt they learned to question the entire education system itself because, as Paloma describes, "[The campaign] wasn't only about youth getting incarcerated. It was our education system—how that was incarcerating. How that in itself was marginalizing students." Kirina's shift in attitude toward school was particularly notable. For one, she felt her K-12 education was "bullshit" and yet she found herself determined to keep learning. She explained,

KIRINA: But then towards the end of like my senior year, I was like *really* like, 'I *need* to go to school. I *need* to keep going[!] I was just like, "I obviously know nothing," you know? [A]fter hearing all these issues and then going even further [to talk about] globalization [and] the whole world---I was just like, "Wow! I know nothing! All this has been like bullshit and I *need* to go to college.

Sara was equally angry at what she felt was the failure of teachers and administrators to provide the kind of historical background she felt could have motivated more students, including her, to walk-out:

SARA: *Y eso es lo que me da coraje de Roosevelt! Que--we never even heard the history of Roosevelt. I only read it until grad school and it makes me mad*

because there's so much history there and I think it's just a threat if the students all knew. Like, if we would've known that history, if I would have seen [the documentary] *Chicano!*...I think the other women [in the dance group] probably had. Maybe that's why *tenian más coraje*. Like, that's why they were more like *into* it and they knew they couldn't lose anything....But I think only a few really knew like the history of that school. But *never* in my time at Roosevelt did I know why we have a Japanese garden. You have a Japanese Garden!...¡*Sabra Diós porque!* We don't even have Japanese students now! But none of us knew...and just the whole, you know, that there was a Jewish community [in East LA] before. You know, what happened with the Japanese students there? The Chicano students there?...Never did I hear anybody--*anybody* talk about that. Anywhere! No teacher---the Principal, *supuestamente que* he was there for a long time and this n' that. He was probably at the [1968] protest but *he* never talked about it. Never!...They never gave an orientation over there about that kind of history and I think it's a threat! 'Cause they're like, "Oh, well the students are gonna be able to," you know, "chain themselves and ask for more." Well they weren't asking for much!

Those who remained involved, in fact, traced their ability to think and read critically to their participation in the campaign. These skills, in turn, created an emerging appetite for the kind of critical material they could not access in school.

PALOMA: In class they teach you one thing but then we would go behind that like, "What happened?" Or you know, we would be like, "Oh, is that true?" and then you get people...who know a lot more than you and you're like, "Wow! Okay. Cool," you know. "I didn't know that!" So it gave me something else to research...I think it was more like questioning *what* we learned in school, you know, on our own time. And just kinda like—you know, there's another side to the story.

AURORA: I think that being involved with [the No on 21 campaign] made me...read things in a different way or made me question things a lot more than I had done previously. You know, I would just do my work and just be a student and not really question like why this is being taught and what it was doing to us as students and how it was shaping our future.

ELENA: [Being involved] also made me want to learn more about other things that I wasn't being taught in school. I remember getting other books and reading other books at that time that weren't being taught in those classes, or like other literature that people had.

Later in her interview, Paloma also admitted to “reading up on articles and finding those Chicano books. You know, the ones that they never tell us about and reading ‘em!,” she says.

The exposure and ability to appropriate critical information gave Aurora the confidence to enroll in college. She remembers, for example, feeling reaffirmed by the sight of a familiar book in her college’s bookstore:

AURORA: I’m tripping out on how there was this book that [people involved] were talking about and I heard of the book and then I went to college a couple years later and there it was. I was like, “How cool!” Like, I knew about it *way* before I went to school.” I guess it was something that [people involved] were reading already.

Kirina also shared that sometimes the degree of awareness she developed about critical issues as an organizer in high school made her impatient with peers at the college she now attends. She describes her frustration in the following paragraph:

KIRINA: It’s kinda sad, you know ‘cause like sometimes I hear people say, “Oh, I didn’t know that women got raped in the military!” Like at school, I hear things like that and I’d be like, “*You didn’t know that?*” Like it just—it pisses me off, you know? “You didn’t know that?” Like, “No. How could that happen?” I’m like, “Oh, my goodness! Are you kidding me?! Like, I was learning this when I was in high school but I wasn’t learning it *in* school. I was learning it *outside* of school!” So it’s like, “And you’re like in college now?” I was just like, “Wow!” you know?

In addition to realizing their capacity to learn, participants also felt empowered by their ability to teach. One notable event for Paloma, for instance, was the incredible affirmation she received as a panelist for an independent film that included coverage on the No on 21 campaign. When the film was introduced at a festival in San Francisco the summer of 2000, Paloma felt it was “one of those things where even to this day I look back at that day and I go “Wow!”

PALOMA: Just being up there and just like talking to people and having people listen to you, you know? They were just like, “Wow! Really? Oh, cool!” And, you know, they had like questions and stuff and they were just interested and I think that was just one of those points in my life where I was like, “I could totally do this,” you know? Like that’s when I saw myself as a leader. You can almost say like you feel, you know, at a high place. You’re totally like,

“Whoah! This is awesome!” People are like asking you questions [and] they wanna know more and you’ve got that knowledge. Like...you’re answering people’s questions. It’s not like someone’s *telling* you to answer them. No! It’s like you. It’s all you, you know? I thought that was pretty awesome!

In a similar vein, Elena also commented on how meaningful it was for her to engage others in an educative process that involved exposing the relationship between prisons and public schools:

ELENA: Just being able to go up to people and say, “Have you heard of Prop 21? This is what it’s about.”... ‘Cause a lot of people didn’t really know the details of it and they just thought it was to incarcerate youth under the age of 14 as adults [but] there was a lot of other stuff in there that was really important. I mean just people not knowing how crazy the prison system is in the state of California and how many more prisons there are than public--higher education schools. So it’s like people not knowing that, people not know[ing] how much money gets put into prisons and not into the school system and, you know, how many people of color are in prison and the recidivism rate. All those things they were new to me and [I was] able to pass these things on to other people.

Guy Friends and the “50/50” Rule

Part of meeting new people involved relating to each other in new ways. Two of the participants, for instance, commented specifically on their relationships with male peers during this time. For example, Paloma made reference to having found a “different way of relating to the guys” in the course of her organizing experience. “‘Cause, you know, I met a lotta guys [and] I learned from [them] too.” Indeed, she remembers Y.O.C. as “like that awesome place where you meet guys that don’t want to do anything with you but you learn a lot from them, you know?” Amazed by the sheer recollection of such a dynamic, she adds, “You can actually meet guy friends! I learned that...all just from being there with all these people, you know.”

Were it not for this experience, Paloma believes she would have “probably end[ed] up with a bad husband.” She confesses:

PALOMA: I probably would’ve ended up with, you know, an older person. Maybe looking for an authority figure....I think it would be more of, yeah, an

authority figure. Just a disciplinarian rather than a husband. I think that's where I would have ended up at....I think so.

Similarly, Kirina's participation in the campaign also "changed [her] thinking" about men.

KIRINA: Seriously! That's when I really saw like males really taking on a really different role for me 'cause it was more respectful. But not just that. It was just—they were real. Like, to me, like disrespect, I think that's more like fake. Like, you're trying to put up a front when you're trying to disrespect women. Like, at least for men. It seems they're sorta like trying to bring themselves up and that's fake. The reverse of that would be for me what's real, you know? So having like met [Jesse] really changed my thinking really whereas before I would talk shit on guys just for no reason, you know?

This experience prompted Kirina to share her reflections about Y.O.C.'s 50-50 rule which refers to the organization's general practice of having half female and half male representation at all public speaking events, particularly where media was present. At the time, Kirina was consistent in her refusal to speak to members of the press, despite the fact that "sometimes, you kinda don't have a choice." While the rule impressed upon Kirina the importance of equal gender representation, she expressed ambivalence as to its value in actual practice. Her description of the practice is worth quoting in full:

KIRINA: Like, "Guys and girls." I understand that. I *totally* understand that but even now I don't like regret saying "No" to all the speaking 'cause even now--like I'm barely becoming comfortable at like speaking and like--Oh, my god! I totally woulda screwed it up for everybody if I'da gone up there all "Aduh-duh!" I mean there was people who spoke so much better so why not let them, you know? But, I don't know. I mean, if they happened to be a guy—so? So what? But I do understand like having to have like girls speak but then again--like I remember... somebody like told Javier to be quiet and let a girl talk because this and that. You know, it's kinda like "Well, he's a human being, too!" You know what I mean? "Just let him finish what he's saying and," you know? You also can't *force* women to speak, you know what I mean? You just—it has to happen, you know? I remember like I didn't like to speak but when I had to say something at a meeting I would say it. [S]o what I think is that if women want to speak, then they'll speak. Personally, I just didn't feel like if somebody was trying to make me speak I *really* didn't want to especially because you were trying to force me to. But it was more

of my fear of just speaking and not knowing what to say. It was really not knowing what to say. If I had known at least something or how to sort of convey an idea--even now I have difficulty! [But] at that point, I was just like stage fright. Just no way!

Solidarity

The opportunity to forge equal relationships also extended a general sense of deep connection with those involved. Sara, for instance, remembers noticing the connectivity between people at the No on 21 conference as well as the sight of her own teacher “like having friends there.” She also remembers finding company with “professors [and] teachers that are talking about how tracking is bad.” Such readings resonated deeply with Sara. “You felt like not alone.”.

This feeling intensified in the midst of protest when Sara suddenly found herself screaming chants against Pete Wilson with hundreds of other youth that same evening. “[I]t was like the climax of the entire conference,” she said. In fact, the “rush” was like nothing she ever experienced. “Like I’m able to scream, like blame someone, just scream at someone. And have solidarity with so many other....high school students who are thinking the same or are pissed off at the same things.” This feeling was something Elena remembered as well. At one point in her interview, she said she remembered experiencing “a sense of solidarity with other groups and other movements.” Her description of the walkouts at Santa Monica High reinforced this message:

ELENA: [T]his was a *big thing* that we put together at SaMo High! It was just amazing to see how many people were able to rally and organize students and go talk to people the day before, the morning of, and get them to really want to participate in the walk out. And it was amazing too to see people like come through and pull through and do it regardless of the consequences. And I think it was significant to see a lot of my fiends and peers want to do something about it and see how important it was for our generation.

Paloma also commented on the degree of connectivity between those involved. Perhaps more meaningful, however, was the immense satisfaction she got from being recognized. “It was awesome meeting people that knew who you were,” she explains. “You know, like...I would meet people from New York that would be like, “Oh, yeah! I totally remember you!” Moments like these were deeply satisfying for Paloma. To be recognized like that, “felt *good*.” “Just like, ‘God!’” she said, as she smiled with amazement.

Doing Something

Along with the theme of solidarity was also the idea of “doing something” together about the problems participants confronted as youth. Many, in fact, expressed a sense of freedom at voicing their frustrations publicly. In the following excerpt, for example, Sara describes the intense relief she felt at the opportunity to aim her frustrations against a target like Pete Wilson:

SARA: [The protest] was a rush! Like, that’s what I felt. Like, “We ‘re actually *doing* something. We’re actually saying, ‘In your face!’ Like we actually have the time to *scream* our frustration of, you know, being criminalized when all we want to do is go to school...Why are we late? Because the bus is late. Not because we want to be late. No! Or we’re running from one class to the other because, “Well, you don’t give us enough time to run from one class to the other” or “Because we have to go to the other bathrooms ‘cause these are all clogged up ‘cause you guys haven’t cleaned the pipes,” or “There’s all this construction going on. So we had to go through another gate.” Things like that—*that’s* where the frustration is, you know?

Aurora also made a reference to the thrill of protests throughout the campaign. “[I]t was really exhilarating!,” she said. Like Sara, the opportunity for meaningful activity was equally profound:

AURORA: It was nice to feel that a lot of the feelings and the ways you felt about things, that there was a way of expressing [them] where you felt like you were doing something. Like it was an empowering feeling to feel like you were involved in something [or] you were *doing* something versus, you

know, just sorta thinking in your head and then you're like, "OK." You know what I mean?

Aurora also felt the campaign offered her the long-awaited opportunity to be consistent with her political beliefs. "So [the No on 21 campaign] was already part of the way I was thinking," she says. She reinforced this point by returning once again to her experience in Junior High, when she found herself identifying with high school students from Montebello who walked out in protest against Proposition 187. "So to now fast forward and be able to say, 'We're gonna organize and meet here to let people know we don't agree with [Proposition 21] was something you felt more able [and] empowered to do.'"

Kirina also found that the opportunity to translate her values into direct experience was what motivated her to remain involved with YOC, beyond the life of the No on 21 campaign: "I would have been like everyone else I knew at school who was sort of just kinda involved in the beginning and then just sort of kind of didn't really at the end. [For them] it was more about going to shows and stuff like that. I think it was more important for me. More meaning[ful], I guess to actually be able to *do* something."

In fact, for Paloma, it was the same action-oriented nature of YOC meetings that gave the organization its strong appeal. She explains:

PALOMA: It was one of those things where you didn't even like say, "Oh, I don't belong here." No. It was just one of those things where you were like, "Alright, Cool! What do I do next?" You know? "What are we doing?" So I kind of just jumped right into it because their meetings mainly consisted of what we're gonna do. Action steps: "What are we going to do this weekend? Okay, we got this coming up. How are we gonna do it?" And I just rode with it, you know?

"Seeded in that Time"

Indeed, every participant involved in this study acknowledged both the immediate and long-term impacts of the campaign. Kirina, for example, believes "the whole college thing

would not have happened” for her. Yet because of her experience, she found herself enrolling at ELAC—the same community college she never knew existed until she attended the No on 21 fundraiser just one year before. The other immediate change was her marriage to [Jesse] soon after her graduation from high school. It was Jesse, she said, a fellow student organizer from Whittier High School, that “changed [her] thinking” about men. Kirina and Jesse now live in the city of Fullerton, where she attends college and provides tutoring services for bilingual/bicultural students. And beyond these changes, Kirina also feels she’s become “more cynical about things.” While she says that she is “not as aware even now as I would like to be,” she does acknowledge that she has become more “skeptical” or “not as accepting” of the information she receives.

Indeed, the influence of her experience continues to astound even Kirina herself. “I don’t know *what* I used to talk [about] before that time,” she said. “Like seriously! What the hell did I talk to my friends about if I wasn’t talking about some issue or something, you know? It’s like a blur to me.” Like Kirina, Aurora also felt that she “really ha[s] made choices because of that time and the way [of] thinking [that] was brought on by it.” This includes the courage to make two immediate changes in her life. One of these was the decision to leave school:

AURORA: I think that the MEChA thing was *really* a part of me leaving school even because I graduated early and I had the choice whether to stay and finish the year or to leave as soon as I got the diploma and I left. It was kinda a disheartening thing. The way I had to go to school with this guy now--this principal who had like really hit me with resistance.

The other was the courage to leave home:

AURORA: I left my parent’s home. There was family problems and I left my parents home. I graduated at 17 and left....So [the organizing] kinda forced me out...I left my house and met my husband and got married. So there was a time when [I went] from being involved like that to...sort of [being] involved in things and then my address changed. I left school and I left my family and I was on my own. Alone.

Although Aurora's sudden thrust into adult life at the age of 17 was meaningful for her, it also marked the end of her organizational involvement with Y.O.C. "I've always been a self-sufficient person and I'm proud that I can say that I've been able to pay my bills since I was 16-17 years old." Yet, the responsibilities that came with her decision to leave home and eventually marry proved too overwhelming to remain connected:

AURORA: I was like living my mom's life. Like, you know, of a wife and doing these types of things. So...like it changed. I still was interested and I still kept an ear out but I wasn't living the same life style. My lifestyle had changed. It all changed for necessity [and] in necessities favor. I had to do other things like work and live somewhere else....So in that time, I mean, my life changed a lot.

Once the initial adjustment to that change was over, Aurora returned to school and secured a profession as an early childhood educator for the city of San Bernardino.

Still, the strength to live her political ideals is precisely what Aurora feels she learned as a consequence of her political involvement in high school:

AURORA: And that's all from—you know, seeded in that time. Like putting a standard out there and...trying to live by the standard that you set and that's it. That's all you can do really. Is put out there what you want and what you intend and try to meet it and follow it. And that's how I am...So I live like those things [I learned] in my every day life now.

A significant part of this standard, she continued, involves the courage "to be bold." She said, "I can say that that time taught me that I have to be able to be sure and confident about the things that I think and the way that I feel." She elaborated on this point at least twice more throughout the interview:

AURORA: I think what I learned is to be passionate and truthful about my feelings, about what I feel. Whether it's popular or not because I find that you, know, that's not always popular. It's hard. So that's really it. *That* I've learned. That I am and feel how I feel and that I'm true to it, you know? And it can turn people off. I mean I don't know if you've ever experienced that but it turns people off--that they don't want to hear it. That they don't think you're right. [I]t kinda repels. It can be a repellent sometimes.

AURORA: It's something that I still deal with now coming from the fact that sometimes it's lonely, I think. Maybe I'm like the only person that's gonna say that but it *is* lonely because I sometimes feel like there's only a certain amount of people that will understand exactly the way I feel about things and the way I think about things. Like when everyone is pro something, I might be against it or vice versa. So there's times when there's...only that [one] person. Like for me, [Kirina's] that person that will understand. And it kinda alleviates that. Like when I'm around those people, I feel like there is that sort of commonality; we understand each other. So, for me [Kirina] and [Jesse] are like that.

Aurora also believes her political involvement as a high school student, including her close friendship with Kirina, was all the preparation she needed to enter into adulthood. She explained: "I think [the organizing] got me ready for the way that I live now which is when I have a feel[ing] about something [or] if I have a conviction...then that's it. That's the way I feel." Paloma similarly believes that her sense of self-assurance emerged as direct consequence of her experience in the campaign. "I learned how to be confident in myself and just, you know, tell myself that I can," she explained. Like Aurora, Paloma felt she "learned how to make a decision and stand by it." She then began to cite specific skills she found useful in her adult life. One of these was discipline:

PALOMA: [D]efinitely discipline. Discipline because you know, you still have to follow rules even though they don't wanna call them rules. You have rules. You have to show up somewhere at a [certain] time. If there was no rules, you could show up whenever you want. You know what I mean? So definitely that.

The next skill Paloma spoke of was responsibility:

PALOMA: You know, because you have to be responsible for your actions...[W]hat we did in YOC and how we did it--you had to learn how to respond for that. So if you did something you had to be able to come back and say, "I did it because of *this*" or "I did it because of *that*" not "Because I was told to." Because once you get called out for it, its--you're on your own! You know, you can't just go blank face and expect someone to answer for you, you know?

She also spoke of the ability to withstand criticism. According to Paloma, this skill remains one of the most salient changes in her life as an adult:

PALOMA: I learned how to take constructive criticism because I think I'm a very proud person. I have like pride issues sometimes...I think that was the most important thing for me. [W]hen you *actually* sit there and take it like a person when somebody tells you not their opinions but just, "What can you do to improve that?" or "How would we have done this different?" That kind of thing... [Whereas] back in the day I was just like, 'You're wrong! I'm right and you're wrong. That's how it works!' But now, its like, I can take it.

The last example she cited was the confidence to let her creativity flourish:

PALOMA: 'Cause, you know, I've always been a creative person but I think YOC helped me be more like---just let it run! Run wild! Like, not have to worry about, being like, "Oh, no maybe not." It's just like, "Just go for it!" You know, you gimme a blank page and you just go for it! So I definitely learned a lot from them.

These skills have also helped Paloma navigate work as an insurance representative.

Having walked into a temporary employment agency after graduation demanding placement in a job with opportunities for advancement, Paloma successfully managed to carve out the decent living she once dreamed of. What's more, she is now the primary breadwinner in her home, helping provide for her husband and their 3 year old son.

The skills she learned through her participation in the campaign helped Paloma develop what she feels is a powerful voice: "Like, I became this awesome speaker, I guess, because people will tell me [that] now. And they'll point it out too and say: 'See how quiet it gets when [Paloma] talks?' You know people will say that! To this day," she smiled. Elena, on the other hand, stated that she "learned the importance of being involved with your community and taking active roles as youth." To explain herself further, she cited details of her involvement in Santa Monica local politics at the end of the No on 21 campaign:

ELENA: [T]hat's when all these other things were going on with like [forming] youth centers in my community...and then there was also the time when there was a

lot of shootings and a lot of young men had died during this one month period or two month period. So there was a lot of stuff going on in the community around that already. So it allowed me to enter into those circles, because of my Prop 21 experience and then bring in my voice and try to be the advocate for the youth in city meetings and local government meetings and going to city counsel to speak for funding for the Pico Youth Center was important or going to participate in the design of the Virgin Avenue Park Youth Center. So all these things I was able to do because I had gained a lot of those tools during my Prop 21 experience.

Aside from being motivated “to get more involved...[and] active in my specific community,” the campaign also taught Elena “to speak freely in groups of adults” and gain a “sense of responsibility and pride” in her work at a young age.

Restating the impact of her experiences, Elena declared: “It was like the first thing that I ever got involved with in terms of like political organizing and it *really* like gave me a lot of resources and networks and tools to like carry on in the other places that I was able to organize in and work with.” Indeed, by the time Elena was a freshman in college, “it was all about college-in-prison programs and how to help people who are getting out of prison [and] stopping the growth of prisons throughout the country,” she says. “So. It definitely did a lot!”

The mere ability to “be a person that could work with a group of people and be able to get things organized” has proven a valuable skill in Elena’s life. That she has been able to offer such assistance to organized groups as a freshman in college, therefore, is clearly a contribution she feels proud of:

ELENA: I remember seeing and trying to use some of the similar ways of putting together educational pamphlets or materials and choosing speakers and, you know, that kind of stuff...I remember getting together with the [prison] group and saying like: “Oh! We had teach-ins, you know, when I was doing Prop 21 and you just bring in a speaker and you have literature out and, you know, we have it one night every month.” So every month we had a different teach-in or we had a movie playing or something about prisons [like] college-in-prison programs...teach-ins on women in prison and health issues in prison. You know!

Her recent college experience is thus filled with vivid memories of symposiums, vigils, flyers, teach-ins, and conferences she helped organized in conjunction with student groups concerned with issues involving immigrants (HR 4437), prisons, and public education. At the time of this writing, Elena was in search of employment to help pay for her second year of law school. To help manage her expenses, she moved into her parent's home in the city of Glendora.

For Sara, the opportunity to learn Danza Azteca in the company of women active in the campaign "really changed me." For one, the women helped provide a space where Sara felt safe enough to enter. This gave her the opportunity to continue resolving conflicts around her rise to individual success as a student and community well being. She used the following example to emphasize this point:

SARA: I would go [to Danza] and ask questions about...not selling out to your community by going to college 'cause those are the things that I would ask the teacher: "Well, you went to college. How did you come back to your community?" You know, "What did you learn in college?" Things like that...

After high school, Sara went on to study at the University of California at Santa Cruz, where she actively participated in organized student groups with a new sensitivity for conditions that promote self-awareness. She explained at length:

SARA: So whenever I'm part of groups and I have questions and doubts and I feel that they start policing the group, then I know it's not the right group for me because I think that there should be room for conversations and clarifications or that person understanding what the group is and the group understanding where that person is coming from and maybe work with each other. This is particularly true when it comes to feeling that identities are being policed. Like the groups that I would go into [as an undergraduate] some of them were very hardcore Chicano when I think, "Well, what is Chicano?" or "What is Chicana to you?" You know, I have a *whole* different experience of why I even call myself Chicana than you so what makes you say "This is what it is and that's it!" And then I have no room to go in and it's not because they weren't accepting me but I was seeing how they weren't accepting others because they weren't either Mexican or because they were *too* Mexican. Like, silly-dumb stuff that break up groups and you can't unite. You can't work together... "Well, that's not gonna help the kids we're trying

to tutor,” you know? Or things like that. So just looking at the bigger picture...[and] seeing myself just trying to be open to others

Relationships

Ultimately, the changes within each participant affected their relationship with others. Significant changes in Kirina’s relationship involved those with family members, most notably with her father. After attending a sweat with one of Y.O.C.’s organizers, Kirina decided that 8 years of not communicating with him was “enough of a punishment.” “Alright!,” she told herself. “Next time he calls, I have to talk.” Kirina’s relationship with her sisters also changed.

KIRINA: For some reason, they *backed off*” My whole family backed off with the whole, ‘No! You come here!’ [attitude]. I don’t know if maybe *they* saw value in me doing this stuff, but when it came down to the organizing, I was just like, “I’m not here on Friday” or “I’m not here on Thursday nights or Monday nights or whatever nights.” [Organizing] gave me *something* to do.” “Not just go *find* something to do, you know what I mean?”

Elena seemed to echo this last statement as she spoke of the way her parents would worry over the amount of political commitments she had as a high school student. They would express concern, for example, that the degree of her involvement would affect her studies negatively. “Well,” Elena would respond, “would you rather have me doing this or going out to party?” she laughs. With time, however, Elena feels they learned to appreciate the manner in which she “learn[ed] to balance school and community work.”

Kirina also felt that her opposition toward “anything that has to do with school” began to fade. She distinctly remembered disliking cheerleaders and thinking the dance team, or any other expression of school spirit for that matter, “was all BS and fake and a waste of time.” Then, she explained, “I think organizing sorta made me see like, “OK, these groups...do have a purpose in school and its not all bullshit,” she said. “So it just sorta opened me [up] to that. To not just being like, ‘Ah, you suck!’ and that’s it, you know?”

Aurora also believed she learned “how to work with people that don’t agree with me...and still be true to who I am.” This shift ultimately affected her relationship with family for the better. She explained, “I love my family members and I always will. I always say when people get mad, I always say ‘Look, I don’t have to agree with you to love you and you don’t have to agree with me to love me, but we don’t agree.’ That’s it.”

Having “learned how to be a strong person [and] not be like bossed around by people, regardless of whether they’re 50 or 4,” Paloma believes organizing gave her the skills to redefine her relationship with her boyfriend, whom she married just a few months after graduating from high school.

PALOMA: Like I have a hardcore Mexican husband but that doesn’t mean that I’m ganna, you know, be submissive, you know?...[L]ike I learned how to like draw the line between me and my husband and say, “You know what? We’re ganna divide the work...regardless of what your mother says,” you know? Because, you know, hard-core Mexican moms—they’re something else!

One of the more significant changes, however, was having developed what Paloma feels is a more authentic capacity to relate to others: “I got my people skills from there,” she says because “I learned how to make friends...without being fake.” She explained how organizing helped her “soften up a little,” “get along with people” and be “less rough” in her exchanges with others.

PALOMA: I think before that I was kind of more about myself...[then] I learned how to make friends and just be this like sympathetic girl. Like, “Oh, Hi! How are you?” without being fake. You know, I didn’t have to pretend I liked someone. I was in a place where, “I like people,” you know?

Mothering

Equally important in the lives of two participants is the impact of their experience on parenting their children. [Organizing] definitely...affects the choices I make in raising [my daughter]” Aurora began. Part of this involves helping her daughter learn to “express her

feelings and [know] if you're idea is not a popular idea, that [it's] still yours," she tells her daughter. "You have to still own them."

Indeed, even with her years of independence, Aurora's ongoing struggle to live her political views is far from over. The only difference now is that those struggles often take place within the field of parenting:

PALOMA: Like, the whole Disney thing has been a *drama* in my family and in my life because people, they don't give a fuck. They want you to have Mickey Mouse in your house. And it's like sacrilegious; it's like against American pop culture for you not to have the *pinche princessas* in your house....So I certainly...put my foot down on that. I don't like allow that. And you know what? Barbie either, okay? Barbie either. And Disney either. And anything that sets up expectations that are not livable and that promotes images and ideas that are not responsible. I won't allow that for my child. If it's not something that I feel shouldn't really be part of their consciousness, then I won't do it. And it's not easy. It's hard, actually....Like I have to remind people... 'cause every fucking birthday they want to bring more stuff. And it's just like, "Let me just say this again," and some people are cool and respect you and other people don't.

In fact, as far as Aurora is concerned, parenting is serious business: "I feel that if you raise your child in a certain way then you're leaving a legacy of something. You're putting out something into the world and that is important to me," she says. Her growing level of awareness, for example, made choosing *padrinos* [god-parents] for her daughter an unexpectedly difficult task:

AURORA: Like even thinking about her padrinos was killing me!...If I choose padrinos that...make her feel that [her culture is] not relevant, it's irrational, it's stupid, whatever, then I'll feel like I can't be at peace....I mean I love [my family] so much but they're so freakin' conservative...I would have to turn over in my grave if when I'm dead they're like talking about "Fucking A-rabs" and they're perpetuating ideas to my child that I wouldn't be ok with. You know what I mean?

Aurora also felt that open communication around matters of cultural difference is extremely important in the process of raising her daughter. Doing so, moreover, is an obligation she feels obligated to fulfill as the parent of a 3rd generation Chicana. She explained:

Like the way that [I] talk openly with her about cultural ideas and the things that we feel and the things that we think and for her to not feel that she has to hide those things...[L]ike in my family and in a lot of other families, it's not something you say outwardly. It's not something you say. It's part of your experience. The way you're raised. Well, here I communicate those things. That you are who you are and you should be proud of it and that's it.

Paloma was the only other parent involved in this project. Like Aurora, she also feels her capacity to parent has been positively affected by the community work she did as a high school student. One notable aspect of this involves her desire to help her son recognize the existence of distinct social classes:

PALOMA: Just using what I took from YOC [to] kind of *help* him...so that he doesn't crack under the pressure because there's a lot of pressure out there, you know? [Y]ou see somebody's else's mother that's like all executive and you know, you can't understand why your mother's not like that and that kind of thing.

She also went on to describe how she plans to undo the kind of parenting she grew up with.

PALOMA: Now with my son, I'm gonna be more open to things. I'm not gonna judge, you know?" Unlike other mothers, she says, who claim "[My son's] gonna take care of me for the rest of *my* life," or "He's gonna do this," or, "No! Not *my* kid. He doesn't do *that*. No way!", Instead, Paloma argues, she hopes to "help [Junior] more than make him *be* somebody.

To do this, Paloma believes she must help her son respect his autonomy by doing precisely the same. This involves cultivating an awareness for social norms and expectations, because, according to Paloma:

PALOMA: When you don't get the support that you need you end up becoming what they are telling you you are, you know? So you become so conscious [of what they're saying] that you're becoming what they say. They're dictating what you're gonna be, I guess. So, I'm definitely gonna stay away from that 'cause that's something I learned from Y.O.C. Just be open, you know.

This openness, Paloma feels, will help her not be "the kind of mom where [I'm] like, "No you're not supposed to do that! That's wrong!" Rather than just saying, "That's wrong because society tells you it's wrong" [or] asking him why..." She also hopes her son "not be confined to,

‘Oh, you gotta dress nice. You gotta look nice. You gotta have nice hair. Blah, blah, blah,’” she said. She offered the following example to illustrate her point:

PALOMA: Okay, if my son ever did something that was out of the ordinary--mohawk, colors, you know--I think my very first question would be “Why?” Rather than, “Oh, you gotta take that off! That’s ugly!” You know? I think it would be like, “Why?” More understanding, you know? Not judging. Not jumping the gun, as people would say. Rather just, you know, let’s see where it goes. [Because] some kids are very creative. Some people see colored hair and they’re like, “Oh, no!” and “He’s bad” or “He does drugs,” or “He’s a low life” or something, you know? And they tend to be like the smartest people ever!

While Junior’s education remains “a number one thing” for Paloma, “I’m not gonna push him to be a lawyer or a doctor,” she said. All she wants is for Junior to have “something bigger than Whittier,” by learning to read and having the opportunity explore the world. “I want him to see the world that I saw,” Paloma said. “You know, I want him to hear my stories and be influenced by them so that he can be whatever he wants to be.” At a later point in the interview, she stressed this idea by saying: “ Hopefully like my son can see [me speak] so he can be like, “Wow! My mom’s an awesome person,” you know? As opposed to “Ah, she hits me all the time!” or “She’s so mean!” or something.”

Thinking back to the original question, Paloma concluded:

PALOMA: So I think it’s helped me just being in YOC and *seeing* all the adventures that I’ve had and just being in the positions that I’ve been in, you know? It’s just kinda like: “He can do it, too!” You know, if he’s fifteen and says, “Mom I wanna throw a conference together.” I’m like, “Well you throw that conference together!” You know what I mean? Rather than putting limitations, which I think some mothers do that. They’re like, “Oh, no!” They limit their children and that’s not something I wanna do.

Teaching

As educators of young children, both Aurora and Kirina found a direct relationship between their capacity to teach critically and the lessons they learned as politically involved

youth. Aurora, for instance, said “[t]he choices I make in the field when I’m with my students...are the next level of my expression of the experiences of the movement.” She particularly feels the strength to defend her decisions has made her a more effective preschool teacher. “Those [struggles], you live ‘em in the field, too,” she said. “It’s not just in your own personal [life].”

Thus, aside from prohibiting all things Disney, Aurora described at least two separate occasions where she took “those decisions and thoughts” from her involvement in the campaign to the classroom. The following was her first example:

AURORA: I had a teacher who was pissed that the Asian students didn’t know what the hell pumpkin pie was about for Thanksgiving. I had to be there to say... “They have the perfect right to not give a rat’s ass about Thanksgiving. *You* can care about it! I would never stifle your ability to care but that’s not *them*.” So why would we interfere [when] the Cambodian student doesn’t care or [doesn’t] want to know about Thanksgiving or pumpkin pie or a turkey or whatever?

Another situation involved the decision to introduce Cesar Chavez to 3 year olds:

AURORA: When I had a 3 year old class, I kinda had a shadow of the M.E.Ch.A experience in my mind: If I teach them about Cesar Chavez, will I be in trouble?” Like, “Will that be a problem?” And then I thought... “It’s a day in California! If I can’t teach it them who the hell is gonna do it in this community?” Because I worked in an Asian/Latino [community], right? And I’m like, “If I’m not going to do it here, then no one’s going to do it.” So I did it!

Kirina also credited the organizing work she did in high school with helping her reevaluate the role of teachers in schools. She pointed to a particular comment by a teacher involved in Y.O.C., as enabling her to identify what eventually became her own motivation for teaching:

KIRINA: I remember when [Jerry] said...he hated teachers and he wanted to be a teacher because he hated teachers. That was my thing, too! But I was more out of anger. Just feeling school is such bullshit...and then it felt like, “Well, teachers really *do* have the power to make their classrooms a certain place” and I felt like, “That’s where you *do* have access to kids”...[So] being a

teacher [came] from feeling like we need to change what's going on in there, you know because I really felt like, "My god! I'm a junior and I don't really know anything like about what's going on!" Like you could do math, fine. English, writing skills, things like that. But *current* things---things that we're gonna have to be dealing with in like 2 years or a year from now as adults and...we don't know *anything*! I thought that was really, really sad.

Initially, Kirina was thinking she would like to teach high school students and "be that teacher who'd be there supporting these issues or whatever through the kids." But as she got older, she explains, "I realized that's not where I should be." She began by explaining how the organizing helped her develop the skill of listening closely to children.

KIRINA: [Kids] have a voice it's just nobody listens. So even with the little tiny-tiny kids, I'm like—you know, they're stuttering. I just listen. I just sit there and I sort of have to remind myself to shut up...so [the organizing] did influence me to do that because if I hadn't, I think I would just sort of be more authoritarian with the kids and just sort of tell them what to do instead of believing that they do have a mind of their own, you know? So I think that really helped me and I got that before I even took any type of education class or development class. Anything that told me this is important....[I]t was the organizing that did that because that sure as hell didn't come from my mom [or] my sisters!

Kirina emphasized this last point with two anecdotes. One was about having to withstand being teased by her sister's for speaking "normally" to her nephews: Like they were babies and I would talk to them like just normally they'd be like, "Ha!Ha! How dumb! She's talking to him!" I'd be like, "He's a person!," you know? "You don't see that."

And the other was about a teacher in her child development class who assumed nobody in the room understood that children have a voice: I kinda felt like, "*Please*, lady! You don't have to tell *me* that kids are important and that they have a voice and they can come up with solutions to things adults can't!"

Feeling like "the point [of organizing] was validating people's voices [and] ideas," Kirina now believes she has no option but to put that into actual practice: "You apply that throughout your whole life. You don't just apply it to organizing or to teenagers or to adults or teachers,

whatever. You apply that to kids and even the little toddlers that are barely learning how to talk,” she explained. Doing so, Kirina added, has long term benefits for children “because *that’s* where it starts” she said. “If you listen to them, then they’ll learn that they *do* matter.

“A Substitute for Parenting”

According to the participants, involvement in student resistance against Proposition 21 helped them gain a sense of purpose during a critical time in their lives. In some cases, the mobilization provided valuable guidance. In other cases, the sense of meaningful connection with others made an otherwise difficult journey toward adulthood less uncertain. Elena, for instance, remarked that the No on 21 campaign “gave me that place to be able to do these things that I wanted to do with my life but I just didn’t know what and how.” In fact, looking back, Elena believes the experience helped her resolve enormous anxiety that she was experiencing as a young woman.

ELENA: It helped me in terms of like knowing I could do school and knowing I was gonna go to college one day and could [still] be a part of my community and kno[w] what was going on now at that moment [and] still be with my friends...I wasn’t going to have to *lose* any of those things that I really wanted to do with myself. I could do them all!

Tensions around girlhood friends, dreams of a law career, and an immediate desire to affect change were thus largely resolved in the process of her involvement.

Elena was, thus, able “to push [her] passion for the justices” in a way that encompassed not only that which was “central to my life,” she said, but consistent “with the person I wanted to be as an adult.” Prior to that, she added, “everything was just very sensitive in my life and emotionally breaking for my family.” The No on 21 campaign, lives on as Elena’s “first and

most important memory of how I was slowly maturing into adulthood.” She reemphasized this point later by saying: “I think it like gave me clarity in the person that I wanted to be.”

The sense of clarity in the process of emerging adulthood also resonated in Aurora’s interview. “I think [the organizing] got me ready for the way that I live now which is when I have a feel[ing] about something [or] if I have a conviction...then that’s it,” she explained. Yet apparent in her interview, is the risk involved in doing precisely that:

AURORA: Maybe I’m like the only person that’s gonna say that but it *is* lonely [to live by the standards you set} because I sometimes feel like there’s only a certain amount of people that will understand exactly the way I feel about things and the way I think about things. Like when everyone is pro something, I might be against it or vice versa. So there’s times when there’s...only that [one] person. Like for me, [Kirina’s] that person that will understand. And it kinda alleviates that. Like when I’m around those people, I feel like there is that sort of commonality; we understand each other. So, for me [Kirina] and [Jesse] are like that.

It is precisely this kind of support Sara felt she had among the community of women who introduced her to the No on 21 campaign. That “circle of danzantes,” (dancers), she said, helped her “balance what was actually going on in my life.” She then commented specifically on the conditions her teacher provided: “Like I never felt that she made us not feel part of the circle, because we had so many questions and so many doubts,” Sara said. “I guess she understood that we were growing and that we had to balance.” Later in the interview, she added: “I saw [Danza] more as a way of just being here as a collective, as women, as learning what we want to do in life ‘cause we went to talk about that too in our circles and what’s going on in our schools and what’s going on in our society [and]our community.” Moreover, despite having “a lot of access to these Upward Bound programs and college trips,” Sara felt the Danza group, “was the first time [she] was seeing a teacher really push [students] to deconstruct what society was and try to look at it as not as...hopeless,” she said, “...but [as something] we can...change.”

Kirina also felt her political involvement as a high school student “was sorta like a place for me” she said. “Kinda like—not giving me meaning but sort of like a purpose.” She explained:

KIRINA: [A]t that [age]...you’re trying to find yourself so there’s a *real* good potential of getting kids to do good things, you know? Or to *care* about things because you can get kids who don’t care about anything. You can either go this way or that way. And that’s [what] I think [organizing] did [for me] ‘cause at that point...I know I was looking for who I was.

Then, as if to stress her good fortune, Kirina concluded, “And then I found *this*! And it was like, “Yeah! This makes *total* sense! And it’s about *me*,” you know? [Because] at that point, everything’s about me. You’re at that age!”

Paloma’s attitude toward her political organizing activity as a youth remains equally positive: “I don’t see it as anything negative and it’s nothing that I ever regret,” she asserted because “I learned a lot like just from being there.” She then smiled as she said: “And it was kinda cool because I was *so* young!” In fact, Paloma believes experiences like hers are “positive things for people” and she uses herself as an example to explain why:

PALOMA: I didn’t know right from wrong! You know, like, I could tell you situations that I put myself in that maybe wasn’t a good idea, you know? But now, after all this you tend to know who has good intentions, who has bad intentions. You learn to make good decisions for yourself. I guess you could say a substitute for parenting.

This idea surfaces again when Paloma explains how “[organizing] *totally* helped me grow as a person ‘cause I had to grow up fast.” “You know, I was one of those kids that had to grow up fast, you know? Because I had to fend for myself and nobody else. So it’s pretty awesome to have that, you know, to guide me... [I]t just *helped* me, you know?”

Then, much like the other participants in this study, she added: “It was a big help just to kinda like find myself and *be* myself [at that age].”

Paloma stated that she saw the influence of her organizing experience “in everyday life,”. To illustrate this point, she told of a recent experience at work, where a fellow co-worker, with whom she strictly maintained professional contact, recognized her as a comrade in struggle.

PALOMA: Well the day he left, he gave me like that hand shake. Like that East LA hand shake and he goes, “¡Qué Viva La Revolución!” And I said, “¡Pues que Viva!” And that was the last thing he said to me. But isn’t that a trip? Because [somehow] I project that. I guess subconsciously, I don’t know. But that’s crazy! For somebody to see that, you know?...Like they *see* it even though you wear your slacks and your polos or whatever it is that you have to wear to work n’ stuff...And I think that’s awesome because how many people can say that? Like your true person comes out regardless of what you wear or regardless of how you do you hair or how you manage yourself in a professional environment. It’s like, you still portray that. And that’s a good thing because that’s something that I don’t have to work hard at. I don’t have to *pretend* to be this revolutionary. I don’t have to *pretend* to be this Chicana. It’s like, it’s who I am!

Paloma voices what seemed to be a heartfelt sentiment shared by all the participants in the study: “I wouldn’t change it for a thing. I mean doing *big* things! [This, is “something that to this day I still can’t believe I did. But I remember doing all of it!”

The many themes and issues raised by these five young Chicanas are rich with meaning and possibilities for informing a critical vision of Chicana pedagogy—one that can function in concert with their lived histories. This entails engaging the powerful knowledge they have garnered from their actual experiences of struggle, as they fought individually and collectively for voice and participation, in their efforts to transform the material conditions within schools that impact their daily lives.

Chapter 6

Education in the Midst of Struggle

If knowledge is to be 'active', that is, oriented to radical social change, then it must be a critical practice of direct producers, whose lives and experiences must be the basis for their own knowledge-making endeavors—Hamanji Bannerji, Thinking Through: Essays on Marxism, Feminism and Anti-Racism

As the previous chapter well-illustrates, it was through their participation in the No on 21 campaign that the 5 young Chicana high school students of this study found substance in the alternative pedagogical context of movement work. Rooted in critiques of conditions at work in public schools, the 2000 No on 21 campaign was able to integrate the varied cultural histories and educational aspirations of the women together in an experience that, although it did not lead to identical futures, led to very similar experiences of social consciousness--experiences that continue to inform their lives as young woman today.

In an analysis of the narratives, several overarching themes emerged. These include: (a) Social Agency (b) Critical Pedagogy and (3) Chicana Feminism as Social Movement. These themes can help us think more carefully about the implications of movement work for Chicana youth, particularly with respect to questions of identity and pedagogy. The following will comprise a discussion of these three themes, each of which will be treated individually despite my complete recognition that they are fundamentally interrelated. This is because movement work *is* praxis and hence has an inherent pedagogy. Nevertheless, for purposes of this discussion, themes will be treated separately in an analysis of these young women's efforts to transform the social relations that limited their understanding of themselves and their sense of connection as social actors and collective subjects of history.

Issues of Disempowerment

Clear from the narratives is that the experiences of the 5 participants prior to movement work were constructed across economic and social relations that embodied varying forms of inequality and subordination. These shaped participant's behaviors and decisions as young women. Thus, while the specific economic, social and cultural contexts in which they were immersed are wide-ranging, the material forces and struggles of their existence made it difficult for participants to transcend their immediate social reality producing instead various ideologies and practices rooted in everyday issues of survival.

Much about the lives of these participants is consistent with the literature on Chicana youth. The parents of all 5 participants, for example, immigrated during the 1980's and all but one lived outside the central city, sharing rooms as high school students with older/younger siblings, their parents, or in some cases, relegated to the living room with "no privacy" (Kirina) or place for their belongings. Their parents were also concentrated in low-wage service-occupations working as janitors, auto mechanics, hospice workers, entry-level administrative support staff, nursing assistants or school aids. This exposed all participants to varying degrees of economic instability despite being raised, in most cases, by 2 fulltime working parents.

Strong paternalistic family relations also undermined their voice and participation at home in ways that created, at best, ambiguous feelings among participants toward their fathers. In fact, most expressed a clear sense that the allocation of privileges or expectations as young women was determined principally by gender. Kirina, for instance, noted that as the youngest female, she would come into visibility only when her labor for childcare was needed. Aurora also explained that her obligation to help her mother was a matter of being "the oldest and a girl." Thus, despite feeling that they were "good daughters" (Aurora) by complying with

obligations at home, school and work, in many cases, they would still, in Paloma's words, "get the worst of it."

Schools

Also inherent in the narratives of all five participants is the manner in which their sense of disempowerment was further operationalized in schools where anti-dialogical relations within the classroom functioned to extinguish the possibility of democratic forms of sociality. This subsumed social interest for family, friends, and community with individual competition for grades and recognition that only compounded the challenges of everyday life for each participant. As a consequence, all participants learned to develop coping mechanisms that involved varying degrees of oppositional behaviors influenced and limited by their unique social and material conditions in order to construct spaces that affirmed their own class and cultural subjectivity (Giroux, 2001).

Both Aurora and Kirina, for example, preferred "hanging out" to time spent in class, where an abstracted curriculum, disconnected from their class and culture, made school a forced cooperation that existed independent of their will. Forced to comply with their parent's wishes to "graduate and that's it" (Kirina), both Kirina and Aurora found themselves unwilling to give into middle class culture by conforming to the image of school success—an image Aurora scoffs at as she imagines her mother advising her about college life rather than work. Thus their resistance to school instruction was part of a larger resolve to thwart middle class authority and refuse the dissimulation of their oppression (McLaren, 2007)

Paloma, Sara, and Elena, on the other hand, managed varying degrees of academic success. Yet this often came at the cost of exposure to culturally invasive forms of instruction,

conditioning as passive recipients of knowledge, and/or patriarchal notions of good behavior (Cammarota 2004; Solórzano, & Bernal, 2001; Fine & Weis, 1998, Lopez, 2003, Valencia, 2005b). Sara, for instance, learned to suppress the contradiction of unequal opportunities in schools as an upper-tracked student while Elena learned to contain her anxieties over the cost of individual success (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001). Immersion in a web of relationships with adults in schools, moreover, and the lack of meaningful opportunities to illuminate possibilities for themselves mirrored that of those who opted to resist school culture altogether (Stanton-Salazar, 2001b). Thus, while their positive orientations toward school were indeed part of a larger struggle against patriarchy and class oppression (Cammarota, 2008), the failure of schools to address their existential situation disabled the capacity of all participants to situate themselves critically.

Social Agency

As opposed to individualizing processes of schools, the politicizing context of the No on 21 campaign enabled participants to tie their oppositional behavior to social and community change. The campaign's powerful critiques of schooling provided the basis for such an alliance and enabled those involved to unnaturalize the social formations in which they were immersed. Through so doing, these five students were able to situate themselves historically and redefine themselves as social actors with common interests and shared experiences as urban youth.

The recognition of themselves as social beings is powerfully exemplified in Kirina's confrontation with the individualism in which she was socialized in school during her initiation into movement work. Not taught to think collectively, she questioned who exactly are "Your people?!" This is also apparent in Kirina's disbelief that she had anything to do with the

walkout. “It just happened!” she said because students are socialized to see their actions are of no real consequence to the world—a dynamic that was unfortunately reinforced in the conditions of family relations.

Also central to the empowerment of agency is the counter-discourse waged by social movements, which in the case of No on 21 campaign, “wasn’t only about youth getting incarcerated,” Sara said, “but about our education system—how that was incarcerating.” This included an emphasis on the human rights of youth. “That’s right! We *do* have these rights!” said Kirina. In the process, participants began to make connections between politics and practices as human constructions in ways that recontextualized their subjectivity, within the social relations that were attached to the existing material conditions in which they sought to achieve academically and sometimes merely survive.

The No on 21 campaign was also a context where issues relevant to the lives of participants were made central. Whereas the ideology of traditional schooling denies the political nature of schools, therefore, movement work within the campaign provided a dialogical space of critique, where the feelings and experiences that youth brought to the table had a place to be seriously engaged. “That’s what I remember!” says Sara as she recalls her sudden immersion into the culture of youth struggle. The mere sound of “teachers talking about how tracking is bad” or how “students don’t learn their history,” for example, validated their actual lived conditions and enabled participants to recognize the value of these experiences and their connection to a larger cultural context and a more expansive community of struggle.

Naming the world in this way is precisely what enabled participants to voice their opposition, to understand their situation further, and engage others in the process of movement-building (Foley, 1999). Thus, their very presence in movement labor gave significance to the

issues central to their survival, enabling participants to break the alienation that happens so often when the experiences of Chicana youth are shrouded by an ideology that obscures the meaningfulness of their existence. “This makes *total* sense. And it’s about *me!*” Kirina declared. Hence, unlike the abstracted knowledge of schools, the campaign spoke to the specificity of their experiences as cultural, gendered, and classed subjects; thus, constituting a type of education that engaged the historically specific modes of being experienced by these five Chicana youth.

That experience, moreover, was given historical significance and meaning within No on 21 campaign because the counter-discourse tied the initiative to the specific history of racialization and exploitation of Chicana/o communities. Repeated calls to Chicana/o Power! as well as the politicizing energy of Chicana/o art also infused an understanding of the historicity of struggle. The movement’s iconography, moreover, included extensive representations of empowerment that spoke directly to Chicanas in ways that confirmed their central and meaningful participation as part of a continuing tradition of Chicana resistance. This historicity, was also embodied in the presence of Betita Martinez who as a veteran Chicana activist helped students make historical connections with Proposition 21 and earlier community struggles. Elena, in fact, recalled the power of relationships forged in the process of struggle when her counselor not only shared skills learned from his previous organizing experience with Santa Monica’s walkouts, but also facilitated Betita’s visit to help mobilize the campus.

Movement work also empowered the social agency of participants by enabling the formation of humanizing relationships in the form of solidarity, which can only be built through concrete collaboration (Darder, 2002; Freire 1970). Indeed, the experience of solidarity proved powerful in the lives of the five participants involved. One of the more notable moments was when Kirina recognized that solidarity can be built across old differences or oppositions, when

the sight of two rival high school students enabled her to break the binaries of opposition that previously would not allow her to envision the possibility of collective engagement. “*That* was very powerful in itself,” she asserted.

Moreover, as Freire (1970) argues, it was solidarity that fed participants courage to act; for, without it, participant’s fears and rage could not be transmuted into collective action. Sara, for example, remained seated during the walk-out, in part, because “not a lot of [her] friends walked out” compared to Elena who felt “in solidarity with more than just the people who were around you.” In fact, Aurora credits the feeling of solidarity she gets from her continuing friendship with Kirina as a source of strength, which enables her even today to continue to live her political commitments. Hence, the establishment of solidarity is part of a humanizing process that empowers social agency and enabled these five young women to recognize themselves as part of a larger and much older community context of struggle.

The narratives of this study also make clear that the installation of fear is a major strategy used to undermine the agency of youth in schools, in order to extinguish the possibility of their collective empowerment and participation. “The way teachers were telling us not to go,” Sara explains, created an internal struggle that manifested disempowering contradictory behaviors that alienate students from their own sense of agency and their own capacity to determine their futures (Darder, 2002). Instead, teachers used their authority to interpret the walkout *for* students, within a conservative ideology that framed the disruption as a grave violation of the social order. Again, the anti-dialogical nature of student-teacher relationships in this instance prevented the creation of solidarity and instead reinscribed the binary of teachers as all-powerful (“You didn’t know *how* powerful they were”) and students as powerless.

Important here is that the coercion was shrouded in a paternalistic relationship of power that assured the subordination of students in the name of helping them succeed and build a better future. “If you go...you’re not gonna go to college,” or “Your GPA is going to go” (Sara). As such, students were being socialized to be passive and thereby forfeit their own capacity to struggle for their freedom, by ensuring their obedience and conformity to the schooling process.

Paloma is another case in point. As an undocumented youth, she developed an ambiguous relationship with her own sense of agency, produced by her condition of illegality. Hence, she described herself as “in the lead but not really there.” So that she, simultaneously, was and was not, creating a state of contradictory awareness as active/passive agent. Fear of deportation for her reinscribed the individualizing process and the isolation of students from one another by preventing Paloma from actually taking part in the larger emancipatory process that she had helped to create.

This study would be incomplete without recognition of certain precautions involved in the process of political youth empowerment. One of these is the seduction of recognition tied to liberal notions of empowerment, where concerns with individual fame or success reproduce oppressive relations within the movement work and leave institutional structures unchallenged (Darder, 2002). Hence, instrumental approaches to movement activity and learning in the form of “career options” or “college range pay” (Paloma) as the primary purpose for involvement can lead to losing sight of their central commitment to social struggle. Hence, while such self-interest is necessarily understood in the context of participant’s material conditions, their participation in movement work must be connected to the development of the kind of political maturity required for long-life commitment to solidarity and collective community empowerment.

Critical Pedagogy

The themes and issues raised by the narratives also speak back to a critical pedagogy for young Chicanas. With the ability to contextualize their subjectivity in dialectical relationship to the objective conditions at work in their lives, all five participants in this study were able to subvert the individualist frame that veiled the political nature of schooling and instead engage in a critical pedagogical process---one which immerses Chicanas in the politicizing process of struggle, in order to recreate their social relations and thus themselves as part of the larger transformation of society.

Participants, for example, were able to connect with their own intellectual agency through participation in dialogue. In other words, unlike schools, the horizontal configuration of power arrangements through processes involving dialogue helped socialize the production of knowledge in ways that participants had never experienced: “I wasn’t used to people talking about progress and making the world better,” said Kirina. Initially, the process of coming together as subjects for purposeful engagement can make students feel “weird” (Kirina), yet negotiating such experiences are crucial in the process of overcoming the student/teacher contradiction (Freire, 1970). Democratizing the process of teaching and learning thus enabled students to recognize that knowledge is communally or socially produced.

The narratives also speak to the manner in which alienation can be overcome by praxis, a central feature of critical pedagogy. In fact, the praxis-oriented nature of the campaign provided concrete opportunities for participants to act on the recognition of the political nature of their education and the larger social conditions that shaped their lives. “We *have* to do this!” Kirina tells herself or nothing will change. Thus, while awareness is a catalyst for action, it is action that transforms existing material conditions. In this way, the campaign enabled participants to transform their subordinated and apolitical subject positions by linking their identities as

Chicanas to the “epistemology of praxis” (Hernández, 1997) tied to the emergence of political subjects within historical struggle.

Praxis also enabled participants to see “the value of education” (Kirina) through an organic process that involved their own self-directed action. The realization that schooling is tied to their domestication can initially make students feel “pretty stupid” (Kirina). Yet because the campaign was anchored in the realities of social relations anchored in their history, students were not allowed to remain in a place of self-condemnation for long. Instead, the campaign enabled students to shift from thinking in such binaries to a dialectical understanding of their relationship to one another through praxis in ways that enabled them to realize why to break the silence of student’s historical being “[is] a threat!” (Sara) to the social order schools preserve.

One of the more powerful examples of how schools are involved in ideological formations that reproduce inequality can be seen when students voted against their own interest by voting “Yes” for Proposition 21 at the end of their class debate. Once the issues were understood more clearly and experienced as “real” (Kirina) through the power of the walkout, the policy was no longer abstracted. Instead, the walkout was able to disrupt the ideological interest of schools that condition students to adhere to the dominant ideological norms that structure inequalities and social exclusions (Darder, 2002).

The obstacles or barriers inherent in praxis, referred to by Freire (1970) as “limit-situations,” also represented significant moments in the development of consciousness for each of the participants. In other words, the tensions they experienced in the process of organizing helped expose the structural and ideological dynamics that structure oppression in ways that helped students develop a critical reading of power. “See ‘cause in my head I’m thinking that...it’s not that hard to express what you wanna say and do what you wanna do,” Aurora said

but after experiencing what Kirina called “cops being used like a military” the reality that this “was bigger than just some kids” (Kirina) became apparant.

The powerful disruption to the social order of schools caused by the walkout also exposed participants to the function of schools as an apparatus of social regulation. One of the more powerful experiences of this for participants involved the coordinated effort among school authorities to normalize oppressive relations after the walkout by “putting the *frenos* [brakes]” (Aurora) on the creation of a M.E.Ch.A. chapter on campus. Unwilling to let students “bring political issues to the school” was a direct retaliation to prevent students from fomenting the power they had already garnered through the walkout. The complicity of teachers, moreover, also highlighted, the uncritical responses that sustain anti-dialogical relations and disable the critical development of students by preventing their legitimate right to create meaningful pedagogical spaces for themselves.

The combination of necessary and creative work inherent in the process of political organizing, moreover, also gave participants an experience with humanized labor that contrasted sharply with the bureaucratized learning they were accustomed to in public schools. In this way, production processes were tied to real rather than imaginary necessities (Freire, 1970). The reinvention of production within the context of the campaign, including knowledge-production processes, enabled participants to “let [their] creativity run wild!” (Paloma) and experience the embodiment of concrete relations necessary for the construction of radical democratic cultures (Allman, 1999; Conway, 2006).

Indeed, the praxis of movement work enabled participants to experience the productive power of human activity. “It was like the first time we had organized something and it happened!” (Elena). Such praxis provided participants with a different understanding of

themselves than that which they received from schools because their labor power was connected to creating “big things” (ibid) of significance and meaning to the world and their communities. Most importantly, participants were able to see the products of their labor and understand themselves in ways that supported their social agency and hence, their empowerment. “It was totally like my work and it was out there!” (Paloma).

This experience also broke the sense of alienation attached to their schooling in ways that deepened their own sense of themselves as subjects in history. As Aurora so clearly stated, “It was an empowering feeling to feel like you were...*doing* something versus...just sorta thinking in your head.” The opportunity to express their own needs within the context of an emancipatory project, moreover, enabled participants to understand the historically constructed nature of their experience. This is precisely what enabled Kirina to recognize the empty promise of “Critical Thinking” courses in schools and instead, like all participants in this study, live the radical construct of literacy as a spirit of critique rooted in existing social relations that gives people in struggle the opportunity to create meaning and voice their needs within a larger project of self and social empowerment (Giroux, 1987).

Exposure to different readings of history further enabled students to demystify the myth of neutrality in education in ways that prompted participants to “question things a lot more” (Aurora) and “rea[d] books...that weren’t being taught” (Elena) in class. This new disposition toward learning enabled participants to “*want* to learn more” and see learning as an important part of their political development.

Having recovered their power to create and transform knowledge, students were able to “see how somebody educates you” (Paloma). This, in turn, enabled participants to analyze what the pedagogical processes in schools “[were] doing to us as students and how it was shaping our

future” (Aurora). Hence, participants were able to become subjects of their own education, rather than objects of state schooling.

Such conditions of agency are necessary in order for students to enter into pedagogical relationships that can help disrupt imposed myths that stifle their empowerment as subjects of history (Darder, 2002; Freire, 1970). This ability to “thro[w] around ideas with [older] people...who had perspective,” in turn, also created opportunities for participants to “get more clarity into [their] path” (Elena) and “see who [they] want to be” in the process of considering new choices and new possibilities for their lives. Hearing older Chicanas share their stories was particularly powerful for these young Chicanas—“*that* really impacted me there” (Kirina).

Thus, with a well developed sense of agency, participants in this study were able to break the “alienated embeddedness” (Stanton-Salazar, 2001b) in which they were immersed in schools as they participated in the process of building broader relationships through movement work. Meeting “educated people” (Aurora) from working class backgrounds, “especially to see Chicanas...going to school” (Kirina), for example, helped Kirina and Aurora transform the idea of college from “something they did on television” (Kirina) to something that “felt more relevant” (ibid) and accessible in their own lives. This had the added impact of deepening each participant’s sense of self as a historical being with the power to shape an undetermined future and transform their conditions in ways that generated a sense of hope and futurity (Giroux, 1987).

With a newly developed sensitivity to and skill for reading the distribution of power, participants were also able to reconstitute themselves by reconstructing the materiality of their existing relationships. Enough of a punishment,” Kirina says. “Next time [my father] calls, I have to talk.” At other times, it included the unwillingness to participate in the dehumanization

of others, including the men in their lives and immediate family: “I don’t have to agree with you to love you” (Aurora). Hence, participants were able to address issues of power and domination in their own lives, exemplifying critical pedagogy’s emphasis on the dialectical relationship between self and social transformation.

The process of reconstruction that enabled participants to reinvent themselves is tied not only to a sense of themselves as historical beings but the opportunity to experience deep connection with their own activity, through the process of humanized labor. Hence, the depth of meaning and involvement in their own lives, as a consequence of struggle, is what enabled participants to “sorta ope[n] up” and be “less rough” (Paloma) in ways that ultimately created the possibility of forging deeper connections with others.

The degree to which participants committed themselves to creating the conditions that enabled rather than constrained human possibility was further evidenced in their practice as teachers. Able to recognize that teachers “really *do* have the power to make their classrooms a certain place” (Kirina), participants learned to create the dialogical conditions that support student empowerment as individual and social beings. This includes the ability to intervene in assimilative forces involved in educative practices as well as their refusal to “tell [kids] what to do” (Kirina), for example, participants rejected the authoritarianism that ties teachers’ practice to the capitalist mode of production. Hence, whether it be as teachers who “suppor[t] these issues...through the kids” (Kirina) or “just listen[ing]” (ibid) to young children, participants refused to recreate hierarchical relationships that stifled student’s critical capacities.

Moreover, as a consequence of having had the opportunity to clarify their values in the process of movement work, participants developed the political clarity required to take decisive action as teachers: “If I can’t teach it then who the hell is...?” (Aurora). This includes the

overcoming of fear from the same authoritarian relations that attempt to domesticate students and the results in what Aurora called “a shadow of the M.E.Ch.A. experience.”

Participants also spoke of their commitment to disrupt patriarchal arrangements as mothers and wives by “draw[ing] the line” and “divid[ing] the work” (Paloma), despite pressure to “be submissive.” Also noted was their desire to resist consumption of Disney, Barbie dolls, and princess products that reinscribe patriarchy and, instead, communicate a sense of cultural being to their children by teaching them their “background and be proud of it” (Aurora). From their experience with the campaign, these young Chicana began to understand issues of class formation and class struggle. Through this understanding they hoped to enable their own children to recognize class differences and the creative cultural force that could nurture their perspicacity to be free. Thus, long after the campaign had ended, the young women were able to use their increased consciousness of self and the world strategically across the varied contexts of their lives.

Chicana Feminism as Social Movement

Both the emergence of Chicana feminism and the pedagogy of social movement point to the primacy of praxis and the centrality of struggle in the formation of critical consciousness. In other words, it was decisive action in the context of movement work that enabled these five participants, like their sisters before them, to unnaturalize the social formation in which they were immersed and redefine themselves more clearly as cultural, gendered and classed subjects. As a product of social movement, therefore, Chicana feminism is understood here as the politicizing process of struggle for the production of a substantive Chicana identity.

In the case of these 5 women, participation in movement work created a context for a shared historical legacy with early Chicana feminists because alternative social arrangements anchored in emancipatory labor provided opportunities to develop not just a more expansive reading of the world, but the space to redefine themselves as part of a larger community. Movement work thus created a sense of collectivity that helps break alienation with respect to how they saw themselves in the world. Hence, the strong paternalistic family relations that undermined their voice and participation were overturned in movement activity where these were acknowledge and respected as meaningful to the larger process. This gave participants opportunities to unlearn oppression and instead enact different relations of power, not just within movement labor, but in the materiality of their existing social relationships.

One of the most powerful examples of this study was the capacity for this generation of Chicanas to participate democratically across differences. This is because an important feature of the pedagogy in *this* movement, was that the place for women to speak was guaranteed. Unlike the women of the Chicano movement, therefore, the women involved in No on 21 campaign were assured an equal share of power in the process of movement leadership work and decision-making. This condition made it possible for participants to labor alongside and “meet guy friends” (Paloma) with a greater sense of equality and self-confidence than early Chicana feminists. In fact, this social arrangement enabled Kirina, who “would talk shit on guys just for no reason,” to recognize the voices of her male comrades as that of “human being[s], too!” so that the women involved in *this* campaign could enter into dialogue with men and feel in integrity with their own voices as they engaged their particular perspectives on the issues being discussed.

The lasting legacy of early Chicana feminists and other feminists of color is also evident in the personal and collective empowerment of women involved in the No on 21 campaign. This was clearly communicated by the powerful presence of Chicanas in leadership positions, in the movement's discourse, and concrete practices. Moreover, the skills participants learned "just from being there" (Paloma) were acquired so organically that participants were able to extend what they learned to other contexts. This enabled participants to feel they "could work with a group of people and be able to get things organized" (Elena). It also ensured the formation of a new generation of active Chicanas with the collective action skills necessary for the ongoing historical struggle of Chicana self-determination.

Also significant, is that movement work brought a collectivity to the individuation process of all 5 Chicana youth. At a point in their lives when they were searching for who they were, the process of grounded engagement in movement work addressed the very real developmental needs of participants. For one, the sense of meaningful participation in the world through collective work enabled each participant to experience themselves as capable of affecting change and of contending with real consequences in the world. This, in turn, provided a deep sense of "purpose" (Kirina) and belonging where the context for emerging issues in their lives could be identified and engaged.

Relationships created in the context of movement labor also provided what Paloma called "a guide" or "a substitute for parenting" that facilitated their maturity into adulthood. So that contrary to the bourgeois concept of freedom as individual, the five young Chicanas in this study were able to experience the materialist concept of freedom as collective, where personal growth comes as a consequence of meaningful connection with other human beings (Allman, 1999). Hence, rather than confronting the process of individuation in isolation, movement work enabled

participants to express their own individuality in the context of community struggle where solidarity fostered the kind of caring relationships that prompted individuals to meet one another's needs. This awareness is clear in the work of early Chicana feminists who labored tirelessly to create empowering pedagogical spaces for young Chicanas knowing full well that the experiences of Chicana youth today sets the stage for the future well-being of their community.

The sense of collectivity to the individuation process as youth as well as the socialization as political beings was also supported and strengthened by the presence of other Chicanas who helped embody individual and collective empowerment. At a point in their lives when participants were "looking for who [they were]" (Kirina) or waiting for the opportunity to "just be [themselves]" (Paloma), movement work enabled them to "balance" and manage "so many questions and so many doubts" (Sara) in ways that enabled participants to develop the ability to "know right from wrong" (Paloma) and "make good decisions" (Paloma). This sense of successful individuation was expressed by participant's perceptions that they had emerged from the experience as integrated, authentic human beings (Freire, 1970).

One of the primary struggles for participants in this study was related to their concerns about maintaining a sense of connection to family and community in the context of emerging adulthood. Yet, their narratives suggest that involvement in a transformative political project enables participants to engage dialectical tensions of family and community in ways consistent with Chicana feminist visions of collective empowerment. Thus, participation in movement work enabled them to recognize that they "weren't going to have to *lose* any of those things" that were valuable in their lives, but rather that they "could do them all!" (Elena) because of their ability to move coherently and fluidly throughout the different social contexts of their lives.

Chapter 7

Toward a Pedagogy of Social Movement

This study examines the impact of social movement participation on the lives of five young Chicanas with various levels of involvement in the 2000 No on 21 campaign in southern California. For these young women, the context of movement labor provided an alternative pedagogical space that enabled them to break the alienation of schooling and patriarchal family arrangements, through a process of humanized labor where they learned to shape their own struggles and futures as conscious beings. Central to this process was participation in dialogical relations that enabled participants to share in the construction of knowledge and to experience the productive nature of human activity in the process of materializing a political vision based on the realities of their lived experience. In the process, participants generated communal power that facilitated their politicization and development as Chicana women.

Clear from the narratives, is that the experiences prior to movement work were embodied varying forms of inequality and subordination. As daughters of recent immigrants, growing up in working class/poor neighborhoods with varied cultural experiences and connections to schools, the limited understanding of themselves prior to movement work was gained from the lived reality of their material existence, which shaped what they learned about themselves as women and in many cases, limited their goals to short-term plans. Many, for instance, could not extend beyond a future of alienated labor that came from a sense of their inability to make their own history. In some ways, this echoed the fatalism that Freire discovered when he first began teaching literacy circles in the impoverished communities of Brazil (Freire, 1970).

Their sense of disempowerment was further operationalized in schools where anti-dialogical relations disabled participants from accessing their empowerment as subjects of

history. Also significant is that knowledge construction was not derived from lived engagement, but rather abstracted, in ways that did not resonate with students but rather conditioned them as passive recipients of reified knowledge. Hence, schools reproduce conditions of disempowerment tied to the reproduction of class divisions in the process of naturalizing the unequal distribution of economic and social rewards.

The context of movement labor, however, opened up the space for these young women to redefine themselves more clearly as cultural beings. This is particularly true in terms of their own identities and their ability to define their own social agency. As such, they were able to participate in conditions of empowerment, which could lead to a transformation of their immediate material conditions, in which they were very clearly subjects of their own lives. It also provided a basis on which these Chicana youth were able to build a supportive community to support their own individualization process as young Chicanas—a process which was strengthened, in part, by the presence of other Chicana women.

Whereas the pedagogy of schools created a sense of profound disconnection, the context of movement building catapulted each of the young women in this study to recognize themselves as social beings. In so doing, this enabled them to construct meaning out of their own lives and immerse them in social forms that supported them in unlearning oppressive ideologies and practices. Central to this pedagogical space were conditions of empowerment that allowed participants to draw on their own experiences and hence, construct knowledge that positioned them as actors in history.

In the process, participants came to (re)define themselves in relation to the social world, through concrete practices of transforming the social relations in their lives in ways that assisted them to experience democratic practices within the material conditions of their daily existence.

The dialogical relations inherent in this instance enabled them to see the historically constructed nature of their experience through political activity that spoke directly to their own culture and class struggles as young Chicana women. These experiences, in turn, became the basis for powerful political claims and actions. Thus, participants were able to *situate themselves* in history as subjects, rather than be *situated by others* as objects. .

Several limitations have been identified in this study. To begin, all of these students identified as heterosexual so that their narratives do not specifically engage questions of heteronormative sexuality within the context of their experience nor did any of the participants raise the issue of sexuality within campaign work. However, had there been young lesbian, transgendered Chicanas, they would have needed a context where issues of their sexuality could be engaged, within the prevailing heteronormative context in which they were involved.

Another limitation is that all participants involved in this study are from low-income communities, which is similar to the context in which the majority of young Chicanas struggled in the early movement. Nevertheless, given the growing population of young Chicanas coming from more affluent working class families, an examination of the issues may bring similar or different dynamics with respect to their positionality and class formation. Moreover, all of these young women are first generation Chicanas. Historically, as with a more varied sample in terms of class background, an examination of the impact of second and third generational experiences as Chicanas might itself surface other questions not raised in this discussion.

It is also important to recognize that, while the No on 21 campaign did not prevent the Proposition from passing, these Chicana youth did not walk away with a defeated sense of themselves. On the contrary, despite their brief experiences, this study shows that youth involvement in political movement work is a powerful force in their development as critically

consciousness adults. This signals the importance for youth organizers to recognize the implications of youth participation not only within the context of campaigns but in terms of the life changing experience and political formation of youth. Part of that pedagogical power lies in the sensual experience of non-alienated social formations on which humanized labor is built. Within the praxis of movement work, therefore, these young women came to recognize themselves as subjects of history, rooted in a lasting commitment to improve conditions for not just for themselves, their children or their communities, but for all oppressed people.

The significance of this study also points to the possibility of critical appropriation of schools, where schools can function more like democratic public spheres (Giroux, 1989) that foster the cultural and political development of young Chicanas as class, cultural, gendered and sexual beings. As such, schools can function as places that foster sustained community engagement for the production of knowledges, where the reconstruction of power and the active knowledge production processes tied to community struggles can find a place for engagement. This is essential to a social vision that can only emerge from engagement with existing material conditions, in order to transform the future. It's a vision of schools that does not focus on the question of academic success at the cost of self-determination; so that Chicana youth, in this instance, can not only be producers of knowledge in schools but producers of knowledge in their communities—a process which enables the formation of transformative Chicana intellectuals required for participation in anti-capitalist community struggle.

Also important here is the recognition that there exists a need to create spaces outside campaign or protest politics, in order to generate the kinds of knowledge and practices that can further illuminate alternatives outside the existing logic of capitalist relations, so that conditions of empowerment, far beyond their identities as students, can be supported.

Future research in this area must be tied to looking at different activities and campaigns that involve young Chicanas outside of school, in order to assess more carefully if experiences are similar or different to those experienced by the young women involved in this study. The dearth of literature specifically focused on young Chicana identity and experience, both within traditional classrooms and pedagogical experiences outside classroom, signal the need for greater investigation into a variety of experiences that potentially fortify Chicanas in both the defining their identities as cultural beings and supporting the social agency and empowerment necessary for their greater democratic participation.

Unlike the existing literature on Chicana feminist pedagogy, therefore, this project attempts to reestablish the primacy of praxis birthed by Chicana Power! and reassert the political vision of Chicana pedagogy as the practice of a social movement linked to the feminist evolution of Chicana youth. To do otherwise is to strip Chicana identity from its revolutionary essence and fall into the trap of idealism, which Marx criticized to begin with. In other words, given that history has shown political action has consistently educated subordinate populations, then only an education linked to class struggle can enable Chicanas to transform power relations and assure their participation in the construction of socialist futures. Hence, Chicana feminism is fundamentally pedagogical and it is lived powerfully through movement participation because it allows Chicanas to ground themselves historically and sustain the transformative intent of their identity within existing social relations of history.

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Appendix A

CCCE Solidarity News

CCCE SOLIDARITY NEWS Vol. 1, No. 1

<http://ccce.net/solidaritynews.htm>

November 20, 1998

Critical Educators Establish a Consortium for Radical Social Movement in California

On Saturday, November 14, fifty educators from across the state, frustrated and disillusioned with the direction that public schooling has been taking in the last few years, have boldly taken the future in their own hands.

The educators who were convened by the Institute for Cultural Studies in Education and Claremont Graduate University's Teacher Education program, have established a new organization, The California Consortium for Critical Educators, to support the progressive work of classroom teachers, teacher educators and critical researchers in the field.

A significant objective of the organization is to promote communication and collaboration among critical educators and researchers working in California schools, universities and community education programs through networking and the creation of multiple avenues for consistent communication between its membership.

The group contends that efforts to pass a string of mean-spirited initiatives, including Propositions 187, 209, and 227, were won because there was no significant social movement in education to unite the work of progressive educators in their efforts to counter these measures.

Moreover, the objectives of the consortium including linking the problems found in schools with the realities faced by workers, families, and communities across the country.

Efforts to reconstruct the project of schooling includes the development of ongoing study groups for classroom teachers in their communities, community public forums to discuss educational issues among teachers,

students and parents, a teacher mentor directory to provide assistance to teachers, and a Web site to access information readily.

Moreover, the group made a forthright commitment to challenge racism, sexism, homophobia, and economic exploitation through a variety of strategies that promote social justice and economic democracy.

Teachers, teacher educators and researchers who are committed to a critical social project are encouraged to join the organization. Members are involved in a variety of activities that are directly related to their everyday work. This permits those who are involved to contribute in ways that do not place excessive demands on their time, but rather maximizes their contributions through direct connections to their ongoing activities.

The time has come for a renewed social movement in education - one that can break the isolation and alienation faced by many critical educators and assist them to work more effectively toward democratic schools and society.

Join the Struggle for Economic and Social Rights in Education

The next meeting will take place on Saturday, January 23, 1999 9:00 - 1:00 at Claremont Graduate University. For information contact 909 607-3786 or antonia.darder@cgu.edu or marta.baltodano@cgu.edu.

Appendix B

Youth Organizing Communities List of Demands

We Demand Schools Not Jails

We Demand a Relevant Education for All

1. Free Education is Our Human Right

- No fees for higher education.
- Fund extracurricular activities.
- Reduce the class sizes to a maximum of 25 students so teachers can take time to help the students who need extra help.
- Fund Retention Programs.
- Hire and train more administrators and teachers of color.

2. Language is Our Human Right

- Fund and augment bilingual education.
- We can celebrate multilingualism rather than narrow our language choices by developing Early Second Language Development Programs for all students.

3. Life, Liberty, and Work are Our Human Rights

- Fund jobs for youth to be pro-active in their community, instead of funding police and building more prisons.
- Stop tracking our children into remedial classes. This leads to boredom and they are eventually "pushed out" of school and end up on the streets.
- If corporations are going to provide jobs, we better be able to live off of the wages and benefits.

4. Freedom of Movement and Security of Person are Our Human Rights

- We are residents of the Southwest for thousands of years and are entitled to coexist with others without fear of intimidation, coercion, or harassment by any government agencies.
- Laws to make our children "illegal" attack our human right to an education regardless of where we reside.

5. Self-determination is Our Human Right

- Fund African American Studies, Asian American Studies, Native American Studies, Xicana/o Studies on all campuses as a requirement to graduate and entrance to college.
- Curriculum K through 12 should reflect the real history of the United States. We need to learn about people of color, working people, women, lesbian/gay, physically disabled and all those that have been left out of our histories.

6. Corporations and Military Should Stay Out of Our Schools

- Donations from corporations should be condition-free. There is no place for commercials in the schools.

- The military is not an educational institution. Teaching about violence, killing, guns, and warfare has no place on any campus. Just say no.

7. Standardized Testing and Retention are Class-biased and Racist

- Standardized tests do not measure creativity, problem-solving abilities, ethical thinking, and many other things central to learning. They mostly measure what is crammed into student's short-term memories.
- Retention blames poor performance on children, not the school district. Rather than transform schools, retention policies make students repeat an experience that failed them before.

[www. SchoolsNotJails.com](http://www.SchoolsNotJails.com)

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