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“VOCES OF LITTLE MICHOACAN”:
A COLLECTIVE NARRATIVE OF RESISTANCE AND PRESERVATION
OF HOME

A Dissertation Presented to
The Faculty of the School of Education
International and Multicultural Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements of the Degree
Doctor of Education
By Ana Angel Avendaño
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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

VOCES OF LITTLE MICHOACAN: A COLLECTIVE NARRATIVE OF RESISTANCE
AND PRESERVATION OF HOME

This empirical study captured the ongoing community organizing, led primarily by Chicanas and young people in a Latinx community in the San Francisco Bay Area. This community has experienced historic neglect, inequities, gentrification, and economic displacement. Through muxersita portraiture, a critical qualitative methodology, with young people as co-researchers, this study captures the collective narrative of the community of North Fair Oaks through platicas, encuentros y acción. In the process, this collective narrative disrupts the negative impact of gentrification by providing a historical context of the contributions of Latinx in North Fair Oaks. This study uses a critical coraje framework; a homemade theory that aims to transform the world through HERstory education, uplifting and acknowledging the contributions of oppressed people and the fostering of advocacy, for the preservation of home.

The methodology offers a HERstory course to lead young people into their collection of narratives, through an intergenerational encuentro. In doing so, we centralize the experiences of Latinx community in North Fair Oaks where over 70% self-identify as Latinx, disrupt gender norms and heteropatriarchy, elevate women voices- because women are often silenced, ignored, or cast aside, and recast young people as active agents capable of promoting social justice within their own communities (Cammarota & Fine, 2008).

This intergenerational encuentro brings together the narratives and experiences of young people and mujeres to form a common story of struggle against the rapid gentrification and displacement in the community of North Fair Oaks. Through this research, young people learn valuable stories from mujeres through pláticas and encuentros, and mujeres learn new ways of being from the next generation. Whereby, the legacy of community activism, intergenerational learning, and new knowledge production inform the framework of critical coraje. The findings offer four tenets of critical coraje: collective HEARTwork, critical hope, m[other]work, and liberatory spirit.

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
TABLE OF FIGURES	ix
CHAPTER I: THE RESEARCH PROBLEM	1
Introduction	1
Mi Testimonio: “In Search of Mi Aztlan”	2
Background and Need	11
Purpose Statement	17
Research Questions	18
Theoretical Framework	19
Chicana Feminist Epistemology	22
Transnationalism and Borderlands Theory	26
Critical Consciousness	28
Significance of the Study	32
Educational Significance	33
Definition of Terms	33
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	35
Whiteness, Gentrification, and Displacement	36
Understanding Whiteness	38
Whiteness as an Ideology	39
Whiteness as Property	39
Urbanism and Diverse Communities	42
Anti-gentrification Movement in the San Francisco Mission	50
Chicana/Latinas and Community Organizing	65
Origins of Chicana Organizing	66
Chicanas Organizing 1930’s and 1940’s	68
The Chicano/a Movement	70
Community Organizing	75
Youth as Co-researchers	78
Legacy of Latinx Youth Activism	78
Critical Pedagogy	82

Critical Youth Studies	84
Youth Participatory Action Research	85
Summary	86
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY	87
Research Design and Methodology	88
Restatement of Research Questions	91
Research Setting and Participants	91
Research Participants	95
Data Collection and Analysis	103
La Colectiva	103
Mujeres of NFO	107
Ethical Considerations	109
Summary	111
CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS	112
Introduction	112
Linda Lopez	115
Gabriela Valencia	121
Graciela Eulate	133
Angelica Rodriguez-Blanco	137
Mary Martinez	144
Beatriz Cerillo	150
Ninfa Zuno	157
Findings from Narratives of Mujeres of Little Michoacan	163
A Heart for Serving: Sacrifice and Leadership	165
Living in the Margins: Challenges of Living in An Unincorporated Community	170
Gentrification and Displacement	171
The Immigrant Experience	176
Collective Support, Nurturing and Staying Persistent	181
Sharing Wisdom and Encouragement	188
Summary	193
La Colectiva	193
Secondary Findings: Lessons Learned from Chicana HERstory	196
Summary	205
Introduction	210

Reinstatement of the Study	212
Discussion	214
Figure 14	215
<i>Critical Coraje</i>	215
Collective HEARTwork	215
Critical Hope	218
M[other]work	221
Liberatory Spirit	225
Summary	227
Recommendations for Future Research	228
Recommendation for Future Practice	230
Closing Remarks	231
REFERENCES	233
Questions for Mujeres of NFO	246
Appendix 2	247
Data Collection Table	247
Chicana HERstory Class Collective Poems	248

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1	55
Figure 2	57
Figure 3	59
Figure 4	62
Figure 5	95
Figure 6	97
Figure 7	98
Figure 8	98
Figure 9	114
Figure 10	115

Figure 11.....	121
Figure 12.....	133
Figure 13.....	137
Figure 14.....	144
Figure 15.....	150
Figure 16.....	157
Figure 17.....	215

CHAPTER I: THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Introduction

On a Tuesday morning, a group of young adults walk into the County Board of Supervisors chambers, a room full of government employees mostly in suits. The youth have taken the morning off from school to deliver their thoughts on a recent community tragedy, hopeful their representatives will listen. Among them is Sandra, a 17-year-old Salvadoreña. Sandra and her classmates take a seat at the front. After a few minutes, the board president calls the meeting and announces public comment. He reads names from pieces of paper and one by one, members of the community take the mic to speak on issues of immigration, schools, parking, and affordable housing. The board president finally reads off Sandra's name.

Folded paper in hand, Sandra stands, walks to the podium, and addresses the board of supervisors: four white men and one white woman. Sandra informs her county representatives that her family is struggling to make this month's rent since it has gone up by \$400. Her voice is shaky. She is nervous, yet delivers her story with heartfelt emotion. She asks the representatives to do something about the unfair rent increases and displacements happening all over the city but mostly impacting her immediate friends and neighbors who live in the unincorporated area. Sandra tells the county supervisors that in the past year she has lost many friends, who have had to move out of the area because of rent increases. Her own family is considering moving two hours away because their combined earned income will not be enough to make their month's rent. Sandra talks about her involvement in school, her academic accomplishments, and her after-school leadership. She says the network and opportunities she has had while living in this area will tarnish if she has to move.

Sandra's experience is part of a larger economic impact that is felt throughout her community. Neighbors losing friends. Networks are being broken and communities ever changing. Sandra's speech to her county representatives represents an act of advocacy, an attempt to be heard and to bring awareness to the injustice her community is facing. Over the past decade, cities across the United States have experienced similar patterns of gentrification and economic displacement. In response to this, there has also been a rise in new forms of activism and movement building to challenge representatives and legislative leaders. Sandra's courageous efforts are also a reminder of young people's involvement in social movements. Moreover, she represents the legacy of young Chicana/Latina community activism that is too often in the shadows. Young women like Sandra have taken it upon themselves to talk back to their representatives. They want to be heard. But mostly, they want to see an end to the injustice that threatens their homes and their communities.

This concept of *home* and making sense of home is something I have always treasured. Learning from Sandra and young activists who fight for their homes and communities inspire me and give me hope. It prompts me to reflect on my own story and my journey finding *home*. Therefore, I offer mi testimonio and how I came to understand the significance of home and community.

Mi Testimonio: "In Search of Mi Aztlan"

The monarch butterfly is known for its migration between the United States and Mexico. Every fall, the monarch makes its long journey seeking warmth and refuge, often settling in the southern state of Michoacán in Mexico. Like the monarch butterfly, I made the journey from the United States to Michoacán when I was only six months old. Just a few months earlier, my

mother had left and my father tried to raise me as a single parent. He was 18 years old, having migrated to the United States just a few years before. Realizing that his 12-hour work shifts and lack of experience and support were challenging to raise me on his own, my father took me to Michoacán where I was raised by my grandmother in a hot, small, rural *pueblo*. This was home for a while. I have small vague memories of my time there, mostly from stories that my grandmother shares. Stories of me running around barefoot, sneaking to her *abarrotes*, a small produce market, to take apples and oranges for my friends. When I was four years old, I traveled back *home* to the United States. I have vivid memories of the small studio where we all lived, crammed but happy. Of spending many mornings alone in that studio, while my tios and tias went to work or to school. Anxiously waiting for my tia to come back from school and cook lunch for me. I remember being so excited to start school and meet friends. Later in life, I remember my abuelita talking about moving back to Mexico. We went back to Michoacán when I was 11 years old, where I went to middle school. Memories of navigating a new school system, having to start ‘all over’ making new friends. I then made my final journey back to the United States when I was 14 to go to high school and pursue higher education.

Like the monarch butterfly, I often crave the warmth of my home in Michoacán and travel back at least once a year, if possible. I am a transnational Chicana, traveling between borders, navigating cultures, seeking refuge in both homes. Reflecting on these memories and my own experience as a transnational Chicana gave me *coraje*. It was my own internal struggle, one that I later managed to understand and use to navigate the changing world around me. In Spanish, *coraje* translates as “courage”. But *coraje* can also mean anger, rage, fury. And at the same time, *coraje* can be strength and value. At an early age, I battled with my *coraje*, as my family instilled in me my citizenship status and “americaness” at a young age. *La Pocha* they

would say, “*Eres americana.*” I knew I was *different* than the rest of my family members, who were born in Mexico. I would often hear, “*No seas corajuda!*” The adverb of coraje, they meant to say “Don’t be grumpy.” But another more positive translation of corajuda is courageous and brave. So why would they be telling me not to be courageous?

While I did not recognize the full richness of coraje until later in life, I also realized that my own family was not seeing the positive light on such a complex word. Gloria Anzaldúa (2015) refers to this complexity as *nepantla*, a Nahuatl word meaning ‘in between space,’ which represents, “temporal, spatial, psychic, and intellectual point(s) of crisis (among other things). Nepantla occurs during the many transitional stages of life and can describe issues and concerns related to identity, aesthetics, epistemology, and/or ontology” (p. 245). Nepantla perfectly describes my internal crisis as a corajuda, understanding my identity, navigating new systems and cultures and learning to embrace the in-between spaces where I often found myself.

There is true duality within coraje, and perhaps it is why I gravitate so strongly to this word. And although I learned the tricks to navigate my biculturalism early on, I did not recognize all the richness and power in my coraje until later in life. My coraje helped me adapt in any situation, from speaking Spanish in the playground with my friends to quickly switching to English when a teacher came by. I often felt confused and forced myself to fit into my two sets of identities. Internally, I was frustrated, sad and angry. I often longed for belonging. I desperately wanted to belong at home, my immigrant household. I did not want to be *La Americana*. I just wanted to be Ana. I also desperately wanted to be Mexicana, just like my grandma and my aunts.

One time, I noticed how my family members had a birthmark on their upper left arm from their immunization. All of them had this. I looked at my upper left arm and noticed I did not have it. The voice inside me reminded me, "*Porque eres Americana*" I grabbed the sharpest pencil I could find and stabbed my arm to make it look like I had a mark. I wanted the Mexican badge. I wanted the honor they had for their language, their culture, and their identities. I wanted their strength and pride. I wanted their coraje.

I offer mi testimonio because it represents part of my migration story; which is part of the larger story of Mexican migration to the United States. According to the Migration Policy Institute, approximately 12,683,000 Mexicans migrate to the United States. This significant number encapsulates not only the impact of immigration as a whole in this country, but also the importance of our migration stories and contributions to this society. (Migration Policy Institute, 2017). This history of Mexican migration or movement between borders dates back to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in which the United States took almost half of Mexico's land including what is now California, Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, and parts of Utah and Colorado. Although there certainly was migration and movement taking place prior, the treaty is a significant historical landmark, because it forced land boundaries, with the creation of borders, complicated issues of identity and citizenship, and made waves for issues of migration - many of which we still deal with today.

Scholars often refer to the rise of Mexican migration as a push and pull factor. Lack of jobs and economic stability in Mexico push people out, whereas the growth of employment opportunities and the promise of economic prosperity pull people to the United States. (Menchaca, 2001, p. 281). A prime example is the Bracero Program, which encouraged high

migration from Mexican workers to fill the shortage of labor brought on by World War II.

Gonzales (1999) explains,

The need for campesinos in the Southwest increased not only because of the growth of the agrarian sector, but also because traditional sources of farm labor were abandoning the countryside for the cities during and after the war. Industrial work, more secure and better paying, was an irresistible magnet for many people living in rural poverty. The expansion of the industrial sector in California, in particular, was so vast that even racial and ethnic minorities found the opening of economic opportunities. (p. 171).

The Bracero Program was just one of the many enticing opportunities created by the U.S. government to bring working class hands that would add to the economy. In the Bay Area, it was canneries and agricultural work that called for immigrant work. Bacon (as cited in Negrete-Gonzales, 2020) explains the growing economy and labor demands in Silicon Valley specifically, “The Santa Clara Valley was the fruit processing capital of the world, owing to the labor of thousands of immigrant workers ... thirty eight canneries ... employed up to 30,000 people” (p.xxiv). Negrete Gonzales (2020) adds that, “from 1948 to the 1970’s, Mexican Americans were the largest ethnic group of cannery workers” (p. xxv). Much like the Bracero Program, canneries and agricultural work called for immigrant hands because it was cheap labor. Thus, pulling in more migrant workers who were in search of job opportunities and better living wages and living conditions for their families back home.

More recent scholarship challenges the dominant migration narrative as a push and pull factor and points to the complexity of migration and movements between borders. Venter (2021), explains that today the push-and-pull factors are much more complicated adding that push

factors are “what drive people to leave their homes including famine, poverty, low wages, unemployment, overpopulation, high taxes, discrimination, religious persecution, civil war, violence and crime, forced family military service [and] social immobility (p. 1377). And that pull factors are “high wages, employment, property rights, personal freedom, economic freedom, law and order, peace, religious freedom, educational opportunity, social mobility, low taxes [and] family reunion” (p. 1377).

Human rights scholars, for example point to this movement or ‘peoples in movement’ as an act of forced migration:

Our emphasis here is on the convergent causes of processes of forced migration and displacement (including the impact of neoliberal policies, free trade, and other forms of state violence and state criminality; the securitization, militarization, and externalization of migration policies and borders; and environmental devastation and climate change), on a global scale, and their regional resonances in the Latin American context. (Pérez Bustillo, & Hernández Mares, 2016, p. 5)

In this way, migration is not just an economic process. Migration is a human right and immigrants and people on the move should be protected. And while history has demonstrated that the government and our society is not always welcoming of immigrants, scholars define the ways that social capital is built among immigrant communities. Asad and Garip (2019), for example, study how an established history of migration in a community influences people's decisions to migrate. In this way, migration is not only an economical and political process but a social one too. Ultimately, it is community networks that not only influence their decision to

come to a new country, but allows them to survive and thrive, creating a *home* away from home.

We see this social capital from the Bracero Program:

Between 1942 and 1965 hundreds of thousands of braceros were able to familiarize themselves with U.S. employment practices, become comfortable with U.S. job routines, master American ways of life, and learn English. As a result of this new knowledge- this new human capital-[in return] created significant social capital in hundreds of Mexican communities. Each time a bracero departed, social capital was created among his circle of friends and relatives, and that social capital in turn reduced the costs and risks of their own international movement and increased their access to U.S. employment. (Massey et al, 2003. p. 42).

A key takeaway from the Bracero Program is how the migration experience not only creates new opportunities but makes way for new knowledge and capital to form. In their movements and search for prosperity, Mexican migrants make spaces for others to thrive as they navigate their changing worlds. While my immediate family did not take advantage of the Bracero Program, it was a cousin of a cousin who left our *pueblo* to work in the United States which then led my grandfather and later my father to do the same. This second cousin helped establish a network and a community for my grandfather and my father in the United States. Eventually, my grandfather sent for my uncles to join him. Then my grandmother and my aunts.

Reflecting on my story and the migration experience, I think about the principle of *coraje* and embracing changing worlds. Specifically, learning to navigate the in-between space. I came across the significance of building home. My migration story, like many others alike, is about finding community and building home. My *coraje* stems from this need to find *mi Aztlan*.

Anzaldúa (1987) defines Aztlan as the other Mexico, a mythical homeland, “the Southwest, Aztlan, land of the herons, land of whiteness, the Edenic place of origin of the Azteca” (p. 26).

Aztlan has become the symbol of home for many Chicanos, a return to the land once owned by the original Mexicans, los indios, los aztecas. Much more, Aztlan comes with a political and historical connotation. As Anzaldúa (1987) writes, “This land was Mexican once, was Indian always and is. And will be again” (p. 25). Aztlan reminds us of what was taken and ignored by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo- the creation of borders, “una herida abierta” an open wound. In their return to Aztlan, Chicanos recognize the history and struggle of the people to preserve their land. In such a way, Aztlan has become that symbol of resistance, identity and belonging in a country that continually discriminates, ignores, and rips you of your culture and history. Aztlan is that home that we crave.

For me, it was the constant movement and living between borders that ingrained the anger and fury I had for the deep need to belong. Throughout this instability, education, learning, and school was my Aztlan. School became the constant stability that I craved. Whether I was in Mexico or the United States, school gave me a network and community- a space to learn and be challenged. A space where I met friends and teachers that would care for me. School is where I developed my strength and confidence. Moreover, school became the site where I further discovered my identity and where I learned what it means to be *Americana, Mexicana, and Chicana*. My coraje allowed me to value relationships and community because this is where I have found the depths of belonging. Most of all, I value my culture, my history and my roots. This is where I learned about home and where I found mi Aztlan.

Looking back on this experience, I now believe to be true, the opportunity to have been schooled in Mexico gave me insights into Mexican history, culture, and traditions. Whereas, the United States has a history of stripping one's cultural history, knowledge, and family values. For example, after the Mexican Revolution, which brought forth a rise of Mexican migration, we also began to see a wave of Americanization programs. In an essay on the acculturation of Mexican American Women in the 1920's and 1930's, Ruiz (1990) highlights the experiences of women in educational and employment programs that sought to introduce Mexican and immigrant women to the culture and ways of being in U.S. society. In doing so, these programs forced the removal of their Mexican culture from their language, their clothing, holidays and traditional practices, and even food.

However, Ruiz (1990) also acknowledges the many ways parents resisted these Americanization programs, "Mexican immigrants retain their cultural traditions, and parents developed strategies to counteract the alarming acculturation of their young. Required to speak only English at school, Mexican youngsters were then instructed to speak only Spanish at home" (pp. 267-268). In this example, the parents ensure their children maintain their cultural heritage through the Spanish language. Ruiz (1990) also brings to light the ways parents ensured their children maintained a transnational experience in the home, through celebrating Mexican holidays, visiting their homeland, and taking part in cultural organizations and churches. For me, it was the opportunity to return to Michoacan- fueled by my family's desire that I not forget my Spanish language- and being schooled in Mexico, that allowed me to maintain strong ties to my roots. And for this, I am forever grateful.

Since it is not easy to travel frequently between borders, as an adult, I continued to seek a community that would bring me as close to mi Aztlan as possible. For the past eight years, mi Aztlan has been the place where my research, scholarship, and advocacy intertwined, where I reside in the Bay Area. This Aztlan, rooted in coraje, is the inspiration for this dissertation. My hope is to cast a spotlight on this community and uplift the legacy of advocacy and contributions of the people, who like me, call it home.

Background and Need

Known for its climate best award, Redwood City, California is 19 miles south from San Francisco and 19 miles south from San Jose. South of downtown, is the unincorporated area of Redwood City, North Fair Oaks (NFO), where over 70% Latinos reside. The majority of the residents come from the southern state of Michoacán, Mexico. Thus, residents, like myself, often refer to the North Fair Oaks as Little Mexico, Little Mex, or Little Michoacán, my personal favorite. With Redwood City being in the center of the top technology companies such as Facebook, Box, and Google (Clark, 2018). Little Michoacán is experiencing an influx of high rents and economic displacement. Urban Habitat (2021) has worked with the San Mateo Anti-Displacement, since 2014. In their work, they point out that San Mateo County is one of the most expensive housing markets in the nation and continues to experience inequality linked to this growth in technology and service economies. And while rent continues to increase, incomes decline, leading low-income households to spend more of their income on rent (Urban Habitat, 2021).

Long term residents have begun taking action, through peaceful demonstrations and community dialogues. Their hope is to bring awareness to housing justice, call an end to

evictions, and preserve the culture and community of Little Michoacán. Through their advocacy, the residents of Little Michoacán are being critical as they refuse to see their community get wiped out by gentrification. In a community meeting organized by the county in the Spring of 2016, they brought together a panel to address gentrification. The room was packed. The panelists: a member of the board of supervisors, a city council member, and a professor from Stanford didn't know what was coming. Once residents were given the opportunity to share concerns, many brought forth issues of transportation, traffic, parking, overcrowdedness and unsafe living conditions. The majority of concerns focused on tenant issues and the increase of rent. One stated, "it is unjust for someone who paid \$1000 in rent a month to now have to pay \$1800 with only a month's notice. Salary isn't going up. This is not only unjust, it should be illegal!" (Avendano, personal communication, May 4, 2016). The median rent in Redwood City is \$1,956 per month (Get Healthy San Mateo County, 2021). Yet the median income of low-income residents continues to fall under \$1,700 a month, making a market-rate apartment out of reach.

With the rise of advocacy and mobilization against gentrification comes a major need to document the history of this cultural community. Several community members, spearheaded by youth, are resisting and taking action through demonstrations, walkouts, and advocacy. As a community member and adult mentor in this social movement, I find myself inspired by the youth voices. As Sandra, the young Salvadoreña, noted following her participation in county board of supervisors meeting, "Despite there being members of power, it is very important to voice our opinions and let them know what the youth can do for the future, you have to use your voice to build a foundation for change" (personal communication, May, 2016) It is this very foundation that Sandra speaks on that led me to lay the beginnings of Little Michoacán. Surely

there were previous voices in North Fair Oaks that worked hard and fought for the community and shaped it to be Little Michoacán. These voices laid the foundation for youth like Sandra to feel empowered to speak out and fight for their community.

Moreover, as a proud Salvadoreña, Sandra attests to the diversity of Latinx in a community like Little Michoacan, where Salvadoreans, Guatemalans, and other Latin American *patriotas* find home and continue to contribute to the richness and history of North Fair Oaks. This also speaks to the social capital that immigrants often create in communities of color that helps them thrive and succeed in a new country.

My husband, an immigrant from El Salvador and I moved to Little Michoacán nine years ago with the opportunity for him to lead the Siena Youth Center, a local community center in the North Fair Oaks. Siena offers academic, enrichment and sports programming to local youth and their families. Both my husband and I are actively involved in the North Fair Oaks through the community council, public art workgroups, and county initiatives. Through this community involvement, I met Linda Lopez. Linda was chairwoman of the North Fair Oaks community council at that time and continues to participate in several community efforts today. Through my *platicas* with Linda, I learned about her involvement dating back to her years at the local high school in the late 1960's. To this day, Linda continues her efforts in ensuring the voice of the people are heard. It is Linda's story that sparked my desire to unpack the knowledge of the history of Latinx in North Fair Oaks. Most importantly, to learn from and document the contributions of Latinx in North Fair Oaks.

Talking to Linda inspired me to focus on the experiences of women in particular, because as the literature explains, it is women who were often at the forefront of many social movements.

However, their contributions were often not highlighted as they should have. As Blackwell (2011) explains, “Histories of the Chicano and feminist movements have failed to fully record the vital forms of Chicana political consciousness and organizing that existed in this period” (p. 3). It is important to document and recover the history and contributions of Chicanas in the movement and beyond in order to put forth new knowledge and transform the way we understand Chicano history and the knowledge about Chicanas. While my work could have focused on the contributions of Latinx in the North Fair Oaks, I specifically chose to focus on the voices of the women because not only is it much needed, but ultimately it can contribute to the larger narratives of the history of Chicanas and social movements. Of course, my connection to Linda, a Chicana, and my own identity as a first-generation Chicana also profoundly influenced my decision to focus on the mujeres of North Fair Oaks.

The issue of gentrification and displacement in communities of color is nothing new, in fact it has a long history. Scholars and organizers often compare it to colonization (and even call it a form of settler colonization) because it is an issue of land and power. For example, in her recent case study of Chicago, Gonzales (2021) explains the way those in power or politicians, often seek neighborhoods they view as ‘in need’ of redevelopment. Developers then are welcomed to the community to improve the conditions and create a new market of possibility’ or luxury for example, to those who can afford it. She explains:

Gentrification increases the inequality of power relationships and exacerbates social isolation. In a model where gentrification is conceived of as a growth, redevelopment is assumed to be ‘good’ for all parties involved, through increasing land values and the presence of a cleaner and safer environment. However, when a neighborhood gentrifies,

housing costs increase.... The existing lower-income residents are displaced. Such displacement impacts more than housing choice; it leads to the loss of social and cultural capital for existing low-income residents” (Gonzales, 2021, p.7).

Much like Chicago, in the Bay Area, much of the focus has been on larger cities like San Francisco and Oakland where communities that were once mostly Black and Latino are vanishing before our eyes. A local Bay Area organization fighting the issue, Causa Justa:Just Cause (2018) defines gentrification as,

a profit-driven racial and class reconfiguration of urban, working-class and communities of color that have suffered from a history of disinvestment and abandonment. The process is characterized by declines in the number of low-income people of color in neighborhoods that begin to cater to higher-income workers willing to pay higher rents. (p. 18)

This definition clearly lays the connection of power with profit. Gentrification is a business serving those behind the revitalization of the community and those who can afford to pay the higher rents. It is driven by economic interest. Ultimately, it is low-income people and people of color that end up suffering. For example, a study led by Causa Justa:Just Cause and Place Matters found that, "gentrification has serious impacts on the health and well-being of longtime residents of gentrifying neighborhoods, individuals, and families displaced, and eventually, in our broader society" (Levitt, 2015, p. 88). The consequences of gentrification often lead to displacement which affects longtime residents who have to relocate and leave their communities. Often this comes with financial burdens, stress, and anxiety, because when

residents are displaced they often lose previously established networks, including access to social services, schools and affordable housing.

Moreover, San Francisco's Mission District serves as a prime example of grassroots organizing against gentrification and displacement. The work of the Mission's residents and community leaders presents a key case study for a community like North Fair Oaks that is experiencing early signs of gentrification. Mission residents organized against the giant tech corporations, real estate developers and local government who continually force displacement of the Mission District's long-time residents. A key takeaway from the Mission's anti-gentrification movement is the community's collective identity. The movement holds its power from the *Cultura* and people's love for *La Mission*, which is their collective identity. Therefore, further exploration of the literature around gentrification, displacement, and social action in *La Mission* is discussed in the literature review section of this study in Chapter II.

Much of the research on gentrification has focused on larger cities and the after-effect or impact of displacement on these communities. However, it is also important to look at smaller communities that are in the early stages of gentrification in order to capture the experiences and voices of the people that live there. Even more, the focus on larger urban areas often misses the impact gentrification has on surrounding cities or suburbs. And while gentrification impacts all communities, marginalized communities are impacted at a higher rate. Often it is low-income, immigrants, and people of color that have to move farther and farther away. In this way, gentrification and displacement is about racialized disposition. It is absolutely an issue of race because when communities of color are neglected and painted negatively, the people are often the ones to blame for- instead of government neglect. In the process, the people of the

community are too treated as inferior, insufficient and ignorant, instead of recognizing their contributions and efforts in building up their communities.

Furthermore, as previously stated literature demonstrates women were often at the front and center of community organizing, yet their contributions and experiences were often omitted from history. Espinoza, Cotera, and Blackwell (2018) in their book, *Chicana Movidas* center Chicana voices because, “Chicanas were on the front lines of forging these new cultures of rebellion. Women played significant roles in the major mobilizations and organizations that coalesced into what is now understood historiographically as the Chicano movement era” (p.1). Current literature sheds light on the contributions and experiences of Chicanas in the movement. These stories and testimonios have brought forth new ways of thinking, not only in organizing, but rather through their organizing that Chicanas,

enacted a new kind of politica (politics) at the intersection of race, class, gender, and sexuality, they developed innovative concepts, tactics, and methodologies that in turn generated new theories, art forms, organizational spaces, and strategies of alliance.
(Espinoza et al., 2018)

One of these theories and methodologies is Chicana feminism; which guides this study that seeks to uplift the voices of Chicanas in community history. It is, therefore, important to trace the history of Chicana organizing through an analysis of the literature, which is explored later in Chapter II.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to capture the ongoing community organizing, led primarily by Chicanas and young people, against gentrification in their hometown of North Fair

Oaks. Through *muxersita portraiture*, a critical qualitative methodology, with young people as co-researchers, this study captured the collective narrative of the community of North Fair Oaks through *platicas*, *encuentros*, and *acción*. In the process, the hope is that this collective narrative will disrupt the negative impact of gentrification by providing a historical context of the contributions of Latinx in North Fair Oaks. Central to this project were the voices and contributions of the women of North Fair Oaks. As Perez (1999) states, I too am “concerned with taking the ‘his’ out of the ‘story’, the ‘story that often becomes the universalist narrative in which women’s experience is negated” (p. xiv). The ultimate goal of this research was to disrupt the ‘his’ in history and emphasize the ‘her’ in community stories.

Moreover, this research brought together the narratives and experiences of young people and elders to form a common story of struggle against the rapid gentrification and economic displacement in the community of North Fair Oaks. It was my hope that through this research, young people would learn valuable stories from their elders, while elders would also learn new ways of being from the next generation. Whereby, the legacy of community activism, intergenerational learning and new knowledge production can serve as a critical pedagogical tool for communities that also face issues of gentrification.

Research Questions

The guiding methodology for this study was *muxersita portraiture*, a qualitative research methodology created through an alliance between portraiture and [Chicana Feminist Theory] and based on the realities and lived experiences of Chicanas. The goal of *muxerista portraiture* is to paint portraits that are committed to social justice

and to challenging all forms of subordination through a Chicana feminist inquiry. (Flores, 2017, p. 75)

While *muxerista* portraiture served as the main methodology for this study. I sought to extend this tool to include young people as co-researchers whereby,

young people learn through research about complex power-relations, histories of struggle, and consequences of oppression. They begin to re-vision and denaturalize the realities of their social worlds and then undertake forms of collective challenge based on the knowledge garnered through their critical inquiries. (Camarrota & Fine, 2008, p. 1)

In order to allow young people to question, re-imagine new realities, and paint portraits of Chicanas, aspects of the research collection, including participant interview questions were co-created and finalized by the youth. These will be introduced in Chapter III. In order to provide a framing for the youth, there were guiding research questions in this study which include:

1. How do we understand Little Michoacan as a community that is built through the advocacy of Chicana/Latinas?
2. How do the residents of Little Michoacan navigate *coraje* in their community?
3. What is illuminated through an intergenerational research encuentro in which youth capture the narratives of mujer elders?

Theoretical Framework

This research project is guided by what Aurora Levins Morales (2001) refers to as a homemade theory. She explains,

My thinking grew directly out of listening to my own discomforts, finding who validated them, and in the exchanging of stories about common experiences, finding patterns, systems, explanations of how and why things happened. This is the central process of consciousness raising, of collective *testimonio*. This is how homemade theory happens. (p. 28)

Theory is the everyday act of asking questions. Most importantly, as Levin Morales states, theory is influenced by our own experiences and our own upbringing. In reflecting on my own upbringing, I recognize the many ways that coraje was the lens through which I understood the world around me. My migration story fueled by the principle of coraje led to the creation of my homemade theory, which I refer to as critical coraje.

Inevitably, my identity has been tremendously shaped by my experiences finding *home*, *mi Aztlan*. In *Theory as Liberatory Practice*, bell hooks (1991) affirms we have been theorizing since childhood. She says that in her search of home, she “found a place of sanctuary in ‘theorizing’, making sense of what was happening. I found a place where I could imagine possible futures, a place where life could be lived differently” (p. 2). My own journey finding *home*, understanding my identity, and life experiences is explained through the idea of critical coraje. As previously explained, the word coraje translates to both courage and fury. It is a powerful word that I seek to reclaim through critical coraje. Because it was once placed on me through a negative connotation “*No seas corajuda*.” In fact, critical coraje exclaims, let’s be *corajudos*! Let’s be aware of our realities, get angry at the world but also create positive change, let’s be courageous!

With coraje comes a desire for change. Critical social theorist, Zeus Leonardo explains this type of desire through dreaming. Leonardo (2009) states, “dreaming spurs people to act, if by dreaming we mean sincere search for alternatives and not the evasion of reality” (p. 22). To be critical is to dream and hope, “a refusal to surrender to despair” (p. 22). Critical coraje then is not just about being courageous, but also about being critical of our surroundings, to ask questions, seek resources and dream with purpose.

Therefore, the guiding theoretical framework for this research is critical coraje. Critical coraje encourages community hope in times of land and space contestation. This framework aims to transform the world through herstory education, acknowledgment of the contributions of oppressed people, and the fostering of advocacy, for the preservation of home. Consequently, the underlying bodies of work that inform this framework are Chicana Feminist Epistemology, Borderlands/Transnational theory, and Critical Consciousness. Not only have these frameworks shaped my own thinking and how I see the world around me, most significantly they provided the language and discourse to my experiences as a first-generation Xicana scholar-activist. Gloria Anzaldúa encourages the development of nueva teoria, new theory that adds, extends, and recreates new meaning, she says

Necesitamos teorías that will rewrite history using race, class, gender, and ethnicity as categories of analysis, theories that cross borders that blur boundaries—new kinds of theories with new theorizing methods. In our mestizaje theories we create new categories for those left out or pushed out of existing ones. (*Making Face, Making Soul*, xxv-xxvi).

Below, I discuss the ways Chicana feminist epistemology, borderlands/transnational theory and critical consciousness inform critical coraje, support this research study, and together create *nueva teoria*.

Chicana Feminist Epistemology

Patricia Sanchez (2009) says,

In the same way that other women of color researchers place great value on their cultural and community knowledge, I find that my own epistemology reflects my knowledge as a Latina, my ways of knowing, and my choice of methodology in capturing this reality.(p. 93)

While Chicana feminism emerged from the Chicano movement when Chicanas urged the need to place women's experiences at the front-line, Chicana feminism also evolved from foundational feminist theories that moved beyond centralizing just gender and exploitation of women (Bleam 1992, Garcia 1989). Reading feminist theories for the first time as an undergraduate Ethnic Studies major, my world shifted. I felt empowered as a woman. However, it was reading the works of Alma M. Garcia, Gloria E. Anzaldua, Emma Perez, Mayelie Blackwell, Dolores Delgado Bernal, Cherrie Moraga and other foundational Chicana feminist scholars that gave my experience as a brown mujer voice and visibility in the academy. Chicana feminist theories questioned what feminism looked like for Chicana/Latinas and continues to transform, expand, and create new meaning.

Chicana feminist theory gave space to Chicana/Latinas within the broader field of feminist studies. Feminist studies began as a direct response to the women's liberation movement which focused on seeking equality for all women, but ultimately on the needs of middle-class

white women. By focusing on issues of voting rights and equal pay, the women's movement was viewed as a hegemonic white women's movement- and Chicana/Latinas needs and concerns were not recognized. However, even within Chicanas in the movement, the focus was often on racial identity, before gender identity. For example, the *Chicana primero* (Longeaux y Vasquez, 1971) ideology came from the call to Chicana's to fight for their *raza* first- before anything else. It was Chicana activist Enriqueta Longeaux y Vasquez who first claimed she was Chicana primero! But while Longeaux y Vasquez was trying to reclaim her racial identity and support of the *Raza* movement, she neglected her identity as a *mujer*.

U.S. Third World Feminists carved a space where Chicanas can be both for racial and gender equity. Alma. M Garcia (1989) explains,

Like other women of color, Chicana feminists must address issues that specifically affect them as women of color. In addition, Chicana feminists must address those issues that have particular impact on Chicano communities, such as poverty, limited opportunities for higher education, high school dropouts, health care, bilingual education, immigration reform, prison reform, welfare, and most recently, United States policies in Central America. (p. 233)

U.S. Third World Feminist and Women of Color feminism gave Chicana feminists the space to do so. Chicana feminism was not a single-issue movement.

The contributions of Chicana feminist theorists, like Gloria Anzaldua, Cherrie Moraga, and Aida Hurtado, in the U.S. Third World Feminist movement was an attempt at distinguishing their experiences as women of color from the experiences of white western feminisms. Mohanty (2003) explains that part of the U.S. Third World Feminist agenda is to encourage "the rewriting

of history based on the specific locations and histories of struggle of people of color and postcolonial peoples, and on the day-to-day strategies of survival utilized by such peoples”(p.52). This agenda has led Chicana feminists to theorize their own experiences in the academy. The same way that Anzaldua calls for Nueva Teoria, Chicana feminist theory carved a space for Chicana/Latinas to create their own theories, re-write history and ensure their voices where at the table.

Ana Castillo (1994) reclaims el feminismo from beyond the academy and names it Xicanisma- where feminism can then live in “our work place, social gatherings, kitchens, bathrooms, and society in general” (p.11). In this way, Xicana feminist theory lives within us, it is part of our daily life. Furthermore, she explains the X in replacement of Ch, as a way to pay homage to the indigenous roots of the Chicana identity, “It is our task as Xicanistas, to not only reclaim our indigenismo-but also to reinsert the forsaken feminine into our consciousness” (p.12). In this same way, Chicana feminist thought recognizes how our culture and unique positionality influences our way of being.

Like Xicanisma, Villenas, Godinez, Delgado Bernal and Elenes (2006) bridge Chicana feminist theory to everyday pedagogy. They argue one’s ‘living theories’ are meaningful sites of knowledge production:

Reenvisioning the sites of pedagogy to include women’s brown bodies and their agency articulated on the church steps, the university cafeteria, and in the intimate spaces where mujer-to-mujer conversations are whispered...rooted in the diverse and everyday living of Chicana/Latinas as members of families, communities, and a global society (p. 3).

In a similar way that Xicanisma lives within us, Villenas et al (2006) call for Chicanas to theorize their everyday lives to make meaning and knowledge of our daily interactions as mujeres. Delgado-Bernal (2016) calls it cultural intuition, specifically when it comes to research, drawing on one's cultural intuition as a methodology. She states, "I used my experiential knowledge as a first-generation college student, my work experience as an elementary school teacher and community organizer, my cultural history and memory, and Chicana feminist writings to guide my methodology" (Delgado Bernal, 2020, p. 155).

Cindy Cruz (2006) takes the idea of 'living theories' one step further by recognizing how our bodies carry knowledge within. She says, "Situating knowledge in the brown body begins the validation of the narratives of survival, transformation, and emancipation of our respective communities, reclaiming histories and identities. And in these ways, we embody our theory" (p. 73). Cruz (2006) reclaims the strength and value in the brown body, as women of color, Chicanas carry a multitude of experiences, often painful but also courageous and powerful, that bring with them truth. Our brown bodies are too carriers of knowledge and truth.

In a similar way, the Chicana M[other]work Collective (CMC) is a beautiful collection of Chicana Mother-Scholars theorizing their experiences as Chicana mothers in academia and beyond, through a Chicana feminist framework. "Through Chicana M[other]work, we provide a framework for collective resistance that makes our various forms of feminized labor visible and promotes collective action, holistic healing, and social justice for Mother-Scholars and Activists of Color, our children, and our communities" (p. 4). CMC includes motherhood as part of the Chicana feminist agenda and, in doing so, recalls CFT as a space that allows Chicanas to reclaim their experiences as meaningful knowledge.

Chicana feminist theory continues to offer an interdisciplinary approach to document the Chicana experience holistically.

Transnationalism and Borderlands Theory

Living between borders, the theory of transnationalism speaks to the idea of embracing multiple cultures and identities. Patricia Sanchez (2004) explains,

Transnationalism embodies various systems or relationships that span two or more nations, including sustained and meaningful flows of people, money, labor, goods, information, advice, care, and love; in addition, systems of power (i.e. patriarchy, Westernism) can be created or reinforced in this process. (p. 8)

The system of transnationalism allows for a flow - a migration, if you will, and in this process, to “have the ability and desire to preserve attachments to their countries of origin in economic, political, religious, or familial terms while still becoming members of another nation-state” (Sanchez, 2004, p. 9).

In her journey to consciousness as a woman of color and ‘outsider’ in society, Maria Lugones (2003) refers to the idea of “world”-traveling. She says that as cross-cultural and cross-racial women we live in different worlds, “One can travel between these ‘worlds’ and one can inhabit more than one of these worlds’ at the same time. It seems to me that inhabiting more than one ‘world’ at the same time and traveling between ‘worlds’ is part and parcel of our experience and our situation” (Lugones, 2003, p.78). She further adds to the idea of learning to love each other by traveling into each other's worlds.

Gloria Anzaldúa’s (1986) best explains the idea of borderlands in her poem, “To Live in the Borderlands Means You”:

To live in the Borderlands means knowing
 That the india in you,
 betrayed for 500 Years is no longer speaking to you,
 That mexicanas call you rajetas,
 That denying the Anglo inside you
 Is as bad as having denied the Indian or Black;
 Cuando vives en la frontera
 People walk through you, the wind steals your voice,
 You are a burra, buey, scapegoat,
 Forerunner of a new race,
 Half and half-both woman and man, neither-
 A new gender;
 To live in the Borderlands means to
 Put chile in the borscht,
 Eat whole wheat tortillas,
 Speak Tex-Mex with a Brooklyn accent;
 Be stopped by la migra at the border check-points. (pp. 194-195)

In her poem, Anzaldúa (1986) speaks to the contradictions and tensions that live in the borders, both physical and symbolic. Michelle Tellez (2005) reflects on her experience living between borders:

learning to weave in and out of the racial boundaries and tensions in my life is a complex, painful experience. As a border dweller living between Tijuana and San Diego, I reconcile reality on a daily basis. My political, personal and professional activities require that I frequently cross the border, an almost symbolic divide as fluid a process as switching from English to Spanish, or using pesos over dollars or vice versa. (p. 64)

Elenes (2011) speaks to transnationalism by analyzing how Chicana/o popular culture has transformed the idea of borders. She finds that,

the Mexico-U.S. border and the borderland speak of the condition of in-betweenness of people of Mexican descent. [Borderlands theory] is capable of understanding the differences among social groups in two ways: One, recognizing the heterogeneity of people in the U.S., and two, by not letting these differences create rights among many of these groups” (p.18).

She adds that, “Borderland theories permits us to look at all the different elements that are part of educational settings, whether we are talking about formal or informal settings

(Elenes, 2011, p. 215).

Sarah De Los Santos Upton (2019) adds a layer to border theory by localizing activism as part of the borderlands identity. She calls it *nepantla* activism, honoring Anzaldúa’s concept of the “in between space”. Through coalition building, *nepantla* activists or *nepantleras* work together to mobilize at the border whether it is to call attention to family separation, unjust caging of children in detention centers, or work to change laws and policies affecting migrants. Upton (2019) explains, “extending [*nepantleras*] work, scholars and activists must also complicate our understanding of how people resist these symbolic and material conditions by theorizing from the modes of resistance available to those on the ground. Identities and borders are thus important sites of resistance” (p. 138).

Critical Consciousness

Critical consciousness is about recognizing the role of colonization, as a structure and not a single event, in producing and reproducing the oppressive systems in place: white supremacy,

heteropatriarchy, capitalism, etc. One way of understanding the legacy of colonization is by looking at history. The history of Chicana/os reveals a history of oppressions in multiple ways. It is a history of invasion, enslavement, servitude, removal of culture and also of resistance. Feminist scholar Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003) explains the history of colonization more broadly: “colonization almost invariably implies a relation of structural domination and a suppression- often violent-of the heterogeneity of the subject(s) in question” (p.18). This violent movement undoubtedly leaves a scar, an eternal mark on the colonized people. As colonized people, Chicana/os ultimately struggle with the effects of oppression carried on by the history of colonization. It is often a struggle that is felt through generations.

Tuhiwai (1999) explains critical consciousness is the need to recognize, acknowledge, and learn one's history; although painful, there is strength and healing. She states, “coming to know the past has been part of the critical pedagogy of decolonization [and] about reconciling and reprioritizing what is really important about the past with what is important about the present” (p.34). Even though the history of colonization is negative, in order to start healing and arriving at a critical consciousness, one must learn from the past, respect our history, and bring the history that matters to our present. This is the start of decolonial mentality.

Mirande and Enriquez (1979) point out two types of colonialism that explains the Chicano experience: ‘classic’ colonialism and internal colonialism. As an oppressed group, the Chicanos were colonized in the ‘classic’ way through the Spanish conquest where, “Chicanos became a colonized or conquered people, rendered politically and economically powerless and having a foreign culture and language imposed by force”(Mirande & Enriquez, 1979, p.8). While and in the aftermath of the Mexican American war, Chicanas faced internal colonialism where,

“Chicanas are powerless, lacking control over critical social institutions which have a direct impact on them” (Mirande & Enriquez, 1979, p.9). It is important to understand these types of colonization that add to both Mohanty’s and Tuhiwai’s concepts because it helps us to understand the idea behind the process of critical consciousness and its uniqueness to the Chicana/o experience.

Emma Perez (1999) explains the importance of rewriting history through what she calls a decolonial imaginary, “a rupturing space, the alternative to that which is written in history... the decolonial imaginary is that time lag between the colonial and postcolonial, that interstitial space where differential political and social dilemmas are negotiated” (p.6). Perez (1999) argues that in order to get a better account of the history of Chicanas, we need to look to the past to understand the present and have the determination and creativity to reimagine a future where women's voices are included. She says, “the decolonial imaginary is enacted as hope, as love, transcending all that has come before, all that has been inherited only to damage daughters and sons who have fallen heir to a history of conquest, of colonization, of hatred between brown and white” (p.126). In this way, critical consciousness offers a perspective of hope- not forgetting the history of colonization- but rather to learn from it and enact a desire for change.

Gloria Anzaldúa’s seminal work in *Borderlands/La Frontera*, offers the new *mestiza* consciousness, a hybrid Chicana identity that is developed over time from understanding the reality and world around us (Perez-Huber, 2017). Anzaldúa explains the process of *mestiza* consciousness, “The work takes place underground-subconsciously. It is work that souls perform- and though it is a source of intense pain, its energy comes from continual creative motion that keeps breaking down the unitary aspect of each new paradigm” (G. Anzaldua, 1987,

p. 101,102). Much like critical consciousness, gaining a *mestiza* consciousness is painful and goes through an inner transformative experience. Anzaldúa offers the new mestiza to Chicana/Latinas who are in constant negotiation of their reality as oppressed members. She says that, Chicana/Latinas already have this decolonial mentality; if we look at how we are living between races, nations, languages, genders, sexualities and cultures. The *mestiza* consciousness lives within us.

The idea of critical consciousness is not to recreate colonization or perpetuate oppressive forces. Instead, it should be seen as an alternative way to end oppression and historical violence, as explained by Audre Lorde (as cited in Hanna et al., 2016), “It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may temporarily beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change” (p. 238). Lorde is hoping to define and build a world in which all can flourish, despite our backgrounds and differences. Critical consciousness is not about repeating history; doing so would not break the cycle of oppression. Rather, it is about learning from history and creating a new one that values and respects all.

Overall, the frameworks of Chicana feminist theory, borderlands/transnational theory, and critical consciousness bring forth the idea of finding and owning one’s own voice and experience; which is not always easy. Therefore, critical coraje explains the courage, anger, and strength that is required to embrace one's own unique lived experience, so that you can take action as needed. The framework of critical coraje is crucial to this research because not only is it the lens by which I understand the world around me, but also guided by the idea of understanding and finding *home*. This research is about community narratives, activism, and the

development and preservation of home. Critical coraje can explain the many ways community members engage in social activism for the preservation of their home.

Significance of the Study

This research study is timely as the community of North Fair Oaks faces gentrification. Community members are resisting the drastic changes by organizing and speaking out. The community is already seeing their neighbors being displaced and new people moving in. These new neighbors often have no background about this community and no knowledge about the history of Little Michoacan. They might just know that it is the ‘up and coming’ neighborhood. While change can be good and bring economic prosperity to the small business owners, not at the cost of the people who have shaped Little Michoacan to be what it is. Why build new luxury homes, build parks and redesign the roads, if current residents will not be able to afford them or enjoy the new parks, trees and paved roads? With these new changes that do not benefit the community, it is important to cast a light on the story and contributions of Latinos in Little Michoacan. By focusing on gentrification, community history, activism, and social movements, this study contributes to the larger field of Chicana/o studies, Women studies, History, and Education. Espinoza, et al. (2018) describe the significance of mapping Chicana activism and the need for new books, resources, and research to add to the scholarship of Chicana history. She states “New dissertations that are being written by our students- not only fill the chasm but also point a way forward. They offer ‘bread crumbs’ of information that others can build on, just like the work of [previous Chicana Historians] has done for us” (Espinoza, et al., 2018 p. 203). This research aims to be a bread crumb in the history of Chicana activism.

Educational Significance

In this study, youth as researchers learned about their community HERstory through the voices and narratives of Chicanas in their community. Through this process, young people learn about their own identity, activism and contributions as members of North Fair Oaks. Whereby, the legacy of community activism, intergenerational learning and new knowledge production can serve as a critical pedagogical tool for communities that also face gentrification and economic displacement. This study sought to add to the lack of or chasms in the historical documentation of Chicana activism, by offering additional methodologies and pedagogical tools to the growing literature on youth as researchers and spark the urgency of community- led social movements against structural and institutional neglect caused by gentrification.

Definition of Terms

For this study, the usage of terms is defined as:

1. Chicana/Latina: Women of Mexican descent living in the United States, whether she refers to herself as Mexican, Mexican-American, Latina, Hispana, Hispanic, and/or Latinx.
2. Critical Coraje: A homemade theoretical framework aimed to transform the world through herstory education, acknowledgement of the contributions of oppressed people and the fostering of advocacy, for the preservation of home.
3. Transnationalism: The idea of being connected to multiple cultures and nations, rather than a single nation-state.
4. Critical consciousness: The process or idea of coming to terms with one's realization of their oppression, and colonized mentality.

5. Displacement: the forced migration of low-income people and people of color from their existing homes and neighborhoods due to social, economic, or environmental conditions that make their neighborhoods uninhabitable or unaffordable.
6. Gentrification: a profit-driven racial and class reconfiguration of urban, working-class and communities of color that have suffered from a history of disinvestment and abandonment
7. HeartWork: Serving others, selflessly, guided by love for community, *con corazon*.
8. Liberatory Spirit: The courage and the fire inside of us that is awaiting to be free, seeking healing and liberation.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This research is guided by three primary bodies of literature: whiteness, gentrification and displacement, Chicana/Latinas in community organizing, and youth as co-researchers. In this chapter, I reviewed the literature from each of these areas in order to understand how they inform the purpose of this study, which was to capture the ongoing community organizing, led primarily by Chicana/Latinas and young people in order to preserve their home.

The first body of literature includes whiteness, gentrification, and displacement in communities of color. When we talk about gentrification and displacement we are talking about issues of land and place. Specifically, I am guided by the following questions:

- What is the role of land and place in making *home*?
- How are communities connected to the land?
- What makes a community unique?
- How are communities resisting or working with changes in land and place?
- How does land and place get disrupted by the processes of gentrification and displacement?

This issue of gentrification and displacement is relevant in this research because it is the main problem that drove me to this work in the first place. A missing piece in this body of literature is the focus of race, specifically the role of whiteness. Therefore, the first part of the literature review is dedicated to gentrification, land, and place through the lens of whiteness. As Causa Justa:Just Cause (2015) argues, we can have development without displacement. However, we

can't talk about displacement without talking about whiteness, because it is low-income people of color who are often impacted by gentrification.

The second body of literature that is important in this research is Chicana/Latinas in organizing. Specifically, the literature that addresses the role and history of Chicana/Latina women in social movements and community organizing. As Garcia (1997) explains,

Chicanas participated actively during this entire period of social protest and community mobilization. Their work within each of the strands of the movement undermined long-standing stereotypes of Mexican American women. (p. 3)

Chicana feminist ideology emerged from the Chicano movement in the late 1950's and therefore a historical account of Chicana feminism is reviewed through recent scholarship on the role of women and community organizing.

The third body of literature in this research was youth as co-researchers, specifically youth participatory action research as a guiding methodology. In this study, I worked alongside Latinx identified youth and youth of color; therefore, this section also introduces a brief review of the literature that highlights the role of youth activism through Chicano/a History. Often in the literature, these two are separate: Youth as co-researchers and Youth as Activists. This section aims to understand the role of youth as co-researchers of their own reality, from critical pedagogy, to youth participatory research and seeks to make a connection that by researching their communities, they are too activists.

Whiteness, Gentrification, and Displacement

When we talk about gentrification and displacement, we are exposing issues of land and place. It is an issue of colonialism, power, and occupation. Tuck and Yang (2012) explain the

concept of settler colonialism, “Settler colonialism is different from other forms of colonialism in that settlers come with the intention of making a new home on the land, a homemaking that insists on settler sovereignty over all things in their new domain. Land is what is most valuable, contested required” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 5). This concept is helpful in the context of gentrification-where we see settlers moving in with the intention of staying and changing the community to their benefit, with no regard to previous inhabitants.

Not all residents experience issues of gentrification in the same way; however, some common responses include the lack of trust of new residents. In his study of gentrification in New York City, Freeman (2006) reveals the importance of examining the phenomenon of gentrification from different perspectives. Through semi-structured interviews, Freeman finds that residents have three ways of understanding gentrification in their communities. One is that improvements to the communities often come from the affluent white residents who demand better goods and services. Residents articulate the need to voice one's complaints and work towards achieving what is best for the community. However, they tend to view this as something whites are more likely to do. Second, improvements in the community tend to happen naturally as more affluent whites move in. It is not that whites demand better services, but rather, businesses that respond to the market created by whites. Third, residents recognize how white privilege favors the needs and wants of white residents over the needs of long-term residents. Freeman’s (2006) study then reveals how "gentrification is then a process designed to benefit whites and certainly not long-term residents" (p. 105).

Gentrification and the ideology of whiteness go hand in hand. Whiteness is centered and intimately connected with the very foundations of this country and is, therefore, critical in the

study of land and place. A good entry point into the literature review for gentrification is by considering the ways whiteness creates the structural realities and conditions of communities of color. Specifically, it does this by considering how the ideologies of whiteness impact the lives of these communities that are often low-income, Black, Latino, Asian, or non-White. These are the communities that are forcefully displaced in the face of gentrification.

Understanding Whiteness

Critical whiteness studies is an extension of critical race studies. While critical race studies examines the impact of race and racial inequalities in society, whiteness studies centers the role of whiteness in this impact. In critical whiteness studies “whiteness becomes the center of critique and transformation. It represents the much-neglected anxiety around race that whiteness scholars, many of whom are white, are now beginning to recognize” (Leonardo, 2009). As a Chicana/Latina scholar and Ethnic Studies scholar, race is pivotal in how I understand the world around me. This study sought to analyze the experiences of Chicana/Latinas in a primarily Latino immigrant community. Therefore, the role of race and whiteness is absolutely imperative in this study. It is important to understand how whiteness as a concept and ideology bleeds through issues of land, space, and gentrification.

The study of whiteness unveils issues of power, privilege, and domination. Specifically, it identifies the structures in place that uphold white racial domination. Zeus Leonardo (2009) explains whiteness as more than just the privileges associated with being white. He argues it is important to look at the role of domination as a starting point in understanding racial privilege:

domination is a relation of power that subjects enter into and is forged in the historical process. It does not form out of random acts of hatred, although these are condemnable,

but rather out of a patterned and enduring treatment of social groups...it is secured through a series of actions, the ontological meaning of which is not always transparent to its subjects and objects. (Leonardo, 2009, p. 77)

Domination then gives power to certain subjects, creating exclusion, and it is society and patterns of history that maintain it this way. The founding fathers of the United States built this society with white racial domination as the guiding principle. In this case, it is whites who are the subject: everyone else is the object. Therefore, white racial domination has come to be part of our history and way of life; it is the norm and can be referred to as hegemony. The laws, ideas, and ways of being ensure that whiteness and white racial domination remains as the standard.

Whiteness as an Ideology

From the time we are born, we are conditioned into accepting whiteness as the model and not questioning this. And this is how ideologies work. In *What Does It Mean to be White?* Robin Di Angelo (2012) explains ideology as “the big ideas that are reinforced throughout society. Ideologies provide the frameworks through which we represent, interpret, understand, and make sense of social existence” (Di Angelo, 2012, pp. 51-52). Furthermore, she explains the power of ideologies in upholding white racial domination. She states “ideologies that work to obscure inequality are perhaps the most powerful forces of oppression because once we accept our positions within social hierarchies, they seem natural and difficult to question, even when we are disadvantaged by them” (Di Angelo, 2012, p.52). White racial domination persists as the norm.

Whiteness as Property

Moreover, Cheryl Harris (1993) explains whiteness as it relates to property, as a tangible object. She states,

white identity and whiteness were sources of privilege and protection; their absence meant being the object of property. Slavery as a system of property facilitated the merger of white identity and property. Because the system of slavery was contingent on and conflated with racial identity, it became crucial to be “white”, to be identified as white, to have the property of being white. Whiteness was the characteristic, the attribute, the property of free human beings. (Harris, 1993, p. 1721)

In this way, whiteness has come to be more than just the model of society but also as a valuable material. And like property, whiteness comes with its set of rights.

While the concept of ‘whiteness as property’ began as a legal study as part of the larger body of critical race studies, 10 years after Cheryl Harris’ work, Adrienne D. Dixson and Cecilia K. Rousseau (2005) built on the concept of whiteness as property in schools. They analyze how the student tracking system asserts the property right of whiteness in education. They state, “one of these privileges and benefits of property is the absolute right to exclude (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005, p. 8). Their study serves as an example of how ‘whiteness as property’ crosses beyond legal work and into education. In this way, whiteness as property can be a great tool to analyze how gentrification serves to benefit whites while excluding others.

At the same time, land and property go hand in hand as something to own. Much like whiteness, land is a tangible object with its own set of values. And those who own the land, have certain rights. Harris (1993) explains, “although the Indians were the first occupants and possessors of the land of the New World, their racial and cultural otherness allowed this fact to be interpreted and ultimately erased as a basis for asserting rights in land” (p. 1721) Consequently, white racial domination allowed whites to claim the right to the land, as if it were

up for the taken. Because no one had claimed it; at least not how they recognized and legitimized it. Whiteness places value in land, and therefore gave power to those who owned the land.

Because it is whites who owned, it is no surprise that white people over time and by virtue of their existence have come to expect and rely upon a unique and exclusive set of benefits, predispositions, and socioeconomic privileges associated with their whiteness, which have been established through a legacy of conquest and domination of people of color globally. (Donnor, 2013, p. 199)

This expectation includes the right to claim land and thereby communities. Gentrification makes way for whites to claim communities as theirs, even though communities of color have been there longer, often establishing a set of cultural practices and traditions. Whites get to claim these cultural practices as theirs because they have the presumption that it is their right by opting to live in these communities.

On the other hand, because whites feel the right to claim land and take ownership of neighborhoods, any sign of ‘non-white invasion’, gets covered up as a ‘threat to their safety.’ For example, in her ethnographic study of segregation in a neighborhood, Alexander (2011) argues how liberal whites use geographical references as a stand- in for race. She states,

they presented their neighborhood as a ‘community’ with a specific and defined set of cultural needs that were being injured by the alien cultural presence of the market and the threat of violence they attributed to its presence. They did so through the means of legal threat, public protest, dialogue, and media attention. They did so, moreover, through a disciplined colorblindness (and class politeness), thinly veiled at times in crude

geographical elitism, that allowed the communities of ‘difference’ with minimal vulnerability to charges of racism. (p. 32)

In this example, whiteness reproduce racial segregation through colorblind ideologies. These racial ideologies bring up the idea that we should ‘treat everyone equally’ by disregarding one's race, culture, or ethnicity. Annamma et al (2017) offers a new scholarship that criticizes how colorblind ideology is informed by racism and ableism. It is problematic because it essentially labels not seeing race as a deficit- further adding to the narratives that blindness equals ignorance or uneducated (Annamma et al., 2017). They state:

The goal here is not to scold or to police the language of race scholars but to instead suggest that if we use an intersectional framework, we can all strengthen our critique of a racial ideology that rejects the recognition of race through confronting the (un)spoken norms lurking within concepts of race and racism. By naming this racial ideology as color-evasiveness, we demonstrate the social construction of race and ability while simultaneously confronting the social and material consequences of racism and ableism. (p. 154)

Annamma et al (2017) offering color-evasiveness vs. colorblindness calls out the problem of ‘avoiding’ to talk about race, or seeing race and choosing to ignore the experiences of people of color.

Urbanism and Diverse Communities

Further exploration of the literature in the study of gentrification and changing communities reveals issues of language. For example, gentrification is associated with words such as *urbanism*, *renewal*, *revitalization*, and *diverse communities*. Often these words are

connected to the positive impacts of change instead of the implications of gentrification. Digging deeper into the reality of changing communities and gentrification reveals the displacement of communities of color.

Displacement is defined as a profit-driven racial and class reconfiguration of urban, working-class and communities of color that have suffered from a history of disinvestment and abandonment. The process is characterized by declines in the number of low-income people of color in neighborhoods that begin to cater to higher-income workers willing to pay higher rents. (Causa Justa:Just Cause, 2018, p. 18)

Not only does this definition reveal the negative implications of changing communities but also reveals how displacement is closely connected with power and profit. Gentrification makes way for the business of displacement and serves to benefit those who are displaced, which are those who are willing to pay the higher rents. Thus, this pattern creates a system of power and domination.

Additionally, this system of power and domination reveals the ways displacement is the precursor of gentrification. Gentrification not only pushes people of color out but also keeps them out, in the same way that whiteness as property excludes. Broderick and Leonardo (2011) explain, “like a house, Whiteness can be demarcated and fenced off as a territory of White people that keeps others out” (p. 2210). While gentrification may serve to bring about change in the communities, ultimately those changes are not always positive because they only benefit those in power. In the process, gentrification excludes others by displacing them, fencing off communities, as property of those who can afford the new changes.

A prime example of a community study is Burke's (2012) study of the impact of diversity in three distinct neighborhoods in Chicago. Burke spends significant time talking to the residents on their experiences living in diverse communities. In her explanation of diverse communities, she presents Nydent et al's 1998 study of communities where they present two types of diverse communities, "communities that were diverse by design and communities that were diverse by circumstance" (p.3). In her analysis of Chicago neighborhoods, Burke (2012) finds these communities are diverse by circumstance.

This means that their diversity is less a product of neighborhood organization intervention and more the product of social and economic forces initially beyond the control of the residents. These social and economic forces are usually tied to some sort of change in the community, such as an influx of immigrants, a decline of elderly whites, or some change in property values without the robust market to create full gentrification.

(p. 3)

Therefore, this literature reveals how gentrification is closely related to communities that are diverse by circumstance, because it is either social and economic forces that lead to the changes in the demographics of the community. The implications of such forces are not only diverse communities as Burke (2012) examines, but ultimately the many issues that are activated with a changing community. This includes racial ambivalence and conflict, hate, discrimination, and prejudice.

Alexander's (2011) study, for example, "demonstrates the ways in which globalization forces (Silicon Valley's upper-middle class) are vigilant in protecting culture and place in the face of what they perceive as threats to their (often recently acquired) traditions and investment"

(p. 33). Whites will take action once their 'safety' thereby 'privilege' and 'god-given right' is threatened. While this action is often against communities of color, it is a racially driven action, yet they are able to cover it up as a safety issue.

Another way to look at diverse communities is through the urban reality. Leonardo (2009) calls for the re-imagination of the urban. He states "re-imagining has taken some root in the 'new urbanism' movement of housing and lifestyle that is dense but planned, with a mixed use of housing and commercial space, mixed income, and smaller utility spaces. That is the urban anti-suburbia. This is also a response to the urban as 'unlivable' (p.165). Leonardo (2009) explains that there is a need to reexamine the urban area, because of the rise in new housing movements that call for neighborhood revitalization, modernization, and cultural and art hubs. He argues that rather than seeing the urban as either good or bad, we should problematize how we make meaning of the urban, as both a real and imagined place.

In his approach, Leonardo (2009) lays out three urban realities: the sophisticated space, the space of authenticity, and the urban jungle. He explains that the urban as a sophisticated space is "where modernism expresses its advances in civil society through art and culture. Being urban is a sign of being modern, of civilization itself" (Leonardo, 2009, p. 144). This urban reality explains word usage such as 'modern' being used to explain changing communities as a positive motive for the changes. Being modern is a good thing. Modernism is also closely aligned with art and culture. Through the lens of whiteness as property, modernism is associated with whiteness. Thus, those who benefit from the art and culture are whites. In the process, modernism excludes those not associated with whiteness. The sophisticated urban space is a

space where whiteness flourish, where whites can come and enjoy the art and culture and live the modern life (Leonardo, 2009).

Furthermore, Leonardo (2009) explains the urban as an authentic space of identity as, “Both people of color and whites tend to imagine the urban as a more authentically ‘ethnic’ or ‘racial’ than suburban or rural spaces. Being from the ‘hood is seen as a positive and ‘real experience of blackness or brownness” (p. 152). In this urban reality, identity is seen as a valuable tool for communities of color to thrive and survive. It is also a space where whiteness can claim their privilege by feeling they have the right to participate and seek out “authenticity.” The very creation of what is authentic and what is not, is in fact created by whiteness. Because authenticity creates a system of power. The more authentic you are, the more real or closer to that identity you are. And if you fail to meet the standard, then you must not be *real*.

Finally, Leonardo (2009) states “in the ‘urban jungle’ people imagine their city centers as teeming with black, brown, and yellow bodies, which are poor and dirty, criminal and dangerous. Gangs, violence, and drugs are closely tied to any image of the urban for most people” (p.154). In this urban reality, all of the negative views of changing communities exist both in the real and imagined spaces. Whiteness too is at the core of these negative images because it reinforces these negative stereotypes through the media and other outlets. However, for many communities of color, this is their reality; but in the midst of the ‘urban jungle’ exist cracks of hope and genuine community efforts to transform these negative images.

These urban realities explain how communities of color can be sites of consumption. In the same way that gentrification serves to benefit whiteness, communities of color and its “diversity” also benefits whites as sites of consumption. Both Burke (2012) and Leonardo (2009)

bring up how diversity serves as a color-blind ideology in changing communities. Bonilla-Silva (2003) explains:

This new ideology has become a formidable political tool for the maintenance of the racial order. Much as Jim Crow racism served as the glue for defending a brutal and overt system of racial oppression in the pre-Civil Rights era a color-blind racism serves today as the ideological armor for an overt and institutionalized system in the post-Civil Rights era. (p. 3)

Bonilla-Silva (2003) places the language behind the idea that race and racism are no longer a part of our society. However, structural laws and practices, along with individual words and actions state otherwise.

For example, Burke (2012) explains how in changing communities, diversity continues to be an abstract idea for white liberals living in diverse communities. Diversity is seen as a good thing, until it requires action. Therefore, communities of color are viewed as diverse communities that are for whiteness enjoyment and pleasure. In the same way that whiteness as property explains “a given right of the individual white person, whiteness can be enjoyed, like a property, by exercising and taking advantage of privileges coextensive with Whiteness” (Leonardo & Broderick, 2011, p. 2210). Burke (2012) adds that “diversity is perceived as something extra, rather than integrated into the core of a community, making diversity particularly appealing to whites who are looking to spice up or add flavor to their otherwise unexamined white normative life” (p.102). In this way, diversity serves as a color-blind ideology for whites who think they are living post-racial lives simply because they are living in *diverse*

communities. When in fact, their whiteness gives them the privilege to enjoy other people's cultures and communities as something to consume and their right to do so.

Furthermore, Leonardo (2009) adds, “the urban has become a place for the white enjoyment of arts, music, and dining. Being urban is consumed for a given amount of time, enjoyed, and then forgotten until the next excursion” (p.148). Whiteness gives segway for changing communities to be spaces of consumption. In doing so, *diversity* serves as the safe word in a post-racial society, that explains whites right to claim space and gentrify with their very presence.

In Burke’s 2012 study, she reveals that despite the efforts of some white liberal allies to do right, their thoughts on diversity still uphold ideologies of whiteness. Burke calls this white habitus and explains it as “the engine of color-blind ideologies, that allows “the cycle to continue until it is consciously disrupted, white habits leaves whiteness and color-blind ideologies unchecked (pp. 117-119). Burke argues that despite some form of collective and individualized action by some white liberals, color-blind ideology, such as diversity, do not allow meaningful discussion on race, and thus whiteness continues to thrive in *diverse*, urban, and changing communities.

Gonzales (2021) offers a nuanced perspective on urbanization and community redevelopment and grassroots activism in her book “Building a Better Chicago”. In her study, she focuses on the collective response to urban redevelopment in Black and Mexican American neighborhoods. She finds that groups often work together through what she calls collective skepticism to influence redevelopment initiatives within their neighborhoods (p.17). She explains collective skepticism as:

a tactical tool that draws on the expertise of community organizers, harnessing their knowledge of local development decisions and the process that have shaped development in their neighborhoods. Central to collective skepticism is an understanding that (1) trust is situated within structures of power and (2) organizations and residents do not, necessarily, have the same goals. (p. 28)

Gonzales (2021) work uplifts the work of grassroots activism and changes the negative narratives of communities of color that are historically marginalized and undergo redevelopment. She centralizes the role of Black and Mexican leaders and organizations that work together to engage their neighbors to pressure the local government to listen to their needs and desires. Gonzales (2021), addresses a gap in the literature of urban redevelopment that often focuses on deficit based neighborhood dynamics and mistrust within poor communities. By focusing on the ways that marginalized communities strategically navigate power relations in the context of neighborhood redevelopment, Gonzales' study begins the conversations on the role of Whiteness in gentrification.

Summary

The literature reveals the ideologies of whiteness in creating a system of domination that is often not questioned. Whiteness as property alludes to this system of power and domination, in the same way that land ownership implies wealth and exclusion. An analysis of the ways changing communities are explained, either due to modernization, urbanism etc, reveals how gentrification serves to benefit whiteness. The ultimate precursor is displacement. Whiteness as property demonstrates how communities of color continue to be taken over, and people of color continue to be forcefully removed and excluded from the very communities they built. Further

exploration of the literature that reveals the role of community action and community narratives in fighting whiteness, gentrification and displacement is needed. Below I will provide an example of a community with a history of community action against gentrification.

Anti-gentrification Movement in the San Francisco Mission

Gentrification has been a long-standing social issue that continually affects the community of the San Francisco Mission District. Since the late 80's, San Francisco's Mission District faced a displacement crisis during the dot-com boom. Most recently the community is facing a new wave of gentrification that is too familiar. Various residents and community leaders have organized against the giant tech corporations, real estate developers and local government who continually force displacement of the Mission District's long-time residents.

The movement against gentrification in the San Francisco Mission demonstrates a new social movement framework in that it is beyond a class-based issue. While the fight is primarily against gentrification, the struggle overlaps and touches on various issues that are multifaceted. Scholars argue new social movements are fluid in their struggle. As Francisco Diaz Casique (2013) explains "statuses such as race, gender, ethnicity and citizenship also shift the terrain as historically marginalized (socially, politically and economically marginalized) groups enter our U.S. urban areas at greater rates, could further alter trans-local modern politics" (p. 22). The anti-gentrification movement is an intersectional movement that complicates the movement and challenges traditional movement building. As a new social movement, anti-gentrification calls for a movement that looks at broader issues and the role they play in affecting gentrification. Most recently organizers have rallied against issues around police brutality, violence, race and discrimination that gentrification brings forth.

Furthermore, anti-gentrification as a new social movement theory can be explained in Angela Davis' concept of freedom, "There are still many significant civil rights movements in the twenty-first century. The struggle for immigrant rights is a civil rights struggle. The struggle to defend the rights of prisoners is a civil rights struggle. The struggle for marriage equality with respect to the LGBT communities is a civil rights struggle. But freedom is still more expansive than civil rights" (Davis, 2013, p. 119). Davis recognizes social movements as a collective struggle. Freedom for one is not freedom for all. Anti-gentrification is too a civil rights struggle in the San Francisco Mission and beyond. Leaders are not only fighting for their own freedom, but freedom for all community members and others affected by gentrification.

Comparatively, the struggle against gentrification has a shared experience that is about loss of home and place, cultural and community identity, and much broadly, human rights. Della Porta and Diani (2006) define collective identity as, "recognition and the creation of connectedness brings with it a sense of common purpose and shared commitment to a cause, which enables single activists and/or organizations to regard themselves as inextricably linked to other actors, not necessarily identical but surely compatible, in a broader collective mobilization" (p. 21). I argue the strength of the movement is their collective identity as members of the Mission District. This identity is what brings the organizers together and motivates other residents and advocates for the Mission to join the movement.

Likewise, longtime residents of the San Francisco Mission have a deep love and commitment to their community, *La Mission*. This identity is key to their connectedness to the movement against gentrification. Paulo Freire (1996) describes love in revolution, "Because love is an act of courage, not fear, love is commitment to others. The act of love is commitment to

their cause- the cause of liberation” (p. 70). This type of love is the love that connects those fighting for anti-gentrification in the San Francisco Mission. Movement builders have a deep, profound love for their community of *La Mission*. The movement is a fight for gentrification but also for the preservation of *La Mission*'s culture, history, and its people (see figure 1). This love for *La Mission* is what unites them to fight against gentrifiers and those threatening to change their community, evicting its people and erasing their history.

Moreover, the origin of the movement against gentrification can be traced back to the Ellis Act, a government act created in 1986, which ultimately “allows California landlords to evict tenants in order to go out of business and remove units from the rental market, usually with the intent of selling them” (Green, 2013). The Ellis Act works in the landlord's favor when it comes to rent control. Landlords can evict long-time tenants to convert their buildings into high-end luxury apartments and condos and charge a lot more for them. This history of the Ellis Act in San Francisco demonstrates a crisis of evictions and forced displacements (see figure 2). The Ellis Act serves as a plague that continues to grow with gentrification, new infrastructures, and rent increases.

On top of that, in the late 1980's the dot-com boom settled in Silicon Valley and brought with it new residents who crawled their way to the San Francisco mission. In this case, “California's high-tech boom attracted not only venture capital, but a wave of upscale young workers associated with the dot-coms. Real estate agents hungry for new markets sold the neighborhoods' relative affordability, proximity to downtown, hip nightlife, and its 'culture' as a selling point. High-end restaurants and clubs began to price out the local businesses, artist spaces and non-profits” (Marti, 2006, p. 8). The dot-com boom took over the Mission District by

displacing many of the small businesses that had been in the neighborhood for a long time and were part of the culture and community of the district. In doing so, they changed the historical and cultural look and feel of the district. At the same time, “even where dot-coms did not directly displace businesses, the rising rents effectively did the same, as traditional industries, like garment shops, had to find new space, or move out of the city. Many eventually went out of business” (Marti, 2006, p. 8). Historically, gentrification begins with the marketplace. Small businesses are affected, which change the look of the community and with it come rent increases, eventually forcing long-time residents to find a new place to live.

One of the most visible movements in the dot-com era was organized by the Mission Anti-displacement Coalition (MAC), “MAC was at the height of its popular power, able to politicize and mobilize innumerable Mission District and San Francisco residents as the neoliberal process of urban development, better understood as gentrification, placed the Mission District squarely in the crosshairs of city agencies and officials who, working alongside building developers and real estate speculators, threatened to create a city inaccessible to working-class and poor residents” (Casique, 2003, p. 6). As history demonstrates, residents of the Mission District stood up against gentrification as many of them suffered from displacements in the dot-com era.

Comparatively, the new Silicon Valley technology giants are forcing themselves into the community of the Mission District. Google, Facebook, Twitter, Airbnb, and Apple are just some of the many technology, Internet, and social media tech giants that have planted themselves in Silicon Valley. The companies attract and hire engineers and “techie” from all over the world. Many of them move to the San Francisco Bay Area, and like in the dot-com era, are attracted to

the Mission District because of its affordability, location, and cultural vibe. However, in this instance, much of the struggle has been against displacement, evictions and the city's infrastructure and regulations that allow tech buses to use bus stops, take up space in the community and overall produce inequality in the city. Maharawal (2014) describes, "activists claimed the city should be asking wealthy technology companies such as Google, Apple and Facebook to pay more for their use of public infrastructure, as one small way to account for the gentrification and displacement that their presence is causing" (p. 20). Supporters of anti-gentrification have rallied against the inequality produced as techies move in and bring their Google buses with them. The techies can afford to pay a lot more money for rent than long-time residents, which motivates high-end real estate investors and landowners to evict current residents, raise rents, and welcome the techies.

Most recently, the vision of the anti-displacement movement has been to demonstrate the violence gentrification is producing. A current effort by the Frisco Five, is taking place in the community, "the Frisco Five went on strike to demand that San Francisco's Mayor Ed Lee fire his police Chief Greg Suhr over the police shootings in recent years of some San Francisco black and brown residents, such as Alex Nieto, Luis Gongora, Mario Woods and Amilcar Perez Lopez" (Woodrow, 2016). These were Mission District residents who were viewed as a threat by the new Mission District Residents, or gentrifiers. In the case of Alex Nieto, the new residents perceived him as a *dangerous outsider* and this caused him his death. The Frisco Five movement is putting discrimination, stereotypes and racism at the forefront of gentrification. Alex Nieto, Luis Gongora, Mario Woods and Amilcar Perez died because of racial discrimination. They were stereotyped as outsiders, when in fact they were long-time residents.

Furthermore, a primary tactic in the social movement against gentrification is the use of counter-stories. For example, Cause Justa/Just Cause (CJJC) an organization whose mission is to “build grassroots power and leadership to create strong, equitable communities. Born through mergers between Black organizations and Latino organizations, we build bridges of solidarity between working class communities. Through rights-based services, policy campaigns, civic engagement, and direct action, we improve conditions in our neighborhoods in the San Francisco Bay Area, and contribute to building the larger multi-racial, multi-generational movement needed for fundamental change” (Retrieved from <http://www.cjjc.org/en/about-us/mission>) One of their focuses is to work with communities who are suffering from displacement and to put a face to the issue of gentrification through the use of first-hand accounts (see figure 1). CJJC works on campaigns to build the movement on housing rights and empower those most affected by gentrification to share their stories. In the process of highlighting their stories, CJJC humanizes the issue of forced displacement and evictions. In their website, CJJC highlights stories of struggle and publishes a quarterly bilingual community newspaper to further expand their outreach and gain supporters.

Figure 1.

Reina y Alyssa.



REINA TELLO, NATIVE SAN FRANCISCAN AND DAUGHTER ALYSSA. FIGHTING ALONG WITH HER FAMILY TO REMAIN IN THEIR BAYVIEW DISTRICT HOME.

Note: Image of long-time resident, Reina and daughter Alyssa.

Source <http://www.cjjc.org/en/our-work/housing-rights-campaign>

Likewise, during the dot-com movement, various direct actions were applied. For example, “[the Mission Anti-Displacement Coalition] led a number of protests from the Mission to City Hall, shit down the Planning Commission, invaded dot-com offices and held sit-ins at the Planning Department, from street actions to mass Monday night meetings to the ubiquitous posters created by the SF Print Collective, MAC created a sense in the community that we weren’t going without a fight” (Marti, 2006, p. 9) MAC organizers wanted to see results from public officials and thus rallied support to make their demands heard. Similar efforts are still visible in the current movement against gentrification.

Current tactics still involve direct action, as with the Frisco Five as a collective who have rallied folks on marches and protests against police brutality. The Frisco Five includes Blackwell, Ike Pinkston, Illyich Sato, Edwin Lindo, and Maria Cristina Gutierrez. The five leaders went on a hunger strike to bring forth the violence caused by gentrification in the San Francisco Mission (see figure 2). As stated in the San Francisco examiner, “The hunger strikers’ efforts sprang from outrage at violence within the ranks of the San Francisco Police Department — made all the more pressing in the wake of two fatal police shootings in the last six months. They say they won’t eat until Police Chief Greg Suhr is fired or resigns” (Woodrow, 2016, para 2-3)

The Frisco Five’s hunger strike has rallied up and encouraged many protestors to occupy city hall and demonstrate their support for the movement.

Figure 2.

The Frisco Five.



Images of Blackwell, Pinkston, Sato, Lindo, and Gutierrez.

One of the most visible transformations that has come from the anti-gentrification movement is around policy changes in affordable housing and housing rights overall. For example, one of the Mission Anti-Displacement Coalition's successes after the dot-com era was around affordable housing. "In 2002, the Board of Supervisors expanded and legislated these guidelines and required that all projects with 10 or more units provide 10% of their units as affordable units to renters earning 60% or less of the Area Median Income (AMI)" (Casique, 2013, p. 39). Affordable housing is a direct result of anti-gentrification leaders fighting for housing rights and equal opportunities. Affordable housing is often viewed as a simple solution to evictions and forced displacement, as it gives long-time residents the opportunity to continue living in their communities.

Movement builders have also taken various other policy recommendations for housing rights to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. Most recently, leaders pushed for the approval of the

Eviction Protection 2.0, which “protects the affordability of Rent Controlled units after certain evictions or specific landlord actions: Evictions should not be motivated exclusively by a landlord’s desire to increase the rent”. The law was passed and tenants gained certain protections against evictions. As one organizer states,

This is a huge win for tenants, not just because we have stronger protections against evictions, but because it shows the power of fighting for our homes, of organizing, of caring for our neighbors and our city enough to fight like hell for it. (Cause Justa/Just Cause, 2015)

In addition to gaining momentum around renter’s rights and affordable housing, the movement has built a national discourse around gentrification. People begin to notice signs of gentrification. With the use of social media, people have easier access to videos, pictures and articles that highlight gentrification and displacement. These different forms give people an idea of what gentrification looks like. For example, in January 2015 BuzzFeed news posted a video and article link on gentrification in the Mission District, “What it’s like to lose your home to gentrification” (Buzzfeed.com, 2015). The video has over 7300,000 views and over 2000 comments on YouTube. This demonstrates the effect the movement has had in establishing a language and discourse on gentrification and forced displacement.

Even more, scrolling through the comment sections on YouTube, many folks recognize similar actions taking place in their homes in Brooklyn, Los Angeles, Oakland and many others. The movement has taken the discourse on gentrification in social media. As primary consumers of YouTube and other social media outlets, young people use this outlet to express themselves and create dialogue around what they see. The BuzzFeed video gives them the language to talk

about gentrification. As one user, Zoey E, notes, “We have a bunch of black owned and Latino owned businesses that we would like to keep and there's always some rich white person coming in to try and buy it just so they can turn it into something else. Just respect the neighborhood and leave it as it is or leave” (see Figure 3). Social media gives young people like Zoey E to talk about what is happening in their neighborhoods and begin dialogue around gentrification.

Figure 3.

What's it like to lose your home.



Screenshot of viewer Zoey E's comment in BuzzFeed video about gentrification.

Similarly, other communities are taking action and learning from the anti-gentrification movement in the Mission District. For example, in Boston, neighbors have organized initiatives in response to gentrification and forced displacement and are advocating for community land trust models in their city. Nextcity.org explains,

In the community land trust (CLT) model, a nonprofit acquires land with the intent of developing it for community benefit — often building affordable housing — rather than for pure profit. A buyer of an affordable home purchases the building, but not the land beneath, helping keep the price low. Resale price is restricted, ensuring affordability for

subsequent buyers, while also allowing homeowners to accumulate some equity. (Sandra Larson, 2016)

The effort in Boston is a clear example of the ripple effect of the anti-gentrification movement in San Francisco and demonstrates how the struggle goes beyond the Mission District. Other communities that share the same challenges are taking action by demanding and offering specific solutions like the CLT model.

Furthermore, like many social movements, art has played a significant role in the anti-gentrification movement in the San Francisco Mission District. Art is significant as it has the power to express the voices of people who are too often silenced. As explained by artist Kevin “Rashid” Johnson, “Art makes knowledge accessible across boundaries of status, race, gender, location, and nationality, and properly used can bridge the separations” (Jobin-Leeds, 2016). The anti-gentrification movement has had a history of using community newspapers to bring forth the voice of the people most affected. A clear example is the Mission District’s bilingual newspaper, *El Tecolote*.

Since 1970, *El Tecolote* prides itself for being the voice of the people and serving underrepresented communities of color in journalism, “ The newspaper has played an important advocacy role in the community, taking up vital community issues often ignored by the mainstream news media” (El Tecolote, 2021). One of the vital community issues that *El Tecolote* has featured is gentrification, specifically highlighting voices of those affected by forced displacement and the stories that other news does not report. For example, in 2014, the newspaper was the first to bring forth a story of a new restaurant in the San Francisco Mission that refused to serve a Latino family, long-time residents of the Mission. As *El Tecolote*’s editor

in chief explains, “It became sort of the case study about how people were feeling about the neighborhood. The owner is from New York City, and he is a transplant, so to speak. And he’s called his establishment Local’s Corner, and he’s allegedly denied locals service” (Garofoli, 2015) *El Tecolote* is dedicated to the Mission and brings forth-real incidents that highlight current issues affecting its people.

In addition, the San Francisco Mission District has a historical presence of murals, and movement builders have tapped into the already established mural culture to create pieces that promote awareness and express the voices of the people affected by forced displacement. As Solnit and Latorre (as cited in Casique, 2013) share, “The mural culture and street art play a vital role in the vision of the Mission District. Because of this, mural art painted along the garages and fences of the narrow alleyway, the artwork suggests that in moving through the spaces of the neighborhood, residents of the Mission District move through narratives of history and struggle particular to the Latina/o population (p. 76). Through the use of public art, the artists that create the pieces are constructing an openly oppositional narrative and promoting discourse around gentrification.

Similarly, local artists have joined the movement against gentrification as many of them struggle against evictions. For example, Leslie Nguyen-Okwu writes in *El Tecolote*, “Artists are struggling to preserve the Mission’s rich Latino culture while being priced out of an increasingly expensive neighborhood. For 71-year-old Yolanda López, a well-known artist and social justice advocate, the reality of removal hits home. On July 12, she was evicted from her home of 40 years. In response, she held “Accessories to an Eviction,” a garage sale and visual exhibit showcasing the legal papers from her landlord and the beloved belongings that she couldn’t

afford to keep” (Nguyen-Okwu, 2014). Artists like Yolanda Lopez, use their own weapon of art to fight back and join the movement. The San Francisco Mission is home to many artists who are part of the culture and history of the Mission. These artists have contributed their work to the community and are now being forced to leave. In addition to joining the marches and direct protests against gentrification, they use their artistic skills to tell their story and rally even more support.

Moreover, *Galeria de La Raza* in the Mission District serves as a physical space for local artists to showcase their work. For example, in 2014, *Galeria* collaborated with People Organizing to Demand Environmental & Economical Rights (P.O.D.E.R) and CultureStrike on a mural to highlight what their community is doing to stay grounded and fight gentrification (see Figure 4).

Figure 4.

Blooming in the midst of Gentrification.



Blooming In The Midst of Gentrification

Digital Mural

Saturday, August 2, 2014 - Saturday, November 1, 2014

Image of digital mural in Galería de la Raza.

The piece entitled, “Blooming In the Midst of Gentrification”, was exhibited in the *Galeria de la Raza* and demonstrates the power of collaboration and art in advocating for social issues, “They specifically wanted to highlight their #PUEBLOTE campaign where P.O.D.E.R. has organized with Mission residents to reclaim public lands for community use based on community planning efforts that bring together the knowledge and experience of neighborhood residents.” (Admin, 2014). The collaboration brought youth together to create what they felt best represented gentrification in their eyes.

Subsequently, the Mission District’s cultural presence plays a large role in the overall resistance against gentrification. “A distinct Mission *Cultura* developed, with the Mission’s developing tradition of murals and especially the *Mujeres Muralistas* on Balmy Alley, the Mission sounds of Santana and other pioneers of Latin rock, writers such as Oscar Zeta Acosta and Alejandro Murguía, the exploration of our indigenous roots, *danzantes* and the smell of burning copal, *Galeria de la Raza*, the Mission Cultural Center, the Mexican Museum, celebrations for *Cinco de Mayo*, *Carnaval*, *el Chasqui*, *Día De los Muertos*, and the feast of *la Virgen de Guadalupe*. *Cultura* can be dangerous” (Marti, 2006, p.6). Many of the Mission’s *Cultura* is still very present and alive in the community today. As Marti describes, *Cultura* can be dangerous, because it serves as a form of resistance against gentrification. Organizers want to keep this *Cultura* alive because many traditions, music, art, and celebrations go against the mainstream American ideology; it is unique to *La Mission*.

One of the clear lessons learned from this struggle in the San Francisco Mission is the impact the community can have when there is a rich collective identity. For this fight, the love for their home of the Mission District is a powerful weapon. It is clear that movement builders still tap

into the love for the Mission, the culture, the history, and the people that make the community what it is. *La Cultura* of the Mission serves as the anchor to the movement.

Another lesson learned from this movement is the importance of gaining support by using the already established cultural resources. Movement builders used a lot of the already established small businesses, like *El Tecolote* for example, to promote their movement and rally support. Because *El Tecolote* started during the height of the Chicano movement in the 1970's, it's social justice framework serves as an ally and resource to the anti-gentrification movement. At the same time, *El Tecolote* has its home in the Mission, and they are also fighting against gentrification as a small business.

Likewise, as this movement has had a long history, it is easy to understand that the struggle has been a challenging one as residents continue to fight for forced evictions, renters' rights and housing equality. It is a real lesson for anyone wanting to fight gentrification. Looking back, organizers have used similar tactics throughout, despite fighting different waves of gentrification. Current organizers should learn from the dot-com movement and MAC organizers in order to recognize efforts that were more successful. Organizers should also prioritize issues that they want to bring forth. As a new social movement, the anti-gentrification movement takes on different issues and thus it can be complex to find solutions in a more timely matter as the housing crisis escalates.

In summary, the anti-gentrification movement has had a long history of resistance in the San Francisco Mission District. It is not an easy struggle as residents continue to face gentrification in different waves. The movement has always been about forced displacement but takes on different issues depending on the time and other challenges that people face. The

movement holds its power from the *Cultura* and people's love for *La Mission*. It has rallied strong support from other community stakeholders including small businesses and artists and has found creative ways of highlighting stories of struggle.

As I imagine my community of the North Fair Oaks and the challenges we are facing, I think about the struggles that are forthcoming. On May 4th, 2016, the County of San Mateo hosted a dialogue on "Gentrification and Forced Displacement in the Bay Area" with expert panelists on the issue including a civil rights lawyer, a policy educator, a sociologist and a county representative. What was supposed to be a dialogue and learning session, turned out to be an opportunity for some residents to speak out on the issue and force county leaders to recognize the crisis we are facing. There is much talk on the housing crisis from county leaders, yet they are not moving quick enough to find solutions to the displacement of long-time residents. The people are speaking out.

Gentrification is alive and thriving in the North Fair Oaks. We are witnessing much of the same issues that the San Francisco Mission District has experienced for a long time, it's time to learn from their struggles and speaking out is only the beginning. As one resident noted, "Our community is not ready for these developments. [The county] didn't think about the working people. As a community we need to organize!" (Avendano, notes 2016) There is power in numbers. The people see the urgency and they are facing a crisis. It is time that county officials recognize the urgency too.

Chicana/Latinas and Community Organizing

Central to this study are the women in North Fair Oaks who share their legacy of community organizing and advocacy with the youth. Due to this centrality of their experience,

this section focuses on the literature of community organizing of Chicana/Latina women. I begin with a focus on the experiences of women in the Mexican Independence and Mexican revolution as a distinct origin to Chicana community organizing. I will then move to the ways Chicanas organized during the labor movements of the 30's and 40's. This will provide a segway for the role of women during the Chicano Movement; which ultimately made a pathway for Chicana feminism. I will then lay out distinct cases of women in community advocacy.

Origins of Chicana Organizing

In *La Chicana*, Mirande and Enriquez, (1979), describes the ways that women in Mexican Independence and Mexican Revolution “marked departures from traditional feminine roles...when heroínas first emerged and were recognized, and culminate in the revolution of 1910, with extensive female participation in areas outside the home” (p.15) Sweeney (1977) argues Chicanas became active participants in the revolution, but also became aware of their political rights as women for the first time. Sweeney refers to the work of Flores Magon brothers and the Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM), which was one of the first groups to organize women. The PLM was radical in that it sought to bring back indigenous communal lands, *ejidos*, give worker rights, including fair wages, end child labor, and public education for all, including women” (Weber, 2016, p.17). The PLM published an anarchist newspaper *Regeneracion*, in which Ricardo Flores Magon wrote the essay, “A La Mujer”. In the essay, Flores Magon elicits women's participation in the revolution by pointing out their rights. Emma Perez (1998) states, “For many of these organizations, the subjugation of women resulted from an exploitative social structure in which capitalism condemned working class women and men to the lowest rung of

the socio economy” and while *Regeneracion* helped to politicize Mexican women in the southwest, it did so only to serve a nationalist cause- The Mexican Revolution. (p.58,59).

Literature on the role of women in the Mexican Revolution often refers back to *Las Adelitas* or *Soldaderas* (women soldiers). Las Adelitas would take on dual roles as women soldiers and continuing to care for their families. “Las Adelitas, traveled with their soldiers in an attempt to win back the land for the peasants. Many of them carried guns and fought in the battlefields. Some rose to high military rank” (Blea, 1992). In her analysis of the legacy of *La Adelita* song, Alicia Arrizon (1998) points out how La Adelita became synonymous with soldadera, and women in Mexico and the U.S., is a symbol of action and inspiration. She says, “her name is used to mean any woman who struggles and fights for her rights”(p.91).

Linhard (2005) points to the lack of historical archives, beyond La Adelita, on women’s participation in the Mexican revolution, “revolutionary women usually made their entrance to historiographies or archives only in the form of icons, metaphors, or myths, discussing their roles in these struggles necessarily leads to a space between history and literature, between fact and fiction, or between myths and the complex histories that lurk underneath”(p.31).

Other scholars, like Norma Cantu (1990), explain the limitations of the Adelita icon, because it describes women's participation as a follower. She argues, “Women are perceived as followers, not leaders, or thinkers, when in fact women are active in the role which our foremothers also played, that of political and social thinkers, of leaders in various areas throughout our communities” (p.10). Not only is there a lack of literature that provides a more robust scholarship on women’s participation in the Mexican Revolution, the contributions of women are brought forth as static and limited figures.

Chicanas Organizing 1930's and 1940's

There are seminal studies that focus on women during the 1930's through the 1950's. These studies demonstrate that women were active participants during the Great Depression, World War II and the Cold War. These specific times in history had significant impacts on the labor force and experiences of Chicanos in the U.S. Cynthia Orozco's (1995) research on women's voluntary participation has been significant in not only bringing attention to the lack of research, but arguing for more literature that is seen through a gendered lens. She states, "studies of Chicano voluntary organizations have largely failed to address women and gender. When scholars have discussed women, they have briefly alluded to their contributions and mentioned a few individual leaders. More typically, however, they have subjected Mexican-descent women to patriarchal and heterosexist ideologies (p.15).

This is the case for Garcia (1989) book *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, & Identity* where he introduces several organizations that provided the space for community involvement and opportunities for the "new Mexican American generation"; mostly U.S. born, middle class, born to Mexican immigrant parents, seeking "the best, purest, and most perfect type of a true and local citizen of the United States" (Orozco 2009). Garcia (1989) points out the role of the League of United American Citizens (LULAC) and El Congreso del Pueblo de Habla Española (Garcia, 1989) but limits women to a small paragraph and minimizes their contributions to auxiliaries where they "made important community contributions" and "directed much of their energies to work in the barrios. This included assisting in orphanages and health clinics, sponsoring youth activities, and collecting and donating toys and clothes to underprivileged children" (García, 1989, p.39). This restricts and pigeonholes the contributions

of women to gender specific roles and further adds to the stereotypes that that is all women can do.

On the other hand, Orozco states that by only recognizing the work being done in the auxiliaries adds to the assumption that it was the only type of work being done by women. In fact, while the auxiliaries “were where the men wanted them to be”, women were organizing even more and become politicized through these spaces, “While ladies auxiliaries did not involve women directly in the center of organizational power they made it possible for women to learn about the external milieu. The auxiliary brought women together in social settings. They learned to organize banquets, dances, and other social events. Several excelled in church functions and others became super fund raisers. The auxiliaries were important appendages to male-run organizations; they provided money, food, service, and entertainment (p. 6) Gonzales (1999) attributes, “The success of LULAC was due to its dynamic leadership, its incorporation of youth and women’s auxiliaries, and its willingness to change the times” (p. 180).

Moreover, Garcia (1989) describes El Congreso “aimed to improve the economic, social, moral, and cultural conditions of Spanish-speaking people in the United States in conformity with the U.S. Constitution. This included supporting federal housing projects for the poor, better sanitary and medical care for the Spanish-speaking, elimination of racial discrimination, better education for children, adequate pay for Spanish-speaking workers to allow them to live humanly, support for the unionization ties who supported the same objective” (Gonzales, Manuel G, 1999)Garcia, 1989 p. 148). While Garcia does give credit to the founder of El Congreso, Guatemalan immigrant Luisa Moreno, and provides a full chapter of El Congreso, he does not fully provide an analysis of the role of women. El Congreso provided more significant roles and

leadership opportunities for women unlike LULAC and past organizations. As pointed out by Gonzales (1999), “From the very outset, women were among the most active members” and adds that El Congreso, “was a progressive-radical body with a marked Communist influence, as witnessed in the labor unions active in its creation. The association sought to ensure both economic benefits and civil liberties for Mexicans” (p.181).

Furthermore, Orozco (1995) states, “Congresso women operated in a mixed-gender setting, an unusual situation in the 1930’s” and criticizes Mario Garcia for not calling to attention the “double discrimination experienced by women” and the work of “women’s committees. Women constituted 30 percent of the membership” and they “expressed feminist consciousness on the national level” (p. 12). Political voluntarism and organizations like LULAC and El Congreso gave women opportunities that challenged traditional gender roles outside the home. While several mujeres leaders emerged from these organizations such as Luisa Moreno, Emma Tenayuca, Jovita Idar, and Josefina Fierro de Bright and many of them joining labor movements, calling and organizing for unions, it was within the next era that a more Chicana feminist ideology began to emerge.

The Chicano/a Movement

Chavez-Garcia (2013) states that during the 1960’s and 70’s the Chicano movement had “it’s larger goals of advancing social justice, education equality, and political representation more broadly” (p. 545). While Chicanas played an active role in the Chicano movement, the literature focuses on the lack of visibility and credit on their contributions to the movement. In their recent book, *Chicana Movidas* (2018), Dionne Espinoza, Maria Eugenia Cotera, and Maylei Blackwell compile twenty-two essays as a response to the lack or gasps of women’s

contributions in the history of Chicano movement. They focus on *movidas* to “describe multiple kinds of ‘moves’, from those undertaken in games and on dance floors to those that take more subversive forms, like forbidden social encounters, underground economies, and political maneuvers” (p. 2). By focusing on the *movidas* Chicanas took, they uncover and demonstrate the various strategies Chicanas took to shape multiple social movements from the margins.

Alma Garcia (1989) explains:

The Chicano movement focused on a wide range of issues: social justice, equality, educational reforms, and political and economic self-determination for Chicano communities in the United States. Various struggles evolved within this movement: the United Farm workers unionization efforts, the New Mexico Land Grant movement, the Colorado-based Crusade for Justice, the Chicano student movement and the Raza Unida Party. (p. 218)

While the Chicano movement focused on several issues, too often sexism and the experiences of Chicanas in the movement were not brought to light. Women in the struggle often held the same positions and traditional roles as secretaries, cooking, child care and cleaning. It was lack of leadership opportunities, patriarchy, and sexism that brought new waves of feminism to light.

For example, Gloria Anzaldúa (1986) explains how Chicana feminism or *la mestiza* calls out the sexism and patriarchy in the Chicano culture:

The struggle of the *mestiza* is above all a feminist one- from the men in our race, we demand the admission/acknowledgement/discourse/ testimony that they wound us, violate us, are afraid of us and our power. We need them to say they will begin to eliminate their hurtful put-down ways. But more than the words. We demand acts. We

say to them: We will develop equal power with you and those who have shamed us. (p. 106)

Anzaldua points out the ways sexism was not only experienced within the movement but at the core of the Chicano culture- through patriarchy. Chicana's in the movement sought equality not just within the movement, but ultimately within their cultures and in their own homes. Chicana feminism in the Chicano movement called for the dismantling of patriarchy, beyond an apology, but with true partnership, support and action from the men.

Moreover, Maylei Blackwell (2011) documents the history of Chicana contributions in the Chicano movement in her book *Chicana Power!* Blackwell states:

it was the chauvinism, discrimination, and sexual harassment of those male leaders that in part led to the rise of feminism among Chicanas in the movement. Women throughout the Chicano movement were no longer willing to tolerate the internal organizational practices and masculinist political culture, which were exclusionary, undemocratic and unfair. (pp. 7-8)

Chicana feminism then offered the space to dialogue about their experiences facing sexism in the movement. This led Chicana feminists to further evaluate their role in the movement and their own experiences as women of color activists.

Alma M. Garcia (1997) explains,

As the Chicano movement developed during the 1970s, Chicana feminists began to draw their own political agenda and raised a series of questions to assess their role within the Chicano

movement. They entered into a dialogue with each other that explicitly reflected their struggles to secure a room of their own within the Chicano movement. (p. 219)

Chicanas in the movement wanted to put forth their voices and bring to light issues that affected them not only in the movement but beyond. If the Chicano movement was in fact a multi-issue struggle. Chicanas wanted to ensure their issues were also being considered.

At the same time, Chicana feminism created the space needed to focus on the specific issues concerning Chicanas as women of color in the United States and their experiences with racial, gender, and class oppression. Denise A. Segura (1990) calls this intersectionality, triple oppression, which she defines as

the interplay among class, race, and gender, whose cumulative effects place women of color in a subordinate social and economic position relative to men of color and the majority white population. (p. 48)

Although Segura focuses her research on the triple oppression in the labor market, this definition helps understand the experiences of Chicanas faced in the Chicano movement and the need for feminism, specific to the needs of Chicanas.

Moreover, Black feminist scholar, bell hooks (1984) argues for a feminist revolution that moves beyond sexist critique, “much feminist consciousness-raising has centered on helping women to understand the nature of sexism in personal life, especially as it relates to male dominance. While this is a necessary task, it is not the only task for consciousness-raising” (p161). hooks calls for feminist scholars to move beyond that single issue and begin understanding other systems of oppression, like capitalism. This is where recent Chicana feminism finds itself as Ellie D. Hernandez (2006) states, “Chicana feminism’s multifaceted and

distinct political diversity offers a critical style that provides important ideas for the new millennium and a recasting of identity” (p76). Chicana feminism continues to reevaluate itself as more than a political identity. Chicana scholars have recognized their role in theory making to continue expanding and revisiting Chicana feminism to ensure it recognizes and validates current experiences of Chicanas.

In the same way, Patricia Sanchez and Lucila D. Ek (2013) write about the directions of a Chicana/Latina feminist pedagogies taking into consideration the growing body of literature and scholarship in the field. Sanchez and Ek identify six areas of focus in Chicana feminism,

these areas are the growing American Latina/o population; technology and social media; social movements in the wake of oppressive structures; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) issues; and healing and spirituality. Although this list is not exhaustive, it does represent a portrait of work being done at this precise moment that has captured our attention as Chicana/Latina academics. (181)

Both authors are clearly influenced by early works in Chicana feminism and recognize their role as researchers to further expand pedagogy in Chicana feminism.

The historical context of Chicana organizing and feminism uncovers an epistemology that transpired from women questioning traditional roles both in and out of the public and private sphere. Therefore, as the literature reveals, it is important for Chicana feminist scholars to learn from that context and continue to push forward nuances in the field as it affects and explains the experiences of Chicanas.

Community Organizing

There is a growing body of literacy in the last two decades that focus on the role of Chicana/Latina organizing in community settings. Two seminal studies within the field of Chicana/o Studies are Mary. S Pardo's work with Chicanas in East L.A and Vickie Ruiz's Mexican American Women cannery workers. More recent studies on Chicana/Latina community leadership are conducted by Sociologist Horetencia Jimenez and Teresa Irene Gonzales.

First, Mary S. Pardo (1998)'s book on the work of Mothers of East Los Angeles (MELA) highlights the work of Mexican American women in transforming and shaping local communities. Her work positions community activism in the forefront of political participation, "For many decades, political participation meant taking part in electoral politics or holding office in a political organization. The significance of politics occurring outside political institutions, and women's community activism particularly, continue to be largely excluded from conventional notions of political activity" (p.6). Pardo's study of MELA and two neighborhood groups finds that while Mexican American women's activism often originates when their family and community networks are threatened, their identity continues to transform and in the process the idea of what "political" also transforms. Pardo states, "women link their work in the home, their identification as wives and mothers, and their activism. They are rooted in traditional social identities.. [And] in some cases transformed their identities as they moved beyond the neighborhood boundaries into new public, political arenas' ' (p.22). Through their activism, Mexican American women continue to challenge their roles in both the public and private spheres. It is a dichotomy they are faced with but have managed to find creative ways to use their traditional expectations or cultural ways of being to accomplish larger political work.

Additionally, Vicki L. Ruiz (1987, 1988) groundbreaking publications focused on the narratives of Mexican and Mexican American women who worked in the can factories of the greater Silicon Valley. In doing so, Ruiz placed their stories at the forefront of labor work, giving them agency and as Chaves Garcia explains, “Ruiz brought together [for the first time] labor history, feminist theory, and culture as well as oral history to study the lives of Chicana cannery workers and their ethnic coworkers”. Ruiz casted a spotlight on the history of women, which had been overlooked by past historians.

More recently, Hortencia Jimenez (2010, 2012) analyzes the role of Latina activists in two different communities. First, she examines how Latina immigrants and Mexicanas become involved in grassroots groups in San Jose, CA. Through ethnographic fieldwork and interviews of two grassroots organizations: *Unidos Por La Justicia* and *Mujeres Fuertes*. She later conducts a study on Chicana/Latinas involvement in the immigrant rights movement in Austin, Texas. She describes the notion of ‘doing leadership’ as an action she states, “Doing leadership is not ascribed or static, but rather an action, a process that is relational, non-authoritarian, and non-hierarchical” (p.107). In her study she finds three modes of doing leadership: shared leadership, leadership behind the scenes, and leadership that serves the community. Furthermore, she argues that doing leadership is part of everyday life of Chicana/Latinas, she states, “Chicanas/Latinas are doing leadership as they give birth to ideas, as they build relationships, as they make connections within families and communities” (p.84).

Similarly, Gonzales (2020) ethnographic fieldwork examines the tactics used by Chicana and Black women activists in Chicago. She explains ratchet-rasquache activism as an asset-based approach, “that acknowledges the various knowledges and strengths existent with marginalized,

impoverished communities and uses local resources to build something from something.” (pp. 6-7). Gonzales (2020) explains that through ratchet-rasquache activism women of color activists reimagine their communities and build coalitions, reframe and influence urban redevelopment, and share resources.

Not only do Jimenez and Gonzales uplift the voices of Chicana/Latinas in organizing, but they set forth the importance of continuing to examine and learn from Chicana/Latinas leadership and activism.

Summary

Chavez-Garcia (2013) argues that if we are committed to seeing Chicano History and Chicana History as a field grow and expand:

We must continue to look to other fields for new methodological tools and theories, and we must read and learn what our colleagues are doing in similar fields to enrich the cross-disciplinary networks that were previously established. And continue to open doors and prepare and guide young scholars. (p. 564)

In this spirit, this research aims at preparing future scholars by learning from the narratives of Chicanas, so that they can add to the field of Chicana and Chicano history. But also learn new research tools, through new methodological approaches. Ultimately, they can learn how the advocacy and contributions of their local Chicana leaders are also part of Chicano history. There is also a growing body of literature that focuses on the role of young people as organizers and community leaders. This will be addressed in the next section.

Youth as Co-researchers

Youth played a significant role in this study as co-researchers. Therefore, it is imperative that a closer look at what the scholarship says about youth as co-researchers, that is about doing research with and alongside young people. There is a growing body of literature within the fields of critical pedagogy, critical youth studies and youth participatory action research. These fields focus on giving young people opportunities to amplify their voice, choice and leadership.

Because this study works alongside young people who are majority Latinx, and the primary data is the narratives of Chicanas, it is important to highlight the legacy of youth activism in Chicana/o/x history. Recent social movements have taught us that young people are at the front lines. For example, in the Summer of 2020, at the height of the Black Lives Matter protests following the murder of George Floyd¹ at the hands of Minneapolis police, Redwood City youth led a protest and gathering in the city plaza. It was Tiffany, a young Latina who organized the rally. And Castro, a young Chicano activist, covered the store-front boards with art reflective of Black Lives Matter, fists of empowerment, and an image of George Floyd. It is young people like Tiffany and Jose that show us how intersectional and transformative their social justice and advocacy is today.

Legacy of Latinx Youth Activism

The dominant narrative of young people reinforces a deficit thinking, often placing young people as passive subjects, uninterested in social politics and more concerned with selfish desires. However, scholarship in the legacy of latinx youth activism debunks these myths and

¹ <https://medium.com/@aaavendano/aint-no-power-like-the-power-of-the-youth-f986dd6db1cc>

places young people as active agents more than capable of making change. Negron-Gonzales (2008) states,

Many scholars have argued that in order for young people to be moved to participate in politics, they must experience positive political socialization, establish civic competence, build civic skills, be mobilized through formal and informal networks, and manifest political efficacy and interest. Much of this, at least for young people, happens in the context of the college or university (p.228).

This is the case for the DREAMERS movement which is primarily led by young Latinx people, who make the majority of undocumented students in the United States. Much of the success of the DREAMERS movement is attributed to the young people. While there is still much more our nation can do in support of our undocumented population, not just our students, the DREAMERS movement has had groundbreaking wins that should be celebrated. In California specifically, this includes the passing of the California Dream Act in 2011, which allows undocumented students to apply for state financial aid. The actions primarily led by young people went off to serve as an example for a federal Dream Act. At the same time, as Arely M Zimmerman (2011) points out, “the DREAM Act [movement] has inspired political participation and activism of undocumented youth in unprecedented numbers. Before the DREAM Act, immigrant rights activists had primarily focused their organizing efforts on class action lawsuits to defend the right to education for undocumented students at the state level. While youth have been historically active in these issues, the immigrant rights mobilizations in 2006 opened opportunities for broader youth participation.” These efforts inspire more than just policies but serve to rally more support from other undocumented students and allies. Gains like

the CA DREAM Act and the federal DREAM Act movement tells us about the legacy and momentum of youth advocacy.

Moreover, the legacies of young people during the civil rights movements tell us about their politics and influence from Martin Luther King, Jr. , Malcolm X, to Cesar Chavez. And from the Black Panther Party to the Brown Berets, there were truly a lot of significant movements happening and young people were in the midst. Young people took part in these movements primarily through the student movement, what is now often referred to as the “blowouts” :

Picket signs protested racist school policies and teachers, and called for freedom of speech, the hiring of Mexican American teachers and administrators and classes on Mexican American history and culture. (Munoz, J.R., 2018, p. 38)

Furthermore, Delgado Bernal (1998) uplifts the contributions of women during the high school blowouts. She argues that because their contributions were not thought of the traditional leadership paradigm, their voices were silenced. Her cooperative leadership paradigm then recognizes the many ways in which Chicanas did offer their leadership during this time. She states:

This alternative history of women's participation and leadership also pushes us to consider how we can redefine the categories for studying and participating in community activism. By redefining the leadership paradigm, we may be able to break through dominant ways of thinking and doing and reclaim histories that have been silenced in our communities, as well as shape our future histories to be more inclusive of traditionally silenced voices. (p. 135)

The legacy of student protests in support of Ethnic Studies and relevant curriculum continues to be attacked. As seen through the advocacy of students in Tucson Arizona, and captured in the film, *Precious Knowledge* (2011); the fight for Mexican American Studies in the high schools continues. Otero and Cammarota (2011) point to the ways, young people used social media and new tools to bring support in the movement:

Through the use of social media networking, young people constructed a community that sought progress for Latinos by elevating their political claims grounded on perceived injustice, and defending their ethnic identities. The young people at this protest demonstrated a commitment to exercising their rights as citizens within a cultural community and utilized old and new political forms to publicise their political claims to a global audience. Students incorporated a variety of media and new technologies to manifest their citizenship claims. (p. 646)

Solorzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) draw on Critical Race Theory and LatCrit to develop a framework to understand student activism and resistance. They call it transformational resistance where, “the student holds some level of awareness and critique of her or his oppressive conditions and structures of domination and must be at least somewhat motivated by a sense of social justice” (p. 319). Solorzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) call out two types of transformational resistance, internal and external but explain that at the core is a motivation for social justice. This framework has been employed as a way to understand the resistance and advocacy of students from the 1968’s school walkouts, to the dreamers movement, immigration movement, and most recently the movement for Ethnic Studies.

Critical Pedagogy

Paulo Freire is known as the father of critical pedagogy in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968), where he calls for the transformation of schools and communities. In particular, he criticizes traditional methods of education and calls out the role of the teacher and the student. He calls it the *banking model*, where the teacher is the knowledge holder and depositor of information, and the students are the receivers. Freire proposes a new pedagogy which he calls *problem-posing* education where instead teachers support the need for students to ask questions and challenge their realities. Not just as receivers, but as active participants in their learning. Freire argues this is education for freedom.

In *The Art of Critical Pedagogy*, Duncan Andrade and Morrell (2008) compose a synthesis on the foundational authors and scholars in critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970, 1998; Freire and Macedo, 1987; Shor, 1992; Darder, 1991; McLaren, 1994, 2003b; Giroux, 2001, 2003; hooks, 1994a, 1994b). While Paulo Freire is known as the founding father of critical pedagogy, other foundational scholars often extend his ideas and concepts. Scholars from different fields adopt his ideas to create alternative lenses to apply them to their own epistemologies. For example, the idea of *praxis*, which is one of Freire's main concepts, which scholars continue to expand, question, reinvent and modify. Freire explains praxis as the need for an education that introduces action and reflection in order for the students and teachers to gain critical consciousness. Shor (1992), Darder (2002a, 2002b), and McLaren (2003b) all expand this idea of critical consciousness to include the role of pedagogy that is driven by research, love, empowerment, and knowledge.

For Shor (1992) it is imperative for critical teachers to “research what students know, speak, experience, and feel” (p.30). For Darder love is central to critical pedagogy and it is with true love that authentic collaborations can take place, whereby students, teachers, and the larger school community work together. She says it is with democratic education that “critical commitment to act on behalf of freedom and social justice that serve as a model for their students to discover their own personal power, social transformative potential, and spirit of hope” (p. 30). On the other hand, McLaren argues the role of social reproduction in schools, he says educators must, “explore how schools perpetuate or reproduce the social relationships and attitudes to sustain the existing dominant economic and class relations of the larger society” (p.33). In doing so, educators come to understand how they themselves perpetuate social reproduction, which can lead to their understanding of students' resistance in the classroom. This is what teaching for empowerment can look like.

While these authors continue to also question the role of the teacher in the classroom, they do so through the lens of love, empowerment, and knowledge. Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) further argue. That it is the role of critical pedagogues to challenge the role of school as major sites of social and economic mobility for students and “suggest that schooling must be analyzed as a cultural and historical process in which students are positioned within asymmetric relation of power on the basis of specific race, class, and gender groupings” (Duncan-Andrade and Morrell 2008, p.23), then surely the role of youth in challenging this system should be considered. Critical pedagogy brings forth the role of youth in their own learning, where their desires and questions are essential.

Critical Youth Studies

Cammarota and Fine (2008) explain that critical youth studies “[asserts] that young people have the capacity and agency to analyze their social context, to engage critical research collectively, and to challenge and resist the forces impeding their possibilities for liberation” (p.4). Critical youth studies is often along the lines of urban youth studies, with a focus on marginalized youth of color, because as the literature describes, they are often the ones that are blamed for their conditions. Ginwright and James, (2002) describe “policymakers usually respond to these issues by blaming youth themselves or simply writing them off as a threat to civil society” (p.29). Furthermore, these negative conditions and oppressions, “can trigger depression, hopelessness, and suicidal tendencies” (p. 31). However, critical youth studies argue that youth people continue to stand up to these injustices and are active participants in their communities.

Ginright and Cammarotta (2002) offer a social justice framework as an effective approach for working with urban youth in their exploration of their reality. They argue that a social justice framework contributes to the field of youth development in three ways, “By shifting our attention from individual and psychological frameworks, we gain a richer understanding of the everyday needs and problems confronting young people. [Second], young people must have opportunities to heal from the impact of hostile environmental forces. Third, through critical consciousness and social action (praxis), our model encourages young people to explore causes of community and social issues and act towards addressing social problems” (p.93).

O'Donoghue (2006) explores the role of community-based youth organizations (CBYO's) in providing an alternative site for civic development. She states, CBYO's may represent contacts within which urban youth can transform themselves into powerful public actors and effect change on the very social, political, and economic contexts that contribute to their marginalization. Ginwright and Cammarotta (2007) also point out the role of community-based organizations in "providing youth with access to networks, ideas, and experiences that build individual and collective capacity to struggle for social justice-the chance to engage in critical civic praxis (p. 694).

Youth Participatory Action Research

Youth participatory action research (YPAR) moves beyond critical youth studies because it engages in multi-generational collectives for critical inquiry and action that is housed in youth development settings. (Fine and Cammarota, 2007). Torre and Fine (2006) define (PAR) as "the understanding that people-especially those who have experienced historical oppression-hold deep knowledge about their lives and experiences, and should help shape the question, [and] frame the interpretations".

Caraballo, Lozenski, Lyiscot, Morrell (2017) define YPAR as a methodological, pedagogical and epistemological tool. They lay out four entry points in the literature review of YPAR: academic learning and literacies, cultural and critical epistemological, youth development and leadership, youth organizing and civic engagement. In YPAR pedagogies learning environments add to the research in different aspects, this includes the environment in which the research was implemented, the configuration of the participatory members, and the critical multiliteracies in the research.

D. Scorza et al (2017) discuss YPAR as the conduit for critical pedagogy, they argue, “Although critical theory alone provides educational researchers the tools to challenge structural dominance it often fails to allow for the creation of practical solutions to many of the challenges faced by and within marginalized communities. YPAR offers a corrective to this, effectively informing educational research while providing participants and scholars a process to connect theory to a methodologically grounded approach” (p.144).

Summary

The legacies of Latinx youth advocacy and organizing demonstrates that young people have always been active agents of change. Through critical pedagogy, critical youth development practices and YPAR, educators can aid young people in activating their agency and help them understand their resistance as part of social justice and a collective movement towards liberation.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Reinstatement of the Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to highlight the voices of Chicanas in a community that has long experienced inequities, gentrification and economic displacement. With youth as co-researchers, this study seeks to offer a historical narrative of the contributions, experiences, and opportunities of Latinos in North Fair Oaks, through the narratives of Chicanas. This section will introduce the guiding methodology in this qualitative study, layout the research design and research questions, and present the ethical considerations of the researcher.

As a deeply involved community member, I am constantly negotiating my role as a scholar who wants to learn more about the history, contributions and practices of the residents of NFO. Specifically, the community activism I have witnessed in the last decade. I look to Genevieve Negrón-Gonzales' work with undocumented student activists. Through her research she explains her unique role, "I participated as a scholar-activist and participant observer, learning from the [Dreamers] movement, that in my estimation, had the potential to meaningfully change the political terrain of the state" (Negrón-Gonzales, 2016, p.271) The role of scholar-activist provides a space where scholarship, research, and activism can intertwine. As an active community member, this is the type of work that energizes me. My work in the community is not separate from my role as a scholar. In fact, it gives me an opportunity to further theorize and understand critical coraje as a space of resistance and transformation. As a scholar-activist, I aim to learn from my own experiences and the efforts of my community as I see many opportunities for leadership and advocacy.

Research Design and Methodology

With youth as co-researchers, and guided by a Chicana/Feminist methodology, this study sought to apply what Alma Itze Flores (2017) calls a *muxerista portraiture* methodology through the collection of narratives of Chicana/Latinas. The goal of *muxerista portraiture* is to search for the goodness in the lives of Chicana/Latinas by painting portraits that are committed to social justice and challenging all forms of subordination through a Chicana feminist inquiry. Flores looks to Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997), who explains:

portraiture is a method framed by the traditions and values of the phenomenological paradigms, sharing many of the techniques, standards, and goals of ethnography. But it pushes against the constraints of those traditions and practices in its explicit effort to combine empirical and aesthetic description, in its focus on the convergence of narrative and analysis, in its goal of speaking to broader audiences beyond the academy, in its standards of authenticity rather than reliability and validity, and in its explicit recognition of the use of the self as the primary research instrument for documenting and interpreting the perspectives and experiences of the people and the culture being studied. (p. 14)

In this way, portraiture provides significant data that conventional research might miss or even dismiss. For example, Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) points out the ways the portraitist (the researcher) must search beyond capturing the story, but to also look for the ways that the person moves, their gestures, the sound of their voice, and what she calls the subtle details of human experience. This is essentially all part of the narrative and what makes whole authentic

portraiture (p.14). Even more, the narrative connects to a wider audience and lives not only within the academic setting.

With conventional research there are clear lines of separation between researcher and subject. Conventional research emphasizes the many ways biases need to be eliminated. With portraiture, the relationship between portraitist and actor is essential, because it is through relationships that “access is sought and given, connections made, contracts of reciprocity and responsibility developed, trust built, intimacy negotiated, data collected, and knowledge constructed” (Lawrence-Footlight, 1994, p.135). This is essentially what Wilson (2008) says is part of an indigenous and decolonizing methodology in *Research is Ceremony*. He states “shared relationships allow for a strengthening of new relationships. This allows you to become familiar or comfortable with the person. Getting to know their relationship to other people or spaces is an appropriate way of finding out about them (Wilson, 2008, p. 84). As I will explain in the participants section, in this study, youth met with women who I share relationships with. A *muxerista portraiture* allowed for previously established relationships, myself to the youth and myself to the women, to not only connect in a shared connection with me but also to the community of North Fair Oaks. In this study, relationships were key!

There are five elements of portraiture - context, voice, relationships, emergent themes, and aesthetic whole (Flores, 2017, p.76). Flores incorporates these elements in her *muxerista portraiture* and explains how they are informed by a Chicana feminist theory, not as a replacement or an alternative, but an extension to the perspective and methodology of portraiture. Flores states, “muxerista portraiture is a mestizaje theory that blends theoretical and methodological boundaries-it provides us with a new approach to paint rich portraits of

Chicanas, a form of Chicana Feminist narrative inquiry” (Flores, 2017, p. 76). This partnership and new approach is the type of inquiry this qualitative study sought to engage in. It is a unique blending of two qualitative methodologies that truly speak to the goal of this research project that goes beyond the simple collection of narratives of the participants. Rather this study sought to collect full narratives that paint a broader portrait of Chicana advocacy- in their voice and their contributions to their local community, as a way to disrupt and challenge all forms of subordination.

While my analytical lens was guided by *muxerista portraiture*, I drew on another methodology to capture the work alongside young people² in the collection of community narratives. Aspects of youth participatory action research (YPAR) inform the methodological approach. As the literature explains,

YPAR challenges who has the right to produce and disseminate knowledge by placing the students at the center of knowledge production. Perhaps the most powerful aspect of YPAR is that it creates the conditions for young people to step back from their world and see that what they might have taken for granted is something that can be transformed. (Caraballo, et al, 2017, p. 315)

This study worked with young people in aspects of the research design and collection of narratives of women. In this way, young people took ownership of their learning as co-researchers and engaged with their community through a unique opportunity. Youth from the North Fair Oaks community worked alongside me to learn about the community, why collecting

² I interchangeable use youth and young people throughout this dissertation

women's stories are important, their role in this research and to the community, refine interview questions, and collected narratives over the course of five to six months (see Table 1).

Taking a step back from working with the youth. I used the five elements of portraiture to conduct a thorough analysis of the findings and narratives of the women. The elements of context, voice, relationships, emergent themes, and aesthetic served as analytical lenses for which to further paint a broader portrait of Chicanas in the North Fair Oaks. The process will be explained in the Data Analysis section below.

Restatement of Research Questions

The guiding research questions in this study were:

1. How do we understand Little Michoacan as a community that is built through the advocacy of Chicana/Latinas?
2. How do the residents of Little Michoacan navigate coraje in their community?
3. What is illuminated through an intergenerational research encuentro in which youth capture the narratives of mujer elders?

Research Setting and Participants

This study is specifically highlighting the HERstory of North Fair Oaks, an unincorporated community in San Mateo County. Over 70% of the residents of North Fair Oaks identify as Latino/a, many of them from the same southern state of Michoacan, Mexico. In 2017, Redwood City became sister cities with Aguililla, Michoacan. The history of Redwood City and Aguililla dates back to the late 1940's when the first recorded immigrants from Aguililla arrived

in Redwood City³ Because of this close connection, many of the locals refer to North Fair Oaks as *Little Mexico*, *Little Michoacan*, and even *Little Aguililla*.

The North Fair Oaks is densely populated with an estimate of 15,454 people. Many of them live in crowded conditions. ⁴Which leads to physical illness, higher risk of diseases, and mental health conditions. A look at median household incomes of North Fair Oaks and its surrounding neighborhoods, puts the context into perspective. North Fair Oaks has a median household income of \$71,558, Redwood City \$99,027, while Menlo Park is \$132,928 and Atherton \$250,000.

The demographics and data of North Fair Oaks only tells us only a small part of the story. The goal of this project is to demonstrate that there is so much more to this community. Despite it being a disenfranchised community. There is a rich history of immigration, significant Latinx contribution, and many working class families surviving and thriving. Even during a global pandemic, when COVID19 hit our community in 2020, families continued to work in many of the essential areas that allowed our economy to continue: food services, fast food chains, restaurants, grocery markets, janitorial services, childcare, nannying, house cleaning etc. All while having to navigate uncertainties and economic distress. However, their contributions often get overlooked.

³ <http://www.redwoodcity.org/departments/city-manager/city-manager-s-initiatives/rci-sister-cities>

⁴ San Mateo Healthy Housing Data reported 24% of households in North Fair Oaks experience overcrowdedness

A place of hope for many of the young people and their families in North Fair Oaks is the Siena Youth Center (SYC) and the St. Francis Center. SYC is an after-school provider and community center where over 100 young people gather to learn, play, and build community, among other things. This includes young people who attend the Holy Family School (HFS), a private charter school in the St. Francis Center. HFS has two cohorts of students, a 3rd grade class and a 7th grade class. These students started their educational journey at HSF since Kindergarten- and have been together ever since. Many, if not all of the students live in the surrounding apartment complexes and homes that are also administered by the St. Francis Center's Housing division. As explained in their website, "the St. Francis Center has gently shifted our primary focus from direct services to acquiring housing that can be turned into homes for low and extremely low-income families. Currently, we operate 135 units of extremely low, very low, and low-income apartments in the North Fair Oaks Neighborhood and Downtown Redwood City" (<https://stfrancisrwc.org/services-programs/affordable-housing/>). Having been a resident in this community, I know it's a tight knit community, where many of the residents have lived for over 10 years, if not more. Residents often walk to get services like free groceries and clothing from the St. Francis Center, tend their garden beds in the community gardens, walk their child to the Siena Youth Center, and even participate in exercise classes at the center. They are all within a block from each other.

Prior to the pandemic, the plan was to recruit youth who attended the Siena Youth Center. I was specifically interested in SYC because of its important role in the community, but also because of my personal long-time involvement. I have been an adult participant and volunteer since it opened its doors in 2012. The center is unique because of its ability to engage and embrace the community as a whole. I believe SYC is providing the space that many of our

young people need to thrive. Even during the pandemic, students logged in remotely for academic support and connection. SYC even served as a pilot location for a county-wide initiative to improve internet access in the immediate community. SYC also served as a testing site for COVID and as a go to resource hub for residents during the pandemic to get help applying for rental assistance, connecting with food programs, learning about the vaccine etc. It is a trusting space for many of the residents

The 7th grade students of Holy Family School have an extra layer of connection to SYC. In the summer of 2020, their teacher Mr. Torres became the new Director of Programs at SYC. When school started for them in the fall, students had hybrid courses and used the space at SYC for much needed community, including in-person support classes and tutoring. Being that I was already connected to SYC and HFS, when I reached out to Mr. Torres, the 7th grade teacher and SYC Program Director, he was excited and supportive of the project and invited me to teach a fall course as part of the 7th graders elective courses. The first session of the Chicana HERstory course began September 11th via zoom. 13 students joined the class: Julietta, Karina, Emily, Sophia, Diana, Lesley, Frida, Albert, Emmanuel, Diego, Daniel, Pablo and Ryan.

In this section I will describe the work of the colectiva by sharing our process and what our sessions together looked like. I will then introduce the research participants in this study, in sections, the youth, followed by the mujeres. I will then share the process of data collection and how I analyzed the data.

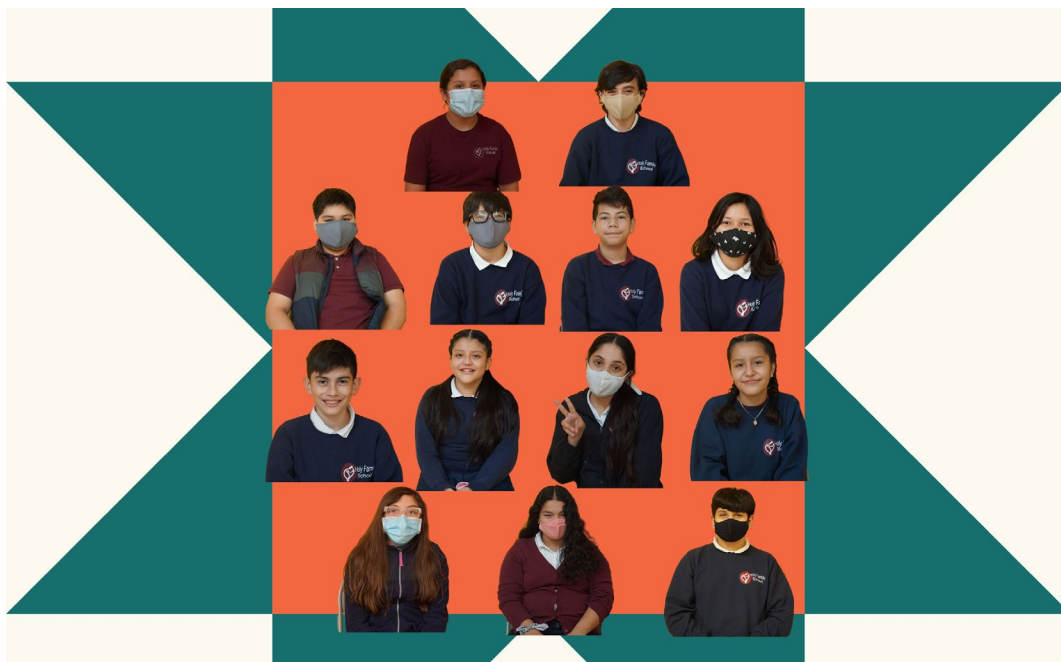
Figure 5*La Colectiva*

Image of youth participants in the study.

Research Participants

There were two sets of participants in this study, this first set includes the 13 7th grade students of Holy Family School. They will be referred to as students, youth, La Colectiva, and or Chicana HERstory class. The second includes the mujeres of North Fair Oaks who were interviewed by the youth and will be introduced later in this section.

La Colectiva

Parameters for the La Colectiva included:

1. Student in the 7th grade Holy Family School

2. They attend the Chicana HERstory class once a week through December 2020
3. They join me in the journey of interviewing a mujer of NFO

On the first day of class, I introduced the research project and the goals for our Chicana HERstory class. I invited them to participate in the research as a colectiva. I intentionally use colectiva instead of the research team because of the power dynamics that conventional research brings forth. A colectiva literally translates to collective. I refer to the colectiva, when I speak about the young people and myself, the research team and/or will use Chicana HERStory when speaking about the class. I am inspired by the work of Mestizo Arts and Activism (MAA) Collective (<https://maacollective.org>) a university-community partnership that engages young people in researching their own community, “Our collective process is characterized by exchange and negotiation. Youth researchers and adult mentors have a stake in the project, in terms of the integrity of the researcher, the personal and political implications involved in representation, the production of knowledge, and the potential impacts” (Cahill et al., 2008). In this way, naming our work as a colectiva, also prompts me to be continually conscious of my role as the adult facilitator, which I will discuss more in detail in the ethical considerations section. In our first session together, we talked about the idea of a colectiva. This is also an important aspect of the work of activist scholars as explained by Cann and DeMeulenaere (2020), “much of the reflection of activist scholars considers the relationships and differentials of power in the research process. Breaking down the hierarchical divisions and making the process of research more socially just are important aspects of our research and important to reflect upon” (Cann & DeMeulenaere, 2020, p. 80).

I shared with them my vision for us working together, sharing stories, and thus sharing knowledge, space and leadership. I was transparent with them and shared with them the timeline of our Chicana HERStory class, seen below in Figure 6.

Figure 6.

Timeline of Chicana HERstory

Week	Date	Topic + Goals	Notes/Materials
1	September 11, 2020	Introductions and Overview of La Colectiva Goals	
2	September 18, 2020	Local HERStory + Why it Matters	
3	September 25, 2020	Understanding Testimonios	
4	October 2, 2020	Research Design, Questions, and Women Participants	
5	October 9, 2020	Digital Tools and Media	
6	October 16, 2020	Gathering of Testimonios	
7	October 23, 2020	NO SESSION	Meet with your group to finalize questions, roles, and logistics
8	October 30, 2020	Gathering of Testimonios	
9	November 6, 2020	Analysis of Testimonios	
10	November 13, 2020	Analysis of Testimonios	
12	November 20, 2020	Analysis of Testimonios	
13	November 27, 2020	NO SESSION 'Turkey Day'	Think about what and how you want to share what you learned with the community
14	December 4, 2020	Our Offer to the Community	
15	December 11, 2020	Our Offer to the Community	

Image of weekly schedule and timeline for Chicana HERstory course

Figure 7*Mujeres of North Fair Oaks*

Note: Portrait Images of Participants in this study

The second set of participants were the mujeres of North Fair Oaks. Their narratives collected by the youth, serve as the primary data in this study. I refer to them as participants, women, or mujeres. These participants were previously selected by me.

My parameters included:

1. Identifies as a Chicana/Latina Woman/Mujer
2. Lives/Works/Studies/Volunteers or has some personal connection to North Fair Oaks
3. Available and Interested to meet with a group of young people

4. Available and Interested in sharing their stories with the young people and myself

As mentioned previously, I have lived in North Fair Oaks and the Redwood City community for about 10 years and have served in several capacities. This includes sitting on volunteer run coalitions, county sponsored workgroups, teaching after school programs and youth circles and helping coordinate an annual Latinx Youth Conference. Recently, I began to work at the local community center where I work with community-based organizations and nonprofits to directly address community needs. I help build programs and establish services and processes to better serve our community. With my strong community connections, I have met many great leaders, including mujeres who are leaders in nonprofits, members of neighborhood initiatives, etc. This includes the seven women who were selected to be in this study. Below are the bios and introductions of the seven mujeres who participated in this study:

Linda Lopez- Linda is a longtime community activist and advocate for North Fair Oaks and communities of color. She has formerly worked for the San Mateo County Superior Court and the Service Employees International Union, Local 521. Linda has an extended commitment of service, which dates back to her high school years when she would volunteer with the Farm Workers Union and protest against the U.S. intervention in the Vietnam War. Currently, she serves as a member of the North Fair Oaks Community Council, San Mateo County Housing Community Development Committee, the Executive Board of El Concilio of San Mateo County and the North Fair Oaks Community Plan Implementation Committee. Linda's community activism began early on when as a child she would march alongside her father demanding for workers rights. As a college student, she organized with classmates in support of Ethnic Studies

programs and Chicano Studies. She continues to be a strong voice for the people of North Fair Oaks and mentors young activists daily.

Ninfa Y. Zuno- Ninfa was born in Veracruz, Mexico and immigrated to Redwood City in 1987, where her second child was born. Ninfa is an educator at heart. Her first degree is in Chemistry Pharmacology; which is how she met her husband Secundino, who was then her thesis professor. Ninfa started her career in education teaching the subjects of Chemistry and Mathematics in High School. 24 years later she received her bilingual teaching credential through the Redwood City School District and taught in Hoover School for 18 years. She then started working in Staff Development at the district. Ninfa began her community advocacy as a parent. She volunteered at her children's schools and was encouraged by a teacher to pursue her Bilingual Teacher credential. Here she saw first-hand the need for parents to be trained on ways they can become involved in the education of their children and to support them in their academic success. This is ultimately what led her to cof-und Familias Unidas, an organization she runs with her husband.

Gabriela Valencia- Gaby was born in a small town in the state of Michoacán, México. She came to the US as a teenager and later arrived in North Fair Oaks in 1997 when she and her husband purchased their home and where they still live today. Gaby began volunteering as a translator in one of the local clinics and it is where she discovered the need for more Spanish speaking nurse practitioners. She is now a nurse in the North Fair Oaks Clinic where she is able to connect with her community and advocates daily for the overall wellness and health of her community. Gaby has been involved in the community as a member of the NFO Community

Council, funding the North Fair Oaks Community Alliance and encouraging residents to participate and raise their voices.

Mary Martinez- Mary is a North Fair Oaks native. She is currently the program director at Generations United, a non-profit organization serving the North Fair Oaks. Mary has served in different organizations over the last 15 years in Redwood City and North Fair Oaks since graduating from the UC Santa Cruz. She enjoys bringing families and community members together to provide a network of support for the students, helping maximize their potential for success. Her relational connectedness proved critical over the past few years as the district threatened to close down the school due to declining enrollment and revenues. Advocating tirelessly, and helping elevate the voices of the parent community before the district, the decision to close the school was reversed and enrollment numbers went back up. Mary is a proud mom to two elementary school children, themselves members of the student body of the Redwood City School District. Mary has also served in the North Fair Oaks Community Council.

Graciela Eulate- Graciela's parents and grandparents all came to the U.S. from Mexico. Her father's family picked cotton in the hot fields of Arizona; her mother's family emigrated to San Jose, California in search of better opportunities. Education was very important in her household when she was growing up. Her parents insisted that a good education opened doors to many pathways and opportunities. Graciela moved to North Fair Oaks in 1998 when she started a teaching career. She decided to get involved with the community after a trip to Cuba where she met members of neighborhood associations that addressed neighborhood issues. She started attending NFO Community Council meetings, spoke out about neighborhood blight and got involved in various committees. She is currently involved with a community art group called

CCNFO (Colectiva Cultural NFO) and is a board member of a new non-profit community outreach group called NFO Community Alliance. Graciela is a working artist, loves making tamales at Christmastime with her family and plays jazz on her flute.

Angelica Rodriguez -Blanco- Angelica, is a first-generation Xicana and North Fair Oaks/Redwood City native with over 10 years of experience working in Bay Area community health centers and non-profits. Her career experiences range from health educator and case manager to grant writer and operations manager. Her passions include health equity, traditional medicine, youth development and the arts. Angelica is a former Koshland Fellow and co-founded the North Fair Oaks Youth Initiative at Siena Youth Center with a group of community members. She is also co-founder of Curanderas Sin Fronteras and helps co-facilitate Xinachtli, a young girls circle at Siena Youth Center. Angelica has a Bachelor's of Science in Sociology from Santa Clara University and a Master's of Public Health from the University of California Berkeley. Angelica is a mother of two and wants her children to enjoy the beauty of her hometown. She is also part of a local neighborhood coalition that seeks to bring more art and music to highlight the culture of the community.

Beatriz Cerillo- Beatriz has lived in North Fair Oaks all her life. And her family has a deep history in California. Her maternal grandparents settled in Santa Barbara in the early 1900's after the Mexican revolution. They worked hard, had their own home/farm and had a big family. Beatriz says the depression era pushed her family to return to Mexico and later returned. Her family experienced hardships, poverty, and health related issues. But seeking prosperity was always a part of them. Beatriz says it was an aunt who found domestic labor and housekeeping to wealthy homeowners in Redwood City gave her mom sponsorship to settle in Redwood City.

Beatriz is a librarian at one of the local Elementary Schools. Beatriz is a part of the North Fair Oaks Community Council.

Both sets of participants are contributors to their community in their own way. This research will connect them in an intergenerational encuentro. Some of them may or may not be familiar with each other but because of their advocacy and involvement in the community some of them might have crossed paths, been in demonstrations together, or attended similar events and meetings. Below I will lay out how I gathered the data and analysis of their encuentros and narratives.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection was done in three ways. The first is through the overall research experience with the youth, which I named *la colectiva*, through the Chicana HERstory class. This was a four month class, where we met once a week virtually and in person, covering several topics to prepare them for their intergenerational encuentro. The second, is the actual narratives of the *mujeres* of North Fair Oaks, either captured by the youth or myself through encuentros and interview gatherings. Finally, using the lens of the five elements of portraiture - context, voice, relationships, emergent themes, and aesthetic whole (Flores, 2017, p.76), I collected and transcribed the interviews into full testimonio/narratives of 7 *mujeres*.

La Colectiva

I was particularly interested in seeing how the *muxerista* portraiture looks like with youth as co-researchers. Therefore, I recorded our zoom meetings, and kept ethnographic field notes during my time with *la colectiva*, to capture our own *platicas*, encuentros, lessons learned, and

opportunities. These notes will be overall reflections and observations of the methodology, what is working, what is not, the questions that come up, and roadblocks encountered.

For the Chicana HERStory the following data was collected:

- 4 recorded zoom sessions
- Reflection notes from my sessions with La Colectiva
- 2 Class Community Poems
- Class artifacts including photos, their own digital collages, and a poem that they submitted

Having worked in youth development for over 15 years, I have learned that scaffolding is an essential tool when working alongside youth. This process allows young people to take smaller actionable steps towards completing their goals. In the design of this research study, I was conscious of the need for them to receive specific training and knowledge before they get into the actual collection of narratives. Youth were guided through 5 sessions in preparation of data collection or encuentros. Table 1 demonstrates the outline of sessions for the Colectiva- the Chicana HERstory course. These sessions included reviewing the goals and intentions behind the research study, understanding why the study is important to the youth as individuals, as a colectiva, and to the community. I will provide a general overview of what happened in each of the sessions with the youth.

In the first session, I shared my vision for us working as a Colectiva. This session set the expectations and community goals/norms for the Chicana HERstory class. We also spent some

time talking about our shared love for our community of North Fair Oaks. We ended the session by creating a Senses Poem (see appendix).

In session 2, I shared a little bit on the History of North Fair Oaks and tested their knowledge using Kahoot!; an interactive web based game for quizzes. I wanted to see what they already knew about their community and was pretty amazed at how much they already knew. For example, 8 out of 13 knew that North Fair Oaks is an unincorporated community. All of them recognized affordable housing as one of the most pressing issues in North Fair Oaks. And they identified the Library, Siena Youth Center, Holy Family School, and the Fair Oaks Community Center as local resources.

Figure 8

A Cultural Celebration

NORTH FAIR OAKS FESTIVAL



A Cultural Celebration

Images of the North Fair Oaks Festival

In Session 3 we talked about identity and terms. The youth viewed several short videos to understand the terms Chicano/a, Latinx, and Hispanic. I also introduced testimonio as a tool and the method of *muxerista* portraiture. In session 4, I also shared my own testimonio with the

students, by reading a part of my introduction for this dissertation and sharing family pictures. We also created portraits of Frida Kahlo together. As seen on the picture below.

By session 5, we started getting ready for their interviews with the mujeres. I shared with them four tips for interviewing: Talk about big important subjects, ask open ended questions, ask followup questions, and listen. The youth practiced asking each other questions and began drafting the questions for the mujeres. In session 6, I collected the questions that the youth had drafted and we combined them into themes. The interview protocol is seen on Appendix 1, and includes the following themes: Advocacy and Inspiration, Early Life in NFO, NFO Today, Childhood and Growing Up.

By session 8, the youth received the name and bio of the mujer they were going to interview. The youth took some time to find more information on their mujer using the internet and began to identify the specific questions they were going to ask. I then began setting up their encuentros. This took some time as each mujer had different days and times of availability. Combined with my own availability and the youth's availability. I was able to arrange encuentros that took place during our time in the Chicana HERstory class. 3 encuentros took place during our sessions, 2 took place in person with the youth on a different day, and 2 of them were collected by me, since these mujeres were not available during the time we had the Chicana HERstory sessions.

In the last two sessions, the youth were asked to share either a collage, poem, or creative reflection on their time with the mujer they interviewed. See Appendix. We had a gallery walk on the last day of class to see each other's work. The youth also created one final sense poem on

their reflections of participating in the Chicana HERstory class. This will be shared in the next chapter.

Mujeres of NFO

La colectiva captured the narratives of mujeres of NFO in small groups through 1-hour platicas. While, youth were encouraged to use digital cameras to video record the testimonios and/or take photographs of the women and any personal materials they want to share with them including photos of their families, activism, work, news articles, and documents that highlight their story. Because of the circumstances with COVID, and not being able to meet in person or spend as much time with each other, these items were not collected. However, the following items were collected and serve as the primary sources:

- 5 transcribed, recorded zoom interviews with 5 participants
- 2 transcribed, recorded in person interviews with 2 participants
- 6 responses to a follow-up questionnaire
- My personal notes, reflections, and observations during the interviews

The goal was to collect three to five narratives as a colectiva, have the youth do an initial analysis and share their findings with the community at large. 7 narratives were collected. While the youth did not get to do an initial analysis, they were able to reflect on their experiences participating in La Colectiva and in the Chicana HERstory class. Their reflections are collected in a community poem that will be shared in the next chapter.

While *muxerista* portraiture is the main methodology for this study. I wanted to extend this tool to include young people as co-researchers whereby, “young people learn through research about complex power-relations, histories of struggle, and consequences of oppression. They begin to re-vision and denaturalize the realities of their social worlds and then undertake forms of collective challenge based on the knowledge garnered through their critical inquiries” (Cammarota & Fine, 2008). In order to allow young people to question, re-imagine new realities, and paint portraits of Chicanas, the interview questions for the narratives were co-created by the youth. (See Appendix 1)

Following the collection of all the narratives, I used the elements of *muxerista* portraiture to better understand the realities and lived experiences of Chicana/Latinas. Specifically, I practiced the analysis lens of a *Muxerista* portraitist which is, “a dynamic and ongoing interchange between process and product, dedicated to the searching for the goodness in the lives of Chicanas/Latinas” (Flores, 2017, p. 2). Below are the five elements, further explained:

1. Context: Alma Itze Flores explains that in a *muxerista* portraiture, context examines the intersectional experiences of Chicana/Latinas and to acknowledge how systems of oppression affect their everyday lives, while also recognizing the many ways they have resisted, recreate possibilities and new opportunities (Flores, 2017).
2. Voice: Voice is about translating both literally and figuratively the languages, cultures, and spaces Chicana/Latinas take on. Flores explains, “a *muxerista* portraitist should negotiate and reflect how to translate voice, keeping in mind how some things may not be translatable, and that participants may not want certain aspects translated or disclosed” (Flores, 2017, p.2).

3. Relationships: Flores (2017) uses Anzaldua's concept of spiritual activism which refers to the relationship between God or a creator and as a call to action. She says it is the ethic of interconnectedness that motivates Chicana/Latinas towards working for social change. Furthermore, "To create authentic portraits, we must nurture relationships that allow for openness, vulnerability, and intimacy" (p.2).
4. Emergent Themes: Flores (2017) refers to the idea of cultural intuition as a tool for identifying emergent themes while doing muxerista portraits. "She must consider facets that are often distinctive of the Chicana/Latina experience like dichos, corridos, and religious/spiritual symbols. She should account for community memory and collective history and understand the significance of cultural rituals" (p.3).
5. Aesthetic Whole: Aesthetic whole is about ensuring we paint whole portraits of Chicana/Latinas. Flores draws on Anzaldua's Coyolxauhqui imperative. Coyolxauhqui the Aztec goddess of the moon who was murdered by her brother. Her body broken into pieces, reminds us of the need for healing and "put together the fragments of identities and spirits that have been dispersed through the data analysis process" (p.3). A muxerista portraiture, aims at "putting Coyolxauhqui back together by creating stories of wholeness and goodness" (p.3).

Ethical Considerations

As a youth development practitioner, I have a connection with the Siena Youth Center and Holy Family School as a former program partner and facilitator. My connection expands over 10 years from program facilitator, to volunteer and participant. I am also the wife of the former program director, who left his position in the Summer of 2020. The best way to

summarize my unique connection and positionality in this study is what Sofia Villenas (1996) explains as “the colonizer/colonized” dilemma, “the ‘native’ ethnographer must deal with her own marginalizing experiences and identities in relation to dominant society. This ‘native’ ethnographer is potentially both the colonizer, in her university cloak, and the colonized, as a member of the very community that is made ‘other’ in her research” (p.712). Villenas calls us ‘native’ researchers to continually question our own privileged positions. This is why I am intentionally naming our research group a colectiva. It reminds me to be conscious of the many ways I carry privilege, as an adult facilitator, university graduate student, wife of the director etc. It forces me to check-in with the youth and ensure they are being included in the research decisions. Villenas recontextualizes the way qualitative researchers have theorized about this type of repositioning and manipulation of identities.

In navigating this colonizer/colonized dilemma, I also realize the ways my positionality and connection to SYC and the community at large gives me an insider/outsider perspective that is unique. Beyond the tensions, this unique perspective gives me a richer background and data than any outside researcher can gather. Because I have built relationships with the youth and the community members over time. I especially love the way Michelle Tellez explains this contradiction “We need to acknowledge the multiple subjectivities of the researcher, subject, and communities. Thus, I cannot remove myself from the research process and must instead place myself in the center among those involved in creating this knowledge” (Tellez, 2005, p.49). Flores (2017) also points to this through *muxerista* portraiture and the idea of Chicana cultural intuition and voice, one of the 5 elements in her methodology. She states “cultural intuition focuses on the distinct insights that Chicana researchers bring to the research process... we must be critically reflective of the assumptions, life experiences, and values that frame what we see

and do not see in our research” (Flores, 2017, p. 69). My identity as a Chicana is not a limitation but rather a strength in this research that I need to lean on as I conduct this research.

Furthermore, my connection and relationships with my participants and the research site will carry certain assumptions as I develop the analysis of the findings. But they too are sources of strength that will help me further understand what I find and not find in this study.

Summary

In this chapter, I introduced muxerista portraiture, the main methodology and lens for which I used in the collection and analysis of the narratives of mujer participants in this study. I explained that I worked alongside youth- La Colectiva, to collectively gather the narratives of the mujeres of Little Michoacan. Although I am personally connected to the location, site, and participants of this study, this is not a limitation, but rather a strength; which gives me unique insights in this study.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to center the voices of *mujeres* in North Fair Oaks, who through their organizing and life experiences have shaped a community that has been cast aside for too long. This study provided me, as a researcher, an opportunity to work alongside youth to collect the narratives of these powerful *mujeres*. Essentially, it has been a study within a study. The first layer of the study was the co-collection of the narratives. As we embarked on this study, the central focus was the *mujeres* stories of organizing against gentrification and displacement. As noted earlier, this was the main purpose behind this study. However, as the research progressed the experiences of the youth involved became part of the study.

Therefore, the second layer of the study was my documenting and observing the youth undertake this important process. I accompanied the youth as they attended *encuentros* with the *mujeres* and collected their stories. One of my goals was to understand the overall experiences of the young people in their role as co-researchers. Specifically, I wanted to explore what the students felt and learned during the collection of the narratives or what I am calling “intergenerational *encuentros*” and during the course sessions. Finally, I wanted to document their overall takeaways and learnings.

To honor the two distinct and overlapping layers of research, I present the findings in two parts. In part one, I share the primary findings from the narratives of the *mujeres* of North Fair Oaks, in their authentic wholeness, using the lens of *muxerista* portraiture. I then present the lessons learned from this “study within a study.” This data arose from the time spent with *La Colectiva* and serves as secondary data.

Mujeres of Little Michoacán

In this section, I attempt to capture the aesthetic wholeness of each woman's story by “putting the pieces together.” By this I mean that I take the responses the women gave to the young people’s questions and weave them together to form a complete story. By sharing their full narratives in their entirety, my aim is to highlight the ‘goodness’ in the lives of the mujeres of Little Michoacan. In line with muxerista portraiture, Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) defines ‘goodness’ in research as “an intentional process that seeks to illuminate what is affirming and vigorous, yet always assumes that expressing goodness is tied with imperfections” (Lawrence-Lightfoot, as cited in Flores, 2017 p. 2).

Sharing the ‘goodness’ in the lives of the mujeres of Little Michoacan is about centering their voices and uplifting the strength and power of the residents, through their community organizing. By sharing the “goodness,” I aim to seek justice and validity in their contributions to Little Michoacan. I also seek to share the ‘goodness’ in the process itself, in the collection of the stories; which came with its set of challenges and imperfections. This is further explored in Part 2 of this chapter and my time with the youth.

To capture the narratives of mujeres, youth worked in small groups and were assigned a participant to meet with. Their encuentros were held virtually, over zoom, and two of them in person. In their small groups, the youth took turns gathering the interviews of the mujeres through questions and answers they themselves developed. Following the encuentros, I gathered the interviews collected by the youth. The mujeres’ responses are what the Latina Feminist Group refers to as ‘papelitos guardados,’ or “kept notes.” Their responses, or papelitos, are a

collection of contemplated thoughts and feelings, often made in isolation that are kept in one's memory and stored away in safe places waiting for the time you can return to them for review, analysis, and reflection that happens upon sharing with others (Latina Feminist Group, 2001).

I organized these 'papelitos guardados' into full narratives or testimonios. This practice is also in line with the goals of testimonio as a methodology (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012):

As a process, *testimoniar* (to give testimony) is the act of recovering *papelitos guardados*- previous experience otherwise silenced or untold- and unfolding them into a narrative that conveys personal, political, and social realities. One's *testimonio* reveals an epistemology of truths and how one has come to understand them. *Testimonio* bridges or serves to connect generations of displaced and disenfranchised communities across time. (Delgado Bernal et al, 2012, p. 365).

By sharing the complete narratives of the seven mujeres, my hope is that they reveal the collective experience of Chicana/Latinas of North Fair Oaks and convey the personal, political, and social realities of those who advocate for and call Little Michoacan "home."

Figure 9

Table of Participants

Name	Identity	Interviewed By
Angelica Rodriguez-Blanco	Xicana	Diego and Karina
Beatriz Cerillo	Chicana	Sophia and Pablo
Gabriela Valencia	Mexicana/Latina	Ana
Graciela Eulate	Latina	Julieta and Ryan
Linda Lopez	Chicana	Ana
Mary Martinez	Mexicana	Albert, Diana, Frida
Ninfa Zuno	Latina, Mexicana	Emmanuel and Leslie

Mujeres of NFO- Participant Table

Note: Image of table list of participants, their identity and who interviewed them

Linda Lopez

Community Warrior and Architect for Change

“Sigue Adelante”

Figure 10

Linda



Note: Portrait of Linda Lopez

My inspiration for advocacy came at an early age about 56 years ago, while I was still in high school. At Sequoia High School, somehow I understood the concept of not just working by yourself, but that there is strength in numbers. That is why I first started getting together with others, and that fed my advocacy. It was working with groups, with common interests and goals and knowing that we were stronger together. And I just started to do the work. I don't know where that came from, I was only 16. I know that one of the factors, though, when I was 16 was my very, very progressive art teacher. His name was Mr. Carter and at that time there was an anti

-war movement and a group called Citizens Against Racism. It was a Redwood City group of Redwood City people, and they started organizing to get rid of the napalm plant at the Redwood City port. They were operating a war plant that produced napalm that was being sent to Vietnam.

So that was the actual single activity and protest and that's where I started. But It was working with others and advocating for what I believe in. It made me feel like I was making a difference, that I was on the right track. Again, at 16 and nowadays 16-year-olds now, they have a totally different type of mentality. But a 16-year old in the 60s at Sequoia High School. I'm not really sure where my inspiration came from, but I knew that my advocacy was going to make the difference, and so I stuck with it.

My best friend's (Karen Kalyani) father, at that time was editor of a very progressive magazine called *Ramparts*. So he was working with Warren Hinkle, very progressive people back then, Warren Hinkel, Ralph Giuliani. And their job was to put the word out against the war, and that's what they did. I would join, believe it or not, sitting in the living room with these adults and just absorb the conversations, absorb the information. And that just added fuel to my initial desire.

I had a great childhood. I have nothing but good things to think about when I think about my childhood. I grew up in Bernal Heights in San Francisco and that was very multi-ethnic. We had African-Americans on one side, the Asians on the other side. We had Americans, rednecks down the street. We had Mexicans across the street. We even had Filipinos, I remember, up the hill. So, I grew up with a multi-ethnic lens. My family came from Mexico and they all established their homes in San Francisco.

But little by little, the family, each family was starting to migrate south. So my relatives were starting to establish themselves in San Jose and Redwood City. This was all in the 40s. We lived in Bernal Heights, San Francisco, but my father noticed, I guess he noticed, I never asked them. He must have seen how the neighborhood was changing. So I think one thing was getting a bigger house, but also as a way to protect his children. He must have felt the need to move out of the area.

And so he started looking for homes in San Mateo County and found a home here in North Fair Oaks. And you have to remember back then, also in the 40s and more in the 50s, because we moved our family, moved here in 1959 to North Fair Oaks, back then, the communities that were outside of San Francisco, they were called 'bedroom communities' because most of the workforce was either at the airlines. I think at one point that was the biggest employer in the area. The airlines and the naval shipyards, and so this whole area was still pretty, *country*. There was no [Highway] 80, there was no Woodside Road there. There were literally cows out in the pastures. It was considered a bedroom community. So my father got on the bandwagon with everybody else and moved us to North Fair Oaks.

When I got into College in San Mateo, my entire political understanding was based on Third World politics. And that was the concept of a college we started, Venceremos Nairobi College. This included African-American, Asian-American, Native American and Mexican-American. From there, going forward, I was always involved in Third World politics because that's what I knew and that's what I thought was important. I didn't get involved. I was not a nationalist. I wasn't just Mexican. I wasn't just Latino. It had to be Third World as part of making the change.

Third Word is a coalition, a multi-ethnic coalition based on the goal that what works or what happens for one group can happen for everybody. That one group alone cannot make the change, that they have to work with each other. It's a movement and the results are the action that you take towards uplifting each other. It gives you that inspiration that what you're doing is creating change and it's progress. This movement included your Marxist socialist leaders. It included your Black Panthers, your Brown Berets, your Black and Brown berets were. I was working with all of these groups, under one coalition, and this was at College of San Mateo, because there was no Canada College [in Redwood City] back then. We were learning from each other. And from just the leaders within each group and the politicians that tried to infiltrate, of course, you are starting to see that information coming out.

I have stayed involved in various organizations throughout the year. Influenced by my third world thinking. I think it is important that I stay connected with these groups. My main role I would say is to offer consistency. Groups change and we have to learn how to cope with transition. By staying connected, I offer that historical perspective, so that we are all clear on our goals and how to move forward. Be consistent. It is really important that people understand the past, you understand where you are, and then you can understand where you might be going.

My sister, Rebecca Lopez, founded El Concilio of San Mateo County and I am still a part of the board. I'm also still working with the Housing Community Development Committee and The County Vaccine communications group, NFO Climate ready, the North Fair Oaks Community Council and North Fair Oaks Culture collective. Most of them and all of them are pretty much targeting one particular community, but I think it's important that I stay connected with groups that are working with the entire county. Some of them are working, of course, within

the nine Bay Area counties. It is extremely important that you stay connected to your local groups, but you have to always connect that work with the bigger picture. We don't live in a vacuum. We don't live in a bubble here. We're connected in some way.

If there's one thing that is important in this work is that you know your community. To me, that is what I call community organizing 101. You must know your community. Once you know your community, then you start looking outside and then you start making those other connections, but if you don't have that under your belt. Then you have no business doing the work. People will know, if you're for real or what. What I love of North Fair Oaks is the resilience of our community. No matter how many times we use the word disenfranchised. I hate that word because I think it takes away people's power and I think I love North Fair Oaks because we have been able to stay on top of our spirit and our power. And even though our community may have been deprived, we continue to reinvent and redefine where we are going as a community. And that, of course, is based on change and who's doing the work.

We are seeing big developments coming into the community, and for me it is about working together. For example, in my particular neighborhood, the developer wants to come in and we want them to be successful, but not at the expense of the neighborhood. So how do you work with that so that both sides get something out of it? And that's a hard one, so we need to stay on top of it. Experience has taught me to always look at the "big picture" and understand how it affects the community level reality. I have also learned how important it is to organize on both levels, at the government level with the decision makers in San Mateo County and at the community level with rooted organizations and individuals who want to fight against gentrification and displacement. Going forward with this very labor- intensive work, I want to

seek out new solutions to gentrification and displacement. Solutions such as, worker grown cooperatives, land trusts, housing under community control, legal collectives and health worker collectives. Keeping in mind, all within existing community rooted movements and coalitions. It is possible.

I always return to the foundation of community work- which is to know your community. Who lives there? Families, seniors, youth. And what are the needs, fears, obstacles, successes, resources. Who shines as a respected leader among their neighbors. This is the labor-intensive work that must take place and will make a significant difference in our future work.

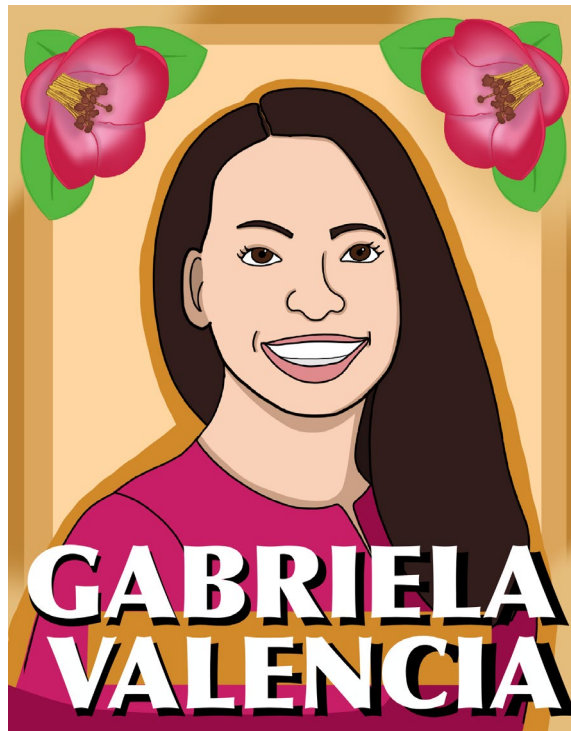
Gabriela Valencia

Caring and Advocating to Protect the most Vulnerable

“What would you attempt to do if you knew you could not fail?”

Figure 11

Gabriela



Note: Portrait of Gabriela Valencia

I come from Michoacan and I was born in a little town where my parents grew up. It's a small town in part of what is called the hot land. It's very hot all year round! Then when I was 12, we moved to a small city and then I came here to the United States. I was 17 at that time. So it's been the most stable part of my life, I think. Basically this has been the place that I've lived the longest in my life because I moved around a little bit during my childhood. Looking back

now it's kind of surprising to me that this is a place where I've lived the longest. If I had stayed in Mexico I would have never met my husband. So it's a good thing! But it's funny because living in Redwood City, if you tell somebody that you are from Michoacan they right away, say, are you familiar.

When my mom came to the US, she had a distant cousin in East Palo Alto so that's where we arrived. But this was a really rough time and in East Palo Alto there were killings every single night; it was really tough. And so, when I got married, we decided to move to a safer place, and we thought Redwood City would be affordable and it would be close enough. We were also very familiar with Redwood City. Because at that time in East Palo Alto there were no supermarkets and we didn't even pump gas because it was unsafe; this was the early 90's. Everything we did was in a different city and most of the things that we did, even laundry, we went to do in Redwood City. So when I got married, we decided to look for an apartment and it was one of the most affordable places.

A few years after we got married, we decided to look for a home; we had very little money. So we were looking and looking and we thought we were stuck because we were both going to school and working at the same time. Both school and work were on this side of the bay, but we couldn't find a home that we could purchase. Ever my husband didn't want to buy a condo, which was all we could afford on this side of the bay, and I didn't want to go to the East Bay. Everything we knew was on this side, so we thought we weren't going to afford to buy anything. But, one day when I took a shortcut to go home, I saw this house for sale. And thankfully, it was within our budget, and we liked it and we bought it.

We didn't even know much about North Fair Oaks. We didn't even know about the whole unincorporated thing, nothing. Thankfully the wonderful agent we had, she's awesome! She specializes in the Redwood City area which is really great and she's really a nice wonderful lady. She told us, "Okay, you know, this means you're going to be buying a home in North Fair Oaks. But this is an unincorporated area, and this is what it means for you." So we knew from the beginning that the services were not coming from the City. That the services were coming from the County but we didn't really grasp what it meant. We just knew Okay, this area is more affordable because it looks poor, but we didn't really know. When you've never paid taxes on a home, you've never paid garbage on a home and you've never owned your own home, you wouldn't know. Then it all starts to make sense.

My favorite part of living here in North Fair Oaks is the food. The food is just great. You know when I first came to the US, the food options were so limited. The quality of the food that was sold and restaurants were just not good. We couldn't get most of the ingredients, even the basic ingredients you needed to cook something good, but now the options in the local restaurants are really great. And the options in the local grocery stores are just wonderful, and so are the bakeries that we have, they are really good. A lot of the restaurants have really good food. And either you can buy something really good or you can buy the ingredients and you can make something really good at home.

I also really like to look at the home gardens around the neighborhood that people have. These are not sophisticated gardens at all, but they remind me of my grandmother and my childhood. My grandmother loved to plant corn in the summers, and we were always involved with anything that required planting. She was actually really smart. She liked to get the kids

involved, meaning myself and my two siblings. We lived right next to her. She was very good at getting us excited about anything that she was going to do, and of course it meant that we would help her.

So every summer we would go through this process of moving the whole barrier that she had for the chickens. We would move it back. We would prepare the soil, we would plant, we would get the seed, plant the corn, and she got us excited about every single part in the process. She also loved fruit trees. Even if there was only one piece of fruit, she would split among all four of us. She had a big tree of anonas and so she would say, "See there's one that's starting to grow, it's going to be ready soon!" She would remind you, like every day. And when you're a kid you get excited about those things! When it was time to cut it, it would be a team effort. She would cut it and we would share among the four of us. It was the same thing when we planted. She would get the seeds for a papaya tree. We would plant the seeds, and watch it grow. When it was ready to bear fruit, it was a huge deal.

So when I see gardens around the neighborhood that have all kinds of things growing and it's not like an organized or a sophisticated type of garden. But It reminds me of that time when we would plant all kinds of things. I think it's beautiful but it's also the idea of growing something that you can enjoy. And that your kids can enjoy. It makes me very happy to see those gardens and I love fruit trees. I think it was because of my grandma. I wish we had more fruit trees in our neighborhood so that people have access to fresh fruit that is organic and not super expensive.

In middle school we were actually taking serious English classes, but I couldn't understand anything when I came here to the US. I had no English, nothing. So learning English

was a huge challenge. I also never had worked in my life because my mom had worked really hard to get us through school. But when I came here I had to work to support myself. And I had to go to school at the same time. I wanted to go back to college and I had to learn English. But quickly realizing that it was going to take me forever was very demoralizing. Emotionally it's really hard when you think you're young. I was always ahead in school, I was two years ahead my whole life and then I came here and all the sudden I was facing this timeline of maybe I could graduate from college in 10 years. That was just devastating.

I was used to going to school full time and now all of a sudden, I had to work. It was really tough. I kept seeing young people graduate and I couldn't because I had to work and I had to go to school at night with older people. Sometimes I fall asleep and it's all really hard. It was really tough and it took a long time. I always thought I was going to be a lawyer because I was in law school in Mexico. And I just thought it was a given, I was going to be a lawyer here also. But it took so long for me to finish. I learned with time that you couldn't become a lawyer in a four-year college. In Mexico, five years straight from high school you go to law school. Similar to the European system, but here it is different. You have to go and do something else, and then you apply to law school.

I was working my way through getting my degree in business so I could then do law school, but it took me so long to finish college. I was really tired, so I wanted to take a break. And I had a really hard time figuring out what I really wanted, because I didn't want to just go for law, just because that's what I wanted to do before. I wanted to do something that was meaningful to me. In many ways, I feel like my choices were limited by my own inability to see my potential. When you haven't had opportunities in your family you cannot see all the options

available to you and everything that you're able to do and accomplish. You don't question whether that's possible. But when you're the first one in your family or the first-generation and your family to do something completely different you don't really know what's possible. You're testing the limits with everything you do.

At that time I didn't have anyone that I could talk to and I didn't really know the resources that were available. So I kept thinking, "What am I going to do with a law degree?" I am going to be stuck in an office doing research. If I wanted to do law, I would probably want to do immigration, but how am I going to feel if I lose the cases and people get deported? How horrible is that going to feel emotionally every time I lose a case. That was the main thing that discouraged me from becoming a lawyer. I gave myself a deadline, and I said, "Okay by this date, if I don't have a decision made, I'm going to look for a volunteer job in North Fair Oaks and where I could use my Spanish."

So I did a Google search and the first thing that came up was the North Fair Oaks Samaritan House free clinic. I didn't even know about that clinic. It was all meant to be, because when I called, I spoke with a manager of the clinic and I was like, "Hey I hear that you, you have volunteer interpreters, do you need anyone?" And she's like "oh yeah! Do you speak Spanish?" I was like, "Yeah I do, but I've never been an interpreter before." And she goes "Well, you want to come and do an interview with me?" I said, "Yes, but I work full time so do you have anything in the evenings?" She's like, "Yeah, we're open once or twice a month in the evening on Wednesday evenings. This coming Wednesday we're open. You want to come?" And I called on a Monday and on a Wednesday, I went in.

When I showed up, she sat me down and we're talking and we're just chatting, right. Then all of a sudden, the clinic starts and she says, "You want to come with me so you can see how I do it?" And then, when the second patient was ready to go in, she said, "You want to do it by yourself?" I said, "Okay I'll try." And she left me there with a doctor. And at the end of the day, I was like, "How do I know if you guys are going to accept me or not?" And then she's like, "Oh! You've been accepted. You're already doing the job". And so I started volunteering there. It was emotionally challenging because I would come home and I would kind of process like what I learned and what I would be going through in the clinic. I would be thinking "wow these people need so much more help than just you know what the clinic offers." I also realized really early on that there was so much that was getting missed when you use an interpreter.

I've always been interested in traditional medicine and acupuncture and Chinese medicine and all of that. Because we grew up with, you know, home remedies and things like that and actually I grew up with acupuncture. There is a long history of acupuncture being available; like even during the 60s, there was a doctor from Europe in my hometown in Mexico. He established an acupuncture clinic there and it's still going on. So I grew up being a kid going into that clinic with my mom. My mom always took us there if one of us got sick, she would give the medication to the three of us. Even if one of us was not sick. If one of us needed acupuncture, all three of us would also get acupuncture. As an adult I continued to get treatments with acupuncture and I became really interested in it. I was actually thinking of going to acupuncture school in Chinese medicine as a way to continue my education. This was around the same time, when I started volunteering. But it just happened to be the only place that takes volunteers and where I was going to be using my Spanish. Yet, once I started going there, I realized there's so much need for Spanish speaking healthcare providers.

When I would come home, I would be really, really sad by the things I would see and the things that would get missed as far as the context or the cultural relevance of some things. One day I came home and I started crying. Ever said to me “So, what are you going to do about it?” I was like, “What do you mean?” He goes, “Yeah what are you gonna do to help these people?” I said, “I am already doing it. I'm interpreting.” He's like, “No, but you can do more.” And I said, “No, I cannot do more, because I can only come in the evenings, and they only open once a month in the evenings.” He goes, “You should really think about doing something else, like maybe you should study to become a doctor or a nurse or something,” and I was like, “But we have a mortgage. And I am working full time. I can't do it!” He goes, “Well, if you want to do it you'll find a way.”

And I started thinking about it and talking with people and so that's how I decided to become a nurse practitioner. I realized that I could work for a living, while at the same time, do something that could help people. Like I could help people with my work and I thought that would be so much more meaningful than what I was doing. And they would be doing it every day, rather than once a month for three hours. I want to be able to serve my community with my daily work. And so that makes me very happy that I'm doing it.

Ever and I and three other residents of North Fair Oaks founded the North Fair Oaks Community Alliance. My inspiration to help the community is honestly the desire to improve the conditions for everyone that lives here. I think most people that have lived here a long time have noticed that in the last decade, and I've lived here since 1997, most of the conditions that we have, have not changed much. It feels like this place has been neglected for a long time, and when you think back and you realize how much time has gone by, and how many missed

opportunities there have been, it's frustrating to see that not much has changed in the community. And so I think it is the neglect that has gone on for so long that makes me want to help.

There are people in the community that have the desire to help but it's not easy to really make a change, especially in this community. It's just not easy. Especially, one person by themselves, trying to help is not enough, and especially when you're up against years and years and years of neglect. There has to be at least a few people with the same desire and maybe they will want to team up and help to improve things. It comes from the desire of hoping to see things improve for everyone.

The social and political events that have happened in the last few years have really forced many people to see the reality of our community. That neighborhoods like ours live in economic and health disparities and environmental and injustices that we have had to deal with for such a long time. At least there's a beginning of a conversation happening and the hope for change. I feel like those conversations at least are opening doors towards change. We can at least try to advocate in a more meaningful way for our communities and hopefully our voices will be heard. Because maybe the environment has changed a little bit and there's more room for those conversations to take place and that's what I'm hopeful about.

When you go to public meetings there is still a majority male presence. And many of them interrupt women. Very easily without consideration. And I think it is because they're used to it. They're just used to it. They don't even see it. Perhaps it's not that they are trying to disrespect women, I think, it's just their habit. And I don't have kids. I don't have that responsibility, but I do think that the responsibility relies mostly on the woman. And if a woman wants to have a leadership role in the community or anywhere else, she usually has to figure out

a way to balance everything. And it's not, it's not the same, I don't think it is the same for men. It automatically feels like it's a given that it's the woman that's going to figure things out with childcare. You know, instead of being a shared responsibility or being the male's responsibility, and I see it all the time, like with my patients or even with people that you invite to participate in meetings and things like that they right away say what is childcare being offered right because they don't have an option.

Even with their own health care. If women want to take care of themselves or make an appointment. Many times you'll see that they don't have anyone to care for the kids while they go to their health visit. It makes it really difficult and very challenging, especially if it's a gynecological issue. It makes it super challenging to have kids in the room. Thankfully I don't have to deal with that, but I do see it in the community, quite often.

Gentrification has been a huge concern of mine for many years and I bring up that issue, every time I can. I feel like the people that have been in public meetings with me know when they know that I'm going to bring it up. It is important to communities like ours that we have about 50% of the people that are renters and don't own a home so that means they're much more vulnerable of being displaced, than, if they owned their homes. What makes them even more vulnerable is that they live day by day. Most of their income goes towards rent and so when you have people that have jobs that are not benefited, if they don't show up to work, one day, they get fired. If they get sick for a few days they don't have a job anymore, so when you have a lot of the population that is like that, obviously, that makes them more vulnerable.

And if they don't own their home there are no protections for them - all of a sudden they can have their rent increased in a significant way. To see the rent jump from \$1000 to \$1,500

which I've heard of from people. Of course, who can find a place to rent at \$1,000 today right, but I've heard from many of my patients who tell me that the rent has doubled. And they were given only one or two-months advance notice. And there is no law to prevent that from happening, so that just makes the whole community much more vulnerable to displacement. When this whole area, the whole Peninsula is way more expensive than our neighborhood in North Fair Oaks. All of a sudden, things are just closing.

There was a time when Facebook even had sent out an email to their employees saying, "If you buy a home within a certain number of miles⁵ from our headquarters from our offices, you'll get this much money from us." I think it was like \$30,000 or \$10,000 that they were going to give if people bought a home near their office. At that time, we were noticing that a lot of those people were looking for homes to buy here. It was really worrisome to have those kinds of pressures. I personally was not going to be as heavily impacted; in fact, it would probably be positive for my finances, because my home would be worth more.

But I just kept thinking about how you know the working poor, which is the majority of the people in this neighborhood, how they would be impacted and how the whole community would change. And luckily it didn't happen as much as I had anticipated. I think it was because other economic things happened at the time and the huge displacement that I was expecting ended up not being as big as I thought it was going to be. But every time there is something going on in the economy like even now right with COVID, I think that there are a lot of people

⁵ Facebook is about 4-5miles from North Fair Oaks.

that cannot afford to pay their rent anymore. Once all those protections are gone, who knows what's going to happen. I think the risk of gentrification has been present for many, many years, I think this neighborhood has gone through many changes.

The other day I was talking with someone who told me that her family was one of the first few Latino families that came here. She used to live on Fifth and she said that she remembers that at the time (she's an older woman), that at that time, there were only two other families that were Latinos. So of course, things change right. It's impossible to not have changes. But I feel like the more we know and the more we understand the injustices that are continuing to be perpetrated against most poor people. Unfortunately, minorities tend to bear the brunt of it. So we need to fight and protect those that have been neglected and have had the brunt of those injustices.

Even though change is impossible to prevent, we cannot stop change, we know that neighborhoods are going to change with time. But if we can have some protection for people and have them make a choice. If they want to leave at least have it be their choice not be forced on them.

Graciela Eulate**Camarón que Duerme Se Lo Lleva la Corriente**

“Stay open-minded and stay true to yourself”

Figure 12

Graciela



Note: Portrait of Graciela Eulate

My childhood was really idyllic. My mom stayed home and my dad went to work. And my mom would make lunch for us. Every day, we'd come home from school, we'd have lunch, and then we'd go back to school. And it was always a nice little taco or a burrito or something and... It was really idyllic. And both of my parents really, really emphasized education as a way

to get out of poverty and as a way to create opportunities. So they sacrificed a lot to send us all to private school. And even though they were immigrants that didn't make it past eighth grade, they really emphasized that that was the way to get out of poverty and get out of any situation. You could just call your shots.

I first moved to North Fair Oaks because I had a friend who was a teacher and she was living in the house that I live in now, and she and her husband were going to be moving to Santa Cruz. And I was looking for a place to live. I was living in the avenues, 16th and Marsh, I was living over there but it was a bit weird because I lived with a mom and a son and I said to myself, "Okay, I want to move." And so my teacher friend says, "We're moving out of our house. You want to come over and check it out?"

And so I came over to see the house but was unsure about the neighborhood. There are gang people walking up and down the street. There are these guys drinking on the corner. And there were these other people doing drugs over here. And my teacher friends said, "No, no, no, no. It's a really good place. It's a good place. And it's not bad. And the rent is really cheap." And I go, "Well, yeah. The rent's really cheap. I mean look at the neighborhood." And so that's how I ended up in North Fair Oaks. I chose to live in the house. It wasn't easy at the beginning. The people that lived right across from me, one of their sons shot up the neighborhood. He literally got a gun and went around the neighborhood. So it was really scary. And I really thought about moving away because it wasn't worth it.

But the community has changed a lot though. There used to be graffiti all over the place, all the time. And old mattresses, people throwing their furniture everywhere. And all day, all night, everywhere. There would be gunshots going off at night. And that's just in this little area. I

live a few blocks away from St. Francis Center. I don't know about the other areas in North Fair Oaks, but in this area, that's what was happening. And so, by Sister Christina and the St. Francis Center buying a lot of the property around here, it's really changed who lives in those places. I haven't seen graffiti in a really long time. I mean, sometimes at El Camino, but that's not in the neighborhood. Mattresses and junk, I haven't seen that in a long time. It's changed a lot and it is a good place to live.

Now I love walking around my community. Going down Middlefield Road and getting whatever pan dulces, whatever tacos, I love that part of it. I love when people have parties at their house and the mariachis come and you can hear the music in the neighborhood. But it's also a challenge because I know when people get together, especially now, with the pandemic, it's dangerous. And I don't think people understand how dangerous it is.

My inspiration for getting involved in the community came after a trip I took to Cuba. And as you guys all know, in Cuba, Americans are not allowed to go over there. Well, in 2011, they weren't allowed to go over there. But I went there as a teacher and I went with a teacher group and we interviewed people from all over the place. And one of the things that they did is they had neighborhood communities that would come together and they'd meet once a month and then they would talk about issues that were going around in their neighborhood. And I thought, "Oh my God, this is so cool. People coming together, they talk about their issues and then they figure out a way to solve it."

And because I was already living in the house with all the craziness going on and the gang members and the graffiti, and I thought, "I need to find a group of people that I can get together with and we can talk about some solutions." And that's how I got involved with the

community. I'm involved in two different community groups here. One of them is an art group, and we are promoting public art. It's taken a little bit of a setback because of COVID, but we promote public art and art related events for our community. And then the other group that I'm involved with is another community group. And it's a new group and we're trying to help community members get information. That is one of my goals to help people be more aware about what's out there and what their rights are and just more information. Getting people informed.

As a high school art teacher, I also love to see young people take on social movements. And with so many political movements right now, there's Black Lives Matter, there's LGBTQ rights, equality, Feminism. There are so many issues out there right now. And what I really like to see as well is how young people really take charge and put these issues in the forefront for everybody to notice. I think it's really important to learn all the issues, and especially important to vote. I also like to encourage young people to learn as much as they can about the world outside their bubble. Experience new foods, new people and new places that will open their eyes to the many possibilities and opportunities around them. Sometimes these new ways will challenge your family's or community's beliefs, but if you stay open-minded and stay true to yourself it will be worth it.

Angelica Rodriguez-Blanco**No hay mal que por bien no venga**

“There is no linear path to success. We all go through challenges, failures, interruptions, etc. But we can’t let that stop us from moving forward”

Image 13

Angelica



Note: Portrait of Angelica Rodriguez-Blanco

I'm from Redwood City, North Fair Oaks. I was born at Sequoia Hospital a long time ago, and just growing up here in the community and especially seeing the lack of just opportunities here for youth, made me want to get involved in advocating for youth programming and more resources for young people. I think it was just my experience of living here and also myself not having a lot of after school enrichment programming really motivated me to want to create something and have something here. I remember it being a lot quieter around here and I do remember it being a little bit more dangerous. There was a lot of gang activity when I was growing up here and I also remember a lot of trash. It just didn't look very nice

I think it definitely looks cleaner now and certainly St. Francis Center and all of that has grown. There's Siena Youth Center now, but I remember the family that used to live there before, the few families that used to live there before, it seemed like a few different houses. I remember in high school, one of my friend's cousins was shot and killed, just a few blocks from here. I remember my Mom didn't really want me going out around here in the community too much after school, just because there was a lot of gang activity. I'm sure there still is, but I don't know, for some reason before, it just seemed a lot more visible, I guess you could say.

Growing up, my inspiration has always been my Mom. She was a really strong woman, hard-working, and I really always looked up to her and she was the type of person that wasn't really shy. Whenever she saw something wrong, she would speak up about it. And I remember as a kid, I would get embarrassed by that, like "There goes my mom and talking to that teacher or speaking up about something," and I'd always be embarrassed that she would go and say

something. But part of me really looked up to that like, "Oh, she's really advocating for me as a child, or for other people that she sees need help."

So I always really looked up to my Mom and her strength. Coming to this country, both of my parents came here in the '70s, so it was a really different time from now, but they left their families and they came from really poor families. They came here looking for work and tried to send money back home to help their families there. I really look up to her strength and I'm thinking now and reflecting on... she was really young. She was 23 when she left or 20... in her early 20s, just thinking about how hard that must have been for her to leave her family, so young to look for work and look for better opportunities. I would definitely say my Mom was a big role model for me growing up.

In college I took a lot of classes on social movements, organizational culture, things like that and then I also minored in Ethnic Studies because I really loved Ethnic Studies and learning about the Latino experience in the US and the different movements in the sixties. I ended up studying those two things and really in my third year in college as part of a Human Services class, I had to do an internship. I started working here in Redwood City at the Fair Oaks Clinic. I was working at the diabetes clinic and just volunteering there first. I started really again delving into health education so by the end of college, I knew I wanted to study public health because of that internship at the Fair Oaks Clinic. That's what I studied in college and it really helped me discover this public health field because there weren't public Health classes at Santa Clara University. But I knew this is something I want to study and keep studying and go to graduate school for this. Eventually I applied to graduate school and studied public health but as an undergrad, I did sociology and Ethnic Studies.

When I went to grad school, I went to UC Berkeley, and I ended up moving into Oakland and I was there for almost eight years. Then my husband and my daughter and I moved back to North Fair Oaks, and something that I missed was the fact that I grew up here. There were a lot of familiar faces that I still recognized. I think something that I like about North Fair Oaks is that there's a lot of families that have been here for a really long time. I love just the fact that there's so many Latino families living in the same area. It feels good to just walk around and hear all of the kids and the families talking in Spanish and smelling the foods like, "Oh, están haciendo carne asada," "It smells like tacos", or it's like the familiar smell of food. I just feel there's so many things I love about North Fair Oaks. It's really hard to just pinpoint, but just like even Middlefield, all the little businesses and foods and things; it feels like home. And I know growing up I visited Mexico a lot, so it just reminds me of Mexico and yeah, it feels like home.

Moving back and becoming involved with the North Fair Oaks Youth initiative, I just saw that the community has changed a lot. So it's great. I see a lot of new things, a lot of opportunities, a lot of activities. It feels safer than when it did back then. It was really good to just kind of move somewhere else, live somewhere else and then come back and just see how much the community has changed. I just feel it's always good to move away; never forget where you've come from and help if you can if there's anything you feel needs help in the community.

One of the challenges of living here though is that we are an unincorporated area. So whenever it comes to voting, what we see on our ballots is very different from what people who live in Redwood City, within the Redwood City limits, what their ballots look like. So for example, I don't know if it was last year when the Redwood City Council had openings and they had elections, and I was reading up on the candidates and being like, "Oh, who do I want to

support?" And then, I guess I just forgot that, "Oh, wait, I'm in North Fair Oaks. I can't vote for the city council, the Redwood City City Council. I think that's sort of a challenge and something that I still kind of struggle with is, yes on paper, and politically this is North Fair Oaks. Yet I think what happens in Redwood City politics, at Redwood City Schools, impacts the families that live in North Fair Oaks, so why can't we also vote and have a say in the Redwood City City Council?

That's the challenge in that we are an unincorporated community who often don't get the same resources that our neighboring communities do. I would say that's sort of a challenge and something that you have to navigate and it's kind of weird, right? Because growing up, living here, you always think, "Oh, this is Redwood City. I live in Redwood City. My mailing address says Redwood City." But then later on I realized, "Oh, this is a community called North Fair Oaks, and this is why it looks different." It's because it's unincorporated and down in resources. It's a whole different system. Things that you have to consider when you want to create change here in the community; you have to talk to different people, right? We have a district supervisor and there is a North Fair Oaks community council also. So you just have to navigate things differently.

Currently I've been working as a grant writer, and it's a really cool skill set to have. There's foundations, and there's money out there by foundations, by counties, cities, federal funds. So with grant writing I'm applying to try to get money for programs. Right now I'm working with a nonprofit here in Redwood City to try to get them money for their programming, and I think it would be really cool to be on the other side, like a grant funder. Working for a foundation, really being able to decide where the money goes, would be really cool, or just

working with a foundation who really values community work and community building, community organizing and just help decide where we should put money. I think that'd be really cool to work for a foundation or with a group of people that decide where money should go. That's definitely one thing that I find really interesting and fascinating. I'd like to see myself going in that direction in the future at some point.

Yet, I'm also a mom, I have two children. I have a three-year-old daughter and a four-month-old baby boy, so I'm also thinking of "Wow, in five years my daughter's going to be eight; my son's going to be five; they're going to be in school." So just thinking, "How am I going to balance being a mom, having children and then also having a career?" But my kids have been my hope and encouragement during this whole thing.

I was pregnant with my son when COVID started. It was definitely challenging and scary at the beginning because we didn't know how long it was going to last. People were getting sick at really high rates, and people were going to the grocery store and buying everything, stocking up on everything. So when you would go to the store and the shelves would be empty. So it was just a really scary time, and then I was pregnant. I feel now that we're so many months into it, I just feel a little bit more at ease, because I think about my kids and that gives me hope and it's really good to see how joyful they are. They don't know exactly what's happening.

My daughter is three years old and I'm kind of explaining to her why she has to wear a mask when she goes to daycare, or whenever we go out somewhere, or why the parks were closed for so long, the library is closed. I feel despite all of that, she's just still really happy. It just gives me hope and it's a reminder, "Okay, things are going to be okay." We've got to keep doing our best to take care of ourselves; that's all we have control over, right? It's ourselves and

what we do, so let's not stress out. Let's not freak out so much, but just do our best to take care of ourselves. I think just seeing my kids every morning just gives me hope for the future.

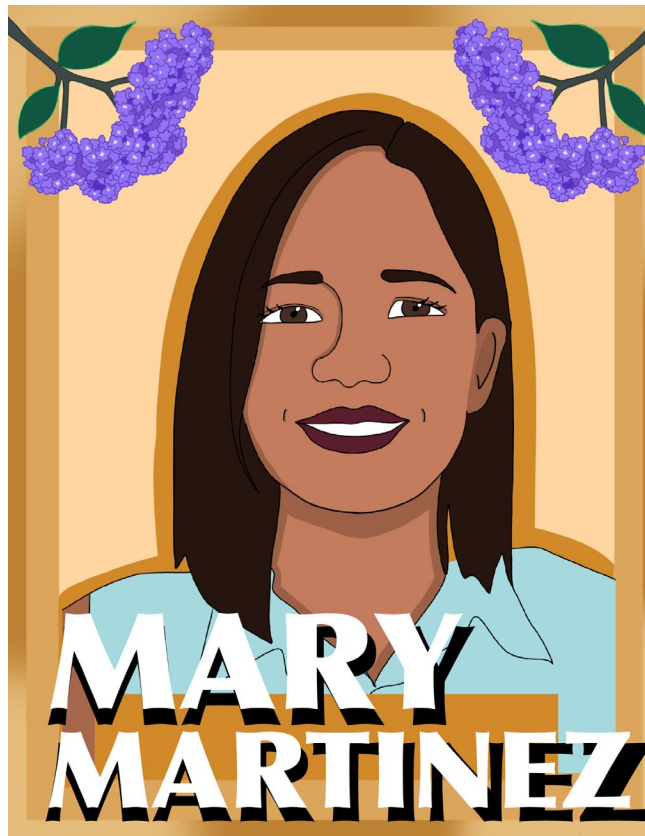
Mary Martinez

Where there is a will, there is a way!

“We all need to be there for each other. The struggle is real and we need to support one another so we don't feel alone in this process”

Figure 14

Mary



Note: Portrait of Mary Martinez

I was born and raised in Redwood City. I grew up in North Fair Oaks, right around Fair Oaks School, where I went to school and where I do some of my current work. I was one out of

five siblings. I was the second oldest, so I have an older sister and three younger brothers. Growing up in a big family was a lot of fun because we were all close in age; we're all about a year to two apart in age. So five of us in a home, it was a lot of fun just having each other. We didn't have much. I grew up very poor, so we didn't have a lot. My mom couldn't take us on fancy vacations; she couldn't take us to do fun extracurricular activities or just some of the things that we wanted, so we knew that we couldn't have much, but we had each other. And that is what was very important to us, is having each other. I also have a lot of cousins. I have a lot of aunts and uncles. So growing up a lot of my memories just revolve around family, getting together for holidays, just visiting each other maybe like in the summer. Family was huge to me. So that's what I remember a lot in my childhood, is just being surrounded by family all the time.

My mom got a lot of support because she was a single mom of five after my stepdad had passed away. And she got a lot of resources; for example. she would go over to Sister Christina (St. Francis Center) and she would get food once a week. And that would really help us out a lot because, like I said, my stepfather had passed away. So it was just my mom and five children. And that's one of the resources that she used that really helped her survive and overcome all of this. And so reflecting on that, it made me really want to give back to the same community that helped my family out in so many ways.

Growing up I didn't have a lot of good role models but I was very aware of the impact my mom had on me. She's a fighter; she's very strong; she's very independent. When she became a single mom of five, it was really, really hard for her but she didn't give up on us. She didn't give up on still trying to live just a decent life for us, for her children to grow up and for us to go on the right path in life. She guided us to go that way. And just watching her struggles. Listening

to her story when she came from Mexico when she was 11, without her mom, and just the struggles that she went through. When she got here, she was 11. She had a hard time in school so she dropped out when she was in eighth grade. And then as an adult, she went to Sequoia Adult School to get her GED. Then she went to Canada College to learn how to speak English and write English. She went through all the ESL courses there, and that really helped her. So seeing where my mom came from when she was little to where she is now, she's my inspiration.

Growing up here, I went to Fair Oaks Elementary school, then Kennedy Middle School; from Kennedy I went to Sequoia High School and I went to Canada College for two years while I got all of my general education classes out of the way. And then I transferred to the University of Santa Cruz and I graduated there in 2005, which is a long time ago. I majored in sociology, which is the study of society and learning about different types of society, how they function, how communities work, how they don't work, what makes them work. That's what I studied.

Now I am working in the same community where I was born and raised.

But if you want to know a little bit more about my education, English is my second language. My mom taught me Spanish first because that's all she knew. So I didn't learn English until I started preschool. Kindergarten is when I feel like I started picking up and learning English. And I felt that for me, I was very interested in school. I really enjoyed it. I got decent grades and that was me trying my best. I always tried for straight A's, but I never did, but that's okay because I tried my best and my best were Bs and my best were Cs. I was proud of myself at the time for that because that's just needed to try my best. As I got older, school began to be more challenging. So I think in middle school is when I felt it started being really hard. And then high school came along, and I felt that it was becoming harder, but I still graduated. I still tried

my best and I still stuck around. I didn't give up just because I felt that school was too challenging, but I did it. I graduated.

I've worked with kids for the past 20 years in North Fair Oaks, mostly on this side, over by where Fair Oaks School is, on that side of North Fair Oaks. I've always known since I was little that I've always wanted to work with children, I just wasn't sure how. As a kid, I would always say I wanted to be a pediatrician because I knew that that's a doctor for children. I didn't really want to be a doctor, but I really did want to work with children so that's what I would say. But it's always been working with children in this community and the North Fair Oaks community. And that's what I love to do.

This community is just filled with so much support, support for one another. I love the people. I love everyone that's a part of the community. People who support the community, people who live in the community, people who were born and raised, people who come in and live there and love it themselves. I just love, love, love the people. You can see a lot of culture, a lot of the Latino culture in this community. It's a community where I was born and raised. I'm 39. I've been part of this community for 39 years and worked in this community for 20 years.

I really love everyone that's part of this community that does a lot for each other. For example, groups in North Fair Oaks, other nonprofits, other organizations, the youth, they are doing a lot out there for the community. They motivate me to keep going because I know that growing up and being a youth, I needed a lot of support in so many ways because of so many challenges that I faced. And I feel that a lot of the challenges that youth today are facing. It's not discouraging, they are dedicated, even with COVID they are not discouraged, they don't give up.

I would encourage young people to come back and work for the community, to give back and volunteer in the community. That's what I would say, is never forget where you come from. Never forget your community because your community is making you who you are. It made me who I am now, made me the type of person that I am now. That's what I would say.

There's always challenges in North Fair Oaks. A recent one, it happened a little over a year ago was when they closed the Fair Oaks School down. They closed the school and opened up two charter schools on the site. Closing Fair Oaks down meant that the families that were already coming to Fair Oaks were faced with the challenges of where to send their children. Fair Oaks is surrounded by apartments and mobile homes. Many of these families took their kids to Fair Oaks. It was easy for the families to come and bring their kids to the school because it was literally right across the street for so many families.

But because they shut the schools down, the families now have to go to a different school, meaning that they had to send their kids to maybe the school a little bit further and if they don't have a car it's really hard for them to get there. Also, the challenge of just closing the school was really hard on teachers, on students, on families, because, as you know, being at a school is kind of like your second family, right? Having to close that down was really heartbreaking for so many people because we all felt like this was all our second family. That was a pretty hard challenge that we faced, when the school closed down.

But I'm really proud of all of the organizations that work to make North Fair Oaks, students, families, and community, a better community, whether it's through art or whether it's through mental health services, or if it's providing after school programs for youth. No matter what it is, I'm very proud of all these organizations that are coming together to help people who

are in need and people who just have so much potential and probably are having a really hard time reaching that potential because of so many challenges that we face right now, especially with COVID. There are many organizations out there that are here to support people in North Fair Oaks.

I was part of the North Fair Oaks Community Council for three years. I was a council member there, and that's a place where you can really advocate for the community. You really get to hear more issues that are going on in the community and get to play a part in helping solve those issues. I did that for three years and then I couldn't do it anymore because I got really busy being a mom. But It felt great. Growing up there were a lot of things that weren't fair in the way that, just living here and then living poor and being a family of immigrants, there's a lot of injustices. That was part of it too. So getting involved it felt like I was making a difference in my community. And I felt like I was giving back. Now working here and helping a lot of the families and a lot of the students for the 20 years that I've been here. It feels really great. It feels great to help someone, to hold their hand, to guide them, and to stand up for them.

Beatriz Cerillo**Being simple is hard, no se diga!**

“Things get done and then things fade out. It's about, how do you sustain what you start over the long haul?”

Image 15

Beatriz



Note: Portrait of Beatriz Cerillo

I was born in Mexico. My mother came to the United States with six children. I was little. My mom was pregnant with my sister. And my story is that my dad was very abusive. He was from a really big family. And he, being one of the youngest in his family, was not a very

responsible person. And so when he became a dad, he was not a very responsible dad. But my mom already had some brothers and sisters here in California. So they kept talking to my mom, saying "come, come. There Are opportunities here". And this was like the sixties. So this is like, "Yeah, yeah. Come. We're going to help you".

So back then, if you were in Mexico, you needed just a family member that could write you some letters, show that you had money in a bank account, and then you could go to immigration. And then you can ask for your family member to come across the border. And as long as you could have that proof of income, and show proof of a place for them to stay, they granted you the permission. So we came through Texas, and my uncles met my mom at the border with her six children. We had nothing else. And we basically came over the border straight to California. We came to Santa Barbara, and we kind of split up because there were six children. So I stayed with my aunt in Santa Barbara for about a couple of years.

And then my mom came here to Redwood City with some other aunts, and they kind of split up. To help my mom get on her feet. They enrolled her in night English classes because she knew no English. They helped her to find a job at a laundry, because back then there were jobs that you could go into. There were house cleaning jobs. In San Carlos, there was a big facility. It was a laundry for the hospitals. It was called Hospital Linens. And many, many, many people that came from Mexico, Michoacán, landed work in the Hospital Linens, because they supplied the clean linens to Stanford, to Sequoia Hospital, to the local hospitals in the area. So there was tons of work to be done. And so there were jobs available that you could come in. And the work was really, really hard. But it allowed you to work and save some money.

So after the support that my mom got from her family, my aunts and uncles, she saved enough for a down payment on a little house, which is the house that I grew up in next to Fair Oaks School, and where my older son lives now with his family. It was affordable. I mean, it was affordable at that time. Because with the credit, they look to see how you pay your bills, if you have steady work. And if you could prove that, then the bank offered you a loan to put a down payment on your home, so that's what happened. It was an older home. It's a small home, but hey, it was our home. So we finally all came together and in this little house and that's where we went to Fair Oaks School. From Fair Oaks School, we went to Hoover School. From Hoover School, we went to Sequoia High School.

My mom was a very hard worker. She was very quiet and I tend to be that way. I tend to bottle up a lot of my emotions, and it's kind of like you caught on, you worked through, you keep going cause you need to. There are certain things that I've picked up from just people around me that sometimes work, sometimes don't work. And I have to learn to be really conscious and work through those. But my mom, for sure, I tend to always be struck by moms. Moms who have families to raise, who go to work, and find the time for creativity, for church, for community action. I tend to really be attracted to those types of women. Because I feel that a lot of times we women just carry the world on our shoulders and we go forth. And then plus lots of teachers. I had great teachers, not all of them, but the ones that really helped me to kind of go through, I tend to remember them also.

I was not a good reader. I was a second language learner. I did not like reading. And then back in the day when I was in school, if you were not a good student, you got placed in this classroom. If you were an okay student, then all of you guys went here. And if you were a

brilliant genius student, all the kids were there. So I never mixed with any of the other kids, because I was always separate in my own group. I couldn't, I didn't like it. I didn't like school. School was really hard for me. No se diga, I didn't like it. It was hard.

But when I was in fourth grade, I had a teacher who loved to read out loud. And listening to the stories being read to me, I finally understood what reading was about. And it was like, "Oh my God, everything that he's reading is like inside this book"? And it was like a light bulb went on. And from there, I went from being a Bottom Student to an A Student, because I finally connected. "That's what I want to do. That's what I want to do. It's contained in this book and I have to learn how to read it so that I can now get that same information..

So when I do read alouds to my students, I help them look for books in the library. Yeah. Many of them have that aha moment, "I really, really enjoy the book you read, I want to read it". And so to me, that is like the best thing ever is to share a story and then have somebody pick it up and say, "because I've heard it. I now want to read it on my own." I almost became a teacher. And I like teaching, I like to be in a situation where I'm always working with students. But it was hard, because when I graduated from college I made a "promise" because I like to keep my promises. So my husband basically said "Oh, you have graduated from college. Great. Now let's get married." And it was like "Oh, Oh." So I had some months where it was really, really hard. So I did get married because he waited for me. And so we got married, and I tried going back to school, but it was harder for me to get back into school. And then I started my family. I have four children.

Some of the challenges of living in North Fair Oaks are the constant changes our community has to face. But there is now more attention from the government, people in power,

people in government to North Fair Oaks. And I think sometimes that it's really about consistency over a long time. It could be two, five, 10 years, 15 years. Sometimes what I see is that there's a whole influx. Things get done and then things fade out. It's about, how do you sustain what you start over the long haul? And one of my concerns is we still have trash, illegal dumping in our area. A lot of times it is not from the people that live here in our area. There are people from outside who will leave things and they go off and live in different areas of Redwood City or wherever. So it's like, how do we sustain these practices that we start?

I would love North Fair Oaks to have more trees and gardens. Parks are really important for me, walking spaces, broader sidewalks where you can comfortably and safely walk, biking trails, get out of your car and walk safely, bike safely. And if you're tired, you can sit down in a beautiful space and just enjoy, enjoy the people passing by, enjoy whatever. Also, what concerns me is that North Fair Oaks, yes, we do have a housing crisis, but where are our affordable stores? Before I used to go on Broadway, where there was a Foodsco. That whole complex is now closed. It's been closed for like five years. A housing unit will go up. I understand that. But before there was a hardware store, affordable, grocery store, affordable. Little businesses that were so affordable for those of us that lived in the area.

So every time I see a housing complex go up, for those of us that live here, where can we go to carry on? By living in an affordable place, I also need affordable places to spend my money. It's sometimes a corner grocery store. If I go for milk and eggs and bread, it's like really more than almost \$15. That's really expensive when I can just go to... Before we had Foods Co., and now our Kmart is also closed. So my question is, for those of us who are on limited income,

where do we go shopping that's affordable now for us? We're getting older, I'm older and we're all on limited budgets now. So where are these affordable places for us? It's a question.

I joined the community council after a friend of mine had told me for a long, long time, "There's a little neighborhood council." It's an advisory to the board of supervisors. A board of supervisors is a group that oversees decisions at the county. Redwood City is part of a county. The counties usually have several cities. So because of where I live, it is not part of the city of Redwood City, but it's in an area that's managed by the county. So if you live where I do, there's a little advisory group that helps Warren Slocum, who is on the big board at the county level, to make decisions about your area. And it can be the roads. It could be businesses coming in or out. It could be all sorts of things. We talk about all sorts of health care, schools, depending on the issues in the area. So we talk, we have conversations. We have the power to recommend to the board of supervisors. We ourselves do not make the decisions. We're just an advisory little council, but we hear from the local people who reside in that area, and then we recommend Warren Slocum at the county level. Like what we think. So we're kind of like right in the middle.

And there is a deep satisfaction of knowing that everything you do is towards the betterment. You're trying to do good, and the impact that you have for other people, especially kids. I'm very focused on children and youth. And so, when I think about illegal dumping, it's like "absolutely." If I'm walking, if I'm two, three, five years old walking with my mom, I do not want to walk on a sidewalk where I see garbage. I want to make sure that it is clean and that it is safe. And so the little things you do every day have a great impact. So some people say, "Oh, you have to do that." No, no, no, no. It's the everyday practices that will have the most impact on where you live and what you do. And so in small ways, it's always about the small ways, the

everyday small habits, small ways to get consistency over time. So just be nice, just be a nice person. Sometimes it's just as simple as that, being nice. But also be active, be active with the people in your community.

We have the Fair Oaks Community Center. We have the youth center. These places need support. That's how they get people in power to fund, to care for, to continue. And so it's about these spaces that are here and supporting and just by participating. We've got to actively, physically participate. Sometimes they say, "Oh, but you've gone to these community meetings over and over and over. Why do you keep coming"? And it's because you have to, that even though I've gone to this same meeting, the people that are going to be here at this meeting today are different from this meeting that I came to like two years ago, or a year ago, or five years ago. You're with different people. And so you bring history when you come, but I enjoy the company of new people coming in. Because you guys are our future. And so I hope to see you active in our community. We have a lot of good people that live in the area, they're decision-makers, and I think it's just always coming together with those great conversations going forward. Yeah. And plus our future, the youth are our future. Yeah. So maybe I'll see some of the youth on the County board and in the schools. For sure. Absolutely.

Ninfa Zuno

Discover daily, lead with love, integrity, optimism.

“Inspire families to progress with the tool of education. Strengthening families in this way will have a strong and healthy community”

Image 16*Ninfa*

Note: Portrait of Ninfa Zuno

Yo nací en Veracruz, vivimos un tiempo en Veracruz. Mi papá fue militar y cuando éramos chicos y nos cambiamos mucho de ciudad haci que vivimos en muchas partes de la

República Mexicana hasta que finalmente estuvimos viviendo en la ciudad de México. De tanto cambio no teníamos oportunidad de hacer muchos amigos porque apenas estamos y a veces duramos cuatro meses en una ciudad y luego irnos a otra. Los muebles que teníamos eran como portátiles. Mi mamá y mi papá no iban a estar gastando en mudanzas cuando sabían que iban a tener que estar este poco tiempo. Aun así tuve una infancia con mucho amor con padres que se preocuparon mucho por mí. Querían que saliéramos adelante, no sé si también nos inculcaron mucho en el trabajo en equipo. En que si estamos juntos como familia podemos hacerlo.

No éramos muy ricos, pero tampoco pobres. Si teníamos ayuda en la casa y teníamos personas que nos ayudaran pero mi mamá y mi papá siempre nos inculcaron que , como decía mi papá *para aprender a mandar teníamos que hacer las cosas* Osea, saber hacer las cosas. Entonces aunque teníamos ayuda, de todos modos tenemos que hacer cosas por nosotros mismos, tú tiende tu cama, recoge tu ropa, cosas que trataron de enseñarnos para darnos la base de valernos por nosotros mismos. Mi papá tuvo un accidente cuando yo tenía 17 años y fue un cambio completamente porque mi mamá nunca había trabajado. En esos tiempos yo me puse hacer traducciones porque aunque no sabía hablar inglés pero si sabía leerlo y escribirlo. Esos fueron momentos de reto de tratar de sobrellevarlo todo. Vimos la importancia del porque nos hicieron aprender todas las cosas, para que no fuera un trauma. Para poder apoyar a la casa. Y nos tocó más a los primeros tres yo soy la 3era y mi hermana la más chica , ella tiene 22 o tres años menos que yo entonces ella era más chica y nos tocó a nosotros los grandes apoyar a mi mamá.

Mi papá y mi papá son mi inspiración. Ellos me enseñaron la importancia de la educación. Mi papá me enseñó que la mejor herencia que le podemos dejar a nuestros hijos es la

educación. Él nos decía que lo que él quería era que terminamos una carrera universitaria y sobre todo como mujeres porque éramos sus tres hijas y un hijo. Pero como mujeres él quería que nosotros terminamos una carrera universitaria para que fuéramos independientes y que tuviéramos más más opciones y más oportunidad. En los tiempos en que yo nací muchas veces las mujeres pensaban que casarse era la solución de su vida. Muchas veces se quedaban en el casamiento porque si no quien las iba mantener o quién les iba a solucionar la vida. Entonces mi papá siempre nos dijo que nosotros podíamos bástenos a nosotras mismas y que podíamos salir adelante por nosotras mismas. Para cuando encontráramos a una pareja fuera ah no para resolver nuestra situación económica sino porque realmente queríamos a un compañero de vida.

También me ha inspirado mucho mi esposo porque siempre tiene una manera muy optimista de ver la vida y me hace a veces cambiar un día malo por un día bueno. Él tiene la misma filosofía que tenía mi papá de la educación. El fue mi profesor de tesis entonces la manera en que me fui guiando, ya que yo no quería seguir y la manera en que me motivó y hizo que terminara, el sueño que mi papá tenía que era recibirme la educación en México. Es un poquito diferente porque ya que uno termina de estudiar tiene uno que hacer una tesis y es como una investigación qué puede llevar a veces años si uno no se organiza y pone el esfuerzo. Y muchas personas no lo hacen si en el título aunque ya hayan estudiado, no conseguimos el certificado si no tenemos ese último esfuerzo. Mi esposo me ayudó a hacer ese último paso. Fue una guía para mi. También en la manera en que hemos llevado nuestra familia y la organización que fundamos de Familias Unidas. Él ha tenido mucho liderazgo en cómo adaptamos la organización de los diferentes cambios. Yo a veces soy muy precavida y no me decido rápido y él es una de las personas que él dice vamos a hacerlo y en el camino aprendemos. Esa actitud me ha ayudado mucho. Cuando

tengo dudas, me acuerdo de lo que él siempre dice, “hay que hacerlo y si no sale no importa”. Con ese optimismo y esa motivación las cosas salen bien.

Llegamos a Redwood City porque la familia de mi esposo ya vivía aquí. El papá de mi esposo es ciudadano Americano y aquí estaba su hermano. Le estaba dando una oportunidad de trabajo y cuando nosotros veíamos que la situación en México, aunque uno trabaja no podía progresar si no había un bloque allá se llama compadrazgo. Es el tener influencias, con las que podrías tener un buen puesto y no importa si uno está dando resultado siempre los puestos superiores serán para los amigos del jefe. Entonces nos frustraba mucho esa situación y no queríamos que nuestros hijos tuvieran esa misma experiencia, que aunque tuvieran una profesión siempre vía un techo donde no podían pasar. Entonces nos venimos aquí por mi esposo. Yo ya era maestra en en la preparatoria en México.

Yo llegué a este país sin saber el lenguaje a un nivel considerado. Mi pronunciación siempre va estar ahí, soy Mexicana. Fue difícil, me tuve que forzar. Mi credencial de México no me lo valieron todo. Tuve que hacer otros cursos aquí en Estados Unidos y pues tenía mis hijos y tenía que estudiar los fines de semana. Ahora trabajo para el distrito y también soy una de las instructoras de Familias Unidas y se requiere esfuerzo pero al mismo tiempo es fácil porque es algo que me gusta hacer entonces termino cansada pero satisfecha al final del día.

He tenido muchos tropiezos en el aspecto que he tenido que probar mis conocimientos o mis habilidades cuando las personas me juzgan porque no hablo el Inglés perfecto. Como cuando yo era voluntaria en la escuela de mi hijo en el distrito escolar de Redwood City y no sabía nada de Inglés pero yo quería apoyar a mi hijo y apoyar a la maestra. No estaba trabajando, entonces le di entender a la maestra que si podía ayudar en algo. La maestra me dio una escoba y un

recogedor porque pensaba que era lo único que podía hacer. No dije nada la apoye en eso pero en mi mente me puse una meta. Me dije a mi misma, “yo voy a demostrar que el idioma que no deben de juzgar. Voy a hacer un ejemplo y yo voy a venir a un salón a un otro nivel enfrente de esas maestras” Esa maestra nunca me preguntó en qué capacidad yo quería ayudar. O sea yo podía revisar tareas etc. pero ella asumió que yo no podré hacer nada. Pues me puse hacer lo que ella pensó que era lo único que sabía qué hacer pero me puse como meta que iba demostrar que que no debemos juzgar a las personas. El hecho de no hablar inglés no quiere decir que “no inglés es no inteligencia”. La posición que estoy ahorita en el distrito obviamente como te digo si fue mucho esfuerzo. Estoy en el año 24 de estar trabajando en el distrito así que esto pasó hace ah 25 26 años o más o menos. Ahora soy Coach de las maestras entonces voy a los salones. Soy la que le da consejos a las maestras para ser mejores maestras y las trato de guiar para que sean mejores maestras. Me costó trabajo ganarme el respeto, pero me respetan y obviamente pues es un respeto mutuo. No tengo la actitud de que *yo lo sé todo y tú no lo sabes*. Siempre empiezo diciendo, “antes de que me critiquen, yo soy un una persona que sigue aprendiendo inglés y mi acento no es de cómo nací aquí pero yo vengo a transmitirles mis ideas y los recursos” Soy coach de matemáticas y les doy herramientas para que las matemáticas sean más accesibles para los niños.

Con Familias Unidas una de las metas y lo estamos logrando poco a poco es tener más apellidos latinos que que tengan una profesión que hayan ido a la universidad entonces eso es lo que queremos que un día volteemos y que las familias latinas su nivel académico sea de College y de Universidad. Y si se está viendo. La misión que tenemos nosotros como organización es inspirar a los padres, que si es posible y si hay maneras. Tenemos que conocer el sistema pero que sepan que si es posible y que vean a nuestros hijos. En mi caso, mis dos hijos terminaron la

universidad. Llegamos y empezamos desde cero igual que muchos están ahorita y que piensan que eso es todo a dónde pueden llegar. Queremos mostrarles que ellos pueden llegar y lograr lo que ellos quieren que no hay límite. Cuando yo llegué aquí mi hijo tenía cuatro años y fui aprendiendo las cosas y no encontré ningún apoyo entonces y eso también me inspiró para ayudar a las a las personas que estaban llegando y que encontraron apoyo como el que yo no tuve y eso me inspiró. La verdad siempre me apasiono mucho la enseñanza siempre ha sido mi pasión. Entonces al distinguir la necesidad de la comunidad en seriada en el nuevo sistema educativo cuando ellos venían llegando y también como yo misma llegué como inmigrante y no tuve a nadie que me guiara en las primeras etapas de educación de mi hijo.

Cuando llegamos a esta comunidad de North Fair Oaks vivimos en la cuarta avenida y Middlefield Rd, ahí vivía el hermano de mi esposo y llegamos con ellos. Después vivimos en unos departamentos que están en la calle segunda. Veíamos- hace 30 años, había muchas personas, la mayoría Latinos que no se preocupaban por Estudiar. Si no se preocupaban nada más por trabajar y abandonaban mucho a sus niños. Y habían muchos grupos de muchachos no quiero decir pandilleros porque a veces no podemos englobar que todos estaban en pandillas pero de un de repente porque créeme que se me han pasado los años muy rápido fue una transformación muy bonita de por ejemplo no ver este tantas paredes pintadas o de un de repente una transformación que hicieron el la Middlefield. Que dijimos que bonito. Mi parte favorita es El Mural- el estacionamiento del mural. Y me encanta ver la tienditas de la Middlefield donde venden, encuentras de remedios caseros y el hecho de que te atiendan en tu propio idioma. Ir a la Chavez y todo eso es muy bonito. Los cambios que tuvo la biblioteca, observamos las remodelaciones y lo que han hecho ahorita. Siento que hubo un tiempo en que no había ningún evento inspirado en los latinos. Y de repente veo la intención de atraer a los latinos. Eso me da

mucha satisfacción de ver esos cambios positivos. Si he notado el cambio. Mi primera impresión es del por qué la gente aquí le da tanta importancia al estudiante y me ha dado gusto ver que se ha ido transformando poco a poco.

La gente es la que me da la esperanza y este tenemos la gran oportunidad de ver a las familias tres veces por semana y ellos nos dan energía. Sabemos que tenemos que responderles estamos tratando de no nada más dar la parte académica sino conectarles y nos ayuda mucho cuando nos mandan cualquier flyer. Nosotros se los explicamos y éste le decimos no nada más se los mostramos, se los explicamos. Porque sí nada más lo mandamos no lo van a leer. El hecho de saber que que ellos están contando con nosotros para para proporcionar los recursos para ayudarlos y para guiarlos cosas que como te digo nada más es lo académico nos no se éste nos motiva a seguir este a seguir adelante en el ver que hay esa necesidad y éste y nos da mucho gusto cuando ellos dos no se agradecen y no se nos comentan este que que pudieron hacer un trámite, que ya recibieron los recursos, eso nos dan motivacional a seguir apoyando. Mi esposo y yo decimos pues tenemos la dicha de que estamos trabajando en la casa y no siguen pagando pero no es el caso para muchas de nuestras familias. Hay unas situaciones que hemos escuchado que nos parten el corazón. Pero esas personas siguen adelante y no podemos abandonarlas si no, ayudarlas.

Findings from Narratives of Mujeres of Little Michoacan

The narratives of the mujeres of Little Michoacan provide an insight into the lives of Chicana/Latinas and ultimately lay groundwork for the HERstory of this community. In order to arrive at the main findings, I first organized the data in response to the research questions:

1. How do we understand Little Michoacan as a community that is built through the advocacy of Chicana/Latinas?
2. How do mujeres of Little Michoacan navigate their coraje in their community?
3. What is illuminated through an intergenerational research encuentro in which youth capture the narratives of mujeres elders?

The major findings I arrived at are explained in this section and offer answers to the research questions. The findings were guided by the muxerista portraiture approach that suggests looking for themes in the following way:

- 1) looking for repetitive refrains, 2) listening for resonant metaphors, poetic and symbolic expressions, 3) paying attention to cultural and institutional rituals that seem important, 4) using triangulation to weave data together, and 5) considering what [Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot] calls 'deviant voices,' perspectives that are often experienced as contradictory and dissonant. (Flores, 2017, p. 83).

In this way, the major findings from mujeres of NFO include:

1. A Heart for Serving: Sacrifice and Leadership
2. Living in the Margins: Challenges of living in an unincorporated community
 - a. Gentrification and Displacement
 - b. The Immigrant Experience
3. Collective Support, Nurturing, and Staying Persistent
4. Sharing Wisdom and Encouragement

I arrived at these findings through revisiting the research questions and pulling out the voices that offered answers to the questions. I then looked for themes within those voices and searched for repetitive, similar, different or unusual experiences or perspectives. In this next section, I present these voices, which offer the main findings in this study.

A Heart for Serving: Sacrifice and Leadership

The narratives of mujeres collectively paint a portrait of Little Michoacan, as a community that is built through the advocacy and organizing of Chicana /Latinas. The Mujeres of Little Michoacan are dedicated to their community either serving in the community council and as leaders in nonprofits, community initiatives and boards. They are educators, artists, health advocates, and mentors. They are resourceful, movers and shakers. The ways they engage in their work sheds light on their leadership style. For example, they often lead with compassion and heart. I call this, a heart for serving; one that is a shared responsibility that is about serving the community, and not about personal gain or to achieve an individual agenda. This is the one thing that connects them in their activist work, and that is their heart for serving their community.

For Gaby, Angelica, and Ninfa their entry into serving the community was through volunteering. Gaby wanted to use her Spanish skills to help her community and found an opportunity at the local health clinic: “But it just happened to be the *only* place that takes volunteers and where I was going to be using my Spanish. Yet, once I started going there, I realized there's so much need for Spanish speaking healthcare providers.” Gaby emphasized *only*, signaling that she felt limited in her options to volunteer. It was the only place that took her. At the same time, saying *only* could mean that Gaby felt she had much to offer, yet she

wasn't given the opportunity. However, she later realized that the health clinic wasn't *only* in need of Spanish translation. In fact, by offering Spanish translation, Gaby became more critically conscious of the dire needs of her community. Even more, she felt a responsibility to do something.

Similarly, Angelica needed to earn internship hours for her degree and found an opportunity at the other health clinic in the community:

I was working at the diabetes clinic and just volunteering there first. I started really again delving into health education so by the end of college, I knew I wanted to study Public Health because of that internship at the Fair Oaks Clinic.

Here Angelica makes a notion that her entry into serving the community was at first to fulfill a requirement for her degree. She was *just* getting her hours in. But, much like Gaby, to her surprise, that experience made her aware of so much more, including the field itself, of health education, as a career.

And while, both Gaby and Angelica had positive experiences with volunteering, Ninfa had a different experience. She explains:

Como cuando yo era voluntaria en la escuela de mi hijo en el distrito escolar de Redwood City y no sabía nada de Inglés pero yo quería apoyar a mi hijo y apoyar a la maestra. No estaba trabajando, entonces le di entender a la maestra que si podía ayudar en algo. La maestra me dio una escoba y un recogedor porque pensaba que era lo único que podía hacer.

Ninfa recalls this experience that made her painfully aware of the stereotypes she was to encounter as an immigrant. While, both Gaby and Angelica had positive experiences as volunteers at the local clinics, Ninfa was pigeonholed, because she was a recent Latina immigrant; who was still learning the English language. As Ninfa shared this story, there is sadness in her eyes, but at the same time there is frustration and coraje. You can sense that she has overcome so much and these stories, while painful, are a reflection of her strength and perseverance.

Through the stories of Gaby, Angelica and Ninfa's volunteer experiences, we learned the ways they gained insights and a better understanding of the needs of the community. Their initial desires to help the community developed into advocacy and future organizing because they wanted to see real change happen. They felt a sense of responsibility. For example, Gaby recognized the need for more Spanish speaking healthcare professionals and eventually became a Nurse Practitioner. Angelica pursued a Public Health graduate degree and returned to her community to serve in different capacities, including grant-writing, and mentoring youth. Ninfa pursued certifications and became a trainer for educators, the same educators that would prejudice her for her accent. These are stories of coraje. Building off their experiences and pursuing their heart for serving.

Moreover, Linda describes a shared responsibility as the foundation for her advocacy work. In the intergenerational encuentro with me she shared, "It was working with groups, with common interests and goals and knowing that we were stronger together. And I just started to do the work." Linda recognizes the strength in unity and collaboration. She often alludes to this in her narrative. She describes this shared responsibility as Third World Politics, she explains:

Third World is a coalition, a multi-ethnic coalition based on the goal that what works or what happens for one group can happen for everybody. That one group alone cannot make the change, that they have to work with each other. It's a movement and the results are the action that you take towards uplifting each other.

Linda speaks about the Third World with so much passion, so much so that it is apparent how much this type of politics is part of her activist foundation. The Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) called for Ethnic Studies departments and faculty and curriculum that reflected the experiences and voices of people of color. In 1968 TWLF student organizers led strikes across the Bay Area college campus'. Linda was a freshman at College of San Mateo, just 20 miles south of San Francisco State, the height of the TWLF movement. Having been part of the TWLF movement in her college, Linda continues to be influenced by this movement and its ideologies of coalition building across racial and cultural identities.

It is safe to assume that mujeres of Little Michoacan continue to live by or engage with the Third World politics that Linda described, at least in the sense that working together is essential. Almost all of the mujeres spoke of their work with others for the betterment of everyone in the community. Beatriz echoes the collective approach in serving the community:

And there is a deep satisfaction of knowing that everything you do is towards the betterment. You're trying to do good, and the impact that you have for other people, especially kids. I'm very focused on children and youth.

An educator, Beatriz strongly believes in a leadership that is self-less. In describing her own community involvement, she says it is about helping others and really wanting to make her community better for all. And while she is personally focused on children and youth- after all she

is a librarian at an Elementary School, ultimately, she knows that the impact she makes affects everyone.

Graciela also describes the sense of responsibility to help her community when she explains why she participates in community groups: “That is one of my goals to help people be more aware about what's out there and what their rights are and just more information. Getting people informed.” Graciela, who is also an educator, recognizes the importance of having access to information, which oftentimes is not accessible to communities of color. She also speaks to the responsibility she feels of sharing resources and helping others get access and information. Here, Graciela also alludes to the challenges of living in an unincorporated community, which many of the mujeres refer to as lack of information and resources. This will be further explored in the next section.

Furthermore, Mary describes a heart for serving that comes from her desire to give back to the very same community that helped her when she was growing up. She shared with the youth:

So getting involved it felt like I was making a difference in my community. And I felt like I was giving back. Now working here and helping a lot of the families and a lot of the students for the 20 years that I've been here. It feels really great. It feels great to help someone, to hold their hand, to guide them, and to stand up for them.

Now a leader in a nonprofit organization, Mary works directly with families who are in similar situations as her family once was. Mary speaks proudly of the work that she does, not as a brag, but in a humble loving way. You can feel how grateful she is for the opportunity she has

had to return to her community. She is proud of the relationships she has built and feels love for the families. Her helping them is part of how she gives back to her community.

This demonstrates the reciprocity that mujeres of Little Michoacan employ in their leadership. They serve their community wholeheartedly, not as a selfish desire but as a shared responsibility that will benefit everyone. In this way, mujeres of Little Michoacan have a heart for serving that is about recognizing the needs of the community, employing a collective approach, working with others, and being reciprocal and selfless in their service. Often through their service and organizing, the mujeres would bring up issues related to living in an unincorporated community. The mujeres became conscious of these issues through their service, which would fuel their desires to do more. It was their internal coraje that would encourage them to do more for their community.

Living in the Margins: Challenges of Living in An Unincorporated Community

Collectively the narratives highlight the many challenges of living in an unincorporated community. North Fair Oaks sits on unincorporated Redwood City land⁶. As an unincorporated community, politically, the area is governed by the County of San Mateo, and not the City. This means that City tax dollars do not come down to the community, which means less money allocated for social services and community resources. For example, public needs, health care, schools, water, trash, road safety, etc. have to go through a longer process of approval, and are often competing for funding with other parts of the county. This is visible through the lack of

⁶ I say land here and want to acknowledge that North Fair Oaks and Redwood City stand on Ohlone land. And ultimately land is not property or something to own.

resources allocated to North Fair Oaks which is highlighted in the narratives. It is also visible in the dominant narratives that NFO is “unsafe,” “uneducated,” “careless,” “ignorant,” etc.

Rather than seeing the lack of resources and negative views as discouraging, *mujeres* of Little Michoacan recognize the opportunity to address these issues. Their narratives reveal the ways the community has changed overtime- less crime, vandalizing, trash and more housing, youth programs, gardens etc. They focus on the positive outcomes that are community driven, offering a counternarrative of North Fair Oaks.

Gentrification and Displacement

Because North Fair Oaks is unincorporated, it is also more affordable, compared to the surrounding neighborhoods. NFO also has more highly dense housing, which means more apartments and houses for people to live in. In the past 10 years, at the height of the social media boom, this has attracted newcomers that travel across the country or internationally to work in Facebook, Google, Box, and other tech companies nearby. Gaby speaks about this in her narrative and recalls how she was ‘preparing’ for this change.

The whole Peninsula is way more expensive than our neighborhood in North Fair Oaks. All of a sudden things are just closing. There was a time when Facebook even sent out an email to their employees saying, if you buy a home within a certain number of miles from our headquarters, from our offices, you'll get this much money from us. I think it was like \$30,000 or \$10,000 that they were going to give if people bought a home near their office. At that time we were noticing that a lot of those people were looking for homes to buy here. It was really worrisome to have those kinds of pressures.

During that time, which Gaby is speaking about, the community was also seeing more revitalization programs, road-redesigning, luxury housing proposals, and increase in rent both for housing and small businesses. Gaby speaks to this issue with a concerned voice, even though this was a few years ago, you can tell she still feels the pain and worry. Ultimately facebook did not end up displacing people at an alarming rate, however, this act left a scar in the community. It was nonetheless a traumatic experience which comes through in Gaby's retelling of the story.

These issues of gentrification and economic displacement, brought forth by the mujeres are all connected to the challenges of living in an unincorporated community. Linda's advice is to stay connected with what is happening and understand the work being done at all levels:

I have also learned how important it is to organize on both levels, at the government level with the decision makers in San Mateo County and at the community level with rooted organizations and individuals who want to fight against gentrification and displacement. Going forward with this very labor-intensive work, I want to seek out new solutions to gentrification and displacement. Solutions such as, worker grown cooperatives, land trusts, housing under community control, legal collectives and health worker collectives.

Linda is often solutions orientated. She reinforces the importance of staying in the know but also finding ways to take action and not getting stuck in the negativity of things. This is one of the ways Linda shines her coraje. She offers solutions and encourages action at all times, rather than staying fixating on what is not getting done. Linda also adds to the idea of working together with decision makers to ensure they see and recognize the work being done on the

ground. Only in this way can they understand the impact it will have on the residents, who are often 'living paycheck to paycheck' as pointed out by Gaby.

Gaby has always been vocal about gentrification as an issue in North Fair Oaks. She says it is the history of neglect in the community that inspires her to be part of the solution:

My inspiration to help the community is honestly the desire to improve the conditions for everyone that lives here. I think most people that have lived here a long time have noticed that in the last decade, and I've lived here since 1997, most of the conditions that we have, have not changed much. It feels like this place has been neglected for a long time, and when you think back and you realize how much time has gone by, and how many missed opportunities there have been, it's frustrating to see that not much has changed in the community. And so I think it is the neglect that has gone on for so long that makes me want to help.

Gaby equates historical neglect with some of the challenges of living in an unincorporated community. Which then makes the community vulnerable to gentrification. She mentions *conditions*, referring to lack of resources, access to services such as health care, social services, affordable housing, overcrowdedness, safety, environmental hazards etc. She says none of that has changed since she has lived here. People are still struggling economically and all of that is due to historic neglect for the community and for the people. At the same time, Gaby describes how doing community work overtime can be devastating when nothing seems to change. She notes that it can be easy to stay frustrated or feel defeated. However, Gaby demonstrates the strength of *mujeres* of Little Michoacan who do not give up and continue to fight for what is just and right.

Moreover, Beatriz points out the impact of cost of living that gentrification brings:

Also, what concerns me is that North Fair Oaks, yes, we do have a housing crisis, but where are our affordable stores? Before I used to go on Broadway, where there was a Foodsco. That whole complex is now closed. It's been closed for like five years. A housing unit will go up. I understand that. But before there was a hardware store, affordable, grocery store, affordable. Little businesses that were so affordable for those of us that lived in the area. So every time I see a housing complex go up, for those of us that live here, where can we go to carry on? By living in an affordable place, I also need affordable places to spend my money. It's sometimes a corner grocery store. If I go for milk and eggs and bread, it's like really more than almost \$15. That's really expensive...

Beatriz adds to a layer of gentrification that is about economic displacement. She points to the challenge of finding affordable places to shop for basic necessities. She notices the changes through the closing down of affordable markets, and the addition of more housing complexes. These new changes ultimately do not address or meet the needs of the people who are currently living there. Beatriz emphasizes that she understands the need for affordable housing, but she points out that others do not seem to understand the overall impact of the cost of living. Having housing is one thing, but having the daily necessities to continuing being a productive community member is just as important.

Additionally, Angelica points to the importance of knowing who represents the community and navigating that system:

It's because it's unincorporated and down in resources. It's a whole different system.

Things that you have to consider when you want to create change here in the community,

you have to talk to different people, right? We have a District Supervisor and there is a North Fair Oaks Community Council also. So you just have to navigate things differently.

Angelica shares that local politics, being unincorporated and not part of the city, add to the challenges of living in North Fair Oaks. She says it's a different system that we have to learn if we want to create change. Angelica is describing *nepantla* and her coraje for navigating the different systems in place. For example, she talks about last year's ballot:

Whenever it comes to voting, what we see on our ballots is very different from what people who live in Redwood City, within the Redwood City limits and what their ballots look like. So for example, I don't know if it was last year, when the Redwood City Council had openings and they had elections. I was reading up on the candidates and being like, "Oh, who do I want to support?" And then, I guess I just forgot that, "Oh, wait, I'm in North Fair Oaks. I can't vote for the City Council, the Redwood City City Council. I think that's sort of a challenge and something that I still kind of struggle with. Yes on paper, and politically this is North Fair Oaks. Yet I think what happens in Redwood City Politics, at Redwood City Schools, impacts the families that live in North Fair Oaks, so why can't we also vote and have a say in the Redwood City, City Council?"

Angelica recognizes the need to learn the system of our local government because it can get confusing. Living in an unincorporated community there are judicial boundaries which creates more barriers in making demands and voices heard. Angelica says that one of the ways to make our voices count is through the ballots. Yet, the politics in place makes it even more difficult. Residents of North Fair Oaks can't even vote on issues that ultimately will affect them

because they don't 'live' in that jurisdiction. Angelica is very much employing her coraje in the way she navigates this complexity. She even describes that she continues to struggle with it, even after living in NFO for so many years. In struggling, Angelica challenges the geographical boundaries that are placed by political agendas. She refuses to accept these boundaries as reality because they set limits for communities of color - who/what we can and can't vote for. Furthermore, her struggle with this complexity points to how she is critical of local politics and the ways they continue to limit the communities voices. In doing so, Angelica sets out to make sure others are too aware of this injustice and encourages folks to show up to county meetings where their voices can be heard.

As the narratives of Linda, Gaby, Beatriz, and Angelica demonstrate, the issue of gentrification is very much connected to the challenges of living in an unincorporated community. North Fair Oaks is much more vulnerable than the City of Redwood City, which adds to the challenges that residents face, as presented in the narratives. Often the community of NFO is subject to economic displacement. There are additional challenges that the narratives shed light on which will be explored next.

The Immigrant Experience

The North Fair Oaks is home to over 70% Latinx residents, and about 30% are immigrants. Collectively, the narratives shed light on issues of immigration, from stories of their families, to their own experiences.

For example, in sharing her experience as a volunteer in her son's school, Ninfa brings forth the challenges she faced being an immigrant and English learner. When she offered to

volunteer in her son's school, the teacher gave her a broom. Thus assuming that it was the only skillset she could contribute and ignoring her decades of experience teaching in Mexico.

La maestra me dio una escoba y un recogedor porque pensaba que era lo único que podía hacer. No dije nada, la apoye en eso pero en mi mente me puse una meta. Me dije a mi misma, “yo voy a demostrar que el idioma, que no deben de prejuizar. Voy a hacer un ejemplo y yo voy a venir a un salón a otro nivel enfrente de esas maestras” Esa maestra nunca me preguntó en qué capacidad yo quería ayudar.

Ninfa shares a painful reality for many immigrants who come to the United States with careers and wealth of experience in a field. Because of their accents or limited English they face stereotypes and are prejudged, instead of being given the opportunities that they deserve. Rather than feeling shamed, Ninfa could have very well given up and continued sweeping, she set a goal for herself. She turned her negative experience into motivation to change the narrative and challenge perspectives. Ninfa also demonstrates her humility by not saying anything to the teacher. She points to the fact that she kept doing the job. She didn't talk back to the teacher. This could have come across as not defending herself, but Ninfa made sure to point out that she set a goal for herself. She had respect for the teacher and herself. The fact that she set a goal for herself in that very moment, lifted her spirit and gave her the strength to carry on. At this moment, Ninfa demonstrates her coraje.

Moreover, many of the mujeres had families who migrated from Mexico to North Fair Oaks, Redwood City, or nearby communities. They often acknowledged previous families who helped them establish here. This is the case for Beatriz who shares her mother's story:

And then my mom came here to Redwood City with some other aunts. To help my mom get on her feet. They enrolled her in night English classes because she knew no English. They helped her to find a job at a laundry, because back then there were jobs that you could go into. There were house cleaning jobs. In San Carlos, there was a big facility. It was a laundry for the hospitals. It was called Hospital Linens. And many, many, many people that came from Mexico, Michoacán, landed work in the Hospital Linens, because they supplied the clean linens to Stanford, to Sequoia hospital, to the local hospitals in the area.

Beatriz's mother's story makes reference to the historical chain of migration which is a support network and method of survival among immigrants in a new country. Beatriz also emphasises that 'many, many, many' people came from Mexico and Michoacan to work in the same company, pointing to the significant numbers of migrants that took advantage of the established connection. This also points to the ways that it is often immigrants that support the workforce of the larger companies in the community. These companies are often the main producers of our economy. Beatriz reminds us that it is immigrants that made and continue to make our economy run.

Additionally, Angelica shares her parents' story:

Coming to this country, both of my parents came here in the '70s, so it was a really different time from now, but they left their families and they came from really poor families, they came here looking for work and tried to send money back home to help their families there.

Angelica's parents add to the dominant story of the immigrant dream- coming to the United States in search of a better life. Angelica also shares the common sacrifices immigrant families have to make, of leaving family behind, because of economic reasons. Yet, the ties remain through remittances. In doing so, the family members show their love, commitment, and support for each other even though they are in separate countries.

All of the mujeres in the study shared pieces of their family history and/or childhood experiences. The narratives often refer to the struggles of their family to either come to the United States, moving between states, and ultimately seeking opportunities for the betterment of their family. This is a common narrative within immigrant families and Latinx families who make the decision to leave their home country in search of a better life.

Furthermore, Gaby talks about the challenges of the education system in the U.S. which is often not built to support immigrant students:

So learning English was a huge challenge. I also never had worked in my life because my mom had worked really hard to get us through school. But when I came here, I had to work to support myself. And I had to go to school at the same time. I wanted to go back to college and I had to learn English. But quickly realizing that it was going to take me forever was very demoralizing.

Gaby shares that it took her a long time to complete her studies, partly because the education system was not equipped to support her as an immigrant, but also as a previous college educated student. Her units from Mexico did not transfer and thus pushed her further behind in her career goals. She had to essentially start all over again. In her sharing of this story, Gaby

reflected on the frustration she felt with the American education systems. To the point where she almost gave up. Her story points to the many ways immigrants often feel rejected and not good enough. She calls it demoralizing. It is the way that our systems and society as a whole often treats immigrants- as inferior, incapable, and not worthy enough. Gaby had to work twice as hard to earn her Nurse Practitioners degree. And she is very much aware of this injustice.

Gaby's immigrant experience is similar to that of Ninfa:

Yo llegué a este país sin saber el lenguaje a un nivel considerado. Mi pronunciación siempre va estar ahí, soy Mexicana. Fue difícil, me tuve que forzar. Mi credencial de México no me lo valieron todo. Tuve que hacer otros cursos aquí en Estados Unidos y pues tenía mis hijos y tenía que estudiar los fines de semana. Ahora trabajo para el distrito y también soy una de las instructoras de Familias Unidas y se requiere esfuerzo pero al mismo tiempo es fácil porque es algo que me gusta hacer entonces termino cansada pero satisfecha al final del día.

Like Gaby, Ninfa was delayed in her career because her Mexican college education was not valid. She had to take extra courses, spend weekends studying and sacrificing family time to build a career in the U.S. She also adds to the struggles of being an English learner, much like Gaby. Ninfa says that she often has to prove herself because she has an accent when speaking in English. While she now talks about the experience as something she is proud of, she recognizes it was not easy.

Furthermore, the narratives of the mujeres shed light on the transnational connections that the immigrant experience often holds. The mujeres often talked about their connections to Mexico and the many ways the community reminds them of their hometown. They describe this

strong connection through the smells, the food, the people, the sounds, the music, the colors. These are often reminiscent of *home*, as described by Angelica.

Both the *mujeres* and the youth in this study connect their love for North Fair Oaks to those familiar senses. This denotes the type of community many Latinx search for and create. History demonstrates that immigrants, for example, tend to create tight-knit communities where they feel connected to their homelands. This is the case for Gaby, who as a young immigrant, traveled to Redwood City because it was the closest place to a Mexican market, where she could locate the ingredients she would need to make her Mexican recipes. *Mujeres of Little Michoacan* and their families add to the vibrancy, the art, the food, and the culture of the community. These are then the very same communities that then are capitalized through gentrification. As Grace Lee Boggs (2011) explained:

The social activists among us struggle to create actions that go beyond protest and negativity and to build community because community is the most important thing that has been destroyed by the dominant culture. (Boggs, as cited in Lee, 2011, p.)

It is clear through their narratives, that *mujeres of Little Michoacan* have a closer connection to their community because of the cultural connection that is built off of the immigrant experience. And as they point out the many challenges of living in an unincorporated community, they also continue to remain hopeful and persistent, which is the next finding.

Collective Support, Nurturing and Staying Persistent

The collective narratives of the *mujeres of Little Michoacan* reveal the many ways they offer support and nurture others in their community. The ways they remain resilient, often turning their frustrations into strength as seen in the previous section. *Mujeres of Little*

Michoacan also consistently navigate their gendered roles and the various institutions and systems they are up against. Despite the challenges and frustrations they remain hopeful.

Mary describes the collective support she sees in North Fair Oaks:

This community is just filled with so much support, support for one another. I love the people. I love everyone that's a part of the community. People who support the community, people who live in the community, people who were born and raised, people who come in and live there and love it themselves. I just love, love, love the people.

Here Mary points to the wealth of resources and support available that often comes straight from the people who love Little Michoacan. This also demonstrates that we can't wait on the local government to make things happen for the community. Often it is the people themselves who bring resources and connect people to services. As explained by Mary, there are many great organizations and people that offer that support and it is a collective effort. Mary also emphasizes the love found in the community. A love that is reciprocal. Love is certainly part of how Mary and las mujeres serve the community.

On the other hand, despite the many sacrifices and challenges Ninfa has faced, she stayed persistent and continued her education here in the United States. Ninfa pursued a certificate and eventually worked as a math teacher and moved her way up in the district. Now she works in the staff development team, coaching, training and mentoring new teachers in math best practices and pedagogy, in the same district where she was once stereotyped. She challenged dominant narratives of immigrants and used a negative experience to fuel her in climbing to the top. She also remains humble and connected to serving her community through her organization Familias Unidas.

Mi esposo y yo decimos pues tenemos la dicha de que estamos trabajando en la casa y nos siguen pagando pero no es el caso para muchas de nuestras familias. Hay unas situaciones que hemos escuchado que nos parten el corazón. Pero esas personas siguen adelante y no podemos abandonarlas si no, ayudarlas.”

Familias Unidas is one of the many organizations that offer support and resources to the people of Little Michoacan. And it is people like Ninfa and her husband Secundino who lead with humility. It is clear that Ninfa recognizes her own privileges stating that she is grateful for having the opportunity to work from home. She points to the people's resiliency and not only does she admire it, but it gives her the drive to help. She uses her own knowledge, experience and connections to offer support. This speaks to the ability to support and nurture as a major theme in the narratives. Again, we also see the love and respect that Ninfa has for her community.

Furthermore, Linda also recognizes resilience as part of the community. She explains:

What I love about North Fair Oaks is the resilience of our community. No matter how many times we use the word disenfranchised. I hate that word because I think it takes away people's power and I think I love North Fair Oaks because we have been able to stay on top of our spirit and our power. And even though our community may have been deprived, we continue to reinvent and redefine where we are going as a community. And that, of course, is based on change and who's doing the work.

Linda and Ninfa use the word resiliency to explain the resistance, the power, the coraje that people carry within themselves. Now more than ever, in the midst of a pandemic, we see this

resiliency play out. Linda describes this resiliency as “staying on top of our spirit and power.” It's easy to feel hopeless, especially when others view you as ‘disenfranchised’ as Linda points out. By staying resilient, NFO continues to challenge the negative narrative that places the blame on the community itself- instead of the systems and government representatives.

Angelica describes resilience as a hope that is ever so important during this time of pandemic- now more than ever:

I feel despite all of that, she's just still really happy. It just gives me hope and it's a reminder, "Okay, things are going to be okay." We've got to keep doing our best to take care of ourselves, that's all we have control over, right? It's ourselves and what we do, so let's not stress out. Let's not freak out so much but just do our best to take care of ourselves. I think just seeing my kids every morning just gives me hope for the future.

Angelica is talking about her daughter's joy and happiness. That despite the fact that we are living in unprecedented times, her children remain joyful- which remind her to be happy and hopeful. This example is also a great way to explain the ways that mujeres of NFO remain persistent and lean on their coraje despite the challenges and frustrations they encounter through their organizing. They don't stress out or “freak out”, instead they lean on each other to take care of themselves and their community overall.

Finally, while the youth did not ask specific questions about their roles as mothers or specific questions related to their gender, some of the mujeres bring this forward through the perseverance described. For example, Beatriz describes the many ways women, or in this case moms, often navigate multiple roles to remain active in their community:

I tend to always be struck by moms. Moms who have families to raise, who go to work, and find the time for creativity, for church, for community action. I tend to really be attracted to those types of women. Because I feel that a lot of times we women just carry the world on our shoulders and we go forth.

Beatriz speaks with so much admiration for women overall and mothers. She highlights the stress of ‘carrying’ so much on their shoulders, which in this case speaks to the perseverance, strength, and resilience of women in community. Beatriz says she is struck by mothers who do this, when she in fact is one of those mothers. She works full-time as a librarian at an elementary school, has children of her own and grandchildren, and serves her community as a council member.

Perhaps Beatriz doesn't add herself to that list because she felt she had to put her personal goals on pause as described here:

So I had some months where it was really, really hard. So I did get married ‘cause he waited for me. And so we got married and I tried going back to school, but it was harder for me to get back into school. And then I started my family. I have four children.”

Beatriz describes the challenges of having to put her advocacy and goals on pause to raise her children and get married. In this case she emphasizes that it was hard to put things on hold, but she did so not only to meet the promise she made to her partner, but also to meet societal expectations at some level. She had to prioritize marriage and becoming a mother over returning to school. Beatriz said she would have liked to continue her education, but she had new priorities as a wife and mother of children. Beatriz is the eldest of the group of mujeres, so when she describes being inspired by mothers who do it all, in some way she is alluding to a younger

version of herself that wished she could have also 'done it all'. However, she is doing it now! She found her way back to serving her community, even after raising her children (which is also a way one serves their community as described in the next chapter).

Moreover, Both Mary and Angelica also bring up motherhood when they point to their mothers as having a significant impact on their lives. It was their mothers' advocacy that inspired them to also ask questions, seek resources, and move forward. For example Angelica recalls:

I remember as a kid, I would get embarrassed by that, like "there goes my mom and talking to that teacher or speaking up about something," and I'd always be embarrassed that she would go and say something. But part of me really looked up to that like, "Oh, she's really advocating for me as a child, or for other people that she sees need help." So I always really looked up to my Mom and her strength.

Angelica reminisces on these sweet moments with her mother as a child. She felt embarrassed by her mother at that time for being vocal. She now recognizes these moments as advocacy. Her mother was an activist- a mover and a shaker. Much like Mary's mom who as a single mother sought out resources for her family.

Mary explains:

Listening to her story when she came from Mexico, she was 11, without her mom. She had a hard time in school so she dropped out when she was in eighth grade. And then as an adult, she went to Sequoia Adult School to get her GED. Then she went to Canada College to learn how to speak English and write English. She went through all the ESL

courses there, and that really helped her. So seeing where my mom came from, when she was little to where she is now, she's my inspiration.

Mary admires her mother's strength and perseverance as an immigrant, single mother, and English learner. She sees her mother's tenacity to pursue her education so that her children can have a better life. Mary recognizes all her mother had to endure and leans on her mother's story to find inspiration. It is also heartfelt that both Angelica and Mary recently lost their mother due to illnesses. Without a doubt their mother's legacy continues to live through their own advocacy and leadership in the community.

And while Gaby is not a mother, she too recognizes the work of mothers and the patriarchy that women often have to confront, especially in community work. She explains it in this way:

When you go to public meetings there is still a majority male presence. And many of them interrupt women. Very easily without consideration. And I don't have kids. I don't have that responsibility, but I do think that the responsibility relies mostly on the woman. And if a woman wants to have a leadership role in the community or anywhere else, she usually has to figure out a way to balance everything. And it's not, it's not the same, I don't think it is the same for men. It automatically feels like it's a given that it's the woman that's going to figure things out with childcare. You know, instead of being a shared responsibility or being the male's responsibility, I see it all the time.

Gaby points out the ways that women are often the one having to figure things out—compromising their role as organizers and their roles as mothers, in order to remain active in their community. She emphasizes that even though she is not a mother, she sympathizes and

acknowledges the responsibility that mothers carry- often on their own. She understands as a woman and through her experience with patriarchy in various community settings.

The narratives of the mujeres reveal the collective support that is felt throughout the community due to the work on the grassroots level. It is felt through the nurturing and persistence that mujeres often carry in their service. In times of pandemic, mujeres of Little Michoacan demonstrate the importance of staying hopeful and ‘staying on top of their spirit’. Having this courage shines through in the ways that the mujeres talk about mothering or how their own mothers influence their organizing. This is also an example of the wisdom that is passed down to the next generation in the encuentros in this study.

Sharing Wisdom and Encouragement

There are many important lessons that are illuminated through an intergenerational research encuentro and they will be further explored in the next section with the work of La Colectiva. However, one of the findings in the collective narratives of the mujeres is how they use the space to share wisdom and words of encouragement to the younger generation.

For example, Graciela tells Julietta and Ryan:

What I really like to see as well is how young people really take charge and put these issues in the forefront for everybody to notice. I think it's really important to learn all the issues, and especially important to vote. I also like to encourage young people to learn as much as they can about the world outside their bubble. Experience new foods, new people and new places that will open their eyes to the many possibilities and opportunities around them. Sometimes these new ways will challenge your family's or

community's beliefs, but if you stay open-minded and stay true to yourself it will be worth it.

In the first part of her narrative, Graciela acknowledges that today's generation are more in tune with current social movements. She sees this as an art teacher but also with the young people in North Fair Oaks. There was a moment in the encuentro, not captured in the narrative, when she told the youth that she was part of their social movements against rent increases and displacement a few years ago. She also joined them at their march against Pink Panthers, a drive through coffee shop where baristas wear bikinis.⁷ In this moment of connection and shared agency, Graciela recognizes the work of the younger generation and their efforts in bringing to light injustices. She encourages them to learn and stay 'outside their bubble' or comfort zone. Julietta and Ryan smiled and were bashful in making this connection and hearing from an elder that joined them in their effort. They felt supported and seen.

At the same time, Beatriz takes advantage of the encuentro to encourage Pablo and Sophia to see themselves as future leaders and decision makers of North Fair Oaks.

You guys are our future. And so I hope to see you active in our community. We have a lot of good people that live in the area, they're decision-makers, and I think it's just always coming together with those great conversations going forward. Yeah. And plus our future, the youth are our future. Yeah. So maybe I'll see some of you youth on the county board and in the schools. For sure!

⁷ <https://abc7news.com/business/lingerie-bikini-clad-baristas-stir-up-controversy-at-proposed-coffee-shop-near-redwood-city/3852549/>

Speaking about the good people that are decision-makers in the community, Beatriz nods to Pablo and Sophia and includes them as future decision-makers. She does so with enthusiasm signally that she is excited for them and the future of the community. Pablo and Sophia humbly smile and nod their heads in agreement, almost bashful that someone sees them as future leaders.

Mary uses her encuentro to remind Diana, Frida and Diego of the importance of reciprocity:

I would encourage young people to come back and work for the community, to give back and volunteer in the community. That's what I would say, is never forget where you come from. Never forget your community because your community is making you who you are.

Throughout her story, Mary talks about her desire to give to her community as a main driver for her work. She uses her time with Diana, Frida, and Diego to encourage them and remind them to be grateful for their community and to give back whether that is through volunteer work or returning to share their skills after college.

Two of the mujeres, Linda and Gaby, were interviewed by me rather than by the youth co-researchers. This was primarily due to the timing, work, family obligations and illness. However, both offered positive messages to the youth throughout the study, they were hopeful and willing to meet with them. They also encouraged the youth to follow up with them wherever needed. I consider both Linda and Gaby as elder role models and in our intergenerational encuentro both offered plenty of wisdom and gratitude for participating in this research. In a follow up email, Linda shared,

I want to thank you for spending your time discussing my history, my life. It is fascinating to me to speak of my journey that has gotten me to this place. What is fascinating is, I have many other stories and experiences that we didn't get to. My life continues to unfold and I continue to appreciate and find the value and merit of my community work. In thinking more about how I have been able to cope, contribute and remain connected to transition I came across these words I wanted to share with you: "A wise person remains centered enough to let go every time their energy shifts. The moment our energy moves, take time to relax and to release. Letting go means falling behind the energy instead of going into it. Energy is constant, beyond our control." I continue to be a work in progress and remain open to positive change. (Email Correspondence, February 6, 2021)

Even after the fact, Linda reflected on her experience connecting with me and sharing her story. She also took time to send additional words she found inspiring in hopes that it will inspire me too. Linda's words are examples of the wisdom and mentorship poured into the encuentros. The opportunity for the mujeres to share what inspires them and in the process inspire others who took the time to listen to their stories. Graciela also sent me her after thoughts in a follow-up correspondence:

My participation in this project has given me an opportunity to look back and re-examine my work in the NFO community--situations that were not always pleasant experiences, but the process of re-examination has ultimately been empowering for me, and I hope that whatever results from this project may encourage others to advocate for their communities. Thank you, Ana!

Graciela was grateful for the opportunity to revisit her life and experiences in the community. Ultimately, she hopes to inspire others through her story.

This intergenerational encuentro was unique as there generally are few opportunities for young people and elders to come together to share experience and make connections, through platicas. There is also the dominant idea that young people and elders have nothing in common or that it is hard for them to connect. This encuentro debunked those myths and offered a sacred space for these two generations of youth and mujeres to come together through their love and advocacy in and for the community. Moreover, it is important to point out that *encuentros* as a practice is not new and very much part of indigenous methodology. Natives have always valued and recognize their elders and honor them for their experiential knowledge, referred to as ancestral knowledge. (Xiiem et al., 2019).

Often this ancestral knowledge is passed down through narratives. Kovach (2009) explains storytelling as indigenous methodology and states it is “Elders’ responsibility in ensuring a moral code and history of the tribe, and it was through storytelling... stories are vessels for passing along teachings, medicines, and practices that can assist members of the collective” (p. 95). In this way, this intergenerational encuentro offers a space for elders of North Fair Oaks to pass along teachings and practices on the community advocacy of mujeres for the betterment of the community. An intergenerational encuentro offers reflection and honor of the elders work, experiential knowledge and practices. Indigenous methodology reminds us that these spaces are sacred and much needed.

Summary

The narratives of mujeres of Little Michoacan offer a wealth of knowledge in community organizing. My hope is that by offering the full narratives their wisdom will shine through on their own. To highlight their contributions and demonstrate how, through their own stories, have shaped the community of Little Michoacan. Mujeres of Little Michoacan have a heart for serving that comes from their awareness of the needs of the community. They are passionate and selfless leaders who recognize the need to work collectively. Linda, Graciela, Beatriz, Gaby, Ninfa, Angelica, and Mary have stayed connected to their community throughout the years, despite the many challenges they encountered. Their persistence and determination turn into resistance and advocacy for their people. The people of Little Michoacan and the mujeres have critical coraje. This coraje will be further explained and developed in the next chapter.

La Colectiva

Over the course of four months, I met virtually and in-person with students of Holy Family School in a class I created for the purpose of this research entitled, *Chicana HERstory*. This course took place in the midst of an on-going pandemic, fires and natural disasters. During this time, we discussed the importance of knowing our community history, understanding our identities, why our stories matter and finally, began a research journey documenting the stories of our mujer-elders. The youth joined me in this journey as my co-researchers, working in small groups, interviewing and meeting mujeres of the community. This study provided me, as a researcher, the unique opportunity to work alongside youth as they learn about their community. This class was an elective, there was no grade and no expectations other than being able to go through this journey with me and to listen to a woman's story.

I was intentional in naming the research group “La Colectiva” because of its literal meaning of a collective. The research and collection of the narratives was a group effort. La Colectiva reflects the sense of community built during the process and the collective process of the research itself. The formal course title was Chicana HERstory, a four-month youth leadership and research methodologies course.

In the development of the Chicana HERstory class, I wanted to be intentional about the goals and learning outcomes I had for the students. While I pulled from my previous experience as a youth development practitioner, ultimately, I found the pedagogy was a reflection and alignment with what Revilla (2004) refers to as a Muxerista Pedagogy. Revilla’s definition of muxerista is also what Flores (2017) uses in her development of muxerista portraiture. “Muxerista literally translates into *womanist*, the x replaces the j to signify a connection to the ancestry and languages of Mexico and Latin America” (Flores, 2017).

While at the beginning of this study I was not consciously tying Chicana HERstory with muxerista pedagogy, in reviewing the tenants that Revilla puts forth, I recognize that Chicana HERstory practiced several, if not all of the key tenets of a muxersita pedagogy.

The following is a list of these key tenets and were also reflected in the pedagogy of the Chicana HERstory class:

1. founded on Chicana/Latina feminist theory and activism,
2. involves natural dialogue, questioning, and dialectical exchange between the youth in the class, the mujeres and myself,
3. based on Chicana/Latina realities and lived experiences,

4. committed to creating social change through Chicana/Latina resistance to all forms of subordination
5. takes place in a safe space nurtured by warmth, playfulness, love, and fun.
6. necessitates the connection to community, culture and language,
7. rejects patriarchal forms of power and leadership,
8. encourages intimacy and loving relationships between women,
9. rejects homophobia and heteronormativity and works to create safe spaces for both Queer and Heterosexual women,
10. involves the production of knowledge that leads to new, redefined, reclaimed, and/or reconstructed concepts,
11. creates mentoring and novice relationships and respects the different levels of consciousness of the participants,
12. recognizes diversity among Chicana/Latinas, especially distinct his/her-stories, and multiple identities and
13. is critical of social justice movements that maintain patriarchal, racist, homophobic and imperialist structures.

It is important to highlight this connection between the course and muxerista pedagogy or portraiture to uplift the work we engaged in the Chicana HERstory class. These tenets are also a reflection of my own teaching style and influences. It was important for me to build a class that was not just about learning how to collect the narratives or what it means to do research, but also

a space of critical praxis, where the students themselves could gain or expand their own critical consciousness through the process. The students in this class had already been actively engaged in local politics through marches, demonstrations and speaking engagements around issues of gentrification, displacement, immigration and racial and gender injustices. Chicana HERstory simply aimed at nurturing their commitment to social justice because as Revilla (2004) points out, as they “gain critical consciousness at multiple levels, they gain a more inclusive sense of activism and build necessary coalitions for their efforts. They become agents of social change on their campus and their communities” (p. 14). Julietta, Karina, Emily, Sophia, Diana, Lesley, Frida, Albert, Emmanuel, Diego, Daniel, Pablo and Ryan will no doubt continue to build on their sense of activism as scholars and community leaders.

Secondary Findings: Lessons Learned from Chicana HERstory

In the development of this study, I intended to solely focus on the narratives of the *mujeres* as primary data. However, the work done in the Chicana HERstory brought in additional secondary data. There were six salient lessons and takeaways from working with La Colectiva and the Chicana HERstory class that I will lay out. These are based on my field notes, observations, and recorded zoom sessions over a four-month period.

Cultural Pride and Transnational Identity

Chicana HERstory provided a space for the youth to learn about their local history, but also about their culture and their identity. In a sense, it offered the opportunity to give the youth an entry into Chicana Studies. In one of the first workshops, we talked about identity and terms such as Chicano/a, Latinx, and Hispanic. While most of them understood the meaning of Latino/a, we dived into the meaning behind the X and the political identity of Chicano/a/x. Most

of them still felt more comfortable identifying themselves as Latino/a or Mexican- even though they were born in the United States. They feel a sense of proximity to their parents' country of origin. Often talking about food and music reveals their connection to their cultural identities. For example, in both community poems they call out *pupusas*, *tacos*, and food.

Discussions around identity gathered strong participation from the students because they felt seen. For example, when I talked about the connection between Michoacan and North Fair Oaks I shared a picture of La Plaza in Aguililla, Michoacan. One of the students, Emily, dropped her jaw when I said the name of the location, she recognized the name. In the chat she wrote, “My mom is from Aguililla!” Another student, Diego, said, “My mom is from there!” And Albert chimed in “I think I’ve been there.” The familiarity of the places, images, and discussions in the class gave students cultural intuition. This is what Sanchez (2007) defines as conscious knowledge that transnationalism and children of immigrants carry. She argues that transnational children bring unique perspectives and global knowledge to the classroom that many mainstream students do not. Emily in fact traveled to Mexico during the thanksgiving break and missed one of the classes. When I asked about her, the students said she had gone to Mexico to visit her mother’s family. The way they said it came through as typical, normal, “She’s in Mexico” like “She’s at the park”. This demonstrates that the students indeed have transnational lives. It is normal for some of their classmates to travel to Mexico or their home countries. Traveling gives them that globalized perspective and they in fact brought this knowledge into the classroom. The students frequently made connections to the course content, especially as we talked about the historical connection of North Fair Oaks to Mexico.

Chicana HERstory incorporates the cultural pride and transnational identities of the students. One of the conversations we had was about the ‘sister cities’ connection of Aguililla to Redwood City. In the picture I shared of Aguililla, we talked about Mexican plazas similar to other Mexican towns. Perhaps, this could be why they felt like ‘they had been there before’. This led to my sharing of the connection with Spanish colonization, and Spanish architecture in Mexico. I also mentioned to them that I had heard ideas from community members wanting to have a plaza replicate in North Fair Oaks, somewhere off Middlefield Rd. the main street connecting North Fair Oaks to Redwood City. I asked them what they thought. The students were surprised and agreed that, “that would be nice”. There was a lot of positive energy in the virtual classroom we created.

Shared Solidarities and Relational Histories

Shared solidarities came through in the ways the students embraced each other and recognized other women in their lives as leaders. For example, one of the students in the class, Sophia, is from the Philippines. In her encuentro with Beatriz, she stated she had been in the United States for four years. She said, “I’ve lived four years here now and then the rest of my life was over there (Philippines).” I knew Sofia was Filipina because she had previously shared this in one of our sessions, but I didn’t know that she had only been here for four years. Throughout the class I was conscious of her and made sure she didn't feel excluded. Sofia was very engaged in class and participated frequently. In one of the sessions, she brought up how some of the Spanish language is similar to Tagalog. I mentioned in class an article I had read where they argue that Filipinos and Latinx are distant cousins⁸. This is a good example of how Chicana

⁸ <https://remezcla.com/lists/culture/film-10-reasons-why-latinos-and-filipinos-are-primos/>

HERstory can weave in shared solidarities and relational histories across ethnic groups. I also noticed how her classmates embraced her, and although they frequently used some words in Spanish or interweaved Spanish and English, Sophia did not seem to be affected by this.

At the same time, this group of students have been with each other since Kindergarten. They have had the same cohort of students. And while Sophia joined the cohort in the fourth grade, she quickly integrated with the other students. I was constantly struck by how all of the students acted like brothers and sisters. They were so comfortable around each other, joked, laughed, and played around, in a very sibling-like fashion. This speaks to the way that the students shared relational histories and embraced each other as a community. As Sophia put it, “young people are changing the world.” Young people are much more accepting of differences and willing to learn from each other. They are open-minded, curious, and kind-hearted.

Another way this shared solidarity and histories came through was in the ways the students identified other women in their community as leaders. In a final activity, I had them reflect on the women they interviewed but also on other women in their lives. In addition to thinking about their mothers, their aunts, and sister, the students identified their school principal and one of their teachers who are both white women. This brought up a conversation of shared solidarities and interconnectedness. I told them my own supervisor is Chinese. Karina asked if we could include Ryan in this ‘list’ of women in our lives. Mr. Torres had previously shared with me that Ryan had recently come out to his classmates and family. Everyone had been very accepting of him and supportive. Ryan is very much feminine in his expressions. When Karina asked me if we could include him in the list of women in our lives, Ryan smiled and nodded confidently. And while I was surprised by the question, my answer was, “If Ryan identifies or

feels comfortable being added to the list- why not!” Ryan smiled and lifted his fist up, “Yeah!” In this very moment, we embraced gender fluidity and our transwomen. Although we didn't talk or engage in this further than that quick interaction, this moment demonstrates that shared solidarity is also about including issues of gender. The students recognize that Chicana HERstory should also include our trans sisters or gender fluid folks.

Activating Agency and Refining Tools

For Chicana HERstory I was intentional about incorporating tools the students were already familiar with. In this way, I learned that oftentimes the lessons were about activating the agency or skill sets they already had. For example, the students were already confident and comfortable with zoom as a platform. When Chicana HERstory began, the students already had about 4 months of remote learning, due to the Pandemic, so they were quite comfortable with zoom and the expectations of participating in class remotely. They were even more comfortable than I was with the platform and there were little to no adjustments needed. This allowed for us to quickly jump into the sessions.

This also gave the mujeres more options for their interviews. By late October, early November, our county moved to the orange tier and certain modifications were allowed. We then were able to have two of the groups conduct their interviews in person at the Siena Youth Center. The other three groups did their interviews via zoom. While the format options were given to the mujer, I noticed that the youth were flexible and open to what worked for their interviewee. This demonstrates that youth are willing to adopt and learn new skill sets as needed. I often leaned on to their already comfortable usage of tools. For example, towards the end of the sessions we explored Adobe Sparks as a digital collage maker and gave them the opportunity to use this web

based program for their final reflections. They quickly took to it. I also used Kahoot, a web based quiz tool to test their knowledge in a fun way, since they were too already familiar with it.

Activating agency also includes acknowledging their previous experience in advocacy, which is a skill in itself. The youth have been involved in past community efforts including the marches against economic displacement, speaking at the board of supervisors meetings, participating in an immigrants vigil, creating posters for Black Lives Matter etc. (See Picture Below). This skill includes: being conscious of the world around them, speaking on issues they care about and taking action. For example, in one of our sessions we talked about advocacy and community leadership in North Fair Oaks. I shared images of their past advocacy work and alluded to their recent contributions. I invited them to speak about their experiences. This gave them an opportunity to see themselves as advocates and recognize their own efforts in the community.

Testimonio as a Pedagogical Tool: Hearing vs. Listening

For many of the students, testimonio was a new concept. We spent two workshops prior to their encuentros with the mujeres, learning about testimonio as a tool. We quickly found that learning about and doing can be very different processes. For example, it was difficult for the students to break away from the “Question and Answer” format. The students had previously worked on their questions and we collected a set of 28 questions in 4 themes: *Advocacy and Inspiration, Early Life in North Fair Oaks, North Fair Oaks Today, and Childhood and Growing Up*. The questions in each section were meant to be a guide for their encuentro. The list of questions was also previously shared with the mujeres in preparation of the encuentro. I noticed during the encuentro, students had previously selected questions to ask and had divided the ‘asking’ of the question. So it was often question and answer. This is also what (Delgado Bernal

et al., 2012) argue is the difference between hearing and listening for a testimonio. Delgado Bernal et al (2012) point that:

listening is central to the pedagogical process of testimonio. Hearing a testimonio is not the same as listening to a testimonio” and add that “as a listener, another’s testimonio is much like a gift. The listener’s responsibility is to engage the *testimonialista* in an effort to understand. (p. 368)

This is the area I felt the students had a difficult time doing in their encuentro. There were moments during their interviews where the women were sharing and rather than asking them further about certain things that were shared or engaging with them, the students would focus on what question they would be asking them next. For example, in Graciela’s interview she began to talk about her involvement in the community and mentioned two community groups she is involved with. Ryan did ask “What was it like working with these groups,” which demonstrates he was listening to Graciela. However, Graciela doesn’t go much further than, “It’s great because you get to meet more people. Rather than asking her to talk more about the groups she was involved with or to give examples of the work those groups do, Julieta asked, “If you had an opportunity to change something from your childhood what would it be.” I could tell Julieta was nervous and was trying to find a question to ask from her list, instead of being with the testimonio and listening. She was hearing and focusing on the next question to ask.

At the same time the zoom format and the virtual setting made it difficult for the youth to fully engage with the stories. There were times when I noticed the students did lean on some of the answers the mujeres gave and broke out of their list of questions. For example, in Mary’s interview, when she was talking about her involvement with North Fair Oaks Council, Diana

asked her if she knew Coach Rafa, her previous program director. Mary went on to talk about her work with Coach Rafa in the council. This led to a shared connection between the youth and Mary. Diana and Albert then said, “oh yeah, I think we’ve seen you before.” “Maybe in the meetings?” During these moments, I realize that they were in fact listening to their narratives and not just hearing the ‘answers.’ The lesson here is that while we as researchers have a certain expectation of what a testimonio should look like, oftentimes it might not feel like they are doing ‘testimonio. Yet, the fact that the students are practicing the act of listening to the stories of the mujeres, learning about a complete stranger, and then coming to find commonality or genuine interest in who they are as a person, this is what testimonio is all about. These pivotal moments of connection in the encuentros- that turned into platicas, are part of the goal of muxerista portraiture. By sitting and listening to someone's story you begin to search for meaning, and important lessons that you can take with you. This lesson points to the challenge of testimonio as a pedagogical tool but as Delgado Bernal et al (2012) note, “the pedagogical practice and process is far from perfect, but when approached with reverence for the process, it is one that can be creative, innovative, and nurturing of various ways of knowing” (p. 365). I believe that the process of gathering the narratives, through testimonio, brought forth an opportunity to be creative with young people at the fore-front of the process.

Intergenerational Encuentro: Learning from Mujeres

This study allowed young people to connect with a mujer who is an adult and or an elder in their community. This doesn’t happen often, yet when it does there are various moments when the ‘elders’ pour genuine nuggets of wisdom into the youth. The encuentros created opportunities for mentorship and guidance to take place. Often the mujeres expressed how proud of the youth

they were and how it was the next generation who gave them hope for the future of NFO. The youth also noted how powerful and important it was to “learn from women.”

There were several small, yet sweet and intimate moments of connection between the mujeres and the youth. For example, Beatriz asked Sophia and Pablo what they wanted to do when they grew up. Beatriz said, “I either want to be a lawyer or entrepreneur.” Pablo said, “I was thinking about being a police officer or something like that.” It is important for the youth to voice their goals and vision for their future and allow for more connection during the encuentros.

Furthermore, after recording Graciela’s narrative, Ryan and Julieta took a long sigh of relief. Ryan stated, “That was scary.” Graciela laughed and said, “Is it scary?” She then affirmed them and told them they both did a good job. This is another sweet encounter between them, where after the ‘pressure’ of being recorded is done, they share their thoughts with each other.

Gratitude and Restoring Humility

In an intergenerational encuentro there are also moments of gratitude. Through this shared gratitude, mujeres also share how being with the youth allows them to reflect on their stories. For example, Mary thanked Diego, Diana and Frida after her interview, “Good job, good job with the interview questions. You guys all did a good job today.” She also stated, “I really enjoyed sharing my story and loved that it was conducted by the youth”

These small moments of gratitude allude to the importance of intergenerational spaces. These spaces provide affirmation and mentorship. Young people need to hear from elders that their work is also significant and that elders are proud of them. At the same time, the women elders appreciated connecting with the students and being invited to share their stories.

Angelica also notes how honoring this experience was for her, “I’m really honored to have been interviewed. Thank you for allowing me to share with your students.” Sharing and connecting with the younger generation for the *mujeres* is a humbling experience. It reminds them of their own accomplishments, being with the youth, seeing themselves in them, and now appreciating where they are today.

Summary

Overall, I learned that as a researcher, working with young people, it is important to let them learn on their own terms and let things flow at times. It requires flexibility and opportunities to let the youth simply be, reflect on their own, and take on the activities as they see fit. While I might have had my goals and ideas of what the study was going to look like, being in the process is different, and by being flexible, you allow the youth to really drive the study. There were times where I was not quite sure if they actually liked the class or were gaining from the experience. Yet, in reading their final poem it was absolutely clear that they learned a lot! They found our time meaningful, and even asked if we “can do this again?” The work with La Colectiva and spaces like a Chicana HERstory class demonstrates the need for more culturally relevant pedagogies; much like Ethnic Studies courses, where youth can see themselves represented, use their skill sets, meet leaders from the community and reflect on their experiences as students, advocates, members of the community, children of immigrants, and researchers/members of La Colectiva.

Their collective senses poems serve as a pre- and post-analysis of their experience in the Chicana HERstory class. Their words are a reflection of Flores’ Muxerista Portraiture: *Context, Voice, Relationship, Emergent Themes, and Aesthetic Whole*. First, you can clearly understand

the *context* the youth situate themselves in. A global pandemic, racial justice and call for black lives matter, police brutality and California fires. There was a lot going on for the youth at that time of this study. And they were clearly aware and in tune. At the beginning of the class the students made reference to ‘justice’ and in the end of the class they were explicitly naming Vanessa Guillen, Black Lives Matter, and human rights as social justice issues.

Second, the youth clearly represented their culture as part of their *voice* through usage of “food from different cultures” and “el paletero going down the street.” In both pre- and post-poems they identified “music” as part of their voice and sounds of their culture, “Selena and Mexican Music.” They also used some Spanish words throughout their poems which marks a connection to their native tongue. Third, *relationships* stand out in both their poems. Family being most important. In their pre- poem they referred to “Mexican family” while in the post-poem they are more explicit by naming the women in their lives, “tias, hermanas, Mrs. Hamilton, Sister Christina, Coach Ana.” Finally, the youth call out what Flores (2017) refers to as *emergent themes*; new things that come up from a conversation. The youth call out the “oppression of women,” but also lay out the intersectionality of feminism by saying that Chicana HERstory speaks for “police brutality, human rights, gender rights,” etc. The students are saying these issues are too Chicana and Latinx issues. Issues that we all should care about. This is getting to what Angela Davis refers to as a transformative feminism, a “feminism that will help us transform the world today must be capable of including perspectives that challenge white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, capitalism, the prison industrial complex attacks on the environment, militarism and war” (GBH Forum Network, 2019). Here Davis challenges us to envision a more radical feminism- one that frames away from the single-sided, homogenous, dominant narrative. Davis believes that it is a transformative feminism that will help us

understand how social movements have never been separated. What affects one community, affects us all. This is truly what Chicana HERstory aims to build and Julietta, Karina, Emily, Sophia, Diana, Lesley, Frida, Albert, Emmanuel, Diego, Daniel, Pablo and Ryan proudly represent the future of feminism.

On our last day, as we gathered in the Siena Youth Center, I shared thoughts with the youth and provided a space for reflection. I spoke about the community that we co-created in our colectiva space, the wisdom rooted in the stories shared by the elders, and the importance of shared solidarity with other communities inside of North Fair Oaks. Below are excerpts from my final thoughts to them:

I hope that you understand the importance of testimonios and story sharing. The mujer with whom you met, for some of you, they were just a stranger to you. Yet through testimonio they shared pieces of their story with you. They opened up to you and now you carry nuggets of their lessons with you...I also hope that you recognize that there are many more women leaders in the community-beyond the women with whom you all met with, and some that might not be Chicana/Latina. For example, your school principal, who is White, past teachers, tutors and mentors. Even my own manager at work, who is Asian. It is important for you to understand that we are all interconnected. And that we are guided by our love for the community.

I then asked the students to reflect and remember the reasons we chose to gather stories from Chicana/Latina elders of North Fair Oaks. I prompted their reflection with “We focused on Chicana/Latina’s because...” and solicited answers from the larger group. Some said, “because women are ignored.” “because we only hear from men”, “white men write our stories”. One

student attempted to say, “Patriarchy” and another said, “because we tend to see women in the kitchen only!”. I helped frame their answers and shared back with the group:

“We focused on Chicana/Latinas because,

- North Fair Oaks is over 70% Latinx- just take a quick glance at who is here in the room? Majority of us are Latino.
- To disrupt gender norms and patriarchy- women are too leaders and deserve recognition for their work
- To uplift women voices- because women are often silenced, ignored, or cast aside”

After a few nods, “oh yeahs!” and “yes, patriarchy!” I asked the students to reflect on other women in their lives who are also leaders in their own way and are also part of Chicana Herstory. I asked them to close their eyes, if they felt comfortable and prompted their reflection in this way:

Think about your moms, your tias, sisters, cousins, and women mentors, who have played a role in your lives. While their actions might not be thought of as ‘advocacy’ or ‘community leadership,’ I want you to think about the things they do for you on a daily basis. It might be subtle but they are making an impact in your young lives. They are helping you succeed. These actions are also part of Chicana HERstory.

As our final activity, I had the students work on a collective senses poem (see appendix). To prepare, I asked the students to use the final reflections we just did together and to think back on their experience being part of La Colectiva and the lessons they learned in the Chicana HERstory class. The following is an image of the final collective poem we created collectively.

In many ways, this poem is a reflection of the dialogues, learnings, and activities we embarked together over the four-month period. It is also a reflection of their portraiture- as a Collective. It offers their voice, the context, relationships, emergent themes and aesthetic wholeness of their Chicana HERStory journey.

As a researcher, I foresaw the bulk of data coming from the narratives of the women, yet the work within La Colectiva became a central part of the research process, and ultimately became a space of intergenerational encuentro.

CHAPTER V- CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

On the evening of Tuesday, March 16, 2021, a group of North Fair Oaks stakeholders, including me, my husband and three of the mujeres in this study, gathered virtually to discuss recent remarks made by our county supervisor. In an article released the day before entitled, “This San Mateo County Community Went from 10 Coronavirus Cases to 551 Overnight” (Castaneda, 2021), the supervisor was asked to explain why the county had not shared the accurate number of COVID-19 cases in our community of North Fair Oaks. His response to the question according to the article was, “The question is how many people are actually looking at that and paying attention,” and went on to add, “Well, some are, but I don’t know that people in North Fair Oaks are looking.” The county supervisor's remarks add to a long history of deficit thinking and rhetoric when discussing the agency of low-income communities of color. His remarks clearly suggest that the people of North Fair Oaks do not care and are ignorant to the current situation. He clearly does not see the strength, community perseverance, and collective spirit of North Fair Oaks.

This gathering of community leaders shed light on the continuous advocacy and power of the people who love Little Michoacan, not because they have a hidden agenda, but because they genuinely care. In response to this supervisor’s comments was a mix of frustration, anger, and desire to take action. Some said, “I am frustrated, this is not okay, but I am also not surprised.” Some of the mujeres shared that they had already written emails to the supervisor, demanding an apology, and they had yet to hear back. Others said they had made calls, and the response was that he had been misquoted: “Well if that is true, then where is the apology”? Regardless, the group agreed this was another tone-deaf remark that piled on top of the already felt collective

exasperation with our local government. That night we walked away with a draft of demands for the local leadership:

1. The NFO community deserves and demands an apology after the dismissive responses provided to the *San Jose Mercury News* by San Mateo County Supervisor Warren Slocum and Deputy Chief of SMC Health Srija Srinivasan stating that the erroneous Covid-19 case posting on the SMC Health Dashboard had “minimal” to “no real-world implications, and implying that the people of NFO does not care about such information.
2. We demand that SMC decentralize vaccinations immediately to provide ALL the highly infected, unincorporated communities better opportunities locally and regularly through community centers and health providers as inoculation is received by SM County.
3. We demand direct reporting of the NFO Council to the Supervisor's Office and NOT to OCA or County Manager’s Office. We want and deserve direct communication with the officials we elect and not with a department or office which is diffuse, indirect and may care less about our communities.
4. We demand real investment in NFO and other unincorporated areas, not only to strengthen our insufficient health care services but also to provide other essential services that our communities lack, starting with direct, succinct and regular communication to our local Councils and residents regarding the programs, services and opportunities that SM County provides.
5. We demand that the Office of Community Affairs should have quarterly meetings with community stakeholders and CBOs to truly learn and serve the real needs of our communities instead of implementing programs on their own and with little to no guidance from the communities.
6. Finally, our community’s patience is being misinterpreted as carelessness or ignorance, and we want all SM County staff to dispel the notions that people of NFO don't care, don’t know better or that NFO residents deserve less. We demand that a memo be sent to All SMC staff immediately clarifying that such a notion is wrong and inappropriate, and reassuring that ALL communities need to be treated

equally, with the same respect, consideration and quality of service and care regardless of the demographics or location. This is essential to strengthen the process of understanding the needs of NFO residents and similar communities in SMC without prejudice and with the intent to minimize inequities and systemic racism. (Avendano, personal communication, March 17, 2021)

As evident in the stories the mujeres shared with the youth and captured in this dissertation, our community of Little Michoacan has been ignored, cast aside, and viewed negatively for far too long. The gathering on the evening of March 16th, 2021, demonstrates that the work of the mujeres and Latinx leaders of North Fair Oaks continues to be significant. This study, and others like this, are essential in lifting the voices and power of our mujeres, our youth, and the civic, political and cultural contributions of the Latinx community. It's also a reminder that we need more representatives of color in leadership roles, who are from the community they serve and understand the needs of the people. For this reason, it is important for young people to know their history and to learn from their elders. Young people can and will be our future leaders. Below I provide the summary of the findings from this study and uplift the theoretical framework I set forth in Chapter One.

Reinstatement of the Study

In this study, I set out to collect narratives of mujeres who are leaders and organizers who have contributed to the ongoing resistance in a community that has experienced a history of neglect. More recently, this community has experienced early signs of gentrification and displacement, along with “revitalization” plans, road redesign, and significant increase in rent and overall cost of living. As an active member of this community, I have witnessed the efforts led by youth and women against economic displacement. While change is inevitable, and migration and movement are part of economic development, growth and prosperity, it should not

be at the expense of communities that have tirelessly built and shaped a community into what it is today. This study offers the opportunity to learn directly from community members. So that new residents, government leaders, and policy makers can genuinely recognize and value historical contributions of the people and build solidarity and understanding.

The purpose of this study was to capture the ongoing community organizing, led primarily by Chicanas and young people, against gentrification in their hometown of North Fair Oaks, Little Michoacan. Through *muxersita portraiture*, a critical qualitative methodology, with young people as co-researchers, this study captured the collective narrative of the mujeres of Little Michoacan through *platicas*, *encuentros* and *acción*. The research questions were:

1. How do we understand Little Michoacan as a community that is built through the advocacy of Chicana/Latinas?
2. How do the residents of Little Michoacan navigate *coraje* in their community?
3. What is illuminated through an intergenerational research encuentro in which youth capture the narratives of mujer elders?

Working alongside youth and guided by *muxerista portraiture*, collectively we gathered narratives of seven Chicana/Latinas of Little Michoacan. These narratives paint portraits that are committed to social justice and challenging all forms of subordination through a Chicana feminist inquiry. The narratives collectively offer insight into the lives of mujeres of Little Michoacan who serve their communities wholeheartedly. Insights include the ways mujeres of Little Michoacan have a heart for serving. Their narratives reveal what it is like to live in the margins, from gentrification, displacement, and immigration. They also demonstrate the ways

their advocacy is about collective support, nurturing, and staying persistent. Their voices and the encuentros reveal the ways elders share wisdom and encouragement to the younger generations.

From la colectiva, and youth co-lead research we learn the importance of culturally relevant pedagogy. Young people need and thrive in spaces that give them opportunities to learn about their culture and relational histories so that they can build shared solidarities. Youth need opportunities to activate their agency and they radiate when you tap into their already established skill sets. Educators must at times have to let youth take ownership of their own learning, remove our own expectations and even biases. For authentic learning to happen, we have to allow young people to grapple with new tools on their own terms. This is how growth happens. Finally, we learn that elders often find humility from their time spent with the younger generation. We learn from them to be grateful and open-minded.

Discussion

In this study, I found that mujeres of Little Michoacan take action through HEARTwork for their community in order to preserve their home. Mujeres of Little Michoacan continually challenge the negative narratives of their community through their ongoing organizing and continuous efforts, volunteering, leading organizations, mentoring youth, building up families, and equipping them with resources. Mujeres of Little Michoacan offer guidance of what coraje can look like through the many ways they navigate their frustrations, hope, resilience, and their multiple roles as mothers, leaders, educators, etc. In this section I offer my analysis of the findings through the lens of a critical coraje framework.

Guided by Chicana feminist epistemology, transnationalism/borderlands theory, and critical consciousness, critical coraje encourages community hope and action, in times of land

and space contestation. Critical coraje aims to transform the world through HERstory education, uplifting and acknowledging the contributions of oppressed people and the fostering of advocacy, for the preservation of home. The major findings from the collective narratives of mujeres of Little Michoacan reveal four tenets of a critical coraje framework:

1. Collective HEARTwork
2. Critical Hope
3. Mother[work]
4. Liberatory Spirit

Figure 17

Critical Coraje



Note: Image of Critical Coraje, a homemade theory

Collective HEARTwork

Collective HEARTwork was visible throughout the mujeres narratives. It shines through in the ways they talked about working together to create greater impact. The mujeres recognize that in order to make change,

you have to work together. Each of the mujeres does what I call HEARTwork. They are guided by love for their community, *con corazon*. For the people and for their home. They serve selflessly. And they understand that collectively they are making a difference in the ways they support and advocate for the youth, the families, and each other. bell hooks (2001) reminds us that love is central to service:

Serving others is as fruitful a path to the heart as any other therapeutic practice. To truly serve, we must always empty the ego so that space can exist for us to recognize the needs of others and be capable of fulfilling them. The greater your compassion the more aware we are of ways to extend ourselves to others that make healing possible. (p. 217)

bell hooks (2001) speaks to compassion in serving others. She argues that selfishness has no space in true service. She adds that in fact it is through serving that you can truly understand the meaning of love. Because when we serve, wholeheartedly, selflessly, we begin to open our hearts and heal ourselves. Gaby, Angelica and Ninfa are key examples of this. It is through volunteering that they came to understand the pain and needs of the community. They were moved towards action. They understood that there was much more to be done.

Moreover, mujeres of Little Michoacan recognize the efforts of local organizations, coalitions, and neighborhood groups in offering support and resources. It is not just their organizing but a collective. In this way collective HEARTwork is about people working together and joining the efforts of local organizations to pull resources together. Social movements in the last decade have demonstrated this collective power. For example, Alicia Garza, founder of #Blacklivesmatter states:

Collective transformative practice is not some hippy dippy thing. It's about how we are working together and how we are successful as movements. This is how #Black Lives Matter thinks about transformative practice: It's about transformative relationship building. It's about practice as a ritual. (Garza, as cited in Zimmerman & Quiroz, 2016, p. 1)

Collective HEARTwork goes hand in hand with collective power. It is about making connections between each other's efforts. The idea that "we are collectively working towards the same goals." Alicia Garza also points out the importance of relationship building. In HEARTwork the love for Little Michoacan is what unifies their efforts.

The voices of the mujeres of Little Michoacan also demonstrate how they nurture and care for each other. adrienne maree brown (2019) writes about love as political resistance. She says as activists, "We need to learn how to practice love such that care-for ourselves and others- is understood as political resistance and cultivating resilience" (Brown, 2019, p. 59). The mujeres in this study reveal the ways they stay committed to their community by supporting them. Not only did they do this through their daily organizing, but even after they pursued careers, became successful, established their own families, retired, or moved away. They often returned to the community or continued serving in different capacities. For example, they established neighborhood groups, joined the community council, as well as founded youth programs, education programs, and non-profit organizations.

HEARTwork allowed the mujeres to tap into their skill sets as a way to give back to their communities. This is the reciprocity that was often shared and echoed in the mujeres' narratives. For example, Mary shares her story of being raised in North Fair Oaks, moving her way through

college, earning her bachelor's degree, and then returning to work at the elementary school she attended. Even after the school closed down- she remained committed to working in the same community as the families with whom she had built trust. Mary's love for the families and children she works with is a form of political resistance.

Beyond that, this points towards the necessity and sacredness of intergenerational *encuentros*. The young people in this study learn from the *mujeres* about political resistance, collective power, relationship building, and 'doing the work' with and from love. And although they are the next generation, they are part of this collective power and collective HEARTwork now! Their efforts in this study, gathering the narratives, learning from the *mujeres*, and making connections to their own advocacy work is all part of the collective HEARTwork of Little Michoacan.

Critical Hope

Critical hope is about seeing beyond despair, having *esperanza*, faith, and envisioning a new reality. Hope shines throughout this study in both the voices of the *mujeres* and during my time with the youth. This study was conducted in the midst of a global pandemic, COVID-19, that plagued the community of Little Michoacan and is still ever present. It is no wonder that the idea of *esperanza* and critical hope came through significantly in the narratives.

For example, the *mujeres* voiced hope as encouragement for the future, being able to see past our current situation: quarantining, social distancing, and mask-wearing. When the youth asked about what gave them hope and encouragement during this time, they often talked about looking forward to 'being with family and friends,' 'returning to normal.' They helped the young people envision a post-pandemic life. Angelica returned to the laughter and smiles of her

children, as her form of *esperanza*. In this way, the *mujeres* encouraged the young people to lean on the good. Remaining positive in the midst of uncertainty is also part of critical hope.

Black feminist authors like adrienne maree brown (2017) refer to the idea of utopias - where we are invited to imagine new realities and possibilities. brown (2017) calls for this practice of ideation to “imagine and create” because, “it is our right and responsibility to create a new world” (p. 19). In a similar way, Kelley (2008) says that in dreaming we are encouraging our radical imagination to run free. Critical hope is connected to this radical imagination and ideation because they not only call us to envision but also give us something new to look forward to, something better!

Furthermore, Anzaldua (2015) adds that:

Imagination opens the road to both personal and societal change-transformation of self, consciousness, community, culture, and society. We have different kinds of imaginings, each with similar yet different processes: a political process of imagining, a spiritual process of imagining, and an aesthetic process of imagining. Without imagination, transformation would not be possible. (p. 44)

Imagination gives us the chance to have hope, and in return, gives us inspiration, encouragement, and endless possibilities that change is coming. This was evident in the narratives of the *mujeres*, not only in the ways they talked about post-pandemic life, but also in their HEARTwork. They were inspired and encouraged to create new youth programs, partnerships, as well as initiatives and policies because they imagined a better future for the residents of the community. For the youth. Beatriz talks about this when she explains her work with the dumping and litter ordinance. She voices her concerns for the current conditions, where

many youth play. And she envisions better and safer play areas, parks and streets, free from illegal dumping. Her desires in establishing ordinances for the community come from her critical hope from the kids and families.

Moreover, the collective HEARTwork of the residents of Little Michoacan demonstrates the many ways they employ this critical hope by remaining persistent and positive in light of the constant neglect and challenges their community faces. Duncan-Andrade, 2009 talks about an audacious hope:

... audacious hope demands that we reconnect to the collective by struggling alongside one another, sharing in the victories and the pain. This solidarity is the essential ingredient for “radical healing. (p. 190)

There is solidarity in the collective HEARTwork of the residents of Little Michoacan as exemplified by the voices and the stories of the mujeres. Their collective disappointment with local government and shared pain allow them to see that there are others who feel the same. Gaby explains this when she speaks of her attendance at community meetings and sharing her thoughts by speaking up in meetings. This has allowed her to meet others who share common stories of struggle and frustration. And in the midst of their shared struggle, there is power and critical and audacious hope. It is critical in times of contestation and despair to have a little faith. Critical hope allows us to see the light at the end of the tunnel. And it is also through this hope and Collective HEARTwork that we can begin to heal. bell hooks (2001) explains:

Without hope, we cannot return to love. Breaking our sense of isolation and opening up the window of opportunity, hope provides us with a reason to go forward. It is a practice

of positive thinking. Being positive, living in a permanent state of hopefulness, renews the spirit. Renewing our faith in love's promise, hope is our covenant. (p. 219).

The idea of positivity is reflected in the stories of the mujeres. For example, they emphasize not only staying positive during the pandemic, but also remaining hopeful despite the historical neglect for the community. Ninfa also shares how she has stayed positive even when faced with racial and prejudicial discrimination. One can argue that it no doubt required critical hope, audacious hope, and faith that their collective work would lead to positive change. A reason for them to keep moving forward.

M[other]work

The idea of m[other]work in this sense is about the ways the mujeres talked about their roles as mothers, specifically in how their gendered roles would play out in their organizing and leadership. While the youth did not explicitly ask about this, it was an emergent theme that shined through the narratives of each mujer. This demonstrates that their role as women, mothers, daughters, leaders, and caretakers is a part of how they do their advocacy and organizing. It cannot be separated.

The term 'motherwork' comes from Patricia Hill Collins (1994, 2000) who theorizes on the work of mothers.

[Motherwork] disrupts gender roles and defies the social structures and constructions of work and family as separate spheres for Black women; it acknowledges women's reproductive labor as work on behalf of the family as a whole rather than to benefit men. Motherwork also goes beyond the survival of the family by recognizing the survival of women biological kin, as well as attending to the individual survival, empowerment, and

identity of one's racial and ethnic community to protect the earth for children who are yet to be born. (Hill Collins, as cited in Caballero et al., 2019, p. 6)

The *mujeres* brought to light the way that being a mother influenced their organizing, not just for them, but also for their own mothers as well. For example, they voice that their children were the inspiration for them in serving. Often they would start to volunteer in the schools and in the classrooms, as was the case for Ninfa. At times, being a mother would also encourage them to take a step back to care for their children and their families. M[other]work would push back on the idea that this care work is not part of their organizing and instead add that taking care of our children, ourselves, and our families is also part of the HEARTwork. The *mujeres* would also balance their responsibilities at home and even continue to find ways to help. As Beatriz points out, it is inspiring how mothers carry their m[other]work to move in and out of spaces.

Additionally, Mary and Angelica share that their mothers were active in their education and in the community, seeking resources for their families. This shows that m[other]work is intergenerational. Although they didn't recognize it then, Mary and Angelica were inspired by their mothers' m[other]work and *movidas*. As explained by Espinoza et al (2018), *movidas* are the moves that Chicanas would develop and deploy through their own political and cultural tools to navigate the multiple fronts of struggle they confronted:

Through these tactical *movidas* [Chicanas], named oppressions that had been ignored, subordinated, or not perceived, they ultimately identified and challenged the marginalization of their communities by outlining the ways in which gender, race, class, and sexuality were mutually constituted. They also opened up spaces for different

approaches to organizing with other women and created new counterpublics in which they would further develop their aesthetics, theoretical, and political practices. (p. 3)

The mujeres in this study also developed their own *movidas* through their advocacy of Little Michoacan, calling out historical marginalization and uplifting the work of grassroots, people-led organizations. Additionally, the Chicana M[other]work Collective (2019) adds:

Chicana M[other] work is care work that includes the care we provide in our homes, classrooms, communities, and selves. Chicana M[other]work is expansive.... Chicana M[other]work is relational. It is also imaginary, because we envision and are working towards mothering for liberation among interlocking systems of oppression. We refuse to continue living fragmented lives, and we will no longer be silent. (p. 13)

The mujeres in this study provide care, love, and support for their families, their community work, their careers, and themselves. They are role models for me and other recent mothers who oftentimes struggle in balancing all our demands. Their m[other]work is something to acknowledge and aspire to embrace. For the young people in this study, in our last session, I pointed out that we need to acknowledge the m[other]work of the women in our lives: our mothers, hermanas, abuelitas, tias, maestras, etc. It is important for them to also understand that these women are too part of our community of support and how we continue to thrive. The m[other]work in this way is how the women in our lives teach us to survive and hope.

In *Revolutionary Mothering*, Gumbs et al., (2016) assert that all mothers have the potential to be revolutionary and it is “necessary and real and happening everyday” (p. 2). Furthermore, they claim that “radical mothering is the imperative to build bridges that allow us to relate across these very real barriers” (p. 41). Gumbs et al (2016) point to the ways in which

the expansive role of mothering, a revolutionary act itself, is part of everyday life. By embracing the m[other]work, we understand that we are bridge builders- making connections, often taking roles on the front line because our lives and the lives of our loved ones depend on it. It is part of how we survive and thrive.

Furthermore, the mujeres in this study demonstrate how they carry their intersectionality through their organizing and in this way are what Anzaldúa (2015) defines as *nepantleras*:

To become *nepantleras*, we must choose to occupy intermediary spaces between worlds, to move between worlds like the ancient chamanas who choose between worlds, choose to speak from the cracks between the worlds, from *las redijas* (rents). We must choose to see through the holes in reality, choose to perceive something from multiple perspectives. The act of seeing the holes in our cultural conditioning can help us to separate out from overidentifying with personal and cultural identities transmitted by both our own groups and the dominant culture, to shed their toxic values and ways of life. (p. 93).

Doing advocacy and community work is a choice the mujeres in this study take every day. By doing this, they are choosing to move in and out of political spaces and their spaces as mothers, daughters, wives, etc. They are *nepantleras* who make *movidas* between worlds, offering their multiple perspectives, voices, experiences, and contributions. They recognize the needs of their communities and take action. And they know they cannot do it alone. Their *nepantlera* mindset knows they need to work together.

The m[other]work employed by the mujeres is about navigating their gendered roles and expectations, moving in and out of institutional spaces and multiple worlds, calling out injustices, and pushing forth the *good* work. We learn from our own mothers, hermanas,

abuelitas, tias, how to do the m[other]work. It is also about validating women's work and being grateful for the tireless work of mujeres in the name of justice. Through recognizing the m[other]work, we honor the HEARTwork, learn the need for critical hope, and seek liberatory spirit for us, our community, and future generations.

Liberatory Spirit

Liberatory spirit points to the courage and the fire inside of us that is awaiting to be free. It is the freedom and justice the mujeres hope for through their HEARTwork and m[other]work. We see liberatory spirit in the ways the mujeres talk about the resiliency in their community. But also we see it in the perseverance the mujeres display through their tireless, selfless efforts. Especially, as it pertains to the discouragement and frustration they historically experience as a community. Linda describes it as “staying on top of our spirit and power.” Liberatory spirit goes hand in hand with critical hope. One way to define liberatory spirit is the way that Anzaldúa (2015) describes spiritual activism:

Activism is engaging in healing work. It means putting our hands in the dough and not merely thinking or talking about making tortillas. It means creating spaces and times for healing to happen, espacios y tiempo to nourish the soul. Meditative prayer, a work of the imagination and a powerful generative and transformative force, often accompanies each stage of this healing process. (p. 91).

Both the mujeres and the youth in this study demonstrate the ways they ‘place their hands into the dough’ and ‘made tortillas’ or take action in the name of justice. The space provided in this intergenerational encuentro certainly provided a space for healing to happen. It gave an opportunity for the youth to learn about their community, see themselves reflected in the

curriculum, and connect with an elder. For the mujeres, the space brought them humility and hope for the future. Through the intergenerational encuentro, the youth, the mujeres and I imagined new possibilities for our community. In doing so, we engaged in spiritual activism and allowed our liberatory spirit to run wild.

Certainly, the liberatory spirit is about healing. Often this healing starts within ourselves. Grace Lee Boggs discusses this inner work in the film *American Revolutionary* (Lee, 2013):

Each of us needs to undergo a tremendous philosophical and spiritual transformation. Each of us needs to be awakened to a personal and compassionate recognition of the inseparable interconnection between our minds, hearts, and bodies; between our physical and psychical well-being; and between ourselves and all the other selves in our country and in the world. Each of us needs to stop being a passive observer of the suffering that we know is going on in the world and start identifying with the sufferers. Each of us needs to make a leap that is both practical and philosophical, beyond determinism to self-determination. Each of us has to be true to and enhance our own humanity by embracing and practicing the conviction that as human beings we have Free Will. (p. 3)

Both Anzaldúa's and Boggs's concepts of spiritual activism and spiritual transformation challenge us to 'take a leap' of faith and begin a healing process by looking inward. Anzaldúa says we need to take care of our 'sustos' and trauma, strip away what is keeping us from moving forward before diving into the outer work. bell hooks (2001) would add that through serving we can begin this inner/outer work, simultaneously. We don't have to wait. Surely staying 'on top of our spirit and power' as Linda states, is about healing ourselves through the HEARTwork. And it

is also about having critical hope. You have to believe that healing can happen. Only in this way can we truly seek liberation.

While the *mujeres* refer to the community as resilient, I feel that resiliency limits the authenticity of the healing work, perseverance, and tenacity that both the *mujeres* and Little Michoacan carry. Their HEARTwork is an act of liberation which is more than the ability to recover quickly. For example, adrienne maree brown (2017) devotes a whole chapter to resilience and describes it as transformative justice:

Transformative justice, in the context of emergent strategy, asks us to consider how to transform toxic energy, hurt, legitimate pain, and conflict into solutions. To get under the wrong, find a way to coexist, be energy moving towards life, together. (p. 133).

By looking at these concepts of spiritual activism, spiritual transformation, and transformative justice, we can understand that the resiliency employed by the *mujeres*, the youth and residents of Little Michoacan is so much more than recovery! It is a long process that takes time. One thing we can learn from the *mujeres* is that through service we can begin to open up our hearts. Only then can we seek recovery. It is the liberatory spirit that enables us to heal and transform our pain into power.

Summary

In this study, I began by sharing my own testimonio and shared my grappling with *coraje*. The complexity and richness provided the framework that guided me throughout my time with the youth and listening to *las mujeres*. Through a deeper reflection of the narratives of *las mujeres* of Little Michoacan I began to further understand the full richness of critical *coraje*. Four tenets of critical *coraje* are revealed through the narratives and further explored through the

literature that guides this homemade theory. hooks (2001) reminds us that love is central to everything, such that love is central in critical coraje and the advocacy and community work of mujeres in this study. Love is central in collective HEARTwork. Love is central to critical hope. Love is central in the m[other]work. Love is central in our liberatory spirit.

The HERstory of Chicanas of Little Michoacan has taught us that without love, there is no collective power, no radical dreaming, no solidarity, no hope for the better, and no healing. For young people and the future of Little Michoacan, it is imperative that they learn from their elders and carry these lessons from the mujeres with them. Intergenerational encuentros are sacred and necessary now more than ever.

Collectively, these narratives serve as a document of the contributions and HERstory of North Fair Oaks that can be shared with others in the community. These narratives are the voices of Little Michoacan, and collectively help to understand the power of community advocacy, women in leadership, and a historical account of Latinx contributions in the greater Redwood City Community.

Recommendations for Future Research

It is fascinating to me to speak of my journey that has gotten me to this place. What is fascinating is, I have many other stories and experiences that we didn't get to.

My life continues to unfold and I continue to appreciate and find the value and merit of my community work. In thinking more about how I have been able to cope, contribute and remain connected to transition. (Avendano, personal communication, February 6, 2021)

The narratives in this study serve as a starting point for future research and a book on the HERstory of North Fair Oaks. There were additional mujeres from the community that did not get to participate in this study and are potential participants for future research. However, due to a family illness and the pandemic, they were not able to participate at that time of the study. After the study and collection of narratives had been completed, I was connected with one mujer who was interested in participating. I also became aware of other mujeres throughout this study - women that were connected with the participants, through their advocacy work. In the end, this illustrates the potential for a book and collection of narratives of mujeres of Little Michocan. So many more testimonios and stories need to be shared. As Linda shared in her email correspondence to me, there is so much more to her story, and we didn't get to it.

Future studies can also include an opportunity for the mujeres in this study and others to come together and listen to each other's stories. An initial goal was to have the mujeres in this study come together for platicas with each other and the youth. However, due to the pandemic and safety concerns, this was not an option. In the future, I would like to host live platicas with the participants in this study, both the mujeres and the youth, to talk about their experience to provide spaces for future conocimiento and sharing of knowledge. As Anzaldúa (2015) explains:

To be in conocimiento with another person or group is to share knowledge, pool resources, meet each other, compare liberation struggles and social movements' histories, share how we confront institutional power, and process and heal wounds. (p. 91)

This act of sharing, meeting each other, comparing struggles, and histories did not happen and would be an ideal next step in the research. It would be so impactful to have all the women come together, further adding to their collective narratives and connectivity.

Finally, the work with La Colective and the youth was secondary data in this study. Future research can take a deeper analysis of the findings by conducting follow-up interviews with the youth, and/ or focus groups. Potentially, it could include asking the youth to also share their testimonios with each other. Future research can solely focus on the work of La Colective and contribute to the field of youth as co-researchers and YPAR. Chicana HERstory offered a mini version of Chicana Studies and therefore, further research can add to the growing scholarship of the value of Ethnic Studies in the classroom.

Recommendation for Future Practice

This study serves as an example of muxerista portraiture methodology conducted alongside youth. Future practice can include incorporating muxerista portraiture in the classroom as a pedagogical tool. Educators can implement muxerista portraiture in a variety of ways. For example, youth can use the elements of muxerista portraiture to analyze oral history projects, conduct migration stories, or do art projects similar to the portraits in this study.

The Chicana HERstory class also serves as a pedagogical tool for future practice, whether in afterschool programs that work with youth in leadership and advocacy or in the classroom. Chicana HERstory can be adapted to learn about local HERstory in marginalized communities, or other communities that are facing gentrification. Chicana HERstory also serves as an example for future research or practice that includes youth and elders for intergenerational encuentros.

Furthermore, critical coraje as a homemade theory can serve as an example for others who are looking into developing their own frameworks. At the same time, those who resonate with critical coraje can apply the framework in their own research.

Closing Remarks

As I reflect on my own journey unpacking my coraje to where I am today, holding on to the lessons I received from the youth and the mujeres of Little Michoacan, I recognize the many ways this research has been my own healing process. I am inspired and humbled by the young people. I am moved by the narratives and wisdom shared by the mujeres.

This research began with the search for mi Aztlan - my *home*. In the process, I found *home* in North Fair Oaks where I have learned to fully embrace my community scholar activist identity - as a doctoral student, community leader, mother, and educator. Recently, I started working directly with community members in the local community center. It is here that I have seen critical coraje play out before my very own eyes. I see it in the way residents carried forth a liberatory spirit, despite the challenges and economic desperation that the pandemic brought. The ways they moved in and out of the new systems in place to seek resources for their families, while their children adapted to remote learning. The ways some of the mothers would reach out to offer support in our monthly food distribution, because they wanted to do something to help. I also witnessed the desire for connection and partnerships among the community organizations. The ways they pulled together their resources to have a greater impact and the ease with which they agreed to partner or participate. Throughout this work, I have also met more community warriors who like the mujeres in this study love and care for Little Michoacan wholeheartedly. Being in these spaces gives me audacious hope for our small but mighty community. We will no longer be cast aside, be a passing intersection, or neglected community.

I began this chapter with the recent meeting, March 16, 2021, of North Fair Oaks stakeholders as a demonstration of the power of coraje in our community. Since then, and in

response to our demands and call for apology⁹ we have seen an expansion of COVID-19 vaccine clinics in North Fair Oaks, more visibility of our county representatives in local meetings, and direct communication from our government leader about upcoming community projects. We have also seen support in local initiatives such as a mural project that three of the women in this study and I are involved in.¹⁰ This project has been long overdue. Yet, for the past two years, we have never had direct communication with our county representative (although we frequently asked for it). Since the release of our demands, he has met with two of our project leaders, sent us weekly updates on the approval status, and communicated his support for the project. These wins are our collective wins! It is moments like these that nourish the soul.

I continue to see the work of Angelica, Graciela, Gabriela, Beatriz, Ninfa, Mary, and Linda, writing letters to our county supervisor, meeting with our leaders, using Facebook to share COVID-19 vaccine information and upcoming clinics, passing out masks, translating forms, sharing resources, helping families apply for services, etc. It's more than encouraging! It speaks to their power, resistance, and advocacy in preserving the rich culture, knowledge, capital and history of Little Michoacan. And I am ultimately grateful for being a part of this community. My home.

⁹ <https://www.mercurynews.com/2021/03/25/its-just-not-right-san-mateo-county-residents-call-for-apology-after-covid-data-error/>

¹⁰ <https://www.ccnfo.org/underpass-murals>

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APPENDIX 1

Questions for Mujeres of NFO

Advocacy + Inspiration

- How did it feel when you first began advocating?
- What made you want to get involved?
- What was your inspiration to help with our community?
- What was the reason why you wanted to make a change in our community?
- Who was your role model when you were growing up?
- Who was someone you always looked up to and made a change in your life?

Early Life in NFO

- Did you or your family have any friends and family that were already in Redwood City that helped you or your family establish here? Why NFO?
- If someone asked you that, they wanted to do what you are doing, what would you tell them and why?
- What did you study in college?
- What is your job now?
- What do you want to do in 5 years?
- What is one goal that you have had and what are you doing to pursue it?
- Was it difficult for you to get where you are now?

NFO Today

- What is your favorite part of the NFO community?
- What organizations are you a part of now?
- Are there any recent challenges you had to go face while living or serving in NFO?
- Did you have any regrets of living or serving in NFO?
- If you had another opportunity to choose a different career what would it be?
- What gives you hope and encouragement during this time?

Childhood+ Growing Up

- Tell me about your childhood- what was your life like?
- How was your childhood and did you have a lot of opportunity?
- What opportunities did you have as a kid?
- What school did you go to? How was your schooling/educational experience?
- What was your community like growing up?
- What were your hobbies?
- What did you want to be when you were growing up?
- Was there something that had an impact on you when you were growing up

Appendix 2

Data Collection Table

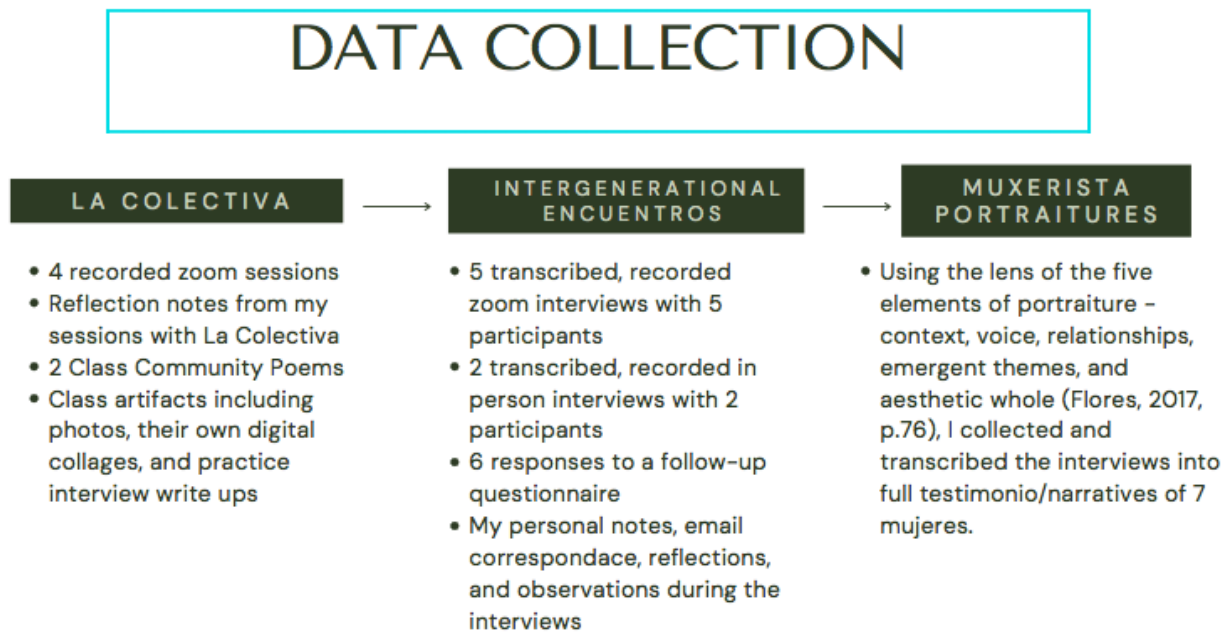


TABLE- Image representation of the three ways data was collected for this project

Chicana HERstory Class Collective Poems

OUR COLLECTIVE POEM

Our Community Taste's Like

Mexican Food, People Making Food , Sweet Tacos and Activity. Pupusas. Food made from different cultures. A community full of joy and Sweet treats.

Our Community Smells Like

Smoke, food, Flowers, joy, smokey campfires and roses

Our Community's Texture is Like

Hard, Smooth, soft, rough, Fluffy, uneven, rocky and bumpy

Our Community Sounds Like

*Justice, Music , Reggeaton music, children playing , the paletero going down the streets , a quiet home
The laughter of children.*

Our Community Reminds us of

Mexico, family, and the future . Fighting for what is right. Where my parents come from.

Poem 1- Chicana HERstory Collective Poem for Class 1

CHICANA HERSTORY

By HFS 7h Grade

EXPLAINING YOUR STORY, LIVES AND OBSTACLES. ADVOCACY.
SOUNDS LIKE MEXICAN MUSIC, SELENA, TESTIMONIOS,
INTERVIEWING POWERFUL MUJERES, SHARING

ART FULL OF COLORS, GATHERING VIA ZOOM, LOOKS LIKE
COMMUNITY,
A GARDEN, JUSTICE, A PROTEST, LATINAS JUNTAS, MUJERES Y
CULTURA

SPEAKS FOR THE OPPRESSION OF WOMEN, VANESSA GUILLEN,
HUMAN RIGHTS, CHICANAS, BLACK LIVES MATTER, FAMILIA,
EQUALITY, OUR VOICES,
THE WOMEN IN OUR LIVES

OUR MOTHERS, HERMANAS, TIAS, TEACHERS AND MENTORS,
MRS. HAMILTON, SISTER CHRISTINA, AND COACH ANA

ADVOCACY, RESPECT, REMINDS ME OF WHERE WE
CAME FROM, LOVE, EL GRULLENSE, TACOS, TAMALES,
PUPUSAS AND ALL OUR CULTURAL FOOD. MY
COMMUNITY AND FAMILY.

THE LESSONS WE TAKE
FEMINISM IS TO TREAT EVERYONE
WITH EQUITY, RESPECT, AND KINDNESS.
THE LOVE FOR THE HISTORY OF MY TOWN.
TO LISTEN AND EMPOWER OTHERS
FOLLOW YOUR DREAMS, SHARE OUR STORIES, LEARN FROM WOMEN

Poem 2- Chicana HERstory collective poem created in the last session of the course