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Transforming Chicana/o and Latina/o Politics: Globalization and the Formation of Transnational Resistance in the United States and Chiapas

Anna Sampaio

Mexican identity . . . can no longer be explained without the experience of "the other side," and vice versa. As a socio-cultural phenomenon, Los Angeles simply cannot be understood without taking Mexico City into account, its southernmost neighborhood. Between both cities runs the greatest migratory axis on the planet, and the conceptual freeway with the greatest number of accidents.

—Guillermo Gómez-Peña, p. 137, 1998

In 1993 Congress passed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), with great anticipation at home and abroad that the newly formed regional alliance between Mexico, the United States, and Canada would increase productivity, reduce inefficiency, and strengthen the states' economies. However, the agreement was not met with universal enthusiasm. Among many of the rural poor, *campesinos*, working classes, racial minorities, and indigenous populations of all three states, NAFTA's passage signaled an unprecedented move toward globalization and mounting economic pressures (Mander and Goldsmith, 1996). In particular, in Chiapas, Mexico, peasants, *campesinos*/farmers, and indigenous populations had for some time been under the weight of neoliberal economic strategies intensified by the austerity programs adopted by Carlos Salinas in the 1980s (Collier, 1994; Harvey, 1990). These *campesinos* and indigenous communities had been notably impacted by privatization and deregulation. In effect, they had seen their own farms and communities displaced and deterritorialized in the move toward regional economic integration and knew that NAFTA's passage would only expedite this process (Kearney, 1996).[1] Such sentiments were reflected in an interview conducted with Subcomandante

Marcos, one of the leaders of the 1994 indigenous and *campesinos* uprising (quoted in Katzenberger, 1995: 67):

> NAFTA is a death sentence for the indigenous people. NAFTA sets up competition among farmers, but how can our campesinos—who are mostly illiterate—compete with U.S. and Canadian farmers? And look at this rocky land we have here. How can we compete with the land in California or Canada? So the people of Chiapas, as well as the people of Oaxaca, Veracruz, Quintana Roo, Guerrero, and Sonora, were the sacrificial lambs of NAFTA.

In the same year that NAFTA was to be implemented, California voters, responding to the recession that still engulfed the state and the perceived threat of growing numbers of immigrants from the south, passed an initiative that would have barred undocumented immigrants from access to a range of public services, including public schools, subsidized health clinics, and social security, and curtailed access for documented immigrants as well. While most of Proposition 187's measures never went into effect and were eventually overturned in the U.S. District Court, its passage served as a critical rallying point in the mounting anti-immigrant/anti-Latina/o campaign that would effectively bring all Latina/os in the state under criminal suspicion (*Los Angeles Times*, September 14, 1999). Angry activists organized rallies, marches, and sit-ins throughout the state. In Mexico City, according to the *New York Times,* forty masked men ransacked a McDonald's restaurant to demonstrate their outrage. "Yankee Go Home!", "Solidarity with the Immigrants!", and "No to 187!" were among the messages left on the restaurant's windows.

These events demonstrate that the restructuring of domestic economies in favor of greater flexibility for multinational capital has dramatically impacted both local and national economies and the social and cultural fabric of those inscribed in these trade agreements. In essence, globalization has placed unprecedented pressure on the poor, working-class, rural, and indigenous communities of both the United States and Mexico and required new strategies of resistance. What is more, these incidents demonstrate the unexpected ways in which people's lives and their struggles to resist the pressures of this new global matrix have been reconfigured and interwoven in unexpected ways. It has become evident that what occurs on this side of the border can no longer be considered strictly in terms of nation-state sovereignty, divorced from what happens to those across the border. In the effort to erase tariffs, taxes, and trade restrictions for capital, agreements such as NAFTA have also transformed traditional state boundaries and necessitated a remapping of this increasingly transnational space.

For Chicana/os and Latina/os in the United States, immigrants moving between these countries, and Mexican rural working-class and indigenous populations, globalization has integrated communities in new ways. While globalization has altered the popular perception of national and cultural

identities for Chicana/os and Latina/os in the United States and Mexicans throughout Mexico,[2] it has equally impacted the structure of gendered relationships in these locations as the feminization of poverty has been aggravated by the restricted opportunities afforded traditionally marginalized women. In addition, while the new global matrix has exacerbated the uneven development between the First and the Third World, it has also engendered new spaces for resistance.

In this study, I examine the impact of globalization on the economic and political context of Chicana/os and Latina/os in the United States and indigenous peoples in Chiapas, Mexico, with a view to showing how this economic process has transformed people's political subjectivities. I focus particular attention on the socioeconomic conditions of Chicana/os and Latina/os in the United States and of the conditions for indigenous peoples and *campesinos* in Chiapas for two reasons. First, the two populations have comparable socioeconomic and political positions relative to their national populations. That is, on key indicators such as average income, occupational mobility, educational attainment, and overall health, both have consistently been ranked in the lowest percentile. Both populations are linked to forms of colonialism not only in the traditional terms of imposition of economic/political/sociocultural control from some external source but also in their relationship to a neocolonialism represented by the intensification of globalization. Among indigenous Chiapanecos the pattern of colonial control was clearly established with the onslaught of the Spanish conquistadores and the continuing battles to maintain elements of Mayan tradition (including political autonomy) in their relations with the Mexican state, with multinationals vying for land and resources, and with cattle ranchers and plantation owners in the region. For Chicana/os and Latina/os the relationship to colonial structures has best been articulated as an "internal colony," one in which these populations have been concentrated in urban barrios and subjected to systematic forms of repression and loss of autonomy (Barrera, 1979). As a consequence, both of these populations have been effectively pushed outside the realm of traditional governmental institutions and public policy making and positioned largely as secondclass citizens.[3]

Second, in some forms of resistance Chicana/os and Latina/os in the United States have increasingly responded to the call for solidarity put out by the Zapatistas when they began their rebellion in Chiapas in 1994. While hundreds of Chicana/os and Latina/os from the United States have gone to Chiapas to witness the rebellion, a better indicator of this affinity has been the adoption of cultural symbols, the creation of "sister communities" and support organizations in the United States, and a gravitation to a political philosophy and a political identity that emphasize a common struggle in the war against globalization.[4]

I examine the changing socioeconomic conditions that have affected these populations' political sensibilities and the terrain on which they resist them, and the impact of the feminization of poverty. In particular, I consider the way in which women's experiences of these transnational transformations have opened up possibilities for resistance. I conclude with a detailed discussion of an example of this altered political subjectivity in the context of transnational resistance—the formation of a coalition of Chicanas/Latinas/Mestizas called Hermanas en La Lucha. Ultimately, the aim of this study is to demonstrate that traditional formations of Chicana/o and Latina/o subjectivity inscribed in the context of a nation-state analysis have become increasingly obsolete with the changes to their daily lives introduced by globalization and increasingly supplanted by the emergence of binational and transnational communities. In conducting such an examination I am equally suggesting that the terrain on which Chicana/o and Latina/o studies has been conceived is increasingly ill-equipped to capture these changing political and economic dynamics and requires remapping.

SHIFTING PARADIGMS IN CHICANA/O AND LATINA/O POLITICAL SUBJECTIVITY

The expression of political subjectivity amongst Chicana/o and Latina/o activists has a long history of challenging idealized notions of citizenship and participation, particularly those of Americanization efforts at promoting assimilation and those implying biological or cultural inferiority (Sanchez, 1990; 1993). Thus, when Chicana/o activists such as Rodolfo González of the Crusade for Justice led high-school students in a massive walkout in Denver, Colorado, in 1968, or marched in the Vietnam War moratorium on August 29, 1969, they were redefining notions of American citizenship; seeking not merely to add Mexicans to a well-seasoned "melting pot" but to construct a new form of civic identity that began from the experiences of a nonwhite population. In particular, these activists practiced a more engaged and transformative leadership that ultimately sought to displace the political and ethnic hierarchy of the country with the growing numbers of politically conscious Chicana/os and Latina/os (Acuña, 1988; Cabán, 1998).

Furthermore, in the process of building a new and explicitly nonwhite America, participants in the Chicana/o movement centered their activities on educational institutions. Schools became a significant site for organizing because they represented a collection of intellectuals who had the space to engage in such debates about alienation and because many Chicana/o movement activists saw them as the foundations of civic engagement in the United States and therefore a central venue for addressing the larger questions about citizenship and belonging. Consequently, the work of many in the move-

ment was aimed at reconstructing citizenship from a cultural vantage point and reforming the very process of inculcating it. The formation of Chicana/o and Latina/o studies across the country and the scholarship of popular academics in this discipline took on a decidedly *nationalist* tone, emphasizing the particular racial formations at work in the United States that had produced internal colonies of Mexican Americans (Acuña, 1972; Barrera, 1979; Gómez-Quiñones, 1971; 1974; 1978; Muñoz, 1970).

As the study of Chicana/os and Latina/os has expanded to include more sophisticated studies of gender, region, and generation, and analyses of participation and political behavior, the focus of the field is still on internal *nation-state* struggles. While the mapping of Chicana/o and Latina/o politics in this manner has proved strategically efficient (suggesting a type of homogeneity does not exist) and relevant to analyses of particular case studies or political behavior (e.g., voting), it has obscured the manner in which Chicana/o and Latina/o communities are "simultaneously engaged in a struggle for inclusion and ethnic affirmation within the U.S. while seeking to maintain some voice in affairs 'back home'" (Bonilla, 1993: 182, as quoted in Cabán, 1998).

The focus on North American political relationships in Chicana/o and Latina/o politics has detracted from the examination of ongoing changes in global capital in the 1980s and 1990s and the way in which the demographics of Chicana/o and Latina/o communities in the United States have been directly affected by efforts at increased regional and global economic integration. Three factors in particular have substantively impacted this trend toward globalization: the employment of neoliberal economic policies in Latin America, the deregulation of U.S. domestic markets, and the increased mobilization of capital and people across national borders (Sampaio, 2001). I will briefly examine these changes and the possibilities that emerge for studying Chicana/os and Latina/os in a transnational framework.

Globalization and Regional Integration

At no time has the movement toward globalization been more apparent than in the past two decades, as countries in Latin America (including Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Panama, and Venezuela) have embarked upon a path of political and economic modernization via neoliberal strategies. Within a relatively short period of time these countries have adopted neoliberal economic theory[5] and begun a series of transitions including the devaluation of their national currencies, the reduction of import tariffs and other trade restrictions, the privatization of public resources, and the deregulation of financial and industrial sectors in an effort to minimize the role of government in the economy while strengthening private business. As a result, these countries expected to achieve greater productivity and reduced inefficiency by curtailing the costs of imported capital and transforming local economies to favor exports.

The effects of these efforts aimed at bolstering economic growth and regional integration are evident in levels of trade and the traffic in goods, services, and peoples across the region in the past decade. In particular, reports from the U.S. Department of Commerce document the rapid growth of state economies in countries favoring neoliberal economic plans such as Brazil, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Peru, and Venezuela. Between 1990 and 1996, as the U.S. economy grew, the gross national products (GNP) of these countries grew comparably (*Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 1998: Tables 1324, 1347, 1348).[6] Furthermore, the levels of trade between the United States and Latin America (particularly Central and South America) from 1990 to the present show a steady increase in NAFTA imports and exports, resulting in an overall level of trade which surpasses the balance of U.S. trade with the rest of the world (Center for the Study of Western Hemisphere Trade, 1999).

More recent examples of these efforts can be found in a host of trade agreements such as the Caribbean Basin Initiative, Caricom, and MERCOSUR (NAFTA's Caribbean and Central and South American counterparts, respectively).[7] This shift in economic policies is also apparent in the day-to-day operations of farms such as those in Chile's desert regions; an area that had been the province of small subsistence farmers has been transformed in the past ten years into an agricultural haven where the main fruits produced are harvested almost exclusively for foreign markets (González-Estay, 1998).

However, in the decades since Latin America embarked upon these political and economic transformations, the limitations of this strategy have become apparent, especially in the increased polarization of citizens and the increasing numbers of migrants/immigrants displaced from local labor markets. Morales (1998) reports that while poverty levels climbed throughout most of Latin America to reach 41 percent in 1980, the percentage of Latin Americans living in poverty continued to grow, reaching nearly 50 percent by 1990. Moreover, recent reports from Mexico estimate a level of poverty as high as 66 percent (Sassen, 1998). The impact of these efforts extends far beyond the boundaries of Latin America; the United States witnessed an unprecedented surge of immigration from Mexico and Central and South America and an increase in the levels of poverty, underemployment, and wage deflation among U.S. Chicana/os and Latina/os.

In particular, while there was a significant increase in the overall migration of Latin American residents to the United States in the 1980s, immigration has increased dramatically in the past decade with the intensification of globalization and the increasing displacement of working-class, poor and peasant populations from land, employment, and access to necessary resources. While Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) reports documented 1,653,300 migrants from Mexico entering the United States between 1981 and 1990 (approximately 183,700 migrants per year), there were over 1,651,400 Mexican migrants entering the United States between 1991 and

1996 (approximately 330,280 migrants a year). When we compare these numbers to the rate of immigration in the history of the Southwest, we find that between 1820 and 1996 total Mexican migration was 5,542,625 (averaging 31,492 migrants per year), while between 1981 and 1996 it was 3,304,682 (averaging 220,312 migrants per year). Comparable increases are apparent among immigrants from Central and South America (INS Statistics, U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1999).[8]

The percentage of immigrants who entered the United States undocumented in this period also grew; by 1996 an estimated 2,700,000 undocumented immigrants from Mexico were residing in the United States and the largest increases in undocumented immigration were emerging from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras (INS Statistics, U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Homepage, 1999). Furthermore, these immigrants were disproportionately women, from Latin America (Mexico in particular), poor, and between the ages of fifteen and twenty-nine (INS Statistics, U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service Homepage, 1999). There is also evidence to suggest that these migrants were increasingly younger, less well educated, and poorer than previous waves of migrants, indicating on some level a form of displacement more profound than in previous periods (Chapa, 1998).

Ultimately, the privatization and rollback of government subsidies (such as those on oil, gas, and tortillas) inherent in neoliberal strategies across Latin America were key factors in the migratory shift from Latin America to the United States. In particular, information exports from the United States, such as innovative technologies in agricultural production, produced changes in the manufacturing and distribution of agricultural commodities, thereby undermining broad sectors of Latin American farmers and ranch owners, as well as rural *campesinos*, and increasing the "push" toward migration. In certain instances, for example, in southern Mexico, Guatemala, and parts of Central America, these economic changes were coupled with ongoing civil strife (often remnants of the civil wars which had begun in the mid-1970s), resulting in the flight of thousands (Hamilton and Chinchilla, 1997; Portes and Stepik, 1997).

However, while the process of economic integration served as a key catalyst for the migration described here, this is not to suggest that globalization's impact in this period was felt solely by those in Latin America. Nor is it to suggest that the only impact globalization had on Chicana/os and Latina/os in the United States was to change the demographic makeup of traditional neighborhoods by adding more recent immigrants to the mix. In socioeconomic terms the intensification of economic integration between the United States and Mexico impacted the wage and occupational opportunities of Chicana/os and Latina/os (sometimes in contradictory ways), restricted their prospects for economic mobility, and served as an underlying element in the anti-immigrant/anti-Latina/o campaign that culminated in the mid-'90s.

In terms of wages, occupation, and economic mobility, Chicana/os and Latina/os in the United States witnessed a persistent decrease in wages and benefits commensurate with the intensification of globalization in the region. Between 1975 and 1989 average earnings growth among Latina/os slowed to the point of stagnation and income inequality grew. Moreover, although Latina/os have made up a greater percentage of the workforce in the past ten years, their real wages have decreased (the median household income for Hispanics dropped from $27,421 in 1990 to $26,628 in 1997) or remained stagnant (the weekly income of Hispanic women from 1990 to 1998 grew at a slower rate than inflation) (*Statistical Abstract of the United States,* 1999: Tables 742, 702). In addition, while the median income of African Americans (both men and women) and Anglos increased between 1990 and 1996, the median income of Hispanics decreased in the same period (*Statistical Abstract of the United States,* 1998: Table 753).[9]

In 1992 the rate of job displacement among Chicano and Latino workers surpassed the rates of Anglos and African Americans, and by 1995 unemployment rates among Latinos surpassed that of African Americans for the first time in American history (Levy, quoted in Chapa, 1998: 77-78). Among Latinas, a slightly different pattern emerged; while more Latinas have entered the labor force in the past twenty years, they have been disproportionately concentrated in service industries offering slightly more than minimum wage and few to no benefits. In addition, while unemployment among Latinas decreased, the percentage of Latinas living in poverty increased from 22 percent in 1980 to 27 percent in 1998 (*Statistical Abstract of the United States,* 1999: Tables 768, 769). These signals indicate that while Chicanas and Latinas increasingly worked to expand the flow of capital into their own homes, they struggled to keep from losing what little economic ground they had achieved. Moreover, this shift in the types of work, income, and opportunities for Latina/os has led to the formation of a new class of underemployed working poor (Chapa, 1998). While this pattern of wage deflation and increased occupational insecurity impacted virtually all working class laborers in the United States in the 1990s, Chicana/os and Latina/os proved to be particularly vulnerable to its impacts as the downturn was compounded by an anti-immigrant movement that included all Chicana/os and Latina/os (not just immigrants) in its path.[10]

Specifically, with the onset of a recession and a weakened currency, Chicana/os and Latina/os were bombarded by a nativism that culminated in 1994-1996 with the passage of anti-immigrant legislation at both the state and federal level and a concerted effort to restrict the rights of documented and undocumented immigrants.[11] In its implementation, U.S.-born Chicana/os and Latina/os, as well as the immigrant population explicitly targeted in these laws, became subject to a host of racist expressions including verbal attacks on radio talk shows, racial profiling by state and lo-

cal law enforcement officers, racist billboards in various Southwestern cities, and a range of verbal, emotional, and physical assaults waged by citizen groups empowered by these laws. Clearly, the economic insecurity introduced in this region by the intensification of globalization served as an important underlying factor in this racist hysteria.

THE FORMATION OF BINATIONAL AND TRANSNATIONAL LATINA/O COMMUNITIES

Collectively these socioeconomic changes indicate a radical restructuring of national economies, but they also indicate a restructuring of individual labor, family life, and community among Chicana/os and Latina/os in the United States and Latin America. For many these changes are felt in terms of alienation, isolation, and fragmentation—what some have termed the "postmodern condition" (Aronowitz, 1981; Jameson, 1984; 1991; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Lyotard, 1984; Soja, 1989). What marks this stage is a sense of schizophrenic decentering and fragmentation reflected in a disproportionate emphasis on local events and localized knowledge, in Jameson's (1991: 413) terms a "multidimensional set of radically discontinuous realities." It has also reconfigured traditional forms of cultural and political expression in unexpected ways.

Obvious manifestations of these changing cultural sensibilities among Chicana/os and Latina/os are readily available in popular culture, where traditional standards such as oldies, mariachis, salsa, merengue, and cumbia have been continually supplanted by the fusion of sounds characteristic of *rock en español* bands such as Los Fabulosos Cadillacs (Argentina), Café Tacuba (Mexico City), Plastilina Mosh (Monterrey, Mexico), and Ozomatli (Los Angeles). Additional indicators of these shifting patterns of culture, identity, and political subjectivity can be found in the increasing numbers of Mexicans and Mexican Americans participating in Mexican politics (such as the 1999 Consulta Nacional, organized by the Los-Angeles based National Commission on Democracy in Mexico); the extension of binational citizenship in Brazil, Mexico, and Peru; and the decision of unions such as the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE) to develop cross-border organizing strategies in the struggle against transnational corporations such as Guess Jeans (Silverstein, 1997; Ritchie, 1996).

Ultimately, these practices point to the formation of a binational or transnational cultural and political identity, one not easily understood in terms of paradigms emphasizing the nation-state. Nowhere has the realization of these new identities become more apparent than in the experiences of immigrants and in the emerging literature on the process of immigration between Latin America and the United States (Bonilla, 1993; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994;

Massey, 1986; Sassen, 1988; Ueda, 1994; see also Zavella in this volume). In general, these studies have attempted to shift the focus by examining the flow of transnational capital, the social location of immigrants in the context of the economic process of globalization, and their relationships to each other and to the changing national landscape. As Glick Schiller, Basch, and Szanton-Blanc (1994; 1995) point out, immigrants continually build familial and social networks that bridge the boundaries of multiple nations and which situate them in a transnational space between countries. Specifically, they argue (1995: 48):

> Transmigrants are immigrants whose daily lives depend on multiple and con-
> stant interconnections across international borders and whose public identities
> are configured in relationship to more than one nation-state. . . . They are not
> sojourners because they settle and become incorporated in the economy and
> political institutions, localities and patterns of daily life of the country in which
> they reside. However, at the very same time, they are engaged elsewhere in the
> sense that they maintain connections, build institutions, conduct transactions,
> and influence local and national events in countries from which they emigrated.

Moreover, Latin American immigrants are compelled to build and maintain these social networks not merely out of nostalgia for their home countries, but because they provide supportive structures in the midst of a global climate that is unsupportive of its poor and working-class immigrant populations. In both the United States and Europe, contemporary immigration policies have not only made the process of immigration more costly, more time-consuming, and generally more difficult for the poor and working-class populations migrating to the metropoles but have also resulted in the removal or suspension of immigrant rights and access to basic social services.[12] This racism has contributed to a heightened sense of political and economic insecurity for immigrants and their descendants.

Building social networks helps immigrants to strengthen their economic position in their new homes while securing resources and social position with family and community members back home. Furthermore, these connections have provided immigrants with opportunities to have their children cared for by family members in their home countries, to continue participating in family decisions, to make regular return trips, and to build homes and small businesses even while they engage in similar activities in their new locations (Rubenstein, 1982; Thomas-Hope, 1985; Gmelch, 1992). Thus, by constructing such transnational networks families and individual immigrants are able to "maximize the utilization of labor and resources in multiple settings and survive within situations of economic uncertainty and subordination" (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blan, 1995: 54).

Finally, it should be clear that while industrial centers such as the United States have experienced periods of concentrated immigration coupled with

intensive trade and expanded markets, the formation of contemporary transnational communities and the altered political subjectivity they embody are distinct. In particular, today's immigration is prompted by a massive restructuring of national economies that surpasses the scope of trade and integration of earlier decades. The closest comparison in U.S. history occurred at the turn of the century; however, this earlier version was characterized largely by the exchange of goods among small merchants, while contemporary globalization is structured by mergers of multinational industries and entire nation-states. Furthermore, the building of transnational networks is facilitated not strictly by trained merchants, official diplomats, or elites (as was the case in the late nineteenth century) but also by working-class immigrants via processes such as registering as binational citizens. Finally, these patterns of integration are expedited by the expansion of conventional communication media and the development of a host of new technologies that structure our very concepts of space and distance (Cabán, 1998; Poster, 1990).

BUILDING TRANSNATIONAL RESISTANCE

Recently, activists have appropriated and expanded on this understanding of globalization and the formation of transnational spaces of resistance to it. One such organization is Hermanas en la Lucha/Sisters in Struggle, a coalition of Chicanas/Latinas/Mestizas based in Denver, Colorado, whose goal is to form alliances with indigenous women outside the United States.

> We are the mothers and sisters, daughters and wives that have come together through the strength of our indigenous ancestors, women working in sisterhood to support each other in our struggles, learn what our sisters have to teach, pass our knowledge to future generations, and to join forces in order to empower our communities locally and continentally. . . . we are different yet the same; we struggle together for self-determination, justice and the right to exist as who we were, who we are, and who we will always be . . .

In forming this organization, the women borrowed a number of theoretical principles from the history of Chicana feminist activism (Garcia, 1990; 1997; Pesquera and de la Torre, 1993; Sandoval, 1991). Specifically, they recognized the history of discrimination that devalued not only the experiences of Chicana/os and Latina/os but also those of women and working-class communities, leading to the development of a "triple oppression" among women of color (Segura, 1986). The women recognized their own perspectives as a function of their experiences with race, class, and gender formations.

More important, Las Hermanas sought to link their struggles with the histories of other women (especially indigenous women) in Latin America generally and Mexico in particular. They argued that non-indigenous

Chicanas/Latinas shared a social, political, and economic location with
women in Mexico by virtue of the relationship to colonialism, globaliza-
tion, and racial, gendered, and class subordination. In particular, they tar-
geted the struggle of women in Chiapas, in part because they saw their
struggles for resistance as having important parallels with their own battles
in the United States and felt confident that changes in this pattern would
emerge only through some type of transnational alliance. Thus, their ex-
pression of feminism moved beyond a strictly First World perspective and
struggled to identify areas of commonality that could address the alienation
and ultimately erasure to which both populations of women had been ex-
posed (Grewal and Kaplan, 1997; Mohanty, 1991; Johnson-Odim, 1991). As
one woman put it (interview with Jillann Mills, August 6, 1999),

> We wanted the organization to be more. . . . We wanted it to encompass a lot
> more possibilities . . . and as women on this continent we've had to deal with
> the brunt of the problems that come from colonization and we wanted to de-
> velop a network or a co-op for dealing with these problems in a proactive way.
> We try to be proactive. What we want to do is help build the infrastructure of
> our community continentally. . . . I think it's time we take a new approach to the
> problem, and that's what we're trying to do with Hermanas. We're trying to se-
> lect different projects that will help us grow and help our community grow and
> work on those projects. I'm kind of hoping that . . . Hermanas can be one of
> those organizations that begins the healing of our community as a whole.

Finally, in forming the organization and seeking connections with other
women in struggle, Hermanas en la Lucha were actively seeking creative and
productive ways to resist these forms of subordination. For them the recog-
nition of the historical and contemporary struggles of women of color did
not preclude an expression of agency. Moreover, much like the women in
Chiapas, their own brand of feminist consciousness emerged principally
from their experiences and attempts to negotiate with the misogyny of the
Chicano movement in Denver, the racism of much of the women's liberation
movement, and the daily battle for simple dignity (Pardo, 1998). In their con-
struction this organization moved away from classic depictions of Third
World women as colonized and "overdetermined"—a depiction frequently
juxtaposed with the image of First World women as active, engaged, and en-
lightened (Kaplan, 1997; Sandoval, 1991; Narayan, 1997). In this way, the
sensibilities of the Chicanas/Latinas in the group reflected a type of mestiza
consciousness articulated by Gloria Anzaldua (1987: 80):

> As a *mestiza*, I have no country, my homeland cast me out; yet all countries are
> mine because I am every woman's sister or potential lover. . . . I am cultureless
> because, as a feminist, I challenge the collective cultural/religious male-derived
> beliefs of Indo-Hispanics and Anglos; yet, I am cultured because I am partici-

pating in the creation of yet another culture, a new story to explain the world and our participation in it, a new value system with images and symbols that connect us to each other and to the planet.

And yet, despite the notion that their efforts to develop alternatives to globalization that are rooted in the specificity of women of color signaled an important political and theoretical shift among both Chicana/Latina activists in the United States and international women's movements, their efforts were not without shortcomings. In particular, there were obvious distinctions of privilege (e.g., easy travel access) that were not always recognized by the women themselves. In one episode the women ended up in a lengthy and heated debate while they were staying in one of the Zapatista communities over how long their stay should be (they had committed to four nights, and some wanted to leave after the first), the cultural and linguistic shock some women were experiencing, and the sense some women had that they were imposing a burden on the community. While the questions raised in these discussions were never fully resolved, they spoke to a larger effort on behalf of the women to negotiate the commonalities of their struggles without erasing the specificity of their experiences and without replicating the hierarchy of privileges that underlay so many of their relationships as Chicanas/Latinas with white women in the United States.[13]

However, in spite of these shortcomings and the geographical, political, and cultural disparities that divided these women, there is some evidence that their "shared differences" were recognized by some of the Zapatista women. Specifically, in an interview I conducted with Margarita López Díaz, one of the women weavers who later came to visit Las Hermanas in Denver, she noted:

> This [racism and discrimination against indigenous people] is very, very strong and what I've seen on this trip is that racism against indigenous peoples exists not only in Chiapas or in Mexico, but there is racism here in the U.S. as well. And it is important to note that the same thing that happens there [in Chiapas] also happens here [in the United States]. . . . And the women of my cooperative or other women in the region don't know that racism exists or that there are indigenous people here. Thus, it is very important for us Chiapanecas to see that in all parts of the world these same things are happening.

THE BREAD PROJECT

Theoretically, Hermanas en la Lucha both borrowed from the cultural nationalist movements in their philosophical and political practices (e.g., the reclaiming of indigenous past) and distinguished itself from previous expressions of

Chicana/o and Latina/o political subjectivity by focusing on a transnational subjectivity. Politically, the group sought to make this altered identity a reality by working to form a collaborative relationship of support with indigenous women of Chiapas—to become what one woman from the highlands termed *transnacionalistas de solidaridad* (transnationalists in solidarity). Specifically, the group first began to organize around the effort to help women in the Mayetik[14] coffee cooperative in the Municipio of El Bosque to build ovens in their communities. The cooperative had been organized four years earlier for the purpose of encouraging Zapatista communities to build a sustainable economic system that promoted fair trade. It brought together twenty-four "communities in resistance" in the highlands to assist in the growing, harvesting, and processing of their coffee, a mainstay for most families in those communities. Together, men and women of the cooperative grew their coffee, established a fair price for their product (including the cost of the actual production [water, fertilizer, tools], the value of the labor, and the value of the expertise, experience, and abilities that the worker brings to the production process), and developed networks of buyers for their product. Over the years the cooperative had been very successful in creating a fair-trade network with buyers and a critical mass of consumers in Mexico, and establishing contracts in the United States, Japan, Italy, Germany, and Sweden. In effect, the cooperative had found a way to protect the goals of the Zapatista struggle in promoting indigenous rights and an end to exploitative economic practices while using the possibilities opened up through globalization to develop an alternative economic model.

However, while the cooperative has successfully created an economic base, the gendered division of labor and authority in the organization had led several of the women to feel that they needed a project of their own.[15] As a result, the women of the twenty-four communities of Mayetik organized to build community ovens to bake their own bread. This effort, which would become known among Las Hermanas simply as the bread project, reflected both the daily politics of survival in the communities of the highlands (many of the women expressed an interest in building ovens so that they would not have to purchase overpriced, nutritionally deficient bread and tortillas from the local government-owned stores), and the effort to create collective economic change (the women also expressed an interest in selling the products at the markets in San Cristóbal and someday forming a women's cooperative around the bread making). The women recognized that to make the project work they would need financial support as well as training, and it was in this context that they turned to Las Hermanas.

These were largely corn-based communities and did not have much experience in making flour-based products such as flour tortillas and *pan dulce* (Mexican sweet bread). Las Hermanas performed a unique service both in helping the women raise the necessary funds and in sharing the culturally

specific tradition of bread making that for many was a mark of their own gendered division of labor in the United States. Las Hermanas organized for over a year around the bread project. What was interesting about their collaboration was that they approached their fund-raising with the same philosophy as their mission statement. They did not simply solicit funds from corporate charities but looked for opportunities to organize the Chicana/o and Latina/o communities in Denver around the larger Zapatista struggle. In this way, they sought to extend their own consciousness as *transnationalistas en solidaridad* to the communities of Chicana/os and Latina/os in Denver and produce change in these communities as well. In addition, they brought to their organizing efforts not only a broader transnational framework but also a sense of accountability, reminding Denver residents that their own actions as consumers and as citizens were directly related to the Zapatista struggle. They achieved this through such activities as a *flor y canto* (a type of cultural variety show that includes poetry, storytelling, song, dance, and other expressive performances), a short video depicting the struggle of indigenous women in the United States and Chiapas (which they showed to local community-based organizations and community development corporations and in high schools, college classrooms, and student organizing meetings and distributed widely among friends), Sunday community breakfasts, and dances.

Their most financially and strategically successful fund-raiser was the *flor y canto* celebration held in a gymnasium in the heart of Denver's Latina/o community. Preparing for this event, the women recruited students from their college classes (many of them Anglo) and for weeks visited local *taquerias*, restaurants, artists' studios, and stores in the Latina/o community discussing the Zapatista struggle and soliciting everything from $2 donations to food, plates, drinks, artwork (for raffles), and other accessories for the event. In addition, they invited these and other local vendors to set up their own tables at the *flor y canto*. For the performance, the women lined up a range of performers reflecting the complexity of cultural formations described earlier. The evening culminated with a presentation of the video Las Hermanas had created, and a discussion about the role of women in the Zapatista military and the significance of the Zapatista struggle to their own communities. Finally, they were concerned to make the event accessible to everyone in the Latina/o community and therefore charged no admission (they did charge for food, drinks, and a raffle) and conducted the evening in both English and Spanish. As a result, the mix of students, community members, parents, friends, shop owners, vendors, and activists was far broader than for other events sponsored in Denver's Chicana/o and Latina/o community.

Ultimately, the women of Las Hermanas raised enough money to build seven ovens (along with providing material for bread in six communities) and to facilitate workshops on bread making in several of the communities.

The experience of raising the money and working with the women of Chiapas proved to be a truly transformative process for those involved. As one woman commented, "I started the bread project thinking I was going to raise money and help organize these communities in Chiapas, but I realized that the women [of Chiapas] were really teaching and organizing us. . . . They taught us how to use our indigenous traditions to organize collectively and to find ways of being inclusive" (Larrea, 2000).[16]

This project depicts one way in which women have expanded the space of globalization to build a transnational collaborative network of resistance and support. Las Hermanas is a unique example of the way in which individual lives (both in the United States and in Mexico) have been altered by globalization. In response to this globalization, both of these populations of women have asserted counterhegemonic political practices that have transformed their own lives and those of their communities. In this way, their work mirrors the description of transnational feminist politics articulated by Caren Kaplan (1997: 139):

> A transnational feminist politics of location in the best sense of these terms refers us to the model of coalition, or, to affiliation. As a practice of affiliation, a politics of location identifies the grounds for historically specific differences and similarities between women in diverse and asymmetrical relations, creating alternative histories, identities, and possibilities for alliances.

CONCLUSION

The need to move beyond a strictly nation-state approach in both social science research and Chicana/o and Latina/o political subjectivity becomes increasingly apparent with the dissolution of traditional state powers. In response to shifting demographics and the desire for regional economic integration, states have become committed to opening up domestic markets, transferring regulatory capacities to private industry, and generally scaling back the size of government with the elimination of social welfare programs. In the aftermath of these changes, countries such as the United States have been forced to negotiate with multinational corporations and manufacturing giants to sustain manufacturing centers in the United States or risk increased job displacement and possibly recession (Ong, Bonacich, and Cheng, 1994). Nation-states have also had to negotiate and often compete with a proliferation of nongovernmental organizations over domestic policies such as immigration law and citizenship status.

Thus, the move toward regional economic unification transformed traditional nation-state borders, weakening their capacity to restrict the flow of capital, commodified culture, and professional immigrants and strengthening their capacity to restrict poor immigrants and alternative economic mod-

els of development. This weakening of traditional state borders has lent itself to a reconceptualizing of the positionality of individuals in both locations and a challenge to the traditional constructions of citizenship within the state. Moreover, recent research on immigrants and the flow of capital and culture has led to a new understanding of the enhanced flexibility and fluidity of identity between these spaces and the notion of the binational or transnational migrant.

Thus, globalization and the transnational networks established by economic integration have produced a context in which the familiar knowledge about Chicana/o subjectivity drawn from nationalist discourse and social science research on the individual or the national level is becoming incomplete at best. It is in this context of increased globalization (specifically the increased traffic of goods, services, customs, and especially people) and a commensurate re-structuring of Chicana/o and Latina/o communities in the U.S. (specifically with overall decreases in per capita income and education and changes in demographic statistics to include greater numbers of Latin American immigrants and first-generation Latinas/os) that we are called upon to reexamine the usefulness of a strictly nation-state analysis in the study of Chicana/os and Latina/os. To begin a reexamination of Chicana/o and Latina/o political subjectivity we must consider the impact of political strategies such as the efforts toward naturalization on both the immediate surroundings as well as political environments beyond these borders. To researchers and scholars working in Chicana/o and Latina/o communities this means that we must find a way to capture the international and transnational boundaries of this Chicana/o and Latina/o diaspora. More importantly, in discussing the creation of an oppositional consciousness in Chicana/o and Latina/o communities it is no longer sufficient to consider the experiences of Chicana/os and Latina/os, we must examine the way actions taken in favor or against minority communities in the United States impact the conditions of Latin Americans and other members of developing nations.

Furthermore, the path of influence can no longer be viewed as unidirectional, with the bulk of goods, services, people, and cultural processes moving from Latin America (and other parts of the Third World) to the United States, and economic policy and development strategies traveling from the United States to Latin America (Rouse, 1991; Kearney, 1996). Rather, the push toward regional economic integration and the transformation of Latina/o communities into transnational locations suggests a more symbiotic relationship in which influence is multidirectional.[17]

Finally, we must begin to consider the formation of political subjectivities that reflect the social locations of people rather than a unified racial or gendered consciousness. Moreover, it is not sufficient to recognize the difference in history and relationship to globalization in forming alliances, we are equally called upon to recognize our own relative privilege in the relationships we form with

other women and men and the ways in which we are accountable to each other. Ultimately, while this movement toward globalization promises to decentralize Chicana/o and Latina/o collective consciousness, it also stretches the imagination and possibilities for the linking of oppositional discourse to the struggles that have long been waged outside our own borders. It is this framework of resistance to hegemonic economic consolidation, coupled with the specificity of our own day-to-day struggles, that promises the most fruitful analyses of the future of Chicana/os and Latina/os opposition movements.

NOTES

1. In 1992, in preparation for NAFTA's passage, Mexico's legislature revoked Article 27 of the country's constitution. The move, considered by many to be one of the galvanizing features of the 1994 Chiapas rebellion, eliminated the state's *ejido* system of land distribution and replaced it with a system of private ownership that was more compatible with that of the United States. In borrowing the term "deterritorialization" I mean to suggest that for many of the indigenous people, rural poor, and *campesinos* of the country the changes in economic structure not only forced them to move from their communities but systematically undermined their ability to own, farm, and maintain any land.

2. One key indicator of the change in political identity among Chicana/os and Latina/os has been the opportunity to obtain dual citizenship and/or become more intimately involved in the politics of their homelands.

3. While the indigenous communities of Mexico have been largely neglected in terms of their representation in government assemblies and by elected officials, this is not universally true for Latina/os in the United States. While the vast majority of this population (particularly Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans, who represent more than two-thirds of the total Latina/o population) are working-class and will not participate in electoral politics, Chicana/os and Latina/os have had some success in gaining electoral leverage, with an increasing number occupying elected office. It is still the case, however, that only about one-third of the Latina/o population will vote in a presidential election, and the specific interests that register as important in their home communities are often ignored. In addition, the position of second-class citizenship becomes even clearer when we discuss the growing population of immigrants who are increasingly barred from governmental structures, cultural institutions, and employment because of a combination of de jure (e.g., English-only language requirements) and de facto restrictions (Schmidt, 2000). Thus, in drawing comparisons between indigenous Chiapanecos and Chicana/os in the United States I mean to imply not an exact comparison but a parallel "relative deprivation" that manifests itself in regionally specific forms (Vélez-Ibáñez, 1996).

4. One of the best indicators of this affinity is the development of web pages in Chicana/o and Latina/o politics that discuss the Zapatista struggle, make use of cultural symbols rooted in the Zapatista rebellion, or serve as organizing tools for humanitarian projects in Chiapas. For a sampling of some of these pages see La Voz de Aztlán (www.aztlan.net) and the Azteca web page (www.mexica.net).

5. For a more elaborate examination of the effect of U.S. economic theory on changes in Latin America, particularly the cadre of social scientists from University of Chicago School of Economics (the "Chicago boys"), which provided both theoretical foundations and technical assistance for Chile's neoliberal experiment, see Collins and Lear (1995: 37-46)

6. Of particular significance here is the absence of Mexico in these growth patterns. Whereas reports from the Department of Commerce indicated significant growth in Mexico's economy at the beginning of the decade, this pattern collapsed shortly after the passage of the NAFTA in 1994, when the emergence of rebel forces in the state of Chiapas and the flight of nervous investors forced the rapid devaluation of the Mexican peso and the near collapse of the state's financial institutions. Steady increases in the levels of imports from Mexico to the United States were reported throughout this decade (*Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 1998: Tables 1302, 1304).

7. As Bonilla (1998) mentions, these efforts at economic integration are also apparent in the 1994 "Summit of the Americas," in which presidents and heads of state from throughout the region endorsed a broad range of economic measures intended to encourage greater regional integration.

8. Between 1981 and 1990, the INS recorded the entrance of 455,900 immigrants from South America and 458,700 from Central America. Between 1991 and 1996 the numbers of South American immigrants totaled 344,000 (an increase of approximately 18,000 immigrants per year), while the numbers of Central Americans in the same period rose to 342,800 (with a comparable rise of approximately 17,500 per year) (INS Statistics, U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service Homepage, 1999). However, among foreign-born Latina/os by far the largest and most significant increase in this period occurred among immigrants from the Dominican Republic. The total flow of Dominican immigrants between 1981 and 1990 reached 251,800; however, between 1991 and 1996 the number of Dominican immigrants totaled 258,100. In essence, the percentage of immigrants from the Dominican Republic virtually doubled beginning in the 1990s, significantly increasing the total population of Dominicans in the United States (*Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 1998: Tables 5-11).

9. Ironically, economic integration also created new opportunities for a professional-managerial class of Latin American entrepreneurs, sales representatives, consultants, engineers, and other highly educated workers to enter the U.S. and European economies (Chapa, 1998). The migration of this elite class of workers subsequently aided in the expansion of a U.S. Chicana/o and Latina/o middle class; however, the experience of these workers differed greatly from that of the larger percentage of working-class immigrants who were increasingly younger, less well educated, and poorer (Sampaio, 2001).

10. The persistent wage deflation among Latina/os and their overrepresentation in service industries documented here must be evaluated in conjunction with the undermining of traditional avenues of economic mobility in the past decade. In particular, since the early 1990s there has been a nationwide effort to rescind programs such as affirmative action and race/gender-based scholarships that promote opportunities in college admissions, retention, hiring, and promotions for women and racial minorities. In California, Texas, and Colorado these efforts have been matched by a push to undo programs of bilingual education and of ethnic and gender studies.

In the same period, the percentage of Latinas in single-headed households has increased (*Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 1999: Table 82), as has the percentage of single Latinas caring for children with no spousal support. This has been compounded by the repeal of state-sponsored support programs, the most notable of these being the dismantling of Aid to Families with Dependent Children in 1996 and its replacement by Temporary Aid to Needy Families, which imposed more restrictive conditions for receiving government assistance and dramatically reduced the length of time an individual could receive such support. While no single factor mentioned here (the rescinding of affirmative action and race/gender-based scholarships, the increase of single Latina headed households with children and no spousal support, and the reduction of state-sponsored support) can be linked directly to globalization, their combined effect in the context of a restructured political economy that has restricted opportunities for Latinas in the United States has been a concentrated underclass status akin to those that we have seen among women in Latin America.

11. In 1996 alone Congress passed a number of bills that would negatively impact Latina/o immigrant communities in the United States, including the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, and the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act.

12. It should be clear that while this is increasingly the case for poor and working-class immigrants, Congress has taken steps to ensure easy entrance for the host of professional-managerial immigrants who come to work as consultants, engineers, middle managers, and other professionals.

13. In another heated episode, the women in the organization debated what role (if any) men should play in the group. While Hermanas en la Lucha was originally formed from a small coalition of women, two men who were related to one of the women later joined the organization and began making demands of the women's time that many felt unwarranted. When some of the women discussed making "most wanted" banners of the men in their communities who could be identified as spouse abusers, one of these men exhibited verbally abusive behavior at the women's meetings. After a number of contentious discussions on the topic and some severed relationships between women in the organization, Las Hermanas eventually decided to eliminate men from the core of the organization.

14. As with informants' names, the name of the coffee cooperative has been changed to protect the communities.

15. Coffee production is a very labor-intensive process, involving long periods of picking, washing, depulping, drying, raking, and packaging. In the communities I have visited, the men were largely responsible for the maintenance of the coffee plants and the harvesting of the coffee, but the remaining processing elements were disproportionately women's work and tended to take place in or around the home. Ultimately, day-to-day authority over the distribution of resources related to coffee came to reside with the men, although decisions that affected the entire cooperative were discussed and decided on the basis of consensus.

16. Hermanas en la Lucha has continued to work with the women of the highlands to raise money for additional ovens in their communities and to help form a women's weaving cooperative that would continue the process of building fair-trade networks.

17. A recent example of the multidirectional nature of transnational culture is the emergence of *la chupacabra* as a feature of U.S. and Mexican popular culture. Be-

ginning as a myth about roving goat-suckers in rural Puerto Rico in 1995, it soon appeared in newspapers and oral histories in northern Mexico, and then in reported sightings (depicted in music and on T-shirts) in Mexico City. Ultimately, it was "sighted" in San Diego and Los Angeles, and by the end of 1997 it had become the subject of one of the country's most popular television programs, *The X-Files*. Since then the series has been rebroadcast over Univision to countries all over Latin America, including Puerto Rico and Northern Mexico.

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