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Chicana Rhetoric, Community and Professional Writing Studies

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Chicana Making: The Archives of the Comisión Femenil Mexicana Nacional

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2010-2011 Library Scholars Grant
With the funding from the Library Scholars Grant, I researched the archival collections of one of the first Chicana feminist organizations, the *Comisión Femenil Mexicana Nacional* (CFMN), housed at the UC Santa Barbara’s California Ethnic and Minority Archives Special Collections. To gain a broader and more accurate understanding of the scope and internal workings of the organization, I also visited the archival collection of the CFMN’s well-known chapter organization, *Comisión Femenil de Los Angeles*, housed at UCLA’s Chicano Studies Research Center library. Through studying the internal and programmatic documents of the organization, I investigated the way that Chicana identity helped build and shape an organization and its practices; at the same time, the way that being an organization shaped the emergence of Chicana identity.
HISTORY

The Comisión Femenil Mexicana Nacional, Inc. was established at the National Issues Conference held in Sacramento in October of 1970. The purpose of the Comisión Femenil Mexicana Nacional, Inc., as indicated in the original resolution and bylaws, is to upgrade the status of women, to deal with issues which pertain to women and the family, and to provide leadership training for women.

To date, Comisión Femenil Mexicana Nacional, Inc. has established a Chicana Service Action Center in East Los Angeles, a Department of Labor funded project, which provides employment counseling, placement and referral services for women. The Chicana Service Action Center is now in its second year of operation.

This year, we received funding for two child care centers to be located in Los Angeles. In addition, the Los Angeles Chapter has as its own special project, Las Hermanas Counseling Center, located in Maravilla.

Augmenting the issues of employment, counseling and child care, is Comisión Femenil Mexicana Nacional's active legislative committee. We believe that involvement in the legislative process is the most effective means of upgrading the status of women in California.

The Comisión Femenil Mexicana Nacional, Inc. is incorporated as a non-profit organization with the State of California.

The Comisión Femenil Mexicana Nacional, Inc. is actively involved in the issues of concern to the Chicana. It encourages the development of a strong and responsible membership. And it is sincerely interested in meeting the needs of the Chicana and her family.

OBJECTIVES

1. To direct its efforts to develop Chicana awareness.

2. To direct its efforts to organizing and training women to assume leadership positions within the Chicano movement and in community life.

3. To disseminate news and information regarding the work and achievements of the Chicana.

4. To concern itself in promoting programs which specifically lend themselves to help, assist and promote solutions to women’s problems and problems confronting the Mexican family.

5. To direct the development of leadership to assist Chicanas in dealings with local, state, and federal agencies and institutions that they may better deal with them.

6. To spell out issues to support and explore relationships to other women’s organizations.

7. To direct its efforts to generally promote Chicana welfare and, in this manner, the welfare of the Mexican-American community.

8. To build the Comisión Femenil Mexicana Nacional throughout the State of California and the Southwest.

PROJECTS OF COMISIÓN FEMENIL MEXICANA NACIONAL, INC.

Chicana Service Action Center
Hermanas Unidas Counseling Center
Comisión Femenil Mexicana Bi-lingual/Bi-cultural Child Care Centers

OFFICERS OF COMISIÓN FEMENIL MEXICANA NACIONAL, INC.

Anita Ramos ............... President
Yolanda Nava ............ 1st Vice President
Gloria Molina ........... 2nd Vice President
Vi Muñoz ............... Treasurer
Evelyn Benson ......... Recording Secretary
Amy Wilson ........... Corresponding Secretary
Executive Secretary .......... Appointed
Parliamentarian .......... Appointed

YOUR LOCAL CHAPTER REPRESENTATIVE IS:
Research Site #1: UCLA Chicano/a Studies Library

The Library

About the Collection

- The first of its kind; the only freestanding Chicano/a Studies Library
- Home to the Comisión Femenil de Los Angeles (CFLA) archival collection (also part of the California Ethnic and Minority Archives)
CFMN RETREAT
 Held in Ventura, August 24, 1984

Present: Teresa Amador
          Bess Stotzer
          Maria Rodriguez
          Gloria Moreno Wycoff
          Sandy Serrano Sowell
          Yolanda Lucero
          Carmen Luna

                                        Carmen Cantu
                                        Debra Gonzales
                                        Linda Marinou-Levine
                                        Berta Saavedra
                                        Yolanda M. Rodriguez
                                        Rosemary Quesada-Weiner

PURPOSE OF RETREAT:
 * To define what has led CFMN to where it is today.
 * To determine accountability and commitment of chapters to
   CFMN and vice-versa.

Rules Agreed Upon
 * Seek group agreement
 * Honesty
 * Ask only clarifying questions
 * For favor - do not interup

DEFINED WHAT IS CFMN TODAY:
 + 1. Statewide/national organization
 - 2. 14 to 6 chapters.
 - 3. 800 to 200 members
 + 4. Organization with unique history.
 + 5. Have existed and are the oldest Latina organization - 15 years
 +/− 6. All volunteer staff and activities.
 + 7. Recognized internationally as feminist group.
 + 8. Recognized as advocates.
 + 9. Considered political/controversial.
 + 10. Issue oriented.
 - 11. Perceived as LA based.
 + 12. Serve as resource.
 + 14. Project initiator.
 + 15. Support group.
 + 16. Credibility from both male and female.
 - 17. Regional.
 + 18. Provide role models.
 + 19. Institution.
 -/+ 20. Poor.
 - 21. Lack of building leadership.
 + 22. Non-profit.
 - 23. Do not nurture chapters.
Comisión Femenil Mexicana Nacional, Inc.

379 South Loma Drive Los Angeles, CA 90017 (213) 484-1515

April 11, 1981

Buenas Hermanas y Colégeas de Comisión Femenil Mexicana Nacional!

Welcome to CFNM's bi-annual leadership training seminar, "Corporate Consciousness". Today's gathering of Chicanas of Comisión Femenil once again reflects the great diversity of our organization. We represent la raza in every aspect of her development: professionally, economically, and politically. This diversity within Comisión is in a continuous state of flux, which is why we need to stop periodically and take inventory of ourselves, and of our skills as a corporate body - as a viable Chicana organization bound by rules and procedures, but not bound by goals and aspirations.

Learning and reviewing these rules and procedures - these sophisticated survival processes - can serve as tools for each of us: 1) for taking care of Comision Nacional business; 2) for taking care of Comisión Chapter business; and, 3) for dealing within our own communities with volunteer agencies, school boards, city councils, and political organizations.

At whatever level we are, we all need to sharpen our individual and collective skills; we need to share our knowledge and experiences with each other. To guide us in this process today, we have five dynamic workshop leaders.

We hope today's seminar will serve as a valuable learning process for us all, for those who have been members of Comision Femenil for many years, and for those who are new to Comisión.

We wish to acknowledge and express our appreciation to the Kellogg Foundation and the United Way Volunteer Leadership Development Program for the materials we have adapted for this seminar.

Thank you for coming and making our day successful. ¡Unidas Venceremos!

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Gloria Moreno-Incoff, President
Comisión Femenil Mexicana Nacional
NEW BUSINESS

Development of Committees:

1. The name of each committee was read by the Chairwoman and a brief description of each was given.

The committees are as follows: (a) Education (b) Publicity & Public Relations (c) Financial & Fiscal Affairs (d) Membership (e) Legislative (f) Program (g) Intergroup Relations (h) Hospitality

Evelyn Benson proposed that the Program Committee should be chaired by the Vice-Chairwoman and that another committee should be titled Political Action. An explanation of the Intergroup Relations Committee was given as "shall establish and maintain a liaison between all other committees and shall coordinate activities of these committees." A question regarding the function of the Education Committee was brought up. It was generally felt that the Education Committee could be anything the members wanted it to be.

For example, child care, research, chicana awareness seminars or issues. Chairwoman Molina felt that the goals of each committee should be defined and brought back to the group. It was felt by many women that the most important education is of ourselves. Again Francisca said that she had never felt so inadequate as when she had attended the child care hearings. She felt we must provide leadership and education to all chicanas. It was generally felt that education should be in two parts: (a) the educational system and (b) education of La Comision. The Chairwoman expressed hopes that this is how La Comision can function, with getting of information, talking and taking action. Some may be business and some issues but hope all of us can be a part of it. She also felt that ad hoc committees should be established for each activity that comes up. After some action is taken, these ad hoc committees can then be dissolved.
WHAT I LEARNED @ UCLA
Chicana/o Studies Library...

WHY JOIN COMISIÓN?

Join Comisión brings latinas together. Latinas with similar interests, facing similar challenges. People who want to improve their communities. People like you.

Gain an understanding how organizations work. Transfer this knowledge to promote change. To advance your studies, your career, your life.

Become involved in issues affecting the latinas. Your participation can affect others in a positive way. Through community awareness, action & planning.

Comisión will challenge you. Train you. Encourage you.

• To establish goals and make them happen.
• To organize committees & coalitions.
• To be an active member. An officer. A chapter representative.
• To learn practical skills with experienced mentors & guest speakers. Through forums & current publications.
• To share information. On jobs. Resume development. Upcoming events.

Comisión develops leaders. Join the team that recognizes the power, talent, & potential of latinas. For our future. Your future. Join us now.
Additional what I learned @ UCLA Chicana/o Studies Library...

✦ Member Lists

✦ Shifts and changes in the organization throughout the years
What I learned at UC Santa Barbara’s CFMN collection

The Library  Negotiating Chicana Activism
Research
Deliverables: Publications

*In progress:*

- College Composition and Communication Online (multimedia composition—including audio meeting files)
- Writing Program Administration Journal
- Community Literacy Journal
- Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social (Chicana Studies Journal)