

**Enriqueta Vasquez and the
Chicano Movement:
Writings from *El Grito del Norte***

Enriqueta Vasquez

Edited by Lorena Oropeza and Dionne Espinoza

**With a Foreword by John Nichols and a
Preface by Enriqueta Vasquez**



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With love to Ruben, Ramona, and Bill

Dedicated to

Gloria Anzaldúa,

a mestiza who could weave words

of serpentine grace to form

vision and song of

mystical sounds carried in the divine breath

of Ehecatl

now echoing in the *más allá*

creating new worlds on

both sides of the border

Contents

Foreword by John Nichols	ix
Preface by Enriqueta Vasquez	xiii
Acknowledgements	xvii
Introduction by Lorena Oropeza: "Viviendo y luchando: The Life and Times of Enriqueta Vasquez"	xix
Conclusion by Dionne Espinoza: "Rethinking Cultural Nationalism and La Familia through Women's Communities: Enriqueta Vasquez and Chicana Feminist Thought"	205

Enriqueta Vazquez and the Chicano Movement: Writings from *El Grito del Norte*

I. Land, Race, and Poverty	
Introduction	3
Discrimination	5
Los Pobres y Los Ricos	8
This Land Is Our Land	11
Racism	14
"Communism," Just a Word	17
Welfare and Work	20
More Abuses at Santa Fe Pinta	24
II. Culture and History	
Introduction	31
Teach True Values, Says La Raza Mother	33
'Tis the Season, Fa La La	36

Let's Be Seen and Heard	39
16 de septiembre	43
The 16th of September	47
La Santa Tierra	53
La Voz de Nuestra Cultura I	57
La Voz de Nuestra Cultura II	60
La Historia del Mestizo	64

III. Nation and Self-Determination

Introduction	83
Somos Aztlán! (English)	85
¡Somos Aztlán! (Spanish)	88
Our New Nation Is Born	90
Se Nace Nuestra Nación	96
Let's Take a Look at the Political System	101
New Levels of Awareness	106

IV. Chicanas, Organize!

Introduction	111
La Chicana: Let's Build a New Life	113
The Woman of La Raza, Part I	116
The Woman of La Raza, Part II	122
Chicana Resolution	127
¡Soy Chicana primero!	129
National Chicana Conference, Houston	134

V. Corporate Institutions and Industrial Society

Introduction	141
The Church Has Made Us Slaves	143
Values Lost	146
Apollo IX	149
Smog and Money Politics	152
The Church and the People	155
Money, Money, Money	158

The Atomic Age	162
Railroads and Land	163

VI. International Politics

Introduction	169
Draft and Our Youth	171
Tío Sam Says: "Gimme!"	174
¡Qué Linda Es Cuba!: Part I	178
Raza, Nos Están Matando. They Are Killing Us, Did you Know?	182
¡Qué Linda Es Cuba!: Part II	186
Kent State	190
El Soldado Raso de Hoy	194
El Soldado Raso Today	197
Third World Women Meet	201

Preface

The publication of these articles, written over thirty years ago, resulted from the encouragement from my friend, Lorena Oropeza, who together with Dionne Espinoza made such a publication possible. It has been an honor to have known Lorena and Dionne who came to my home to interview me. Both are now profesoras at universities. That we have scholars and Chicana PHDees of this caliber teaching in our educational institutions fulfills a vision of what we hoped would come out of the Chicano Movement. Even more extraordinary is the fact that most scholars do not forget "La Causa Chicana," thus watering the *raíces* of the ancient past and living the Chicano epic.

El Grito Del Norte, a Chicano newspaper based in Española, New Mexico, was born from the revolutionary flames that engulfed the Southwest in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It began as the official newspaper for Reies López Tijerina's La Alianza Federal de Pueblos Libres, an organization with a membership of 6,000 heirs representing descendents of fifty Mexican and Spanish land grants. With the help of Beverly Axelrod (RIP, June 19, 2002), we formed a cooperative of editors who came together as volunteers, community peoples and political activists. Elizabeth (Betita) Martínez led the pack, so to speak, by holding down the fort of *El Grito* headquarters in Española as it became a beehive of movement and activism. The variety of skills and people from all walks of life that united in producing this newspaper generated a phenomenal power of and with the people. *El Grito* reported Alianza demonstrations, courtroom battles, injustices and the growing militancy of the Spanish/Mexican population, Black Power, American Indian movements and national and international issues. The presentation of history and culture in the form of poetry, stories,

recipes, and songs made *El Grito* appealing to everyone and it soon grew to be a very successful member of the Chicano Press Association, an organization of the time that included some fifty newspapers.

Doing a newspaper became an important part of our lives and a priceless education to those creating it. One cannot separate *El Grito* from the Civil Rights Movement which empowered Raza with political knowledge and experience. Evolving with the activism of the times, we embraced a new literary form, breaking all conventions regarding proper English, language purity, and word usage. Intellectual development grew with the use of bilingual lyrical abilities in a unique, creative, self-refined way, a people's way. This new Spanglish, as some call it, gave such freedom so that even my words and expressions in writing came from childhood family conversations as well as experience in community meetings and political conferences across the country.

I learned to listen, not only to words, but to the hearts of people; thus capturing the passion, anger, outrage, and indignation when discussing racism, greed, repression and exploitation. These sentiments became an eruption of hundreds of years of repressed thought now set free. This reflection of the past revealed who and what we had become and what we had lost, "por eso estamos como estamos." It deciphered the difference between "Justice" and "Justus" and in the process of activism, we envisioned a humanitarian way of governing by putting people before profits; a way to make people proud with honor and dignity.

During this time, the newspaper and our homes were under constant surveillance and we were followed by local, state, and federal authorities. Many of us are in the congressional record with telephone, car license numbers, and personal information openly targeting us to whomever. Despite all of this, our home in San Cristobal, where we had moved to help start La Escuela Tlatelolco which would be based in Denver, became a hub of activity and a source of inspiration in reading, studying, discussing, and learning with family and friends. Our neighbor, Craig Vincent, became a mentor to many of us, as did Cleofas Vigil. They joined our home circle when visitors stayed with us and we learned of activists and activism across the country. Our kitchen table became the heart and axis of movement secrets,

laughter and discussion. My children always listened and marvel saying, "Wow, Mom, if these walls could talk."

My articles and column, "Despierten Hermanos," today I would also say Hermanas, became a regular in *El Grito del Norte*, a *grito* that could be read and heard from New York to Mexico, Cuba, Latin America, Puerto Rico, and all over the Southwest. I named the first column "Despierten Hermanos" and when I sent the next article, Betita called me to ask what I wanted to name it and without thinking I said, "Oh, call it 'Despierten Hermanos.'" And so the column became Despierten Hermanos.

I am but one of many who walked this path of change: it took a movement to change what this place called North Amerika had become. These essays represent labor and thought at a time when we even debated what to call ourselves. They are non-professional, most unplanned, some with logic and some with no logic, some great, some not so great and although diverse in subject, they remained consistent in taking racial attitudes, institutions, and ruling powers to task. I never claimed to be the best; actually I never even thought of myself as a writer or columnist, other people said that, not me. I just rambled, wrote my opinions my way, and ideas took shape flooding my mind with new ones. People either liked them or if they didn't like them, it made them think and pay attention to what took place in the country. A new dawn opened for La Raza.

Of all of my writings probably the article that created the biggest whoooorah turned out to be "The Woman of La Raza." This lost me friends and made me a target for the renowned "Malinche" label. But, like so many of my writings, the rewards were many and this article opened centuries-old flood gates that poured forth in women's words and thoughts. I knew "This is very important," and from this article came a whole women's history book, *The Women of La Raza*, hopefully to be published soon. This women's book begins to define the side of that mestizo face medallion we wore so proudly, La India.

The Chicana/o Movement is a vital chapter of Southwestern history, a history needed to inspire new dreamers as activists become the elder generation. As we recall this chapter in Chicano history, we

reseed the harvest of the Civil Rights Movement and cultivate the harvest of "La Revolución Chicana" remembering that our ancestors planted the first resisting seeds of non-defeat. This Revolución is the foundation of today's evolving issues, the metamorphosis of activism that makes all movements more important than ever. It will take more than thirty years to change 500 years of colonial racist exploitative attitudes, changes which only you can make possible as we live the sun of justice, The Sixth Sun.

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As I look back I remember, "To think that at one time even my mother accused me of being a communist and threatened to report me to the government as such." I always respected her and had never answered her, but this time I answered:

"Go ahead, I will call the FBI for you and you can turn me in. Who do you think I learned to be a revolutionary from? Remember when you would say: 'Si yo supiera hablar inglés, ¿ya me hubieran echado a la prisión?' Pues yo sí sé inglés, y ahora, ¿usted me acusa de ser comunista? Ándele, entrégume."

Her little eyes blinked and after a long silence we both laughed, hugged and cried as she said, "Hija de tu nana, me ganaste." I thought, "Of course, I won, what do you expect from the daughter of the Mexican Revolution?"

Later, in 1968, I brought her to visit me in New Mexico and took her to hear Reies Tijerina when he spoke at Española High School. I will never forget the incredible look that came over her face as she drank up every word. After he finished, my mother walked right over to Reies, talked to him and hugged him, tearfully saying, "Nunca creí que oyerá en este país las palabras y verdades que ha dicho usted."

After we left, I smilingly hugged her and reminded her that now, she too was a communist. ¡VIVA LA REVOLUCIÓN, SIEMPRE!

Enriqueta Vasquez
August 14, 2005
San Cristobal, New Mexico

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Many people helped in preparing this anthology for publication. Fittingly, many of them were strong women, that *buen barro* that Enriqueta Vasquez celebrated in her columns. Foremost, we would like to thank Betita Martínez, the editor of *El Grito del Norte*, for her interest in this project over the years and for allowing us to use Rini Templeton's art in this work. Thanks also to Herminia S. Reyes, Delia V. Sarabia, and Bertha S. Figueroa, the translating *tías* of Lorena Oropeza. Just as the wisdom of Doña Faustina was a resource for Enriqueta Vasquez, our mothers, Audrey Espinoza and Celia S. Oropeza, also pitched in with expert advice. Without the aid of a crew of first-rate students who transcribed and chased footnotes, putting together this anthology would have taken even longer than it did. We would especially like to thank Elisabeth Ritacca, Kim Davis, Lia Schraeder, Fernando Purcell, and Julia Kehew, all University of California, Davis graduate students, and Emily Erickson, an excellent undergraduate research assistant. Most of the funding to pay these students came from Chicana/Latina Research Center on the UC Davis campus. Special thanks are owed to Inés Hernández Avila and Beatriz Pesquera for their long-time support of this project. Finally, we wish to thank Jorge Mariscal, who played a critical role at the inception of this project.

Viviendo y luchando: The Life and Times of Enriqueta Vasquez

Years later, Enriqueta Vasquez still remembered how whenever she visited the local hamburger joint in the town of La Junta, Colorado, she was handed her order in a paper sack. The restaurant's policy was to accept her money but not allow her to eat it inside. As the sign on the front door clearly read: "No Mexicans Allowed." Born in 1930 in nearby Cheraw into a family of farmworkers who traveled the southern portion of the state, Vasquez had often experienced blatant discrimination against people of Mexican descent. After World War II began, however, the restaurant's segregationist policy suddenly struck her as intolerable. Was not this war being fought in the name of freedom and equality and against a regime that embraced a creed of racial superiority? And did she not have three older brothers serving in the U.S. military fighting on behalf of American democracy? Although just barely a teenager, she decided to write a letter to the local paper in La Junta in which she railed against an injustice noted by many Mexican-American civil rights activists at the time: although apparently good enough to risk their lives overseas, Mexican Americans were not good enough to be treated as equals at home.¹ Faltering only at signing her name, she used the initials "HV" for "Henrietta Vasquez" having been renamed by a teacher upon entering the first grade. Then without telling anyone in her family, she mailed the letter and shortly afterward saw it in print.² Long before she had become a well-known columnist for *El Grito del Norte*, a leading Chicano Movement newspaper, Enriqueta Vasquez was taking up the pen against injustice.

Continuing that crusade as an adult, Vasquez's columns for *El Grito del Norte* showcased a distinctive voice of protest that was

fierce yet always hopeful. The main aim of her columns, entitled “¡Despierten Hermanos!” [Wake up, Brothers and Sisters!], was to rouse an ethnic population that had long been described as a “sleeping giant.” Toward that end, Vasquez employed equal parts anger and humor to offer a Chicana perspective on such weighty topics as racism, sexism, imperialism, and poverty. As a columnist, she drew upon her own life experiences to insist upon the primacy of the Chicano struggle. Yet during an era of tremendous political dissent, Vasquez consistently situated the Chicano Movement within a broader, even global, effort to advance equality. Candidly and even bluntly speaking truth to power, her columns traveled beyond New Mexico, where *El Grito del Norte* was published, and beyond the Chicano Movement. In the hope of allowing a new generation to reflect upon and perhaps find inspiration in her call for justice, this anthology has collected Vasquez’s writings as they appeared in *El Grito del Norte* from 1968 to 1972.

An anthology of Vasquez’s work serves another purpose: to underscore the contributions and complexities of the Chicano Movement more than thirty years after its height. Vasquez was an ardent champion of Chicano cultural nationalism, or *Chicanismo*, the main guiding philosophy of the Chicano Movement. In the words of the 1969 *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán*, a foundational blueprint for the Chicano Movement that Vasquez strongly endorsed, nationalism was “the key” to advancing “total liberation from oppression, exploitation, and racism.”³ For more than a century, Mexican Americans had battled against discrimination in education, housing, employment, and the administration of justice. Yet during late 1960s and early 1970s, activists who called themselves “Chicanos” and “Chicanas” promoted a politics of cultural identity that challenged long-held assumptions about the history and contemporary role of the racial-ethnic group within U.S. society. Rejecting any notion of themselves as newcomers or immigrants, Chicano Movement participants like Vasquez insisted instead that Mexican-origin people in the United States were indigenous to the continent and therefore were residing in their homeland. Aware of the difficulties of making that claim a reality, advocates of

Chicano cultural nationalism insisted that a critical first step was to promote cultural pride, which, they hoped, would lead to ethnic unity and, in turn, greater political clout for all Mexican Americans.

Proud to be a participant in what proved to be the most intense and widespread struggle for social justice by Mexican Americans in the history of the United States, Vasquez nevertheless grappled with the dilemmas posed by this prescription. Many of her columns revolved around the same set of implicit questions: How might Chicano Movement participants foster unity with those Mexican Americans outside the movement? What was to be the relationship between a politicized Mexican-American population and the majority society? And given the stated goal of “total liberation,” what practical steps could Chicanos—and Chicanas—take to improve their status day-to-day? Her search for “answers” in her columns was revealing. Certainly, Vasquez’s cultural nationalism never precluded her interest in feminism or socialism or coalition-building in general. Although the angry criticism that Vasquez directed toward majority society was one notable feature of her columns, her vision of a better future ultimately included Anglo Americans and Mexican Americans alike. Unwavering in her conviction that change was both possible and necessary, on the pages of *El Grito del Norte* Vasquez crafted a unique pedagogy of hope.

That hope endured despite Vasquez’s intimate familiarity with the pain of violence, poverty, and discrimination. For the past several decades, scholars have employed the categories of race, gender, and class as tools of analysis. Under these circumstances, much of Vasquez’s life could be read as a textbook study in subjugation. To reduce her life story to victimization, however, omits her remarkable resilience. For Vasquez, multiple confrontations with inequity simply strengthened her resolve to fight against oppression. Yet in contrast to her written work, and in sharp contrast to the academic attention paid to several male leaders of the Chicano Movement, Vasquez’s biography is not well known. It deserves to be. A chronicle of both suffering and triumphing against it, Vasquez’s personal narrative provides tremendous insight into her published work, just as the work

itself profoundly enriches our understanding of the Chicano Movement's significance overall.



Even as a child, Enriqueta Vasquez was always more inclined to speak out than bow down. As she once matter-of-factly observed, "I just had a strong sense of justice [from] somewhere." An intense personality was apparently hers from the start: her baby picture shows a serious-looking Vasquez with her arms outstretched as if she were orating on some pressing matter. Also true, however, was that her experiences as a person of color, as a low-paid worker, and later, as a single mother and as an abused wife sharpened and refined Vasquez's innate sense of justice. Through much struggle and determination, Vasquez finally arrived as a member of the Mexican-American middle class at the age of 38. Yet personality and personal experience had by then forged a political activist. Not content to rest upon her accomplishments, Vasquez decided to abandon the comforts of a conventional life and devote herself full-time to the Chicano Movement instead.

A child of the Great Depression, one of the defining experiences of Vasquez's life appropriately enough was financial hardship. Her parents, Faustina Perez and Abundio Vasquez, were among the estimated one million Mexicans who entered the United States during the first third of the twentieth century.⁴ Like many of their compatriots, they left desperate to escape the violence, chaos, and poverty of the Mexican Revolution. Traveling separately from the state of Michoacán, both found low-paid work as farm laborers in Colorado where they met and fell in love. Soon they were the proud parents of a rapidly expanding family that joined them in the fields, the oldest children working alongside their parents harvesting tomatoes, green beans, beets, and onions, the next oldest watching over the youngest ones. With only one younger sibling, Vasquez recalled pitching in with odd jobs and then caring for her little brother. Yet despite the economic contributions of parents and children alike, the Vasquez family, like many Mexican-American farmworkers at the time, still could

not afford basic medical care: only seven of Vasquez's 12 siblings reached adulthood.

Given the strained economic circumstances of the family, one bright spot was making music. Thanks to a traveling music teacher named Bonifacio Silva, Vasquez learned to play the mandolin by age five. Eventually, she also became proficient on the violin and guitar. In fact, some of her happiest memories of her childhood against the bleak backdrop of Cheraw, Colorado—muddy and cold in her recollection—were of song and dance. The family formed part of a village band organized by *el profesor* Silva that traveled to neighboring towns to celebrate such events as Mexican Independence Day, the 16th of September. Later, when Vasquez would use her columns to extol the richness of Mexican culture, her knowledge of traditional music buttressed this sense of pride.

As a young girl, Vasquez was closer to her father than her mother. Part of the reason was that she was an unrepentant tomboy who loved sports and the outdoors. While her sisters called her "Henrietta," the name she had to use at school, her brothers called her "Henry" or "Hank." Given the choice between embroidering with the girls and helping the boys fix a car, Hank preferred the latter. Indeed, she learned to drive by the age of 12 in order to help her family with errands once her three older brothers had joined the military service and her eldest sister had gotten married. By then, Vasquez also knew how to shoot. The year before, her father, telling her stories of the Mexican Revolution the whole time, had taught her how to fire a 22-gauge rifle. Only half-joking, her mother warned that, given her daughter's quick temper, teaching her to use a gun was probably a bad idea. Nevertheless, both parents fueled Vasquez's innate sense of justice—as well as her sense of Mexican identity—by telling her various times as she grew up, "*los gringos se robaron esta tierra* (The gringos stole this land)".

Her mother, a *curandera* (a healer), also imparted knowledge of Mexican—and indigeneous Purépecha—culture. As Vasquez recalled, her mother helped deliver dozens of babies in the Cheraw area. She was a talented *sobadora*, having been taught by Vasquez's great-

grandfather the art of indigenous therapeutic massage. Later Vasquez would pay tribute to the wisdom of her mother in such columns as "La Voz de Nuestra Cultura," which favorably compared the curative powers of traditional healing practices to Western medicine. By then, the two women had grown closer in part because they shared a similar political outlook.⁵ As a youngster, however, Vasquez was painfully aware that she was not her mother's favorite. That designation went to an older sister who Vasquez years later described as beautiful, well behaved, and fair-skinned. Vasquez, in contrast, was dark-complected.

Racism, another frequent theme in her work, consequently played a part in her political evolution as much as poverty. Encountering subtle racism within her own family, she was assaulted by it outside her home. At school, children were punished for speaking Spanish. When Professor Silva arranged for the Cheraw *banda* to play at the school—"and we were good," recalled Vasquez—band members played to an empty auditorium. During a decade when deportations and repatriations to Mexico were common, Spanish-speaking parents preferred not to venture into the English-only school setting, Vasquez recalled; Anglo parents were apparently not interested. Only the school janitor who was responsible for opening the doors for the event showed up. Official segregation, as was the case with the hamburger joint and most other restaurants in neighboring La Junta, was also commonplace. In La Junta, barbershops were also segregated. Closer to home, the elementary school in Cheraw had two swings, one for Anglos and one for Mexicans. Even if no Anglos were on the playground, Vasquez remembered, the ethnic Mexican children would dutifully line up to wait their turn on the swing designated for them.

Subsequent years provided ample evidence of how poverty and racism were intertwined. As a teen, Vasquez landed a job at the local cannery where she noticed that during the height of the harvest season, employees, virtually all Mexican-American women, were expected to work through the day and most of the night. Yet they did not receive overtime pay. True to form, Vasquez wrote another letter, this one to the U.S. Department of Labor, prompting government investigators to pay a call. Later, after she graduated from high school,

Vasquez, an excellent typist, moved to Denver hoping to land a secretarial job. To her dismay, she was told at the state employment office that most businesses were not ready to hire "Spanish American" girls for office work. Especially, one might assume from the comment, dark-skinned ones.

Vasquez's move was accompanied by dreams of a better future. For a while, those dreams came true. After a tough month of searching, she found a job doing everything from janitorial to clerical work in a furniture store owned and operated by a Jewish American man and his son, neither of whom evidently minded hiring a Mexican American. The wages were low, but the job had other benefits: Vasquez learned a lot about running a business, and the father trusted her to use the company car on weekends. She was young, happy, and independent. As someone with access to a car, she was also popular, with a wide circle of friends. Through this social circle she was introduced to a friend's cousin, a New Mexican man named Herman Tafoya. They married in 1951. His parents struck her as "real nice people," Vasquez recalled. "I always thought that if you came from a good family, you were a good person."⁶ She was wrong. Five days after the wedding, her husband beat her. Called to service in Korea, he came back a heavy drinker and "even meaner." Vasquez thus came to know violent injustice directed against her as a woman.

For several years, despite the beatings and her husband's alcoholism, Vasquez attempted to make the marriage work. A son, Ruben, was born in 1952 while Tafoya was in Korea. Vasquez hoped that a child might bring the couple closer together, but recalled that her hope died once Tafoya returned unchanged. Nevertheless, in 1954, in another attempt to foster family unity, Vasquez relocated the family to Kentucky for several months so that Tafoya might pursue a job-training opportunity there. "I tried to do what he wanted," Vasquez explained years later.⁷ Like many women during the 1950s, she also explained, she was convinced that the role of wives was to obey and respect their husbands, and that divorce was not only unthinkable, but also a personal failure on the woman's part. For several years, therefore, Vasquez devoted the strength of her personality toward trying to

make the marriage work. Nevertheless, by the time Vasquez was pregnant with a second child, the unthinkable appeared as her only salvation. Deciding to separate from her husband, she returned to her parents' home in 1955, a single mother with one young child to support and another on the way. After the birth of her daughter, Ramona, she moved to a housing project in Pueblo where there was a medical specialist for Ruben, who had been born with a clubfoot.

Vasquez was a single mother for more than a dozen years. In her columns, when Vasquez wrote about the endurance and strength of Chicanas and the contributions they could make to the Chicano Movement, she spoke from experience. After the divorce, Tafoya had little contact with her or their children. He rarely sent child support payments. For nearly two years, Vasquez was dependent upon welfare to survive. Years later Vasquez remembered how stretched financially she was during the mid-1950s, a full decade before Lyndon Johnson's Great Society and War on Poverty initiatives bolstered such federal programs as food stamps and Aid for Families with Dependent Children.⁸ Her welfare check barely covered the rent. The supply of food offered by community pantry scarcely lasted the month. Without health insurance, whenever Ruben, who was also sickly with asthma, needed to be rushed to the emergency room, Vasquez had to borrow money to pay the doctor.⁹ Even making a phone call was difficult, she recalled, as she had to look for a neighbor's phone to borrow. But Vasquez eventually landed on her feet. Her typing skills secured her a secretarial job in a law office in Pueblo. Later in Denver, Vasquez found a well-paying civil service job with good health insurance. By then a divorced woman, she still feared her ex-husband and with good reason. In 1960, Tafoya found her in Denver and beat her for the last time. Overnight, she decided to pack up the family's belongings—three suitcases full—and move to the Los Angeles area, where her older brother lived.

During the three years she spent in Culver City just outside of L.A., the Catholic Church proved a refuge. Vasquez had been baptized Catholic not as an infant but at the age of 11. Part of the delay was logistical: Cheraw did not have a local Catholic Church; the family

attended mass in La Junta no more than once a year. But part of the delay apparently stemmed from her parents' reluctance to make this commitment on behalf of their daughter. Vasquez described her father as especially "open-minded." "He encouraged me to attend the Menonite church [in Cheraw] and whatever tent services came around so that I could learn as much as I could about the Bible for myself."¹⁰ Once in Culver City, however, Vasquez became deeply involved in the affairs of the local parish even teaching catechism and taking her children and herself to mass and confession weekly. Years later she remarked that her sense of Catholic guilt was so refined that she used to make things up just to have something to confess to the priest. During this time, Vasquez worked at Hughes Aircraft as an executive secretary, but given the high cost of childcare, the family once again could only afford to live in a public housing project. Certainly, Vasquez's church involvement was accompanied by the hope that the church would provide a positive influence for her children, a counter to the negative environment of the housing project, which was increasingly plagued by gang- and drug-related problems. In fact, the danger posed by these problems prompted Vasquez to return the family to Colorado in 1963. Her now lengthy resume, embellished by community college courses she had taken in California, quickly secured her more civil service work, first at an air force base, then with the Internal Revenue Service, and finally with the U.S. Attorney General's Office in Denver.

The 1960s also marked Vasquez's introduction to political activism. Her involvement in Chicano activism was largely a result of her friendship with Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales, an emerging Chicano Movement leader. She had first met Gonzales in 1950 in Denver, when he was already a well-known personality around town, a prize-winning boxer whose bouts she sometimes would attend. By the time Vasquez returned to Denver, Gonzales was also an established businessman, a seller of bail bonds. Although Vasquez technically worked for the prosecution, whenever she noticed a judge treating a defendant unfairly, she would call Gonzales to see what help he could offer the defendant. In 1964, Gonzales invited Vasquez to join the American

G.I. Forum, a Mexican-American civil rights group founded by World War II veterans. The following year, her Forum membership, commitment to racial equality, and strong administrative skills earned her a position as one of the directors of Project SER (for Service, Employment, and Redevelopment; in Spanish “ser” means “to be”), a War on Poverty program funded through the Forum. As a director, she visited corporations in the Denver area such as Coors Beer and asked them to start hiring Mexican Americans or face an economic boycott. For Vasquez, as for many Chicano Movement participants, the Great Society’s reform programs marked the opportunity to deepen their political involvement.

Yet the Chicano Movement also represented, in the words of Ignacio M. García, “the rejection of the liberal agenda.”¹¹ Along with rejecting traditional party politics, activists doubted the ability of federal government programs to deliver upon their promises. In the case of Gonzales, a political dispute hastened this rupture. Like Vasquez, Gonzales had been active in local Great Society programs: he had chaired the city’s local War on Poverty board and headed an agency called the Neighborhood Youth Corps. His career as a Democrat Party loyalist, however, came to an end in 1966 when the city’s conservative paper, the *Rocky Mountain News*, accused Gonzales of favoring Mexican-American groups in the dispersal of federal funds. The dispute concluded shortly thereafter when Denver’s mayor fired Gonzales and Gonzales, in turn, announced his intention to form a new Chicano advocacy group called the Crusade for Justice.¹² Throughout, Vasquez had been among many Denver residents who had rallied to Gonzales’ defense. She had joined picket lines outside the newspaper office and written letters of support on his behalf. She immediately joined the Crusade for Justice.

That was when Vasquez said she went “crazy,” crazy for the Chicano Movement. She strongly believed that there was a need for an organization like the Crusade, that there was a need for change. “I didn’t want my kids to go through what I went through,” she later said. She was also impressed by Gonzales’ leadership ability. “He was everybody’s hero,” Vasquez recalled. “I always had a tremendous

amount of respect for him. I just felt that this man was going to do something.”¹³ As a result, Vasquez was willing to lend her secretarial skills to the organization when a task needed to be done. When Gonzales decided to run for mayor as a means of encouraging voter participation in Denver’s barrios, for instance, Vasquez was one of two notary publics who collected signatures to get him on the ballot. Understanding that Gonzales’ chances of actually obtaining office were slim-to-none, she nonetheless went door-to-door and set up registration tables everywhere from churches to bars. Along the way, Vasquez found herself falling in love with a close friend of Gonzales, an artist named Bill Longley, who was also deeply political. At the time, Longley, who had served for a long time as a personal bodyguard for Gonzales, was also working as an artist for the Crusade. When she decided to marry him after nearly 13 years as a single parent, Vasquez said, “Then I knew I was crazy. Artists don’t even have jobs!”¹⁴

The union ushered forth a series of dramatic changes. First, both partners changed their name. Dropping “Tafoya,” Vasquez reverted to her birth name. Born in Wyoming and of French ancestry, her husband legally changed his “William” to the Spanish “Guillermo” (within movement circles he became known as “Yermo”); “Longley” to the original French “Longeaux.” Committed to the Chicano Movement, he added “Vasquez.” Longeaux y Vasquez became their shared name. Second, Vasquez broke from the Catholic Church. As a divorced woman, she was not allowed to re-marry according to church teachings. Even before meeting Bill, she had inquired about an annulment but found the cost prohibitive for a single mother earning a secretary’s salary. (For his part, Vasquez recollected, Bill was insistent that her first marriage was a “bunch of hogwash” not a life-long commitment before God.) Unable to resolve her dilemma, Vasquez went to talk to a liberal priest in Denver who told her to go ahead and re-marry and be happy. “At that point,” she said later, “I saw through the church.”¹⁵ Although she remained spiritual, Vasquez went on to write scathing critiques of the Catholic Church as an institution. Yet a third change occurred in April 1968 when Gonzales asked her and Bill to run a cul-

Once moving to the state permanently, Vasquez and her husband took other steps to nurture the relationship. First, the Longeaux y Vasquez family embraced the precarious economic circumstances of many of their Aliancista neighbors. During the 1960s, and as a direct legacy of land loss, the average individual income in New Mexico's northern counties was just over a \$1,000 compared to more than twice that for the state as a whole and almost three times that for the United States overall.²¹ For their part, Enriqueta, Bill, Ruben, and Ramona scraped by on a \$142 disability pension that Bill received every month for his military service during World War II. Their home, a 100-year-old adobe that Vasquez had purchased with her retirement savings upon arriving, became another means of fostering good relations. Nestled in the scenic Sangre de Cristo Mountains, the modest structure soon served as a popular gathering place for Alianza members as well as for other Chicano Movement activists who came from across the Southwest to rest and recuperate. In still another display of solidarity, Vasquez, although not a land-grant claimant herself, made it a point to attend Alianza meetings regularly.

The result for Vasquez was a deeper appreciation of the historical roots of Chicano protest. She credited Tijerina, whom she labeled a "brilliant" and "dynamic" leader, with bringing renewed attention to the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo that had concluded the U.S.-Mexico War. According to the treaty, the property rights of Mexican citizens in the ceded territory were to be "inviolably respected."²² Yet across the new U.S. Southwest, as Tijerina constantly pointed out, Mexicans experienced massive land dispossession through fraud, intimidation, and the imposition of new judicial and tax systems that favored the conquerors.²³ To Vasquez, Tijerina's insistence that a historical wrong had been committed reverberated with the childhood memory of her parents telling her that the Southwest had once belonged to Mexico. Strongly identifying with the land-grant movement as a result, Vasquez recalled that Tijerina had one central message for all Chicanos, whether they were the descendants of long-ago Spanish colonists or, like her, the offspring of more recent Mexican

immigrants (as well as a migrant to an urban area). It was: "This is our land."

By the summer of 1968, Vasquez was among a group of Alianza supporters who were determined to get that message out by starting a newspaper. Stepping in as editor was Elizabeth "Betita" Martínez, who was then a full-time staffer with the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). At the time, SNCC was making the transition from civil rights to Black Power politics. Meanwhile, Martínez, a former editor with Simon & Schuster in New York, had just finished a book about the Cuban Revolution. With SNCC and herself both pursuing new directions, Martínez took an exploratory trip to New Mexico to investigate the possibility of starting a newspaper. Acutely aware she was an outsider to the state's politics and culture, Martínez first conducted a tour of the northern portion of the state to ask dozens of long-time Alianza supporters what was *their* vision for a paper. Her traveling companion was Beverly Axelrod, a San Francisco-based radical lawyer who had defended several Black Panthers before coming to New Mexico to offer legal advice to Tijerina.²⁴ This inclusive approach paid off: as Vasquez remembered, *El Grito del Norte* seemed to emerge organically from the region's circle of activists. Indeed, among the earliest supporters of the newspaper were several participants in the 1967 courthouse, including José Madril, Juan Valdez, Tobias Leyba, and Baltazar Martínez. Other early supporters included Craig Vincent of the Vincent Ranch; Valentina Valdez, a young Alianza member originally from San Luis, Colorado; Anselmo Tijerina, an older brother of Reies and a committed organizer for the land-grant movement; Rini Templeton and John DePuy, both artists in the area; Maria Varela, like Martínez a veteran of SNCC; and the future novelist John Nichols, who contributed cartoons. Before long, such local personalities as Cleofas Vigil, Vasquez's neighbor, and Fernanda Martínez, a fiery land-grant activist from Tierra Amarilla among others had joined the list of regular contributors.

With a staff that featured Aliancistas and other activists, imported professionals and homegrown talent, as well as folks with Spanish-surnames and those without, *El Grito del Norte* soon emerged as one

of material possessions alone. Along the way, Vasquez proved fearless in lambasting Anglo America. In one telling example, in a column promoting the richness of Chicano culture, she managed to challenge Mexican Americans and criticize Anglo Americans at the same time. Demonstrating her impatience with the long-standing notion among academics and Mexican Americans alike that ethnic group members suffered from an “inferiority complex,” Vasquez instead denounced Anglo American “superiority problems.” “You know, just studying the lifeless Gringo (heaven knows they have studied minorities enough) one can feel sorry for them and wish that one could help them with their superiority problems,” she opined. “I think that minorities can do this and I think we should.”³¹

When it came to race relations between Anglo Americans and Mexican Americans, Vasquez walked a fine line. On the one hand, Vasquez reserved her most acidic comments for a people and a lifestyle that she labeled “Gringo.” As she flatly announced in another column: “80% of Gringo society is reported to be neurotic and 50% of the people are hypochondriacs.”³² Although Vasquez routinely incorporated material that she had gained from reading news magazines such as *Time* and *Newsweek* and from talking to friends like Craig Vincent, a few statistics used in her columns were clearly the product of artistic license as was the case here. To Vasquez, “Gringo” society was characterized by an unrelenting drive for profit, as she put it, the “DOG-eat-DOG concept whose total goal” was “named MONEY.”³³ On the other hand, she made clear that her use of the pejorative term “Gringo” was meant to refer specifically to white privilege and the misplaced values of mainstream society and not to whites in general. “When we speak of Gringo, we do not particularly hate all white people,” she explained in 1969, “but we refer to their social system as ‘Gringo.’ That is what we don’t like.”³⁴ Supporting this distinction was her frequent appeal for Anglo Americans to reconsider their priorities and learn from Chicanos. “Raza has a beautiful way of life and has a lot to contribute to the majority,” Vasquez offered in one instance.³⁵ Or to rephrase her somewhat ironic suggestion, minorities could “help” members of the majority with their superior

ity problems and much more. Vasquez knew that discrimination was real but so too was the possibility of Mexican Americans and Anglo Americans working together for the benefit of both groups.

Just as important, Vasquez’s negative portrayal of majority society was as reflective of the era’s counterculture as it was congruent with the sentiments of Chicano cultural nationalism. When Vasquez suggested, for example, that Mexican Americans return to a “humanistic way of life” that was rooted in the land and environmentally friendly, her inspiration was her hippie neighbors as much as her indigenous ancestors. By 1971, the Taos area boasted nine hippie communes with names like Hog Farm, New Buffalo, and the Reality Construction Company.³⁶ To many Spanish-speaking New Mexicans, these “long-hairs” represented only the most recent Anglo invasion—and with good reason.³⁷ Years later Vasquez remembered how the hippies used to swim nude at local watering holes to the dismay of more socially conservative local folks or, worse, use the *acequias*, the region’s communal irrigation system that dated from colonial times, as their personal latrine.³⁸ Still, Vasquez was favorably impressed by the hippies’ attempt to build a communal way of life. At a time when impoverished native New Mexicans were leaving the rural north of the state in order to look for a city job, she recalled, hippies were determined to support their communes by living off the land. As a columnist, she suggested that Chicanos attempt to do the same. “Let’s start thinking in terms of feeding ourselves instead of feeding the grocery stores. Cooperatives are certainly a big answer for the people,” Vasquez advised her readers in 1969. “Let’s go back to being more self-sufficient. Why do we have to support Mr. Safeway, whoever or wherever he may be?”³⁹ Although most of the communes collapsed a few years later, at the time the utopian visions of her hippie neighbors informed Vasquez’s ideas about land, a central theme within the Chicano Movement.

Even more influential in this regard were her Native American neighbors. The move to New Mexico had provided Vasquez the opportunity to reconnect with her indigenous inheritance. Living just a few miles away from the Taos Pueblo, she made it a point to attend festivals and ceremonial days there as much as she was able to as a non-

Pueblo Indian. These included the traditional foot races held every May, the festival in honor of San Gerónimo, the patron saint of the Taos Pueblo, held every September, and the *matachines*, a processional dance that merged European and Indian traditions, held each Christmas. These experiences, combined with her own continued reading of such authors as Carlos Castañeda, convinced Vasquez that, as she explained years later, “the basis of a lot of our own [Chicano] culture is indigenous.” From this feeling of cultural connection, moreover, emerged a sense of political solidarity. Vasquez was supportive of another land struggle culminating in northern New Mexico at the time: the ultimately successful campaign by members of the Taos Pueblo to regain control of their sacred Blue Lake and surrounding acreage from the federal government.⁴⁰ Although Vasquez was not directly involved in that struggle, she did receive frequent updates about it from Craig Vincent, who was close to the main architect of the final 1970 agreement, a Taos elder named Paul Bernal.⁴¹

Her respect for Native American sovereignty soon complicated Vasquez’s interpretation of Aztlán. Aztlán was the mythic homeland of the Aztecs that many Chicano Movement participants claimed as their rightful inheritance in 1969 when they endorsed El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán, which outlined a series of Chicano Movement political, economic and cultural objectives. Regarding Chicanos, the prologue to the plan also asserted: “We are a nation. We are a union of free pueblos. We are Aztlán.”⁴² In this dramatic appropriation, Chicano Movement participants thus extended their claim to the land back in time to not just before the U.S. invasion of Mexico’s northern territories but to before the European invasion of the Americas. In attendance at the conference, Vasquez celebrated that point of view. “Somos Aztlán! [We are Aztlán!] Aztlán Is Reborn!” began her report about the gathering.⁴³ Or as she explained years later, by emphasizing the indigenous roots of Chicano culture, Aztlán: “brought us back to our beginnings It gave us a myth This made us a tribe.” For a short while, Vasquez even considered the possibility of carving out a separate Chicano nation within the United States.

Two meetings, however, prompted her to reject the territorial notion as political infeasible and, equally important, hardly liberating for Native Americans. The first meeting occurred in the immediate aftermath of the Denver conference when Vasquez eagerly sought out a lawyer friend of hers to ask him a series of interlinked questions concerning the legal status of Mexican Americans, the concept of Aztlán, and the provisions of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. As Vasquez recalled, the lawyer confirmed her opinion that Mexican Americans should rightfully enjoy treaty and tribal rights on par with Native Americans. Any heady sense of entitlement, however, soon crumbled before the grim realization, as she put it years later, that “there was no way that we were going to be allowed to take back this land” from the United States. A second important meeting for Vasquez occurred a few months later when she traveled to San Francisco to attend a conference in support of those Native Americans who had been occupying Alcatraz Island since November 1969. As she recalled, Native American activists at the gathering “felt threatened” by talk of Aztlán and “had a hard time grasping [the concept].” Their concerns, Vasquez remembered, “made me really think: what does nationhood really mean? Do we have in mind that this is our land and [that] we are going to fight for it?” Convinced the answer to the second question had to be “no” given the relative power of Chicanos within the United States, Vasquez next sought to reconcile Chicano land claims and Native American concerns. “This is where I really delved into our history,” she later commented, and so found herself “on the road to spirituality.” Specifically, Vasquez turned to indigenous ideas upholding the sacredness of the land and rejecting private land ownership. Aztlán, she concluded, had “to take hold in the deepest self” not emerge from a legal document. To Vasquez, the relationship between Mexican Americans and the land remained a fundamental cultural and political precept. Yet, influenced by interactions with Native American activists, she rejected the idea that Mexican Americans should seek sole physical possession of any part of the present-day U.S. Southwest in favor of the idea that Chicanos and Chicanas

needed to nurture their sense of cultural and spiritual belonging to the land.

That conclusion, however, did not mean Vasquez was abandoning political protest. To the contrary, her spiritual journey as a member of Aztlán proceeded concurrently with her political radicalization. While the move to New Mexico had plunged her full-time into a world of leftist organizing, a trip to Cuba during the summer of 1969 cemented Vasquez's commitment to revolutionary social change. She had gone upon the invitation of the Cuban government, which wished to advertise the revolution's accomplishments to foreign correspondents ten years after the 1959 revolution that had brought Castro to power. Traveling through Mexico (and returning via Canada), Vasquez arrived in Cuba as a representative of *El Grito del Norte*. She immediately liked what she saw: socialism at work. Cuba seemed like a "solution," she later recalled. "I saw all the things [that] we talked about . . . saw [that] . . . it's possible to have a country that is sharing. Many experiences really affected me."⁴⁴ Certainly, land reform in Cuba struck her as entirely consistent with the type of communal land use that she had been advocating. Yet Vasquez later recalled that she was probably most touched by a smaller detail: the racial composition of an orchestra that she had heard. Whereas in the United States, symphonic musicians were usually white, Vasquez, a lover of music, noted that in Cuba white people, black people, and every shade in-between were up on stage. Such positive memories lingered. Well past the fortieth anniversary of the Cuban Revolution, Vasquez remained a committed leftist. "I certainly embrace socialism. I can't see any other solutions," she noted in 2003. "This country (the United States) could feed the world if it wanted too."

During the Chicano Movement, the question of advancing sweeping social change inevitably raised the question of violence. Like many within the Chicano Movement, Vasquez refused to rule out its use. To the contrary, part of her admiration of the Cuban Revolution—and of the revolution in Vietnam—was that the Cubans and Vietnamese had actually taken up arms to achieve their goals. On occasion, Vasquez even pondered whether Chicano activists should do the

same. "I guess people are supposed to be submissive and robot-like and take all of this crap," she wrote in one 1970 column that made clear that meek acceptance was not her style. Instead, as she confessed in this moment of frustration: "I do believe that the only thing that Tío Sam will listen to anymore is violence and demonstration, if you don't have power and money to be heard."⁴⁵ The implicit threat contained in the article, however, was an anomaly for Vasquez who generally dismissed violence as a strategy because it was unnecessarily dangerous for a vulnerable political minority.

The use of arms for purposes of self-defense was another matter. Vasquez not only strongly believed that Chicanos had a right to defend themselves if threatened, but she also was convinced that being able to do so, as she later explained, was "very important; it empowers people a lot." After all, she asked in 1969, "How can one guarantee complete non-violence when one lives in a completely VIOLENT country?"⁴⁶ Indicative of the tenor of the times, Vasquez, along with many other area activists, routinely engaged in target practice outside her home, everyone bringing their own weaponry. Notably, the article that Vasquez wrote encouraging Chicanas to become politically organized, featured a drawing by her husband of Vasquez holding one of their rifles.⁴⁷ Years later Vasquez stressed how deeply rooted and widespread was the conviction among Chicano activists at the time that violence might erupt at any moment.

Near constant police surveillance was a major source of tension. In New Mexico, Vasquez noticed what she assumed were unmarked police cars following her whenever she drove. Vasquez received unique confirmation of that suspicion in an article that appeared in the March 1969 issue of *American Opinion*, the publication of the ultra-conservative John Birch Society. Entitled "New Mexico: The Coming Guerilla War," the article's premise was that a grand conspiracy to wage war against the United States was about to burst forth among Alianza supporters. Studded with almost comical references to "Castroite terrorist Tijerina" and "Rudolpho sic 'Corky' Gonzales—the Red-nosed Mutineer," the article less comically also included mention of a "Ms. Henrietta Vasquez Tafoya," the make of her car, and the car's

registration address, suggesting that the author had been in close contact with law enforcement officers who, in turn, had been closely monitoring Vasquez.⁴⁸ That June, Representative O.C. Fisher, a conservative Democrat from Texas, inserted the entire article in the *Congressional Record*, adding by way of explanation merely that it contained "some interesting information."⁴⁹ By then, Vasquez's politics apparently also had piqued the interest of the FBI.⁵⁰

The late 1960s and early 1970s offered plenty of proof to Chicano Movement participants like Vasquez that protest carried significant risks beyond mere surveillance. Three months before she moved to the state, for example, the Alianza's headquarters in Albuquerque were firebombed, just one episode in a series of anti-Alianza attacks that was to continue for several years afterward.⁵¹ Violence turned deadly in January 1972, when two Black Berets, one of whom had worked for *El Grito del Norte* as a photographer and reporter, were shot and killed by police in Albuquerque. According to police, the two men had fired first and were probably attempting to steal dynamite from a construction site. According to the newspaper, the deaths were highly suspicious, not least because the activists were about to expose the mistreatment of Chicanos in prison.⁵² Indeed, Vasquez's article updating an abuse scandal at the Santa Fe state prison appeared in the same issue dedicated to the memory of Antonio Córdova and Rito Canales, the two slain Black Berets.⁵³ As a continuing member of the Crusade for Justice, Vasquez also observed relations between that organization and law enforcement deteriorate over the years. In 1972, for example, she was at La Raza Park in Denver when clashes between Chicano activists and police at the park sent teargas wafting through the crowd. The following year, Luis "Junior" Martinez, a 20-year-old Crusade for Justice member was shot to death by Denver police during a confrontation. Although Vasquez was not in Denver when the shooting occurred, she knew Martinez from the summers he had spent attending the cultural school that she and her husband had operated for the Crusade. During these visits, the teenager had apparently fallen in love with northern New Mexico. He was buried in the San Cristobal cemetery just a stone's throw from Vasquez's front door.⁵⁴

For five years, despite an atmosphere marked by occasions of danger and uncertainty, a committed cadre of volunteers had kept the newspaper running from its offices in Española. As early as November 1968, the staff received a phone call from a person who, after receiving directions to the newspaper office in order to subscribe in person, shouted "Thank you, you communist!" before slamming the phone down.⁵⁵ In addition, although the vast majority of the letters to the editor were enthusiastic of the newspaper's efforts, in early 1973 one vitriolic exception appeared. The missive thanked the newspaper for confirming the writer's "beliefs about the overall idiotic stupidity of 90% of the scummy filthy wetback welfare parasites that have invaded my country from the south." (The newspaper retained the original letter's misspellings.)⁵⁶ By then, *El Grito del Norte* had relocated to Las Vegas, NM in order to take advantage of an offer of free office space by one supporter and to be closer to several key volunteers. The final edition of the newspaper in August 1973 nevertheless made an oblique reference to mounting pressures. "To our enemies, we say: don't celebrate. The spirit that El Grito voices will never die," the announcement of closure read. "Hasta la victoria."⁵⁷

Vasquez embraced the sentiment. After the newspaper stopped, she remained busy as an artist, activist, and author. During the 1970s, she painted murals in Taos as well as in El Mirage, Arizona, as part of a larger project to recognize the contributions of women farmworkers there.⁵⁸ She also co-authored with Elizabeth Martínez a Chicano history entitled *Viva La Raza!* published by Doubleday in 1974. In 1977, she traveled to China as part of a Taos-based U.S.-China friendship association whose members sought to secure that the entrance into the United Nations for the People's Republic of China. She also became more deeply involved in indigenous spirituality, meeting with Native American elders in the United States and Mexico. In 1992, five hundred years after the Spanish arrival in the Americas, Vasquez traveled to Spain as part of an intertribal indigenous delegation that provided through speeches and ceremony a counter-balance to the nation's festivities marking the anniversary. Since then, she has frequently participated in sacred *ceremonias* as an elder and has nearly completed

another book—a sweeping history of the women of La Raza from indigenous times to the present. Still the traveler, she also visits college campuses to speak to students. Tellingly, during the days of *El Grito del Norte*, the headshot that usually accompanied her columns had showed Vasquez looking past the camera and seemingly into a brighter future. Although *El Grito del Norte* ended, Vasquez, like so many people associated with it, continued to work toward that better future.

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This anthology was truly a collaborative project. Of course, the heart of the volume is the 44 essays that Vasquez wrote for *El Grito del Norte*. The co-editors, Dionne Espinoza and myself, contributed the concluding and introductory essays, organized Vasquez's columns thematically into six chapters, and included short introductions to each chapter. We also decided to annotate the essays in order to clarify references to people and events that the passage of time had sometimes made obscure. In addition, in the hope of gaining Vasquez the broadest audience possible, we included translations of sections that originally appeared only in Spanish. At the same time, recognizing that Vasquez's use of two languages testified to her rich cultural background, instances of "Spanglish" in the text remained. Finally, in honor of the activist life of Rini Templeton, an artist whose work frequently appeared in *El Grito del Norte*, we selected six of her drawings, five of which originally appeared in the newspaper, to grace each chapter's opening page.⁵⁹

The anthology's origins date back more than a decade ago when the words of Enriqueta Vasquez first captured the attention of both of us independently. In 1994, Dionne, then completing a doctoral dissertation in English at Cornell University, interviewed Vasquez as part of her research exploring the ways in which Chicanas participated in the predominantly cultural nationalistic Chicano Movement.⁶⁰ Meanwhile, also completing a doctoral dissertation at Cornell in the field of history, I was impressed with Vasquez's incisive criticism against the war in Vietnam.⁶¹ Although Dionne and I had known each other at

Cornell, neither of us knew of the other's interest in Vasquez or, more generally, the Chicano Movement, until we were both Chicana dissertation fellows and office mates at the University of California at Santa Barbara during the academic year 1994-1995. I interviewed Vasquez for the first time in 1997 after Dionne kindly provided the phone number. That same year, two of Vasquez's most well-known essays on Chicanas were reprinted in an anthology of Chicano Movement-era selections, entitled *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings*.⁶² During my first interview with Vasquez, the first of many as it turned out, I remember almost casually mentioning that all of her work should be collected and published in a single volume. It was not long before all three of us agreed that this was a very good idea indeed.

Still, competing visions for this project soon surfaced. Most significantly, true to her activist spirit, Vasquez hoped to update all her articles so that they could speak more directly to current events. Aware that some were written quickly and in the thick of the moment, she also hoped to revise and polish them as necessary. Together Dionne and I convinced Vasquez that the columns as they were written at the time were invaluable primary sources. Except for correcting obvious typos and adding some accent marks, the columns therefore appear as they did in *El Grito del Norte* with the addition of the annotations and translations. It is impossible to over-emphasize the courage of Vasquez in accepting this format. If she had had her druthers, for example, she certainly would have tweaked some of her negative comments about technology circa 1969 to reflect her current great appreciation for her computer. Similarly, Vasquez would have sought to explain that her promotion of Chicano culture as a columnist was never meant to bind Chicanos—or Chicanas—to a static set of precepts, but to encourage them to explore their indigenous heritage as an unexploited resource. What ancient wisdom was possibly available to them in terms of medicine, spiritual enlightenment, and ideas on land use? Adding to her concerns was this introduction because Vasquez is fundamentally a private person. While she had shared the wisdom gained from experience as a columnist, she had always avoid-

ed revealing the details of those experiences with others for fear of seeming too eager to grab the limelight. A lot of convincing took place on this point, too. In the end, Vasquez trusted two scholars who were not participants in the Chicano Movement with not only contextualizing and analyzing her columns but also her life story.

That story is important. Although recent years have seen a flurry of publication about the Chicano Movement, the vast majority of these books are still focused upon four male leaders. Specifically, Reies López Tijerina, Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales, José Angel Gutiérrez, a founder of the Raza Unida Party of Texas, an independent Chicano political party, and, most of all, the iconic César Chávez.⁶³ This new work revived discussion about the successes, failures, political strategies, and vision of the Chicano Movement. Still, many of these accounts, by virtue of their focus on male leadership, inevitably omitted or obscured the considerable efforts of thousands of other individuals, half of whom were women. To capture the political evolution of one Chicana through her own words, along with the related scholarship of two academics, therefore, specifically highlights the gender dimensions of the Chicano Movement. What prompted Chicanas like Vasquez to join the movement? What appeal did Chicanismo hold for them? What did they as women hope to accomplish? Unfortunately, this single anthology cannot do justice to all of the women of *El Grito del Norte* (never mind record the remarkable history of the newspaper overall). But, along with a handful of other writings about Chicano activists, it is a start.⁶⁴

The aim of this volume, however, is to do more than fill a gap in the scholarly literature. The power of Vasquez's voice offers a corrective to the polarization of representations about the Chicano Movement that was occurring outside of academia at the start of the twenty-first century. On the one hand, one of the most celebratory interpretations suggested that the Chicano Movement was the Mexican American version of the African American civil rights movement. Appearing often in high school and college textbooks, this interpretation naturally featured César Chávez prominently. After all, the labor leader was not only the most well-known Mexican American to

emerge from a decade of protest, but also the one whose commitment to Gandhian non-violence most closely paralleled that of Martin Luther King, Jr. and other civil rights advocates. On the other hand and at the same time, a much more sinister view of Chicano activism could be found on the Internet, cable news shows, and even some newspaper pages. Conservative media personalities repeatedly attacked the Chicano Movement's emphasis on cultural pride and ethnic unity as inherently dangerous and divisive. They offered as conclusive proof of their point of view a line found in the Plan de Aztlán, "*Por la Raza Todo, Fuera de la Raza Nada*," which these non-Spanish speakers insisted meant, "For the race, everything, for those outside the race, nothing."⁶⁵ Thus, the Chicano Movement was either applauded as a familiar form of protest in the civil rights mold or, conversely, condemned as a Nazi-like bastion of reverse racism.

Ironically *neither* interpretation directly addressed the complexities and nuances of the Chicano Movement, which often paired integrationist goals with militant language. Indeed, the on-going tension between seeking inclusion, in terms of removing barriers to equality, and endorsing separatism, in terms of affirming Chicano cultural and political unity—a tension that Vasquez consistently explored—became one of the hallmarks of the Chicano Movement. Emphasizing the political implications of cultural pride, including pride in the complicated racial inheritance of Latin America, one Spanish-speaker and former Mechista explained the meaning of "*Por la Raza Todo, Fuera de La Raza Nada*" this way in 2003: "By or through this mixed up mongrel of a race, everything. Outside, or without, them, I have/am/can do, nothing."⁶⁶ Veterans of the Chicano Movement meanwhile noted that the slogan of *el Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán*, the Chicano Movement group attracting the severest criticism, was actually "*La Unión Hace La Fuerza* (Unity Creates Strength)."⁶⁷ These correctives corroborate a central message found in Vasquez's writings a generation before, that Chicano solidarity was always a means to an end, the end being Chicano empowerment and not, despite the angry criticism that she and other Chicano Movement participants directed at Anglo America, white defeat. Writing at a time

that celebrated revolution, Vasquez advocated radical social change. At the same time, her politics, filtered through her own experience and tempered by circumstances, maintained a sense of what was politically possible. Fierce, funny, and full of faith in a better future, the writings of Enriqueta Vasquez perfectly exemplified the Chicano Movement's complex character. With great pleasure, we present her work here.

Lorena Oropeza

¹ For an overview of this civil rights strategy that World War II amplified, see Lorena Oropeza, *¡Raza Sí! ¡Guerra No!: Chicano Protest and Patriotism during the Vietnam War Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), especially Chapter 1.

² This brief biography was compiled primarily using information gained through oral history interviews that I conducted with Enriqueta Vasquez on June 28, 1997 in San Cristobal, New Mexico, and on May 14, 2003 in Richmond, California. Additional quoted material was taken from a two-day oral history interview conducted by Dionne Espinoza with Enriqueta Vasquez on June 13 and 14, 1994 in Taos and San Cristobal, New Mexico. Several more details emerged from conversations between Enriqueta Vasquez and myself during the week of August 23-28, 2004, which I spent at her home in San Cristobal. In addition, I pulled some information from a January 13, 2001 autobiographical piece Enriqueta Vasquez wrote entitled, "Jumping through the Crossfire," a copy of which is in my possession. To clarify a few remaining matters, I also asked several follow-up questions over the phone. In some cases, the citations below list more than one interview source because Enriqueta Vasquez recalled the same events in the same way during different interviews. Finally, the taped oral history interviews that I conducted are in my possession; Dionne Espinoza's are in hers.

³ "El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán," reprinted in F. Chris Garcia, *Chicano Politics: Readings* (New York: MSS Information Corporation, 1973), 170-172. The plan is also easy to find on the world wide web.

⁴ Manuel G. Gonzales, *Mexicanos: A History of Mexicans in the United States* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1999), 113.

⁵ After Enriqueta took her mother to hear Reyes López Tijerina, the leader of a New Mexican land-grant movement, speak, Faustina became a great fan.

⁶ Espinoza interview with Vasquez, June 13, 1994.

⁷ Oropeza interview with Vasquez, May 14, 2003.

⁸ Gareth Davies, *From Opportunity to Entitlement: The Transformation and Decline of Great Society Liberalism* (Lawrence: UP of Kansas, 1996), 158, 171.

⁹ She was fortunate that the March of Dimes paid for his foot operations.

¹⁰ Vasquez, "Jumping through the Crossfire," January 13, 2001.

¹¹ Ignacio M. García, *Chicanismo: The Forging of a Militant Ethos among Mexican Americans* (Tucson: U of Arizona P, 1997), 11.

¹² Ernesto B. Vigil, *The Crusade for Justice: Chicano Militancy and the Government's War on Dissent* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1999), 26. Additional details about the origins of the Crusade for Justice can be found in Elizabeth Sutherland Martínez and Enriqueta Longeaux y Vásquez, *Viva La Raza: The Struggle of the Mexican-American People* (New York: Doubleday, 1974), 229-163. More information about Gonzales can be found in Christine Marín, *A Spokesman for the Mexican American Movement: Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales and the Fight for Chicano Liberation, 1966-1972* (San Francisco: R&E Research Associates, 1977).

¹³ Oropeza interview with Vasquez, May 14, 2003.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Very little has been written about the Vincents, whose ranch had operated as a vacation spot for political progressives during the 1940s and 1950s. Among their many projects, they supported the filming of the banned 1954 film *Salt of the Earth*, a movie about a successful zinc mine strike in New Mexico four years before. See James L. Lorence, *The Suppression of Salt of the Earth* (Albuquerque: UNM P, 1999), 56, 140.

¹⁷ In 1994, a Mississippi jury convicted Byron De La Beckwith, a white supremacist, with murder in connection to the Evers case.

¹⁸ A member of the Hermanos Penitentes, a lay religious fraternity that the U.S. Catholic Church had tried to stamp out after 1848, Vigil shared and strengthened Vasquez's low opinion of establishment religion. Recent works on the Penitentes include Michael P. Carroll, *The Penitente Brotherhood: Patriarchy and Hispano-Catholicism in New Mexico* (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP 2002) and Alberto Lopez Pulido, *The Sacred World of the Penitentes* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2000).

¹⁹ See, for example, "Let's Be Seen and Heard," January 29, 1969.

²⁰ The original name of the organization was *La Alianza Federal de Mercedes Reales* (The Federal Alliance of Royal Land Grants). The name was changed in June 1967 in an attempt to avoid turning over membership rolls to authorities. Richard Gardner, *Grito!: Reyes Tijerina and the New Mexico Land Grant War of 1967* (New York: Harper Colophon, 1970), 146.

²¹ Gardner, 183.

²² Pertinent passages of (and deletions from) the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo can be found in David Weber, *Foreigners in their Native Land* (Albuquerque: UNM P, 1973) 162-166. See page 164 for "inviolably respected." A succinct history of the treaty and its significance is Richard Griswold del Castillo, *The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo: A Legacy of Conflict* (Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1990).

²³ In New Mexico, roughly 80 percent of Mexican-era land holdings were rapidly lost. Victor Westphall, *The Public Domain in New Mexico, 1854-1891* (Albuquerque: UNM P, 1965), 49.

²⁴ The editor of *El Grito del Norte*, Betita Martínez, provided information regarding the origins of the newspaper to me via an e-mail message in October 2004 and

again on August 26, 2005. She also related the origins of the newspaper during an oral history interview that I conducted with her on January 14, 1993 in her home in San Francisco. Interview in author's possession.

- ²⁵ The June 5, 1971 special edition on La Chicana captured *El Grito del Norte's* feminist and transnational ethos. Highlighting the contributions of Chicanas to the Chicano Movement and the work of women members of the Black Panthers and Puerto Rican Young Lords, the special insert also credited the efforts of Japanese, Chilean, Vietnamese, and Palestinian women toward creating a global "*sociedad de justicia y paz, y una vida sin hambre o miedo* [society of justice and peace, and a life without hunger or fear]." The quotation can be found on the page lettered "O."
- ²⁶ Espinoza's concluding essay offers an analysis of Vasquez's writings on precisely this topic.
- ²⁷ See the back page of the February 18, 1972 edition, for example.
- ²⁸ In separate conversations over the years, both Martínez and Vasquez shared the mechanics of producing the newspaper.
- ²⁹ "Discrimination," August 24, 1968.
- ³⁰ "Discrimination," August 24, 1968.
- ³¹ "Let's Be Seen and Heard," January 29, 1969. A contemporary example of the assumption that Mexican Americans suffered from an inferiority complex can be found in Dennis R. Bell et al., *Barrio Histórico Tucson* (Tucson: College of Architecture, U of Arizona, 1972), 48. The pamphlet is available on the web at <http://southwest.library.arizona.edu/barr/>.
- ³² "La Santa Tierra," December 7, 1970.
- ³³ "Values Lost," March 10, 1969.
- ³⁴ "Racism," September 14, 1969.
- ³⁵ "Discrimination," August 24, 1968.
- ³⁶ Iris Kelz, *Scrapbook of a Taos Hippie: Tribal Tales from the Heart of a Cultural Revolution* (El Paso: Cinco Puntos P, 2000,) 17. Arthur Kopecky, *New Buffalo Journals from a Taos Commune* (Albuquerque: UNM P, 2004) is a personal memoir of one local participant in the counterculture.
- ³⁷ Tensions between the two groups was a repeating theme on the pages of *El Grito del Norte*, see "New Mexico Longhairs," May 19, 1969, 14; "Newcomers and Old Struggles," July 6, 1969, 13 (reprinted in Kelz's *Scrapbook*, 54-55); "More Views on the Hippy Question," July 26, 1969, 3; and "Peace, Love in Taos?," May 19, 1970, 15.
- ³⁸ In *Scrapbook of a Taos Hippie*, Iris Kelz recalled watching a naked mother washing her baby's diaper in a ditch. "Hey, that's our drinking water," was the response of a writer for *El Grito del Norte*, July 6, 1969, 13.
- ³⁹ "This Land is Our Land," April 14, 1969.
- ⁴⁰ For more information about this land struggle, see R. C. Gordon-McCutchan, *The Taos Indians and the Battle For Blue Lake* (Santa Fe: Red Crane Books, 1995).
- ⁴¹ Craig Vincent was part of a larger citizens committee dedicated to the return of Blue Lake to the Taos Pueblo. Members included John and Clara Evans, JoAnn Reed, and John Collier of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.
- ⁴² "El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán."
- ⁴³ "Somos Aztlán," October 13, 1969.

- ⁴⁴ Oropeza interview with Vasquez, May 14, 2003; Oropeza interview with Vasquez, June 28, 1997. For more of Vasquez's view on communism, see "Communism, Just a Word," March 28, 1970.
- ⁴⁵ "Smog and Money Politics," January 17, 1970.
- ⁴⁶ "Racism," September 14, 1969.
- ⁴⁷ The article was "Women of La Raza II," which appeared in the July 26, 1969 edition of *El Grito del Norte*. The drawing can be seen on page 13.
- ⁴⁸ Alan Stang, "New Mexico: The Coming Guerilla War," *American Opinion* 12 (March 1969): 49, 52, 54, and 58.
- ⁴⁹ *Congressional Record*, July 17, 1969, E-6076.
- ⁵⁰ An older brother who was working for federal government in Puerto Rico told Vasquez that Federal Bureau of Investigation agents had once paid him a visit, probably in 1970 or so, asking questions about her.
- ⁵¹ See "Dynamiters Hit Tijerina Home," *El Grito del Norte*, January 29, 1968, 3. The newspaper recorded other occasions of violence directed at Alianza supporters on October 31, 1968, 5; March 28, 1969, 1; August 10, 1969, 1; and September 14, 1969, 1.
- ⁵² "Why Are They Dead?," *El Grito del Norte*, February 18, 1972, 1, 4-5. In 1999, a man named Tim Chapa swore under oath that he had been asked by New Mexican police to infiltrate the Black Beret organization and that a police conspiracy to kill Black Berets had resulted in the deaths of Córdova and Canales. Based upon this new testimony, the families of both sought to reopen a wrongful death suit. They were turned down by the Tenth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals in 2001 and by the New Mexico Court of Appeals in 2004. The court decisions regarding *Córdova v. Larsen* and *Canales v. Larsen* were available on the web at <http://www.kscourts.gov/caselaw/cases/2001/02/00-2164.htm> and <http://www.supremecourt.nm.org/pastdecisions/VIEW/04ca-087.html>, accessed October 21, 2005.
- ⁵³ "More abuses at Santa Fe Pinta," February 18, 1972.
- ⁵⁴ Vigil, 172-178.
- ⁵⁵ *El Grito del Norte*, November 28, 1968, 7.
- ⁵⁶ *El Grito del Norte*, January-February 1973, 13.
- ⁵⁷ The announcement appears on the back cover of the final edition of *El Grito del Norte*, July-August, 1973.
- ⁵⁸ "Vasquez lives creatively," *Taos News*, December 14, 1978, B2; Oropeza phone call to Vasquez, August 9, 2005.
- ⁵⁹ For more about Templeton, see *El Arte De Rini Templeton: donde hay vida y lucha/The Art of Rini Templeton: where there is life and struggle* (Mexico: Centro de Documentación Gráfica Rini Templeton/Seattle, WA: The Real Comet, 1988). The image of the dove for Chapter 6 came directly from this book.
- ⁶⁰ Dionne Espinoza, "Pedagogies of nationalism and gender: cultural resistance in selected representational practices of Chicana/o movement activists, 1967-1972" (Ph.D. diss., Cornell U, 1996); Dionne Espinoza, "Revolutionary Sisters: Women's Solidarity and Collective Identification among Chicana Brown Berets in East Los Angeles, 1967-1970," *Aztlán* 26 (Spring 2001): 17-58.
- ⁶¹ Oropeza, *¡Raza Sí! ¡Guerra No!*

- ⁶² Alma M. García, *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings* (New York: Routledge, 1997).
- ⁶³ See for example, the personal diary of Reies López Tijerina, translated and republished as *They Called Me "King Tiger"* (Houston: Arte Público P, 2000), the selected works of Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales' gathered in *Message to Aztlán* (Houston: Arte Público P, 2001); and a memoir written by the founder of the Raza Unida Party in Texas, José Angel Gutiérrez, *The Making of a Chicano Militant* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1999). Recent books on César Chávez include Frederick John Dalton, *The Moral Vision of César Chávez* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2003); Susan Ferriss and Ricardo Sandoval, *The Fight in the Fields* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1997); and Richard Griswold del Castillo and Richard A. García, *César Chávez: A Triumph of Spirit* (Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1995). Complementing works that focus on leadership are several works that focus on Chicano Movement organizations. See, for example, Ignacio García, *United We Win: The Rise and Fall of La Raza Unida Party* (Tucson: Mexican American Studies & Research Center, U of Arizona, 1989); Armando Navarro, *Mexican American Youth Organization: The Avant-Garde of the Chicano Movement in Texas* (Austin: UT P, 1995); and Ernest Chávez, *¡Mi Raza Primero!: Nationalism, Identity, and Insurgency in the Chicano Movement in Los Angeles* (Berkeley: U of California P, 2002), a look at four L.A. based Chicano Movement groups. As the above citations also make clear, very little has been written about the Chicano Movement in New Mexico.
- ⁶⁴ Early efforts include Martha P. Cotera, *Diosa y Hembra: The History and Heritage of Chicanas in the U.S.* (Austin: Information Systems Development, 1976), especially 168-178; Sonia Lopez Cruz, "Role of the Chicana within the Student Movement" in Rosa Martinez and Rosaura Sanchez, eds., *Essays on La Mujer* (Los Angeles: Chicano Studies Center Publications, U of California, Los Angeles, 1977), 16-29; Magdalena Mora and Adelaida R. Del Castillo, *Mexican Women in the United States: struggles past and present* (Los Angeles: Chicano Studies Research Center, U of California, Los Angeles, 1980); Dorinda Moreno, *La mujer en pie de lucha* (San Francisco: Espina del Norte Publications, 1973); and Adalberto Sosa Riddell, "Chicanas and el Movimiento," *Aztlán* 5 (Fall 1974): 155-165. In addition to Dionne Espinoza's work mentioned above, other scholars who have researched Chicana activism within the Chicano Movement include Maylei Blackwell, "Geographies of Difference: Mapping Multiple Feminist Insurgencies and Transnational Public Cultures in the Americas" (Ph.D. diss., U of Santa Cruz, 2000); Marisela R. Chavez, "Despierten hermanas y hermanos!: Women, the Chicano movement, and Chicana feminisms in California, 1966-1981" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford U, 2004); and Dolores Delgado Bernal, "Grassroots Leadership Reconceptualized: Chicana Oral Histories and the 1968 East Los Angeles School Blowouts." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 19 (1998): 113-142.
- ⁶⁵ "El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán." For an example of the criticism, see Valerie Richardson, "Chicano Group Denied Funding," *Washington Times*, May 9, 2004, on the web at www.washingtontimes.com/national/20040509-123652-1592r.htm; Frosty Wooldridge, "Swallowing a Scorpion from Mexico, NewswithViews.com, November 25, 2005, found on the web at www.newswithviews.com/Wooldridge

frosty7.htm; Michelle Malkin, "Media Ignores Bustamante's Ties to Racist Group, Cybercast News Service, August 20, 2003, found on the web at www.cnsnews.com/Commentary.asp?Page=%5CCommentary%5Carchive%5C200308%5CCO20030820d.html. The gubernatorial campaign of California's Lt. Governor Cruz Bustamante in 2003 also coincided with frequent criticism of the Plan de Aztlán on the Fox-TV Network. Because websites are notorious for disappearing, I also printed out a copy of each website mentioned in these citations. They are in my possession.

- ⁶⁶ See fishfirst.org/bloggerarchive/2003_09_01_bloggerarchive.html.
- ⁶⁷ For the slogan and a defense of MEChA, see Ralph de Unamuno, "The Facts Behind the Myths: FOX News, the GOP, and MEChA" which can be found on the CSUS (California State University, Sacramento) MEChA website, www.csus.edu/mecha/mythsfacts.html. See also a commentary written by Rodolfo F. Acuña, "Fair and Unbalanced Racism," which appeared on the website of Latino Political Wires at www.voznuestra.com/PoliticalWires/_2003/_August/29.