Deep Roots, Rich Legacies: Honoring Fifty Years of Scholar-Activism

L Heidenreich

In April of 2022, the words of our Chair, Roberto D. Hernández called us together to "remember, recall, honor, and embrace—warts and all—the may respective elders and scholars of [our] particular geographies… whose efforts over the past 50 year have allowed each of [our] campuses to have space from which [we] do the work that matters."[1] And so we gathered, to remember and recall, and to do the work. We engaged multiple opportunities to reflect on the deep roots of our interdiscipline, and to celebrate the critical ways in which the field continues to evolve and diversify, while striving to create a more just society, and to open the doors of the university to new generations of Chicanx scholars. We strove, as we continue to strive, to build on a rich legacy, where 1972 stands out as a critical watershed, emerging amid what we now know as the Chicano Movement.

Our founding was made possible by, and helped to fuel, one of several revolutionary movements of the late twentieth century. By 1972 when, at the Annual Meeting of Southwestern Social Scientists, Chicano scholars came together to share their research and to strategize on how they might develop and engage what was not yet a field, Chicana/o/x activism and Chicana/o/x print culture flourished.[2] The journal *Aztlán* was founded two years prior; Jaime Sena-Rivera, the first chair of the National Association of Chicano Social Scientists (NACSS), had published refereed work in the premier volume of the journal. [3] *El*

[1] Roberto D. Hernández, "Dear Colegas," *50 Years of Activist Scholarship, NACCS Annual Conference Program, April 20-23, 2022*.
[2] Michael Soldatenko, *Chicano Studies: The Genesis of a Discipline* (Tucson: University of Arizona, 2009), 58; Maylei Blackwell, *¡Chicana Power!: Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement* (Austin: University of Texas, 2011), 146; "History of NACCS," https://www.naccs.org/naccs/History.asp, accessed August 8, 2022.
[3] Jaime Rivera Sena, "Chicanos: Culture, Community, Role-Problems of Evidence, and a Proposition of Norms Towards Establishing Evidence," *Aztlán* 1, no. 1 (1970): 37–51.

Grito was founded by Octavio Román five years prior to that first meeting, embracing the overlap of the Chicano movement with other revolutionary movements of the time.[4] Other movement publications included *Con Safos* (1968), *Regeneración* (1970), *Encuentro Feminil* (1973), *De Colores* (1973), *Revista Chicano-Riqueña* (1973), *and Bilingual Review* (1974).[5] While publications such as *El Grito* and *Aztlán* grew out of University settings, others such as *De Colores* were founded without university support and, instead, were produced by community collectives. In the words of José Armas, a member of the collective that produced *De Colores*, the goal of the work was "To harness … intellectual 'barrio gold' for empowering our pueblo."[6] Similarly, *Encuentro Feminil* not only documented the political mobilization of Chicanas, it also "fostered new forms of Chicana political solidarity and participation."[7] As noted by Maylei Blackwell, feminista publications such as *Encuentro* and *Regeneración* served as mechanisms for knowledge production and for action.[8]

In this rich context, NACSS, soon to rename itself the National Association for Chicano studies (NACS), flourished. In 1973, NACSS called a conference at New Mexico Highland University where 50 scholars gathered; the next year almost 100 scholars gathered to share scholarship, build the field, and organize. As noted by Michael Soldatenko, the early conferences, in conjunction with the Plan of Santa Barbara, set the tone for the emerging field. It was strongly influenced by internal colonial models and by materialist analysis, and like the much of the Chicanx print culture of the time, it sought to "break down barriers between research and action."[9]

This rich history, the history of our organization, is just one critical watershed in a long struggle. The seeds and roots of our interdiscipline, and of NACCS, run much deeper than that critical moment and those critical movements of the late twentieth century. In combing the footnotes of articles from the time, a

[4] Mariana G. Martínez, "The First 'Chicano' *Journal: El Grito, A Journal of Contemporary Mexican-American Thought*," *Diálogo* 20, no. 2 (2017): 47, 50.
[5] Soldatenko, 57; José Armas, "The Origins of Chicano Studies in the Southwest: *De Colores Journal* and Pajarito Publications," *Diálogo* 20, no. 2 (2017): 97–105.
[6] José Armas, "The Origins of Chicano Studies in the Southwest: *De Colores Journal* and Pajarito Publications." *Diálogo* 20, no. 2 (2017): 98.
[7] Blackwell, 146.
[8] Blackwell, 146-149.
[9] Soldatenko, 58-59.

historian, it cheered me to find a clear recognition of the scholarship that preceded the movement; the scholar-activists on whose shoulders we stand, often built, very consciously, on the generations of critical scholars who came before them. Jesús Chavarría's "Précis and Tentative Bibliography on Chicano History," published in volume 1 of *Aztlán*, for example included entries for Manuel Gamio's *Mexican Immigration to the United States* (Chicago, 1930), and Carlos E. Castañeda's *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas* (Austin, 1936).[10]

Legacies of knowledge production as a tool to challenge imperial violence emerged immediately following the U.S. Invasion, with the testimonios of Californios and Californianas, speaking out against the U.S. Invasion and the continued violence of its aftermath. Rosalía Vallejo de Leese, for example, insisted on speaking her testimonio of the Invasion in Spanish, explaining, "Those hated men inspired me with such a large dose of hate against their race, that though 28 years have elapsed since that time, I have not yet forgotten the insults they heaped upon me, and not being desirous of coming in contact with them, I have abstained from learning their language."[11] She spoke through "clenched teeth," yet she spoke and so her words of resistance, a counternarrative to Euro-American myths of the Invasion, carry on into the twenty-first century.

The early years of the twentieth century saw continued resistance and insistence on voice and action. George I. Sánchez, Jovita González, Ernesto Galarza, and Carey McWilliams addressed the struggles of our communities and called on scholars to treat Mexican American communities as subjects, not objects.[12] Laying the groundwork for the field to come, it is their scholarship that would appear in footnotes of so many movement scholar-activists. Galarza, in 1929, argued, "unless his economic contribution to the development of the western United States is recognized and rewarded, unless his needs and interests are considered from his point of view," the challenges faced by Mexican and

[10] Jesús Chavarría, ""Précis and Tentative Bibliography on Chicano History," *Aztlán* 1, no. 1 (1970): 133-141.
[11] Rosalía Vallejo de Leese, "History of the Bear Party," MSS C-E 65:20, p.1, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California.
[12] Miroslava Chávez-García, "The Interdisciplinary Project of Chicana History: Looking Back, Moving Forward," *Pacific Historical Review* 82, no. 4 (2013): 544. https://doi.org/10.1525/phr.2013.82.4.542.

Mexican American labor would not be met.[13] Though sparse, the scholarship in the years preceding and immediately after WWII made possible the work of the Chicano Movement generation – scholars influenced by the politics of their families and communities, and by the politics of the liberation movements of the 1960s and 70s—scholars such as those who came together in 1972 to found NACSS.

Yet, while the spirit of the Plan was alive at the founding conferences, so was the sexism of the time. Chicano studies often elided the voices of Chicanas. Cynthia Orozco, in the proceedings from our 1984 annual conference, noted these profound silences:

> Rodolfo Acuña' *Occupied America*… a work which should be considered the 'Chicano Bible' –epitomizes the lack of a conceptualization of gender. Acuña cogently describes racial and class oppression, but he does not mention gender oppression. In not doing so, he suggests a male ideology: sexism is not a problem.[14]

Orozco, and others pointed out that the male scholarship of the time, in addition to foundational documents such as el Plan de Santa Barbara, demonstrated a "lack of consciousness about sexism." Thus, Chicanas developed and engaged multiple feminisms and challenged the silences within the emerging field and within NACS itself. Chicana feminism built on theory and activism rooted in Third World Feminisms and was also constitutive of it. At times it also built on nationalism, at times materialism. It was, as one feminist of that generation called all activists to be, "oppositional."[15] Chicanas actively shaped the early years of the organization and the field – they researched Chicana history and Chicana

[13] Ernest Galarza, "Life in the United States for Mexican People Out of the Experience of a Mexican," In *Man of Fires: Selected Writings,* eds. Rodolfo Torres and Armando Ibarra (Chicago: University of Illinois, 2013), 31, first published in the *Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work* at the Fifty-Sixth Annual Session held in San Francisco, California, June 26-July 3, 1929 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1929), 404.
[14] Cynthia Orozco, "Sexism in Chicano Studies and the Community," in *Chicana Voices: Intersections of Class, Race, and Gender*, ed. Teresa Córdova, et al. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico), 12-13.
[15] Chela Sandoval, "U.S. Third World Feminism: The Theory and Method of Oppositional Consciousness in the Postmodern World," Genders 10 (1991) 1-24.

experiences and published their work in *Aztlán* and *El Grito del Norte*, as well as *Encuentro Feminil*, and *Regeneración*."[16] They founded scholar-activist organizations such as Mujeres en Marcha, and Las Hijas de Cuauhtémoc. [17] And they pushed their colleagues to include a session devoted to "La Chicana," at NACS' third conference, held in 1975.

While Chicanas remained active in the movement and in NACS, Chicano studies institutions were slow to change. It was in the 1980s that NACS underwent structural shifts that acknowledged the voice of and struggles of Chicanas in the field. Historian Maylei Blackwell maps how,

> At the eleventh annual NACS conference in Tempe, Arizona, in 1982, [women of Mujeres en Marcha] organized a panel to bring attention to gender inequality and create discussion about the struggle of Chicanas to be recognized as scholars within the organization and the field of Chicano Studies. Powerfully using consciousness-raising techniques, they generated three proposals for the next NACS conference: (1) a plenary on gender oppression; (2) child-care provisions; and (3) an anti-sexism session organized by men of the organization. While none of these changes was implemented at the 1983 NACS conference, the Chicana Caucus of NACS was formed that year, even though it was not formally incorporated into the organization until 1986.[18]

NACS continued to grow, diversify, and to flourish in the years that followed. It did so because of the activism of its membership and the insistence of its membership that it continue to grow and change: In 1984 the annual conference theme was Voces de la Mujer, it resulted in the publication of *Chicana Voices*, a rich publication with articles that remain relevant today.[19] In 1986 it held its first Chicana Plenary, in 1990 the Lesbian Caucus was founded, and in 1992 the Joto

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[16] Chávez-García, 546.
[17] Soldatenko, 59.
[18] Blackwell, 204. See also Alma García, "The Development of Chicana Feminist Discourse, 1970-1980," *Gender and Society* 3, no. 2 (1989): 233-234. http://www.jstor.org/stable/189983.
[19] Chávez-García, 549; See also Teresa Córdova et al., *Chicana Voices : Intersections of Class, Race, and Gender* (Austin: Center for Mexican American Studies, University of Texas, 1986).

Caucus established. In 1999 NACS changed its name to the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies, formally reflecting the gendered reality of the field and of our scholarship.[20]

The development of the field was not/is not linear and is not contained by national borders. As Antonia Castañeda, Deena González, and Vicki Ruiz have noted elsewhere, Chicanx scholars of the 1970s and 1980s were often hemispheric in their approach to the field.[21] This was, in part, due to the lack of Chicano faculty and Chicanx programs as the first cohort began their work. Thus many of the first Chicanx historians, such as Ana Macías, Luisa Año Nuevo Kerr, Rodolfo Acuña, Raquel Rubio Goldsmith, and Shirlene Soto were historians of Mexico and Latin America.[22] Adelaida R. Del Castillo's *Between Borders: Essays on Mexicana/Chicana History* included work by Chicanx historians and literary scholars whose work spanned the U.S. and Mexico.[23] This hemispheric approach to our work has not died, instead it made possible continued expansions, such as the work of Alejandro Ollin Prado, whose work you find in section two of this year's proceedings, connecting Chicanx issues to those of the people in China. Our communities and our scholarship continue to be hemispheric and global.

Fifty years strong, the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies continues to grow and evolve; our field remains rooted both in word and in action. Our 2022 Annual Conference and, in relation, our 2022 Proceedings,

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[20] William Calvo-Quirós with Antonia Castañeda, "How did We Get Here? A Short Timeline… a Long Tradition," *News from Nepantla: UCSB Chicana and Chicano Studies Newsletter*, Fall 2012, https://escholarship.org/content/qt3zb2t8k3/qt3zb2t8k3.pdf.

[21] Antonia Castañeda, "Gender, Race, and Culture: Spanish Mexican Women in the Historiography of Frontier California," and "Que se Pudieran Defender," in Antonia Castañeda and L Heidenreich et al., *Three Decades of Engendering History: Selected Works of Antonia Castañeda* (Denton: University of North Texas, 2014). Deena González, Gonzalez, "Gender on the Borderlands: Re-Textualizing the Classics," *Frontiers* 24, no. 2/3 (2003): 15–29. https://doi.org/10.1353/fro.2004.0012.

[22] Author correspondence with Drs. Antonia Castañeda and Deena González. See also Mary Pardo, "Honoring and Remembering One of the First Chicana Historians: Shirlene Soto," *Noticias de NACCS*, December 2009, pp. 2, 15. https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1044&context=noticias_naccs.

[23] This included Rosaura Sánchez, Raquel Rubio Goldsmith, Emma Pérez and José Limón, among others. See Adelaida R. Del Castillo, ed. *Between Borders: Essays on Mexicana/Chicana History* (Encino: Floricanto Press, 1990).

reflect this rich and layered heritage of struggle, resistance, and coalition. Section One of the volume focuses on legacies, with our Chair, Roberto D. Hernández, calling us together to honor this legacy "by recommitting ourselves and our work to be in the spirit of a transformative activism that continues to open spaces for all of our people… always growing collectively from and with new activist voices of those that have chosen to also walk in the path of what Reynaldo F. Macias calls *La Perspectiva Chicana*." We follow his inspiring call with the plenary addresses of Drs. Luis Torres Alvarez and Rusty Barceló. These two historically grounded addresses place our work in a longer and larger context of our 50 years. Luis Torres maps the NACCS 1994 response to Colorado's Amendment 2, which sought to codify GLB discrimination into the Colorado State Constitution. He addresses the critical difference that our amicus brief, made in the successful challenge to Amendment 2, while also marking the shortcomings of our struggles to confront inequality. Rusty Barceló's address, from the Chicana Plenary, shifts our gaze to the struggles for Chicana and LGBTQ voice and equality in our organization itself, including the critical role that allies have played, and reminds us that new voices are "opening up new conversations in unexplored and new terrain." She insists that we not walk away, but instead stay and work to make our organization more "cohesive and inclusive." As we look forward to another 50 years of struggle, growth and knowledge production, the work of these scholars, and their legacies, remind us to do work that matters, vale la pena.

Section two of *50 Years* highlights the power of the political, and of utilizing *los relatos de vida* for survival, paths to conocimiento, and flourishing. Together, the four powerful papers address voice and agency, building on the legacies of Chicana scholar-activists such as Gloria E. Anzaldúa and the women of the Latina Feminist Group, as well as other WOC scholars such as bell hooks—all of whom taught us the power of speaking our truth. Amanda Tovar, in "Chisme Saves Lives: Chisme, and #MeToo as Storytelling Interventions in Sexual Violence," engages the work of Gloria González-Lopez, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Josie Méndez-Negrete to demonstrate the power of chisme as *relatos de vida*, speaking her own story and mapping how speaking her story to family and friends freed them to also speak and heal. Gabriella V. Sanchez, Jesús Jaime-Díaz, and Josie Méndez-Negrete, in "Self/Other, Other/Self: Conocimiento as Pedagogical Practice," bring us into the classroom. Like Tovar, they critically engage the work of Anzaldúa—in this case, to interrogate and share one method for using

teacher education classes as places of conocimiento. They argue that we can create spaces where future students "critically examine their respective legacies by sharing a living history" Margaret Cantú-Sánchez, in "Pandemic Pivoting within Academia and Activism," joins the discussion of pedagogy and conocimiento, arguing that the Covid Pandemic was un arrebatamiento, thus the work of Anzaldúa, and other scholar-activists such as Kendi, are now more critical than ever, as we seek to not only survive the remolinos of the twenty-first century but to change the world. As educators, she reminds us, changing our world means changing ourselves and aiding our students in similar processes. Last, in "Conceptualizing Academic Putería: A Critical Reflection on the WAPs, DAPs, and Flops," Tess Pantoja Perez and Olga Alvina Estrada bring young and energetic voices to return our gaze to the university – insisting on the power of the erotic to survive and, perhaps flourish in academe, where we all "engage in academic putería" They argue: "Academic putería is derived from the labors of the mind, body, and spirit, which are commodified and mined for their wealth. From this perspective, we regard academic putería as a means of survival within an individualistic, merit-based, capitalistic, neoliberal institution."

Our closing section brings us back to NACCS as an expanding field, rooted and growing in coalition. Elizabeth Barahona's "The Campaign for Decent Housing: Black and Latino Coalition Building in Durham, North Carolina," looks at how Black and Latinx community members came together and created resources for their communities in Durham. Because they understood the needs of their communities, they were able to succeed even when the media and/or police force was less than helpful. Her work provides critical insight into community organizing in sites beyond commonly studies spaces such as New York or Los Angeles. In relation, Alejandro Ollin Prado studied the emerging relationship between Chicanos in Oakland and the people of China. In "Toward a Transnational Chicanidad: New Tribalism, Environmental Justice, and China," he maps the activism of mark! Lopez, using the words of Lopez to argue for the importance of a Chicanidad that is global and that builds global networks and coalitions for resistance and for creating new world. Our volume this year closes with the reflections of a former chair, Dr. Karleen Pendleton Jiménez, as they reflect on the veteranas who helped them envision themselves as a Chicanx scholar-activist, and as they look forward to another fifty years of the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies.

This year, in honor of our fiftieth anniversary, the pages that divide our chapters are graced with excerpts from *Perspectivas en Chicano Studies: Papers Presented at the Third Annual Meeting of the National Association of Chicano Social Science, 1975*. *Perspectiva*s was the first time that NACSS, which would become NACCS, published its proceedings. In that volume, Reynaldo Flores Macías, the general editor, wrote:

> The Association is still too young to tell whether it will have much impact on the intellectual work of Mexicanos. These Proceedings, however, promise a positive and hopeful beginning. The annual meeting of the NACSS is the only national gathering of Mexicano scholars dedicated to and focusing on the development of intellectural work for the benefit of our communities…. Let us continue to develop NACSS and other broad-based organizations that will allow us to do the work needed to liberate our peoples.[24]

As we look forward to the next 50 years, "Let us continue to develop [NACCS] and other broad-based organizations that will allow us to do the work needed to liberate our peoples."

L Heidenreich
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