

Las Mujeres De La Caucus Chicana



A film production by



Mujeres de La Caucus Chicana

Year: 2007

Length: 90 min.

Writer, Producer, Director: Linda Garcia Merchant

Editor: Steven Lemieux Jordan

Producer: Linda Garcia Merchant

Still Photographs, Austin/San Francisco: Kathryn Haviland

Music: Various Artists

Released: September 2007

Synopsis

Emerging from the Feminist and Chicano movements of the 60s and 70s is the story of six Latinas who, through a series of "Aha!" moments answered the call to action. Their ideological differences, personal experiences and upbringings brought them to a monumental turning point in their lives—the National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC) and 1977 International Women's Year National Women's Convention. As chosen delegates from the states of Illinois, California and Texas, these women formed the NWPC Chicana Caucus —representing Latina sisters across the nation and working towards liberation.

Screenings

- 6.29.07 **NWSA Conference** "Roundtable Discussion: Chicana Foundations, Generations, Transformations: a Mother-Daughter Dialogue"
Pheasant Run, St. Charles, IL
- 9.1.07 **Film Release Party** The Center on Halsted 3656 N. Halsted, Chicago, IL
- 10.10.07 **Chicago Premier** Rafael Cintron Ortiz Latino Cultural Center University of Illinois Chicago, Chicago, IL 60607
- 10.11.07 **West Texas Premier** Centro de Salud Familiar La Fe Inc., El Paso, Texas
- 10.20.07 **NACCS FOCOS Regional Conference** Michigan State University Student Union-Ballroom, East Lansing Michigan
- 1.24.08 **Human Rights Week** University of Iowa Women's Resource Center, Iowa City, Iowa
- 2.23.08 **Dia de la Mujer Conference** Michigan State University, Kellogg Conference Center, East Lansing Michigan
Workshop: 'Preserving the Dream' The curious and fascinating road to activism traveled by the children of activists.
- 3.06.08 **Women's History Month** Luncheon and Screening, DePaul University, Chicago, IL
- 3.19-22 **National Association of Chicano and Chicana Studies**, Austin TX
- 3.28.08 **Best of Cine Mujer**, Screening and Discussion, University of Texas-Pan American, Edinburg, TX
- 3.29.08 **Sor Juana Festival**, 15th Anniversary, Screening, Museo Alameda, San Antonio, TX
- 3.30.08 **Sor Juana Festival**, 15th Anniversary, Screening Mexican American Cultural Center, Austin, TX (MACC debut in festival)
- 3.31.08 **Womens' History Month Brown Bag Lunch Film Series** Lansing Community College, Gannon Building, Room 134, Lansing Michigan.
- 4.10-13 **CineFestival '08 en San Antonio**, Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center, San Antonio, Texas
- 4.19.08 **University of Wisconsin-Parkside**, Kenosha, Wisconsin

Biographies of Mujeres de la Causa



Lupe Anguiano

Lupe Anguiano, an educator, who all her life has worked for the equality of all people. As a Missionary Sister for fifteen years, she worked to improve the social, education and economic conditions of poor people throughout the United States. Lupe was a United Farm Workers Volunteer, working under the direction of Cesar Chavez in Delano, CA and then in Michigan where she led the grape boycott of 1965.

During the 60s and 70s Lupe's involvement in the Women's Movement helped bring Catholic support to the Equal Rights Amendment. She is a founding member of the National Women's Political Caucus, working with Gloria Steinem, Bella Abzug, and other feminists leaders. An elected delegate of the Texas and 1977 National Women's Conference in Houston, Texas; Lupe, along with Jean Stapleton and Coretta Scott King, read the "Declaration of American Women" one of the highlights of this landmark event for women of the US.

Nationally, She is best known for her many years of award winning work demonstrating changes needed in AFDC Welfare Policy. Through the creation of the National Women's Employment and Education Model Program (NWEE), Lupe created, field-tested and implemented this groundbreaking model as a "change agent" to AFDC Welfare. The Model is a "How-to-Policy" for AFDC Welfare Government Agencies. It illustrates how a government agency can assist women (as single parents and heads of households) to move into the employment training, education and social services needed to become economically self-supporting wage earners like over 80% of American Women.



Andrea Cano

Andrea Cano, an experienced communications professional, grew up in Orange County and currently resides in Portland where she is the commissioner for the Mt. Hood Cable Regulatory Commission. With 25 years of serving community, national and international non-governmental and religious organizations, she has been engaged in some of the most fascinating political arenas. She was a consultant for a council of churches in Ecuador, the communications director for the World Council of Churches a journalist during an emergency, spearheaded a national project to establish community-based radio stations and was the director for the Centro Alberto Rembao for Theological and Religious Studies and Christian Action in Guadalajara, Mexico.



Martha P. Cotera

A noted historian and author of numerous feminist writings, including "Diosa y Hembra" and "Chicana Feminist," Martha P. Cotera has been a key player in establishing some of the most influential Latino organizations in the country. She is a founding member of the Raza Unida Party in Texas, Mujeres Pro-Raza Unida Caucus, the Texas Women's Political Caucus, the National Women's Political Caucus and several others. As an independent scholar working with a concentration in Latina feminism and political development, she has worked for the University of Texas-Austin for more than 30 years and was instrumental in creating the Mexican American Library Program of the Benson Latin American Collection at UT/Austin.



Margaret Cruz

Margaret Cruz, “Little Giant” always said her life was defined by the blessing and strengths she derived from her children and husband, her faith and her steadfast commitment to her community.

Often referred to as a powerhouse in Northern California politics and the “matriarch” of San Francisco’s Latino community, the Mission District, Margaret Cruz has worked, in some capacity, under every president from Truman to Clinton. In 1973 Margaret was the first woman elected president of the Mexican American Political Association. An organization started in 1960 with the likes of Bert Corona and Ed Roybal to get Hispanics elected to public office.

She served as a vice chair for the National Women’s Political Caucus’ Chicana Caucus and has 30 years of achievements in youth education, women’s equality, farm workers rights, immigration law and more. At 62, she became the oldest woman to graduate from Lincoln law school. Today, as a result of her personal battle with breast cancer, she founded and is the director for the Margaret Cruz Latina Breast Cancer Education Foundation.

Sadly Margaret lost her battle with cancer in February 2007. This documentary was created as a tribute to a life defined by love for family, God and fearless advocacy for her community.



Pauline Martinez

A San Antonio native, Pauline Martinez’s longstanding commitment to equal opportunity is reflected in her work. She began working for the federal government in the late ‘50s, first for the Department of Defense and later as an equal opportunity specialist for the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in San Antonio--ensuring compliance of

the Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Pauline also worked as secretary to the director of the 1968 Hemisfair Worlds Fair in San Antonio. From 1968 to 1972, she worked for the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, during which, she formed Working Women—a group of women working in the federal, state and local governments seeking equal opportunity in employment and lobbying for appointments to San Antonio's boards and commissions.

In 1979, Pauline moved to California and opened the first Equal Employment Opportunity Commission office in San Jose. Once there, she became involved in real estate. She operated her own realty company from 1993-2000 and is currently affiliated with Windermere Silicon Valley Properties.

Pauline was involved with several organizations. She served as Legislative Chair for the Texas Women's Political Caucus' and was responsible for the election of the first Latina to the Texas Legislature, Irma Rangel. She was a vice chairperson of the Chicana Caucus of the National Women's Political Caucus, and one of the founders of the first Hispanic Business and Professional Women's Club in San Antonio. She is a member of the National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals, Santa Clara Association of Realtors, Women's Council of Realtors and California Association of Realtors.

She graduated from Fox Tech High School, attended San Antonio Junior College and San Jose State University. She has been married for 47 years to Gilbert Martinez and has five children and 12 grandchildren.



Ruth "Rhea" Mojica-Hammer

As the Executive Director of Spanish Language Programming at a local TV station Ruth Mojica-Hammer was also the first Mexican American woman to run for legislative office in the state of Illinois. Although she didn't win, Rhea, who lived in Chicago at the time, went on to manage a successful campaign for the first Latina elected to public office in Illinois, County Commissioner Irene Hernandez. From 1973-75 she served as the first vice-chair of the National Women's Political Caucus. In 1976 President Carter appointed Rhea to the President's Commission for the IWY National Women's Conference held in Houston, 1977. The resolutions created at this historic gathering came to be known as "A Plan of Action for the Women of the United States" and were presented to President Carter in March of 1978.

About the Director



Linda Garcia Merchant

Born and raised on Chicago's West Side, Linda Garcia Merchant's experience growing up during the 1960s and 70s with a mother active in both the Feminist and Chicano movements was pivotal in shaping her views today. Influential activists that included many of her mother's friends surrounded her and, absorbing all the discussions on politics, history and world events and standing by her mother's side at protests or political conventions, she began to cultivate her own voice at quite a young age. She developed a strong conviction for activism and civic responsibility. And, having experienced some of the most exciting social and political events, Linda was inspired to capture on camera the Latino influence of those times.

In June 2006, Linda created Voces Primeras, LLC, a production company dedicated to creating and distributing documentary-style features of pioneering Latinas to the educational, political and retail markets. Her goal is to provide resources that expand the understanding of the 60s and 70s in our collective American history—research not available through traditional channels and in danger of becoming extinct because of the lack of documentation.

She is currently directing her first production, *Las Mujeres de la Caucus Chicana*, which recounts the turning points of six women who answered the call to action and came together at the 1977 National Women's Conference in Houston. These women helped shape national policy for women and worked for recognized organizations such as the Raza Unida Party, the Women's Action Program, the National Women's Political Caucus and International Women's Year National Women's Convention. The film is scheduled to be released in September of 2007.

While working on her directorial debut, Linda also works as a full-time IT/Marketing Specialist for a midsized insurance brokerage. She has been in the graphic and Web site design field 23 years during which she provided her design services for Chicago community organizations such as the Partnership to End Homelessness, Latino Council on the Media and Spanish Coalition for Jobs.

Linda received a Bachelor of Science, with honors, in advertising/design/photography at Western Illinois University. She was voted Volunteer of the Year by the Partnership to End Homelessness in 2005. She is a current member of the National Association of Latino Independent Producers, National Association of Latino Arts and Culture, Amigas Latinas, and National Women's Studies Association.

Production Crew

STEVEN LEMIEUX-JORDAN (Editor)

Member, Chicago/Midwest American Society of Media Photographers

Steve Lemieux-Jordan's artistry is as multifaceted as a life and career that has ranged from his homeland in England, through France, and on to the United States. From his formal British education to his hands-on apprenticeship in Chicago's largest commercial laboratories; from founding his own video production company to joint ownership of Evanston Photographic Studios – Steve's quest for excellence and cutting-edge technical expertise has been a hallmark of his entire life.

Though his British charm and rapier wit would seem to belie it, Steve claims he feels most at home when photographing inanimate objects. Whether he is hanging from a helicopter for a world-class architect's aerial shot, or up at dawn to capture the glories of a Lake Michigan sunrise, or in a friend's garden contemplating the intimate geometry at the heart of a single blossom – invariably his images invite the viewer into hitherto unperceived realms of light and shadow, reality and fantasy that his well-trained eye and gifted sensibilities have discovered.

Steve's work has graced the pages of publications ranging from Northshore magazine to The Illinois Tourism Guide. His loyal clientele includes Northwestern University, Weis Builders and Atkins Benham Construction, to name just a few.

Kathryn 'Katie' Haviland (Still Photographer, San Francisco, Austin)

Originally from Lakewood Ohio, Katie began her photographic training at Lakeland Community College in Mentor, Ohio and completed her bachelors at Columbia College in Chicago with a degree in photography.

She has spent time shooting abroad and has sold many images from her travels in numerous multi-artist shows. Katie has spent the last decade or so in many different aspects of graphic design and is currently an adjunct instructor of photography and design at the International Academy of Design & Technology, Chicago. In addition to teaching, Katie is pursuing a masters degree from Columbia College in Interdisciplinary Art.

Production Notes

FILM FORMAT: DVD

Director's Notes:

A wise woman once wrote to me that, 'history is ours to tell'. It is with this statement that I begin this correspondence regarding the purpose of Voces Primeras, LLC, and importance of the documentary work 'Las Mujeres De La Caucus Chicana'.

Las Mujeres De La Caucus Chicana

From a period beginning in 1971 and ending in the early 80s the six Chicana women featured in this film, with a variety of strengths, talents and experiences and coming from very different backgrounds came together as advocates for women.

It would be easy to romanticize this 'golden age' as a time of hope and determination, altruistic and benign in the production of its goal of equality for women. The Hollywood version of their story would include that kind of perspective, with these women as collective champions of this famous cause, marching off into the sunset of some future probable equality.

However, that wouldn't be their story. The story of a time that included Lupe Anguiano, Andrea Cano, Martha Cotera, Margaret Cruz, Pauline Martinez and Ruth 'Rhea' Mojica Hammer is certainly a story of persistence, challenge, success and disappointment. It is a story supported by facts and dates, names and places, events and programs developed by pioneering women as advocates for women.

Mostly it is a story that is best told by its owners, the women that lived through those times; that fought for those events and programs, that were the originators of those facts and dates and the challengers of those names and places. 'Las Mujeres De La Caucus Chicana' chooses to tell their story as they tell it.

The purpose of Voces Primeras, LLC

It is fortunate that each of these women has a wealth of materials, archived by forward thinking universities from which we can recreate the stories of their lives. Ephemera, writings, articles, photographs all help to reassemble those moments when history is made, when life does change for each of us in small and large ways. These resources serve a secondary function as well. They help to keep the producers of these kinds of documentaries objective and focused on the importance of the story.

The importance of documenting these stories can be seen in the availability of this kind of material, in this medium. As Latinos we are growing in number and in many ways in culture-consciousness. As we raise our young Latino children to be members of the larger society it is equally important to school our children in a cultural awareness. That proud awareness is a necessary part of the brickwork that is the foundation of culturalism and then of nationalism. While there are a few commercially successful stories about famous Latinos, the large number of stories about us, remain untold.

The goal of Voces Primeras, LLC is to create and distribute documentary style features of pioneering Latinas to the educational, political and retail markets. In order to create these films, the resource of women and their archives have to be available. It is a secondary goal of this company to encourage the archiving of these womens' writings, ephemera, articles and photographs at colleges and universities.

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