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## Creating Consciousness, Creating a Legend: A Conversation with Virginia Espino, Historian and Producer of *No Más Bebés* (2015)

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# Creating Consciousness, Creating a Legend: A Conversation with Virginia Espino, Historian and Producer of *No Más Bebés* (2015)

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Virginia Espino

“Inside I feel pain, remembering,” says Carolina “Maria” Hurtado, in Spanish. Consuelo Hermosillo echoes her in English, “It’s like when you bury somebody, you’re always going to carry it in your head.” Whether they speak in Spanish or English, the pain and anger felt by these Mexicanas, who were coercively sterilized in the Los Angeles County–University of Southern California Medical Center in the late 1960s and early 1970s, is palpable. While traumatized, they were not, however, silenced by their pain and spoke up with courage against this injustice as part of a group of ten plaintiffs in the 1978 *Madrigal v. Quilligan* case, a federal class-action lawsuit filed against E. J. Quilligan, MD, and other hospital obstetricians. The voices of Dolores Madrigal, the lead plaintiff, and other Latina women who participated in the lawsuit are at the center of a recent documentary, *No Más Bebés* (*No More Babies*) (2015) by Virginia Espino and Renee Tajima-Peña. Told in a moving manner, interspersed with interviews and a variety of archival material, the documentary shows these women’s little-known story

that resonates with intersectionality across issues—of gender, race, immigration, class, and reproductive choice—of enduring and urgent relevance.

Espino and Tajima-Peña have been friends for more than a decade; their mutual interests and their children coincidentally brought them together. Espino, who calls herself a “daughter of California,” grew up in her hometown of Los Angeles. She is a historian by training (taught by Vicki L. Ruiz) and earned her PhD in American History from Arizona State University, where she specialized in Latina and Latino history, as well as public history. From 2008 until recently, she worked as an oral historian for the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Center for Oral History Research. She is now dedicated full time to Moon Canyon Films, the company she and Tajima-Peña created to coproduce *No Más Bebés*. While *No Más Bebés* is Espino’s first film, Tajima-Peña has been making films since the 1980s. A professor, writer, filmmaker, and Asian American activist, Tajima-Peña’s corpus revolves around issues of race, immigration, injustice, and the legal system. Currently a professor at UCLA, Tajima-Peña is an Academy Award-winning filmmaker and a Guggenheim Fellow (2011) who, in addition to her best-known work, *Who Killed Vincent*

*Chin?* (1987), has made many other films, among them *Calavera Highway* (2008), *Skate Manzanar* (2001), *Labor Women* (2002), and *My America... Or Honk If You Love Buddha* (1997). She is currently at work on an interactive historical documentary and video-game-based learning project on the World War II incarceration of Japanese Americans, *Building History 3.0*.

At the fortieth anniversary of the filing of the *Madrigal v. Quilligan* court case, Tajima-Peña and Espino reassemble and reconstruct the story to remind viewers of a tragic, shocking, and buried episode in our nation's past and history. The film interviews both the women who were sterilized under duress and the doctors who worked in the hospital. It also focuses on another central figure, one of the attorneys who represented these women, Antonia Hernández, then a recent graduate of the UCLA law school; she, along with Anna Nieto Gomez, another member of the Chicana feminist organization *Comisión Femenil Mexicana Nacional*, offered legal assistance to the women.<sup>1</sup> In the trial, they argued that under *Roe v. Wade* (1973) a woman's right to bear a child was constitutionally protected just as much as her right to abortion. As the film's director writes, the documentary "attempts to navigate the gulf between accountability, as it is legally defined, and justice—the muddy waters through which policy, gender, race, and ethics travel from the public sphere to the maternity floor and which structure an intimate moment of a woman's life: birth" (Tajima-Peña 2013).

The documentary situates this episode within a broad historical and social milieu, and illuminates how the contexts of Chicano nationalism and white mainstream feminism came to bear on the events. It also directs our attention to how reproduction was racialized by the eugenics and anti-immigration movements in California. It is not surprising, then, to see how, within this environment, the federal government sponsored and supported population-control measures and how family planning programs were abused, leaving racial minority, immigrant, and poor white women most vulnerable. Thus, while the film focuses on Latina women, their story echoes the experiences of Puerto Rican, African American, and Native American women who have all been subjected to sterilization abuse.

Emotionally powerful and aesthetically savvy, the documentary tells a story of the politics of reproductive control, of reproductive rights and justice, of tragedy and survival. It is a salute to the courage of the "Madrigal 10": Guadalupe Acosta, Estella Benavides, Maria Figueroa, Rebecca Figueroa, Maria Hurtado, Consuelo Hermosillo, Georgina Hernandez, Dolores Madrigal, Helena Orozco, and Jovita Rivera.

In the following interview, Virginia Espino, historian and producer of the film, speaks about her research on this marginalized episode in history, the challenges and rewards of collaboration, intersectionality, and the story's importance for Chicana history and reproductive justice.

### **Hidden Histories and the Making of a Film**

**Anupama Arora, Laura Muñoz, and Sandrine Sanos (JFS):** We wanted for you to talk a little bit about how you came to the topic of your film, why it became so important, and if there were any difficulties when you were doing the writing, and during the filming as well.

**Virginia Espino (VE):** I learned about this history through Dr. Vicki Ruiz in one of her courses; she was my graduate school mentor, and one of the things she tries to do in her classes is to bring out these histories, these unknown histories, these untold histories, these histories that have been what she calls "hidden in the shadows." She tries to bring them out of obscurity, so in her lectures she talks about things that generally haven't been discussed.

At that time, in the mid 1990s, it was primarily Chicano historiography. There weren't a lot of books written about Chicana feminism. Maylei Blackwell's *iChicana Power!* only came out in 2013.<sup>2</sup> Vicki mentioned the

history [of sterilization] in a class, and she mentioned it from the perspective of the activism, the fact that there was a lawsuit. She didn't talk about it in terms of racism only, but how these women fought back during the Chicano movement, these Chicana activists. I [wound up] in the neighborhood I grew up in, very close to my home, like ten minutes away. But not only that, it was part of my whole surroundings because of the county hospital towers. I don't know if you've been to Los Angeles, but if you've ever driven on the 5 freeway or the 10 freeway, you see the hospital looming large across that part of LA. If you stay primarily on the West Side, you're never going to see it. So it was like a fixture, in my childhood and my youth, and to hear that these sterilizations were taking place at the time when I was growing up, in the 1970s, and I never learned about it, never heard about it, never read about it, I was shocked. I was angry.

But at the same time, that is why I was in graduate school and I wanted to do my PhD in history, to learn about these stories, to uncover these stories. So I made it my project, to write my first paper. I think I wrote my very first paper on this issue and Vicki published that later on in *Las Obreras* journal through UCLA (Espino 2002). So it started there, and became a bigger project with my dissertation. I wanted to tie it into questions and issues of population control. [I looked at] Thomas Malthus and the principle of overpopulation [that] started with him. Some of the ideas that he talks about in regards to Europe and the peasant class, you could see some parallels in the discussions of overpopulation in the 1970s, and some of the ideas that Paul Ehrlich talks about go back to Malthus and Malthusianism; so that's what I looked at in my dissertation.<sup>3</sup> But Vicki is very much interested in how we can write history for the public good, such as public history, museum studies, etc. When we started, she was teaching out of Claremont Graduate School. And that's where I first learned about the history of sterilization abuse in LA. But she took a position at Arizona State University, and I followed her out there. So, that year that I was there at Arizona, I got a full potpourri of the different ways history can be used, because they have a pretty strong public history program there: oral history, museum studies, museum collecting. She encouraged me to apply to a fantastic summer internship where you can apply your historical knowledge to a larger, broader audience.

Documentary film wasn't part of my education, but I knew it was a good way to bring history alive; and just by coincidence, around the time that I was working on my dissertation, I met Renee [Tajima-Peña]. We have a mutual friend here in Los Angeles who thought we would be great friends because of our similar interests and also the fact that we both had kids that were about a year old at the time. She was a new mom; and I had my second child. We would have play dates and talk about our work and our research, and ideas about how we wanted to apply the information we were gathering. I think she was working on a project called *The New Americans* for PBS.<sup>4</sup> She thought this would make an amazing film, to document this history of sterilization abuse—especially because we're both from Los Angeles, both women of color, and we were both new moms. And it was something we both found so outrageous and so appalling. Also, the idea of allowing people to tell their own stories, that's very important to both of us. Instead of me theorizing about how they could feel based on newspapers and court records, I really wanted to hear their own words. I wasn't able to find them when I was writing my dissertation, but we really knew we had to do [this] for the film, to find the plaintiffs and get them, hopefully, to talk to us.

**JFS:** And how difficult was it to find them and convince them to speak on camera, which is a whole different dimension? And to have them revisit the story as well?

**VE:** Well, it's not something that you would do for a book or a dissertation; you would not go to a private investigator and pay them to find people. People would consider that unethical and just crossing the line as far as what you do for your research! But for a documentary film, you have a different set of ethics. The other strange coincidence is that Renee and I both have a mutual friend who is a private investigator; her name

is Angelica Garza and usually she works with lawyers, in trying to find information for the defendants and lawyers. And she found a couple of the people. She found Dolores Madrigal first. My husband is a journalist; he was a journalist for the *Los Angeles Times* for many years. And he wasn't able to find any of the women just by their name and by their birthdate through his databases; that's when we decided to take it to the next level.

Although, I should add, before we decided to consult a private investigator, I had some information about Dolores Madrigal, who was the lead plaintiff in the case. I was able to find her previous residence, and I was able to find people who knew her and they gave me a trail, where she might have gone after she left that residence. They gave me a trail of the churches she attended and some of the places where she lived. So we were able to find people who knew her, but she had left the state. And that's when we decided to consult the next level of researcher, that is, a private investigator. And that's when we found her.

**JFS:** Was the PI collaborating with you, working for free, doing this pro bono? Did the investigator have a feminist investment in this?

**VE:** The thing is that when you're an intellectual woman of color, interested in these kinds of stories, you have a small community of people. And so we all kind of know each other. Angelica was actually somebody we would hang out together with, we would end up at the same political events, we shared the same political views, and I think she calls herself a feminist. But we weren't necessarily just focusing on women's issues, because we have an intersectional approach in how we address our politics. I think I met her at a labor strike, I can't remember, but she's definitely a politically minded person and was on board right away to help us find these women.

Also, whenever Renee could pay somebody, she would. She got a grant through the California Council for the Humanities, so that was our seed money. It's a wonderful program in California that allows for these kinds of storytelling. After that, we won a grant through Independent Television Service (ITVS) and PBS to continue the project. So everybody that we deal with is usually somebody who is sympathetic to the issues that are being addressed and has a strong sense of social justice and purpose. The next person that we contacted to help us find people, her name is Clara Solis. She's a mom where my kids went to school, and that's how I met her. She's also a PI and she's very good friends with Angelica. She's also part of the same community: she worked for UFW [United Farm Workers], worked for political campaigns here in Los Angeles.<sup>5</sup> We all kind of knew each other somehow. Six degrees of separation! I think that everybody feels so strongly when you grow up in LA—Angelica is from LA, Clara's from LA, I'm from LA, Renee's from LA—that our histories never get told on that broad, big scale of a PBS broadcast. Usually, it's not even mentioned in certain circles—unless it's the Brown Berets, that's a narrative you get to hear a lot about, but not reproductive justice and how we were involved in that struggle.<sup>6</sup>

**JFS:** Would you say that you see your work as contributing to building an archive of women of color?

**VE:** Absolutely. We donated some of our records so far to the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center.<sup>7</sup> The CSRC has one of two archives on sterilization in Los Angeles and their focus is on what the professor Carlos Vélez-Ibáñez donated.<sup>8</sup> He was the doctor and anthropologist who testified on behalf of the plaintiffs. He donated all of his records to the CSRC, and we complemented that with our records; and we hope to have a digital archive with all of these items that we collected. Many of the interviews didn't make it into the film, and we hope to make them available as well. So a component of the documentary film project is that we hope to have a digital archive of the resources, so the researchers can move the research forward and find new information, ask new questions, take it to different angles, maybe from the legal angle, from the medical perspective. I think there's a lot of ways you can look at this issue and further the research.

## Speaking to the Plaintiffs, Women Speaking

**JFS:** And was it difficult once you found the women and met them, to convince them to speak?

**VE:** It was hard. At first, they were willing and then they got cold feet. Well, not all of them. Certainly Dolores Madrigal: She got cold feet after we planned our trip to go out to see her, and we were able to continue with our plan, and our trip, and our interview because her son was a very strong advocate for participating. He did not know she had been involved in this lawsuit and he thought it would be a good idea for her to talk to us. So it was really because of him that we were allowed to follow through with the interview. This [was] before I actually met her.

When I met her, the bond was instantaneous because she reminded me of someone I knew in my family, like an aunt or a grandma—and also, someone who had so much knowledge that isn't quantifiable. She doesn't have a degree, but she had all of this healing knowledge, all this folk wisdom, and so it was a beautiful meeting. And I'm still very close with her. She calls me regularly, she tells me to pray for her, she says she's praying for me because I have my own problems [laughter], and that's I think another thing that made it easy for her to open up to me because my life is not perfect. I was very honest about my own struggles in my life, about raising my kids, and even though I have an education, and I have more economic privilege, you don't get off scot-free. So we share things about our own struggle: being moms, being daughters—well, she hasn't been a daughter for a while—but my mother had cancer, and Dolores Madrigal was somebody that I would go to because she was so connected to the Catholic Church and my mom's very Catholic. So she helped me a lot through that, ironically enough.

But she didn't want to interview again. We just brought up the painful memories, and she wasn't comfortable having them come to the surface. She wanted to keep [them] repressed. She hasn't seen any of the screenings. She's not interested in actually seeing, viewing the film. There was a moment when she said, "Well, maybe..." and then she said, "No I can't, I don't want to go back there, I want to leave that in the past," in the closet, so to speak. So she was hard to convince, but we were able to convince her, but then she did not want to keep participating. And there was one woman who said, "I don't even want to go back there. Please don't come back here. That's not something I want to recall. I appreciate what you're doing, but I don't want to be a part of it." Some we could not even find, no matter what the PIs were able to dig up. We couldn't locate them.

And then you have people like Carolina Hurtado. Mrs. Hurtado, who plays a big part in the film, who was just so open, who had a completely different perspective. Probably because her husband was so supportive. A powerful daughter and a husband to take her lead, insofar as to what did *she* want to do, how did *she* want to handle it. So that was a very different kind of film experience, where she would let us come back every day if we wanted to. She tries to come to all of the different screenings. The problem is she lives in San Diego, and a lot of the screenings are up here in Los Angeles, so it's hard to get her up here. But they're really enjoying the whole ride. It's painful, it's a painful history, but she feels like she's been elevated to this level of respect that she didn't have before. This anonymous person who participated in this great important legal battle is not anonymous anymore, and she likes that celebrity and that fame.

**JFS:** That makes sense, because, in some way, it's a way of recreating a different form of community, years after this particular project. Do you think the women you interviewed see this as contributing to Chicano history in the same way as you do?

**VE:** Probably, once they've actually gone to some of the college screenings, because they can witness it; they can witness the student population who is in the audience and [who are] mostly Latinos. I don't know if they're Chicanos or Chicanas, but they're certainly Latinos and Latinas. So they can see that they're

educating a whole new generation about this history, and how these students are embracing this history, how professors at UC Santa Barbara, professors at California State Fullerton, professors within all these universities within the California system are filling up their auditoriums, can hear them speak and can hear their stories on the screen. So I haven't asked them that question, but I think it would be hard not to see your impact when you've got 500 kids in the audience who are captivated by what you have to say. It's pretty incredible.

And then, they ask them to take pictures with them. It's like Beyoncé! They're celebrities but not because of their dancing, their singing, but because of the role they played in this important legal battle. It's pretty awesome to witness that and to experience that. I told my mom today that I made history. I made historical figures. In the sense [that] I didn't create this narrative but, through this film process, we created these legends who are going to be part of the historiography of not just Chicano/a history but also women's studies, ethnic studies. They're going to be central figures for the next... maybe forever, part of the canon. They are part of this canon, and their stories of who they are and how they each understood it. Some people identify with Dolores Madrigal and they cry. They're so upset after the screening, they're like, "I can't believe she had to go through this horrible thing and then be abused at home." And then other people identify with Mrs. Hurtado: "Oh, she's so funny, she's so lovely, it was so wonderful to get to know her, to meet her. What a strong woman. We're fighters, we fight back." So the audience members have these different women to look to, to understand their own experiences, and possibly their own pains, or their own struggles.

### **Feminism, Race, Class, and Reproductive Justice**

**JFS:** It's fascinating to hear you talk about this reception. One of the things that was striking to us (some of us not knowing that history) was how the film touches on feminism, civil rights, immigration, reproductive justice, the stories of those who are invisible. And the story of these women in LA in the 1960s and 1970s reminded us of what we know about African American women in the early twentieth century. So there's actually a longer history of these forced sterilizations, which shows us how reproductive justice is always racialized and is always a political issue. We were wondering whether you had any thoughts on whether the plaintiffs, at the time, conceived of it in those terms. Because there's a clash between the Chicano movement, which was male-dominated, and white mainstream feminism, which didn't have a place for these women; and how we could think about reproductive justice now, especially in this moment when it is under attack.

**VE:** Those words weren't being used back then, not even by the Chicana activists. I think African American activists or Chicana activists were not talking about reproductive justice. That came later, with their own understanding and interpretation of their role. You can hear the women in the film talking about "well, that's my own personal right," so internally, they have this notion of bodily autonomy, of my own right to determine if I want to have twenty kids, if I want to have any kids. They understood that. But they did not have that term, reproductive justice. We're not really sure how they feel about issues like abortion. Because some of them are very religious. We never talked about that whole idea—how they understood reproductive justice, as far as the ability to receive a safe and legal abortion. But they certainly understand what it means to raise your kid in a free and healthy environment, with a quality education. They were all interested in their kids' education, in their kids' role in school and healthcare. You know this was something that changed the way they viewed the healthcare system. All those things that are part of reproductive justice [and] are part of their everyday lives. Later on, terms such as intersectionality and reproductive justice would help make sense of this period, but they themselves didn't use that kind of language.

They didn't talk about feminism, although you can see how Mrs. Hurtado was a strong powerful woman who advocated for her right to sexuality. She talks about the difference between "mansa" and "mensa": that's to me a way of looking at women's power.<sup>9</sup> I'd never even heard these terms. I was the one who did the interviews and I probably didn't understand what she meant at the time. In terms of understanding women's behavior, it was really interesting [that] she articulated it that way. I think Consuelo Eduncio says about her granddaughter [that] she wants her to have liberty and to decide for herself if she wants to have kids, if she wants to get married, if she doesn't want to get married. What if she wants to go to college? Those kinds of things are definitely part of their ideological thinking. Whenever I bring any of the plaintiffs to a screening, they always say, "We're here because we don't want this history to repeat" and "When you go to a doctor, don't go alone, make sure you go with somebody." So they always have advice for students in the audience.

**JFS:** There's a way in which this history shows the limits of feminist coalitions and, speaking about intersectionality, [exposes] the very issues on which, in the 1970s, those that talked about reproductive justice would not find common ground. That's why the story is powerful because it speaks to the possibilities and limits of feminist coalitions.

**VE:** I think that, for me, personally, as a historian, the white feminist movement needed to grow up a bit, as far as their politics. They needed to be educated just as we, I, needed to be educated on what reproductive justice really means to those who are in that fight. To think of including teen moms, teen parents, into that discourse just wasn't something I had considered. And when I was educated on that, it just opened my eyes on how we throw away teen pregnant girls; they're tossed-away people because, in our view, they've ruined their life. You know, they're not married, they're sixteen, and they're pregnant. Instead of finding ways to help them finish school, finding ways to help them raise their kids in a healthy environment free of violence, we just toss them aside like trash or like damaged goods, so to speak. I was really interested in what other people were saying, in what the other experiences were in relation to African American and Chicana experience. Just like today, we always need to have the white majority be willing to listen to what is *our* perspective, what is *our* viewpoint. That was the case then. There were some who did understand, but they were primarily from more of the leftist organizations, more of the socialist feminist groups who were looking at the intersectionality of race, class, and gender. And that's how they interpreted these abuses. So they weren't strictly feminists, so to speak. They had a class analysis that allowed them to be more accepting of this 72-hour wait period that the white feminists from the mainstream did not want to sign off on.

### **The Afterlives of *No Más Bebés*, the Meanings of Collaboration**

**JFS:** Do you see your film in light of what you just said, of also reminding people of the need to think about that, because the issue of restrictions to reproductive health is a big debate topic right now? It's happening in Texas and elsewhere in the United States. Do you see your film as contributing to hopefully more effective mobilization on the part of feminists, with that intersectional frame? Was that on your mind when you made the film or since then?

**VE:** We definitely wanted the film to be a tool for social justice advocates, for reproductive justice advocates, and how they use that is really dependent on the community that they're in. So, we are working very closely with the California Latinas for Reproductive Justice, and they're being asked now to screen the film, and host screenings and host discussions, because they're able to frame it within that reproductive justice dialogue that Renee and I aren't really immersed in. We are definitely advocates of it. We try to encourage



discussion of it, but we're not on the ground in the grassroots like some of these other organizations. And so, we're so happy when people from those movements want to screen our film and want to host a discussion.

Last night, I Skyped in an interview with some folks in Pennsylvania, reproductive justice advocates. They have a "herstory" celebration in February where they have different film screenings that focus on women of color and their roles in history. So for instance, [consider] the fact that this film is being shown in Pittsburgh, where I don't think there were any Latinos or Latinas in the audience or not very many; the organizer told me that it's always a black/white narrative. It's because of the geographies of where we are. So it's wonderful to be able to have this conversation with other groups.

I think that our film is doing work that we only are beginning to understand. We don't really have a strong sense of how it's being used in different settings. But the fact [is] that we have people at the grassroots or just basic community organizers, and then we have people at these prominent universities, Yale, Brown, and so on. It's pretty exciting that we have created a product that is of interest to this wide spectrum of people. It's just so rewarding.

**JFS:** Yes, it really is. It resonates because it's such a moving film. It's moving, it's political, it's a real story. It's all of that at the same time.

**VE:** Yes, I have to give credit to Renee. Renee really had the vision of just the visual elements. You know, like the idea of Mrs. Hurtado pulling out her wedding dress, or Mr. and Mrs. Hurtado dancing, or Mr. Hurtado singing. You know, it's like all of these little elements that would really get a window into who they were as people.

**JFS:** And that's the distinctive feature of your film, the collaboration between you and Renee, but also your friends you were talking about who were PIs. There's always been a strong tradition of collaboration in feminism. Could you say more about that, and how that really shaped the process and the film itself?

**VE:** I think it definitely means being an advocate for people of color in film, and I'm certainly interested in making sure that if someone is going to get a gig, that they are at least a person of color. In this case, with this film, it was important that they were Spanish-speaking and hopefully Latina, and if not, at least they should be Spanish-speaking because the women were Spanish-speaking, and I wanted to make sure that they felt comfortable with a room full of individuals who are basically strangers. Also, when you are thinking about "miking" a person, you really have to go through their clothes, and I wanted to make sure that whoever was going to do that was going to have a vibe that the women would be comfortable with. So, making sure that there were people of color on the crew was a big priority for me.

I don't know if you were following our Twitter memes that we started posting around the time of the broadcasts. We [Renee and I] got some young Latino graphic artists, undergraduates (we are meeting a lot of undergraduates on our tour). I asked them, "What was this like for you, what was this process, what did it mean to you?" And one of them said, "I never imagined that I could use my creative talent for social justice or to create consciousness."

I told Renee, "We're creating this whole world through this film of people who are understanding an ideology differently, even down to the graphic artists." I just thought that was really cool. And those memes are amazing! They're very strong. They're very powerful in their own right. I think, in some regards, they're feminist, they're activist, and they celebrate our community, our culture, and the role that everybody played in this documentary, including Dr. Rosenfeld.<sup>10</sup>

**JFS:** What has it meant for you as an academic to do the documentary as opposed to a book monograph?

**VE:** Well, I when I finished my dissertation, I had children. I had three kids, eleven and under, so I was not going to write. It was just going to be too difficult to carve out that time. I came back from living abroad

with my family. Renee and I began to work on the documentary right away, but I also had a full-time job. Trying to balance between the full-time job, kids, and the documentary, it just would have been impossible to write, and especially because I am just a queen of procrastination when it comes to writing. I felt that once the documentary was done, I would get back to the writing, and I still might because there is so much that is not in the film that I learned through this process. I think that the monograph is very important. It also lives a long time and becomes part of the canon, but I'm fairly certain that there are people who are seeing this story in film form that would have never picked up a book, would have never come across it. So that's rewarding in and of itself. With this documentary, what I get as far as making an impact socially is very rewarding.

**JFS:** So how transformative has this moment been for you?

**VE:** It's not. For me, it's more of an honor; it's more rewarding; it's just this feeling of incredible satisfaction when you do things that help other people. I can't even explain how good that feels. If I die tomorrow, I have really made a big impact, and I've given back to all the people who have made Chicana and Chicano history, to all the people who challenged racism so that I didn't have to experience that same kind of racism as an adult. I definitely was there during the heyday of the hate of Mexicans in the 1970s, but to see people fight back gave me back my culture in a sense.

Because when I was growing up, my parents didn't speak to me and my sisters in Spanish, and they were very much into us assimilating because they had experienced so much racism [that] they didn't want us to have to jump those same kinds of hurdles. So, no Spanish. They moved us into a neighborhood that was mostly Anglo, and so I felt like I was stripped from all of that richness of my culture, and to get it back because of the Chicano movement was... that was transformative. I feel I'm giving back to that same movement of celebrating our culture, of celebrating who we are, honoring our stories, honoring our differences, our uniqueness, and to watch other people have a transformative experience is very rewarding. I wouldn't change anything. If I never write the book, I'll be happy with this project!

## Notes

1. Both Antonia Hernández and Anna NietoGomez are major figures in the Chicano movement. Hernández earned her JD at the UCLA School of Law in 1974. From 1985 to 2004, she was the president and general counsel of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), a national nonprofit litigation and advocacy organization dedicated to protecting the civil rights of the nation's Latinos through the legal system, community education, and research and policy initiatives. She is currently the president and CEO of the California Community Foundation.

NietoGomez is one of the central figures in Chicana feminism and labor activism. In 1968, she cofounded the Chicana student group Las Hijas de Cuauhtémoc (The Daughters of Cuauhtémoc, the Aztec emperor) at California State University, Long Beach. Las Hijas is considered one of the earliest Chicana feminist organizations in the nation; it published two critical outlets that defined and shaped Chicana feminism, the short-lived newspaper *Las Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*, and the journal *Encuentro Femenil*. Las Hijas formed originally within the nationalist organizations of United Mexican American Students (UMAS) and its later iteration, still known as the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MECHA). The male leadership of UMAS and MECHA perceived women as secondary in the movement; Las Hijas responded with demands for accountability and a political education campaign that challenged the discrimination and sexism they experienced in the movement. For a full history of Las Hijas, see Blackwell 2013.

2. Maylei Blackwell's *iChicana Power! Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement*, published in 2013 by the University of Texas Press, was the first monograph on Chicanas in the Chicano movement published in the United States.

3. Espino refers here to Paul R. Ehrlich's book *The Population Bomb* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1969).

4. The documentary mentioned by Espino, an episode in the PBS series *The New Americans*, was *The Mexican Laborer*, directed and produced by Renee Tajima-Peña and produced by Evangeline Griego.

5. The United Farm Workers (UFW) is a labor union that represents agriculture and farm laborers in the United States. Because of its mostly Filipino and Mexican-origin membership, who united under the UFW banner in 1966, and its political leaders including Larry Itliong, Cesar Chavez, and Dolores Huerta, the UFW is associated with the emergence of the Chicano movement. See Matthew Garcia, *From the Jaws of Victory: The Triumph and Tragedy of Cesar Chavez and the Farm Worker Movement* (University of California Press, 2014) and Mario T. García, ed., *A Dolores Huerta Reader* (University of New Mexico Press, 2008).

6. The Brown Berets (so named because of the brown berets they wore, with the color referencing people of Mexican and indigenous descent) are a militant Chicano nationalist organization that grew out of a Los Angeles-based student organization called the Young Citizens for Community Action. Its members were closely associated with the Los Angeles high school walkouts in 1968 and charged themselves with providing protection for participants at Chicano movement's political events. Because of their stances on self-defense and police brutality, the Brown Berets were subject to state and federal police infiltration, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Counterintelligence Program (COINTELPRO).

7. "Virgina Espino and Renee Tajima-Peña Collection of Sterilization Records" at the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Library.

8. "Carlos G. Vélez-Ibáñez Sterilization Papers ca. 1972-1979" at the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Library. See also Vélez-Ibáñez 1980, 239-40.

9. "Mansa" in Spanish means meek or tame, while "mensa" means stupid or foolish.

10. Dr. Bernard Rosenfeld, who at the time of the lawsuit was a medical student in residence at the Los Angeles County-USC Medical Center, shared the confidential hospital records with the plaintiffs' attorney Hernández.

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