The National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies (NACCS) was established in 1972 under its original name, the National Caucus of Chicano Social Scientists. The organization held its first meeting in November 1973 at the University of California at Irvine. The members present voted to change the organization’s name to the National Association of Chicano Social Scientists (NACSS), and during the third national conference, held in 1976, the membership renamed the organization the National Association for Chicano Studies (NACS). The most recent name change took place in 1995 at the national conference held in Spokane, Washington. The membership voted unanimously to change the name to the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies (NACCS).

The preamble of NACCS outlines its vision of Chicana/o Studies, stressing its advocacy role in combining academic scholarship with political activism within Chicana/o communities. The organization further envisions the discipline of Chicana and Chicano Studies as developing an ongoing critique of what it calls “mainstream academic research [that is] based on an integrationist perspective emphasizing consensus, assimilation and the legitimacy of society’s institutions.” NACCS calls for its members to engage in academic scholarship and political involvement that examine and challenge the inequities and constraints of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation in U.S. society. The organization further calls for its members to develop new theories, paradigms, and frameworks for academic research that will provide a holistic, interconnected approach to systems of exploitation and domination and subordination. Relying on members to establish links between universities and communities, NACCS adheres to a core belief that “ideas must be translated into political action in order to foster change.”

As part of its mission statement and bylaws, NACCS outlines six specific goals. First, NACCS strives to establish communication among scholars, students, and community activists. Second, it seeks to promote and assist the development of Chicana/o Studies university centers, programs, and departments. Third, NACCS works in recruiting and retaining students in the educational system. Fourth, NACCS also focuses on reforming the educational curriculum on Chicana/o Studies and integrating it into all levels of education. Fifth, NACCS develops mentorship programs for Chicana/o undergraduate and graduate students. Last, NACCS mentors university faculty to promote their recruitment and retention.

The organizational structure of NACCS is based upon its general members, who vote for policies at its annual conference held at designated locations throughout the United States and occasionally in Mexico. Membership is divided into regional areas called Focos. Members vote for their regional representatives at the national conference. These representatives constitute the organization’s Coordinating Committee, which elects national officers such as general coordinator, treasurer, and secretary. In addition to the regional areas, NACCS has a variety of specialized caucuses: Student, Chicana, lesbian, “joto” (gay), community, K–12, and graduate student. A national office coordinates the organization’s activities.

NACCS spans more than thirty years, during which many watershed events took place in Latina/o history. Many members have lived through and participated in the United Farm Workers struggles, the Chicana/o student movement, labor union strikes, and the anti-Vietnam War movement, as well as protests against U.S. involvement in such places as El Salvador and Nicaragua. Not only have NACCS members engaged in research related to these historical events, but many have been active participants and, in some cases, leaders. For example, many NACCS members were formerly student leaders who organized the high-school and university boycotts and protests of the 1960s and 1970s.

NACCS women were at the forefront of the Chicana feminist movement and brought the issue of sexism to the center of discussion within the organization. As early as the 1960s Chicanas voiced their concerns as feminists within diverse Chicano organizations. The
actual confrontation with NACCS came in the early 1980s when a small but growing number of Chicana undergraduate and graduate students began to join women of longer standing as members of NACCS. Chicanas brought the discussion of male dominance and sexism within the organization to both regional and national conferences, and these discussions led to tense political debates and personal attacks. Chicanas within NACCS were accused of being divisive and a threat to the organization. Lesbian baiting further complicated the attempts by Chicanas to address sexism within NACCS. During the 1983 national conference held in Ypsilanti, Michigan, a group of Chicanas met informally and formed the Chicana Caucus. They drafted a letter to the National Coordinating Committee that was planning the 1984 national conference to be held in Austin, Texas. The Chicana Caucus called for the conference theme to be changed to “Voces de la Mujer” (Voices of Women). Eventually their demands were met, and for the first time in the history of NACCS its annual meeting focused on women. The papers presented at the plenary session were published in a groundbreaking volume, *Chicana Voices: Intersections of Class, Race, and Gender*. After the watershed 1984 conference, women became very visible in the national leadership, and Alma García was chosen the first Chicana national coordinator.

The National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies has played a significant role in Chicana/o history as an agent both of scholarship and of political activism. Its members have produced some of the most important research in the discipline, and its mentorship of young undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty has contributed greatly to the development of a diverse and more equitable educational system. NACCS continues to work toward its original mission of analyzing the dynamics of social inequality and promoting political activism to address issues critical to Chicanas and Chicano communities.


**Alma M. García**

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**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PUERTO RICAN / HISPANIC SOCIAL WORKERS (NAPRHSW) (1983– )**

A nonprofit, nonpartisan association located in Brentwood, New York, the National Association of Puerto Rican / Hispanic Social Workers (NAPRHSW) advocates for the professional and paraprofessional Latino/a social worker and provides resources and services within the Latino community. In the formation of a local branch of the New York City-based NAPRHSW in 1983, the chapter’s first president, José Fernández, CSW, recalls that there was a “strong need for bringing to Long Island a group that could serve as a conduit for inquiry, fact finding, and advocacy.” Gaspar Santiago, the president of the New York City organization, along with a group of Professor Luis Campos’s Latino/a graduate students from the School of Social Welfare at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, joined forces with other social work students and human service professionals from the area to form and run the chapter. Opening ceremonies were held in the Brentwood Public Library on May 16, 1983. In 1985 in response to the growing needs of the rapidly increasing Latino population on Long Island, the chapter seceded from the New York City group, incorporating as a separate national entity on April 14, 1993. In November 2004 the New York chapter resumed activities under the national office in Brentwood, Long Island.

Members of the newly formed association met in members’ homes, public libraries, and their respective workplace agencies to discuss community and professional issues and to formulate responsive actions. One of the earliest battles the group confronted was the fight to increase the number of bilingual-bicultural professionals who were capable of directly assessing and addressing client needs in Suffolk County. The struggle to establish lines for Spanish-speaking social workers, caseworkers, and other social service positions, then and now, is based on the principle of maintaining client confidentiality. This right is breached whenever an agency is forced to relay on a third person’s interpretation.

The organization’s current priorities include expanding outreach and recruitment efforts to Latino/a mid- and high-school-age students. In line with attracting bilingual recruits into the profession, the association is also looking to revive “La Visión,” the youth conferences it cosponsored over the years with various county agencies. Other issues that have been identified as high-need areas include increasing services to Long Island’s expanding immigrant populations, offering cultural-sensitivity training through community institutions, that is, churches, schools, and agencies, and addressing matters that concern the undocumented.

Political education and participation are essential tenets of NAPRHSW’s philosophy, and the board encourages its members to actively participate in struggles important to the community it serves, including engagement in research and policy making. Since its
National Chicana Conference

inception more than twenty years ago, the organization has formed strong coalitions with national agencies, such as the National Association of Social Workers, and local groups. Working with the Long Island Coalition for English Plus, it helped repeatedly defeat the English-only legislation proposed in Suffolk County in 1989, 1996, and 1998. Supporting upward mobility, the association boasts of members’ exemplary dedication to the community, their successes, and their affiliations. Among the admirable are Sonia Palacio-Grotolla, founding member and past president; María Cuadra, executive director of COPAY (a drug rehab and counseling center); Sylvia Díaz, chief deputy commissioner of the Suffolk County Department of Social Services; Irene Lapidez, former commissioner of the Nassau County Department of Social Services; Yvonne Peña, executive director of the Suffolk County Human Rights Commission; Lynda Perdomo-Ayala, department administrator of the Department of Pharmological Sciences at the State University of New York at Stony Brook; and Pauline Velázquez, chair of the Nassau-Suffolk Hispanic Task Force. Members of NAPRHSW have also been appointed by the former county executive, Patrick Halpin, to sit on the Suffolk County Hispanic Advisory Board since its first incarnation in 1988.

Advocating for increased visibility and recognition of Latinos/as in the social and human service fields, the association provides its membership with a strong network of support. In addition to guest speakers at bi-monthly meetings, culturally relevant and timely in-service workshops are regularly offered, recent topics include working with immigrants and issues of separation, and the assessment and treatment of traumatic stress disorders. Workshops have assisted those individuals preparing for certification in the profession. A national job bank and placement assistance are also available to members, who, in turn, act as mentors and role models to students pursuing social work careers, particularly those elected to serve on the executive board of the NAPRHSW as student members-at-large. The board is composed of the president, the first and second vice presidents, the treasurer; the secretary and corresponding secretary; members-at-large; and student members-at-large. The first national conference, “The Diversity and Strengths of the Latino Family,” was held on June 8, 2001. The organization continues to thrive and play a central role in bringing Latino professional and community issues to the political table. Paying tribute to those who respond to the call to participate en la lucha, (the struggle) NAPRHSW annually honors those who distinguish themselves in advancing Latino issues at the Scholarship Dinner Dance, at which time the Social Worker of the Year Award, the Leadership and Humanitarian Awards, the Agency Award, and the President’s Award are all presented. Scholarship monies are also awarded annually. For its dedication and service to the community, NAPRHSW’s awards include the Salute to Latino Professional Organizations, given by the City Council of New York in July 2001. Accomplished and vital, the National Association of Puerto Rican/Hispanic Social Workers and its individual members constitute a fundamental part of Long Island’s Latino/a history and its future.


Lisa Meléndez

NATIONAL CHICANA CONFERENCE (1971)

The first National Chicana Conference, also known as the Conferencia de Mujeres por la Raza, was organized by Elma Barrera, Houston’s first female Hispanic television reporter, and the staff at the Magnolia Park YWCA. More than 600 Chicanas from around the country attended the Houston conference, held on May 28–30, 1971, to organize around gender-related issues within the Chicano movement and within their communities.

Before the national conference Chicanas in Texas and California had hosted regional conferences where they set their platform agendas for the national meeting. These platform agendas were strongly influenced by regional differences. In an article after the California regional conference held in Los Angeles, a Chicana wrote, “The philosophy of the Chicana has to be one of uniting the Chicano movement, to realize that our enemy is not the Chicano, but the system which keeps us divided.” Accordingly, attendees at the national conference concentrated on finding solutions to the obstacles they encountered in their double-jeopardy role as both women and Chicano. In contrast, the Chicanas at the 1969 Denver Youth Conference took the stand that they did not want to be liberated.
Two key issues identified by the Houston conference organizers and attendees were reproductive freedom and motherhood, which were individually addressed in “Sex and the Chicana” and “Marriage: Chicana Style.” A resolution from the first workshop called for “free, legal abortions and birth control for the Chicano community, controlled by Chicanas.” Critical of the control that the Catholic Church held over their right to choose, the resolution stated that “we [Chicanas] have a right to control our own bodies.” The “Marriage: Chicana Style” resolution echoed this philosophy, stating that “we as mujeres de La Raza recognize the Catholic Church as an oppressive institution and do hereby resolve to break away and not to go to them to bless our union. So be it resolved that the national Chicana conference go on record as supporting free and legal abortions for all women who want or need them.” Both resolutions broke the silence about a Chicana’s ability to have a say about her body and the institution of marriage. Their statements stood as testimony of the strength of Chicanas to change cultural and religious values. Other resolutions passed at the conference included a demand for “24-hour child-care centers in Chicano communities,” because “Chicana motherhood should not preclude educational, political, social and economic advancement.”

This conference set the stage for the discussion of Chicana liberation versus women’s liberation. Chicana leaders argued that by denying Chicanas their rights, Chicanos oppressed them in the same way that white men oppressed Chicanos. The conference allowed Chicanas to express their thoughts and to create an agenda that helped them organize against racism and sexism. But other Chicanas felt that too much attention was paid to women’s liberation and that “women’s lib’ was irrelevant to the Chicano movement.” Unfortunately, miscommunication about housing left a number of women from out of state without a place to stay, and they returned home dissatisfied with the results of the conference. Regardless of the tensions, the conference was one of many that Chicanas organized throughout the 1970s around issues of sexism and family within the Chicano movement.


Mary Ann Villarreal
National Council of La Raza


Edna Acosta-Belén

**NATIONAL COUNCIL OF LA RAZA (NCLR) (1968– )**

The National Council of La Raza (NCLR) is a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan, tax-exempt organization that has risen to national prominence as one of the leading Hispanic civil rights organizations in the country. Established as the Southwest Council of La Raza in 1968 with a grant from the Ford Foundation, the council has greatly expanded its scope, activities, membership, and financial resources during its thirty-five-year history. Headquartered in Washington, D.C., the NCLR engages in policy analysis and national advocacy for Hispanics on a wide range of issues, for example, education, employment, health, and immigration. Five regional offices in Chicago, Phoenix, Los Angeles, San Antonio, and San Juan, Puerto Rico, assist in the NCLR’s work. The NCLR also serves a large constituency-based membership of more than 270 affiliate organizations, mostly community development corporations and social service agencies, in forty states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. It operates on a multimillion-dollar budget sustained from government contracts and corporate and foundation grants.

Founded during the social activist era of the Chicano movement, the Southwest Council of La Raza, based in Phoenix, Arizona, began as an umbrella organization to channel resources from the Ford Foundation to local affiliates in several major cities of the Southwest. Each local affiliate, in turn, was to support the grassroots organizing efforts and programs of a broad range of barrio groups. Council founders originally intended to develop local leadership and “empower” barrio residents through community organization. However, organizational and political problems caused the council to move away from community organization and mobilization toward sponsorship of economic development projects through its local affiliates.

In 1973 the council claimed a new role for itself—to become an organizational leader for Hispanics in national politics. A name change resulted, headquarters were moved to the nation’s capital, and the council sought to represent not just Mexican Americans, but Hispanics from all nationality groups in all regions of the country. Shortly thereafter Raúl Yzaguirre became national president, a position only he has held since 1974. Under Yzaguirre’s leadership the NCLR established a permanent capacity for policy analysis and legislative advocacy on national issues while expanding its technical assistance and support to community-based affiliate organizations. A board of directors sets broad policy for the organization, and two additional bodies serve in an advisory capacity: the Corporate Board of Advisors and the Affiliate Council. A publications unit distributes council reports that command attention from the national media and policy makers. The publication *Agenda* serves as the organization’s newsletter.

Given the vicissitudes of political and financial support for public-interest groups, the council’s ability to survive and expand during several decades is a notable achievement. The council characterizes itself as the largest constituency-based national Hispanic organization in the country, pointing to its affiliate membership and associational ties to “more than 30,000 groups and individuals nationwide.” Raúl Yzaguirre supervises eighty-four national staff members who oversee a myriad of programs and initiatives. Annual conferences feature an array of big-name Latino celebrities and politicians and draw crowds of more than 15,000 in attendance. High-level government officials, including the U.S. president, vice president, members of the cabinet, and prominent politicians, and influential corporate and foundation executives appear at NCLR functions. Over the years the NCLR has built a reputation of credibility and influence as a major player on policy issues affecting Hispanics in the United States.

Latina women have been part of the NCLR’s development, but their initial inclusion as women in the council involved a political struggle. In 1968 the original board of directors included only one woman among its twenty-five members. At the same time only one of the council’s seven affiliate organizations was headed by a woman. Three years later only three women served on the twenty-six-member board.

The few but outspoken women in the NCLR pushed for what became a controversial but ultimately successful cause: equal representation of women and men on the board. The council adopted this policy in 1973, and it is still in effect. Indeed, the NCLR notes that it is one of only a handful of Latino organizations that mandates a 50-50 gender split on its board. In the late 1970s the first woman was elected chair of the board of directors. Since that time half of the board chairs have been women. Gender equity also applies to representation on the NCLR’s Affiliate Council. Each of five regions elects two representatives, one man and one woman, to three-year terms on the Affiliate Council.
Women are well represented throughout the organization's corporate staff structure. The NCLR reports that women have constituted the majority of staff members for almost two decades. Women have counted among the executive staff for nearly three decades, at one point women made up the majority of vice presidents in the organization. In 2002 Cecilia Muñoz served as vice president of policy, Lisa Navarrete as deputy vice president in the Office of Public Information, and Sonia Pérez as deputy vice president of policy. In 2005 Janet Murgía assumed the presidency and is CEO. Monica Lozano, publisher and CEO of La Opinión, is board chair.

In the early 1990s, NCLR issued reports on Hispanic women, work and welfare, teen pregnancy, and family poverty. A fact sheet of demographic data on Hispanic women was also prepared. Notably, the fact sheet continues and is updated periodically. In 1993, at a Latina empowerment workshop at the annual conference, Latinas representing NCLR affiliates called for a greater focus on women's issues at the annual conference and in the work of the organization. NCLR formed a Hispanic Women's Task Force to address these concerns, and at the request of the task force, a major study of Latina women was produced in February 1996, Untapped Potential: A Look at Hispanic Women in the U.S.

Annual conferences now include more workshops on Latinas; the 2001 conference included a “Latinas workshop track” for the first time. Latina concerns have also become incorporated more specifically into NCLR policy analyses and advocacy. For example, NCLR's Center for Health Promotion has focused much of its work on Latina health issues.

As one of the leading Latino organizations in the country, the NCLR can be credited with institutionalizing a Latino presence in national policy making. Latina women have been an important part of the organization's story as activists in local affiliates, members of governing bodies, and council staff and officers. Given the increasing significance of the Latino population in the United States, the NCLR is likely to remain a player in national policy making. Latina women have been an important part of the organization's story as activists in local affiliates, members of governing bodies, and council staff and officers. Given the increasing significance of the Latino population in the United States, the NCLR is likely to remain a player in national politics for some time to come. As women exercise their influence within the council, they will no doubt ensure that Latina women's experiences, issues, and perspectives are represented in the organization and in national politics as well.


**Christine Marie Sierra**

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**National Hispanic Feminist Conference**

**NATIONAL HISPANIC FEMINIST CONFERENCE (1980)**

During the 1960s and 1970s Latinas addressed the issue of feminism and its relevance to their everyday lives and to their communities in general. Latinas from specific cultural groups, such as Mexican American women, identified certain key aspects of feminism. For example, Mexican American women (or Chicanas, the preferred name during this era) developed a feminist consciousness largely as a result of their participation in the Chicano civil rights movement. They took part in every aspect of the movement, including the student and farmworker movements. Chicanas and Puerto riquesas, like their African American women counterparts, encountered various forms of sexism. Latinas recognized the need to address sexism and other pressing issues, and local, state, regional, and national conferences were organized.

The 1980s began with one of the most significant and controversial conferences in Latina history: the National Hispanic Feminist Conference. Held in San Jose, California, the National Hispanic Feminist Conference was organized to bring together an estimated 1,000 Latinas from throughout the United States and from such countries as Mexico, Cuba, Argentina, and the Caribbean. They came to the conference to discuss such issues as employment, education, the relationship between Latinas and Euro-American women within a feminist movement, and the problematic relationship between lesbian and heterosexual feminists.

The conference’s organizer was Sylvia González, a San Jose activist, who together with a small group of women put together the conference’s agenda, workshops, and plenary speakers.

The opening day of the conference witnessed the beginning of a series of controversial issues. Some participants called for a boycott of the conference headquarters because of its insensitive handling of a Native American burial site during the ongoing construction of the hotel. A boycott of the National Hispanic Feminist Conference soon developed among a small group of participants who urged the rest of the participants to join them. Other women protested that many community women found the registration fees prohibitive and thus called for the establishment of a sliding fee scale. Because of the scheduling of separate workshops for university and community women, some Latinas criticized the organizers for working against the conference’s major goal: establishing a dialogue between community and university women. Many also questioned the presence of Euro-American women who represented the National Organization for Women (NOW), fearing that NOW would dominate political debates.
National Puerto Rican Forum

Sylvia Gonzáles, the conference’s organizer, addressed these criticisms during the conference and later in an article in the magazine Nuestro. Gonzáles claimed that her opponents were angry that they had not been included in the program as keynote speakers. She and other conference organizers believed that those undergraduate Latinas who supported the boycott did not understand the issues. In the Nuestro article Gonzáles acknowledged the seriousness of the opposition to the conference’s format and agenda but remained optimistic that Hispanic feminists would eventually resolve their differences and unite as a political force.

Soon after the National Hispanic Feminist Conference ended, many women who attended the conference wrote about their experiences. An important publication, La Razón Mestiza/Union Wage, devoted an entire issue to commentaries on the National Hispanic Feminist Conference. Latina feminist writers, such as Dorinda Moreno and Chela Sandoval, wrote insightful, critical appraisals of the conference. Although both Moreno and Sandoval agreed that the conference displayed serious flaws that accentuated the ongoing exploitation of community activists, they both concluded that at least the conference provided a forum to bring these divisions to the surface. Other participants also pointed out that despite the forces that pulled participants apart, other forces developed that began a tentative dialogue among Latinas from a diversity of backgrounds. Sandoval concluded: “The struggles within the conference pointed out real differences among ‘Hispanic Feminists,’ but they do not suggest the divisiveness of defeat. Much of the excitement of The First National Hispanic Feminist Conference lay in a reworking of differences rather than their settlement. . . . We Chicana feminists consider the conference another beginning.” Indeed, the 1980 National Hispanic Feminist Conference set the stage for Latina feminists of the 1980s to grapple with the contradictions inherent in feminist organizing across class, culture, sexuality, and communities.


Alma M. García

NATIONAL PUERTO RICAN FORUM (1957–)

The Puerto Rican Forum was founded in 1957 as a collaborative umbrella agency to initiate the formation of other organizations in the New York Puerto Rican community. The brainchild of Antonia Pantoja and a cadre of Puerto Rican professionals and activists who worked with her on launching this prestigious organization, the forum, a civic, nonprofit coalition, sought to improve the economic conditions of the community while simultaneously mobilizing for social change. Among its earliest projects was a plan for an ambitious comprehensive community project, detailed in the 1964 publication A Study of Poverty in the Puerto Rican Community. The Puerto Rican Community Development Project, a forum-spawned agency, called upon the services of more than sixty organizations and community leaders to deliberate upon and craft solutions for the problems facing the Puerto Rican and Latino community in the city. Many of the proposals that surfaced from the group were implemented, but others were not. Perhaps the most successful project to come out of the plan was the concept of ASPIRA. Headed by Pantoja, this educational enterprise focused on creating Latino and Puerto Rican leadership for positions in the public and private spheres. It came to fruition in 1961.

Overall, the forum specialized in community development programs and small-business loans. In 1967 Pantoja conceived the Basic Occupational Language Training (BOLT), program, along with other social service programs, to advance the community. Adult literacy, English as a second language, and occupational placements provided essential services to a heavily Spanish-speaking community. In 1972 the forum assumed a national focus and a new name, the National Puerto Rican Forum, shifting its mission from advocacy and research to service.

As a national organization that serves Puerto Ricans and Latinos, the forum ranks among the oldest in the continental United States. The National Puerto Rican Forum provided employment and training programs in the city’s five boroughs, Hartford, Connecticut, Miami, Florida, Cleveland, Ohio, Chicago, Illinois, and San Juan, Puerto Rico. Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s the forum lost significant funding because of government budget reductions, causing the organization to lose most of its staff. Nonetheless, the mid-1990s brought new leadership, an experienced staff, and dedicated board members. The forum reconsidered its mission and program goals and committed itself to those services most needed by the Puerto Rican and Latino community. The pledge to continue to improve the socioeconomic conditions of Latinos in the United States resulted in the creation of a wide array of programs covering employment, education, technology, and professional training.

Today the forum runs programs in Manhattan, Chicago, and the Bronx that meet the employment and ed-