

Chicana Neighborhood Activism: Gender, Race, and Urban Planning

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Abstract: This article weaves the activist narrative stories of three Chicana neighborhood leaders that have transformed redevelopment projects in their barrios to gain more community benefits. Chicanas pressured the city, redevelopment agency staff, politicians, and developers to transform market-based redevelopment housing projects into affordable housing. These projects encouraged links to social and educational services, supported locally owned retail, and built Chicano/a culturally appropriate public spaces. In particular, we analyze how these Chicana neighborhood activists were influenced by the Chicano/a movement; how they became involved in urban planning issues; and finally, how each transit-oriented project changed to encompass more community benefits as these Chicanas pressured the city and developers. The projects include Fruitvale's Transit Village in Oakland, California, the expansion of East LA's Goldline in Los Angeles, California, and the transformation of El Mercado Del Barrio redevelopment in San Diego, California. The narrative stories help to conceptually and empirically ground the larger structural barriers that create inequitable and racially segregated neighborhoods and demonstrate how Chicana activists challenged and pushed back against those structures to protect their barrios.

Keywords: Activism, gentrification, gender, neighborhood revitalization

Introduction

The status of women and the nature of cities have been dramatically altered since Mexican-Americans became part of the United States. However, instead of validating their impacts on cities, the urban planning field has neglected the important role Chicana activists have played in reshaping and protecting their neighborhoods from cities' redevelopment efforts (Cordova 1997). Chicanas have historically fought for issues of environmental justice, against gentrification, and ameliorating neighborhood inequality (Pulido 1996, 2006). Chicanas' historical role as community change agents in protecting their barrios provides a lens into urban struggles over gender, race and politics in the contemporary city (Pardo 1990, 1995, 1998).

Urban history has, since the 1980s expanded its boundaries beyond space and particular behavior of people in that space to include multiple paradigms of city life and urban culture.



During the 1960s and 1970s, the field of “new urban history” focused narrowly on space and behavior without much attention to architecture, politics, gender, or culture. This essay is also in discussion with the broad field of urban history and its wide attention to culture and urban shifts in the late twentieth century.¹

This article weaves the activist narrative stories of three Chicana neighborhood leaders that have transformed redevelopment projects in their barrios to gain more community benefits. Chicanas pressured the city, redevelopment agency staff, politicians, and developers to transform market-based redevelopment housing projects into affordable housing. These projects encouraged links to social and educational services, supported locally owned retail, and built Chicano/a culturally appropriate public spaces. The barrios examined in this study include The Fruitvale in Oakland, Boyle Heights, and Barrio Logan in San Diego. These three barrios are historically important Latino neighborhoods experiencing pressures of gentrification.

We analyze how these Chicana neighborhood activists were influenced by the Chicano/a movement; how they became involved in urban planning issues; and finally, how each transit-oriented project changed to encompass more community benefits as these Chicanas pressured the city and developers. The projects include Fruitvale’s Transit Village, the expansion of East LA’s Goldline, and the transformation of El Mercado Del Barrio redevelopment in San Diego. The narrative stories help to conceptually and empirically ground the larger structural barriers that create inequitable and racially segregated neighborhoods and demonstrate how Chicana activists challenged and pushed back against those structures to protect their barrios.

Chicana Neighborhood Activism and Chicana Feminist Epistemology

Chicanas have played a large political and sociocultural role in reshaping their neighborhoods. They have been at the forefront of the Chicano movement (Ferre and Martin, 1995; Garcia, 1997; Pulido, 1996). Chicanas were even organizing in the foundation of the urban planning field during the progressive era as women organized to bring attention to the tenement housing conditions in New York were also joined by Mexican American women whose legacy has not been adequately acknowledged in urban planning history. Hence, historically, the story of Chicanas politically organizing to defend their communities, especially in the urban planning literature, has not gotten the important recognition it deserves. In fact, it has gotten almost no attention.

The key book that does address this important issue is Mary Pardo’s “Mexican American activist: Identity and resistance in two Los Angeles communities” (Pardo, 1998). Pardo’s book tells the stories of Chicanas involved in neighborhood activism in Los Angeles. Pardo argues that Chicanas transformed everyday problems they confronted in their neighborhoods, such as the building of a prison in East Los Angeles or the building of a parole office in Monterey Park, Los Angeles, into political mobilization. Pardo’s Boyle Heights case tells the story of Mothers of

¹ Gilfoyle, Timothy J. “White Cities, Linguistic Turns, and Disneyland’s: The New Paradigms of Urban History.” *Reviews in American History*, Vol. 26, No. 1, *The Challenge of American History* (Mar., 1998), Pg. 176. (pp. 175-204)

East Los Angeles (MELA), a grassroots group of women who worked via the Catholic Church and mobilized the Chicano community to stop the construction of a state prison in Boyle Heights. Gloria Molina, who was then a California State representative, played a key role in that resistance. MELA, at their height in 1986-1987, was able to create a grassroots movement that forced planners and state officials to stop their plans of creating a prison in that community.

Pardo explains that Chicana activist women had a long history of involvement in neighborhood issues. But they really became politicized in the 1960's social movements that transformed civil rights across the country. Pardo attributes dynamics of women activism in East Los Angeles to three things: 1. Gloria Molina seeking grassroots activist support in Boyle Heights after state officials ignored her arguments. Molina argued that state officials did not provide responsible public participation forums or procedures. 2. The Catholic church legitimized the anti-prison struggle and served as a vehicle for communication and grassroots networking. 3. Women relied on their gendered identities via roles as mothers and protectors of the neighborhoods. MELA defined mothers as a woman who "does for children", so it went beyond a biological connection. Hence, members of MELA were defined as 1. protectors of neighborhoods and 2. those that "do for children". Lastly, Pardo argues that the women of MELA used their ethnic identity as a tool for resistance.

Key themes from Pardo's work are very useful in helping us understand the role gender plays in Chicana neighborhood activism. For example, women formed community identity as resistance. "Women used their life experiences in the neighborhood and the relationship of those experiences to outsiders to build positive collective representations of the community. Constructing community identity became a key element in defending Eastside Los Angeles" (Pardo, 1998: 81). She also describes how social networks played a key role in collective community concerns. "As women became activist, they reflected on their experiences as mothers and working-class Mexican Americans, converting long-established social networks into political networks. In transforming their social networks, they expressed what were formerly individual concerns as collective community concerns" (Pardo, 1998: 106-107). These networks that Chicana activist developed and maintained were extremely important to securing the resistance to the prison. These networks originated through impacts on their families and then evolved to larger community issues. "In both communities, women's activism originated in family concerns and community networks, then generated broader political involvements. This pattern is similar to that found in other studies of woman's activism" (Pardo, 1998: 228). Their gender identity was very closely linked to their cultural identity and directly materialized into political opposition. Pardo writes about a MELA participant, Juana Gutierrez, who identified family, community and ethnic identity as the impetus for her involvement. "I say "my community" because I am part of it. I love my Raza, my people, as part of my family". She clearly uses motherhood and family as a metaphor for civic responsibility and action. She has expanded her responsibilities and legitimized militant opposition to projects she assesses as detrimental to the community" (Pardo, 1998: 115).

Pardo's important study provides a clear linkage between the gender Chicana literature (Pardo, 1990; Pardo, 1995) Esquire and Segura, 1997; Platt, 1997; Pulido, 2006) and urban planning justice scholarship (references). One study that does provide this link is Teresa Cordova's study of the Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP) (Cordova, 1997). SWOP is a

social justice organization fighting for environmental and economic justice in New Mexico. Cordova argues that the Chicana movement literature is dispelling Chicanas as passive political actors. But Chicanas have a long history of community activism originating in the Chicano movement. Cordova points out that research on Chicanas makes four key points: “1) Chicanas are not passive but instead have a long history of action for social justice; 2) mobilizations by Chicanas reflect an identity tied to class; race, and gender; 3) consciousness and mobilizations by Chicanas are reflective of ties among family, household, and workplace; 4) Chicana’s organizing skills and strategies stem from their experiences and conditions” (Cordova, 1997: 32). Cordova builds on Pardo’s study by pointing out the important role of gender networks and how they were transformed politically. “The Mothers of East LA accomplished this by turning their preexisting gender-based networks, e.g. those related to church and school, into political benefits, bringing forward previously “invisible” women into leadership positions” (Cordova, 1997: 34). Cordova calls on urban scholars to further research these gendered dynamics as Chicanas social movements directly relate to urban planning issues. “Armed with knowledge, oppositional consciousness, and principled strategies, Chicana grassroots activists are inserting themselves into questions of international economic integration, local economic development, neighborhood change including issues of gentrification, infrastructure, tax abatements, natural resource management, zoning, and an array of other development issues” (Cordova, 1997: 49).

We engage the role of gendered activism to understand how these Chicana leaders were able to transform large scale transportation infrastructural projects. We do this by engaging a form of gendered epistemology within an urban planning praxis. We view urban planning as an epistemology of intervening in the urban environment. Epistemology involves the nature, status, and production of knowledge (Harding, 1987). Hence, we engage the concept of Chicana feminist epistemology within the education field and apply it to issues of Chicana neighborhood activism (Bernal, 1998). As Dolores Bernal argues, Chicana feminist epistemology educational research thus becomes a means to resist epistemological racism and to recover untold histories” (Bernal, 1998: 556). Highlighting untold stories of Chicanas struggling and ultimately reshaping large scale planning projects reflects a turn in planning scholarship that advances the contributions Chicana activist are making to the field. This epistemological turn directly challenges past racist and sexist scholarship that silenced the voices of Chicanas. This type of gendered centered epistemological planning praxis demands a methodological transition to one that directly asks questions of gender. As Bernal challenges the educational methodology, we challenge planning. “A Chicana (centered) methodology encompasses both the position from which distinctively Chicana research questions might be asked and the political and ethical issues involved in the research process.” (Bernal, 1998: 559).

Historical Context

During the 1970s and 1980s, Chicana feminists in California demanded their role in the city would be focusing on community revitalization, non-profit development, and transit communities that would connect affordable housing, social services, retail development, and public transportation in poor Latino communities.

Almost one hundred years earlier, in the 1860s, Mexican-American women developed new approaches to city life by creating religious charity groups. Elite and middle-class Mexican-

American women sought a role in urban life largely through their historical remembrances, Catholic charity organizations, and Latino immigrant support groups. Women reformers began to push in the 1890s for environmental issues by acting as “municipal housekeepers” extending their role from the home to the urban environment.²

Californio-Mexican women such as Antónia Perez de Woodworth, Francesca Sepúlveda, Ysabel del Valle, and Refugio Bandini all were involved in the Los Angeles based *Daughters of Charity* organization, a Roman Catholic organization dedicated to fundraising for their orphanage and school beginning in the 1850s.³ By the late 1880s, women around the United States had begun to develop a concept of “organized womanhood” that emphasized the power they could create by working in solidarity across numerous organizations in the United States.(136) Many Mexican-American women belonged to Catholic organizations, Spanish-language groups, and were involved in the social life and charitable work of the major cities of California.(137) One of the most visible organizations that in the beginning of the twentieth century in Los Angeles was the organization that developed the public celebration of the Fiesta de las Flores, a celebration that drew heavily on the regions Californio-Mexican past.(138)

After numerous clashes between the American and Californio women in the early club movement, Californio women created a space for themselves beginning in the 1920s by focusing on two specific areas within the larger club movement, Spanish language and Californio cultural instruction and the historic preservation of the Californio past.⁴(141) By the 1920s and 1930s, the descendants of the early Californio-Mexican women had become a part of the Los Angeles women’s club scene that work to remake the California cities to reflect historical events and preserve(or reenact) old homes, family histories, family artifacts, and family historical clothing.(141) In terms of language and cultural preservation, the Californio women gathered in the Friday Morning Club beginning in the 1910s to meet and discuss Spanish-language texts and read the Los Angeles Spanish-language newspaper, *La Opinion*.(143) These Californio women and newer Mexican immigrations to California created organizations to raise their visibility in California public life in the cities. In organizations like the Friday Morning Club, Californio-Mexican women worked to rebuild, shape, and protect buildings, history and memories of public space in Los Angeles and around the state.

The women’s movement of the 1970s, known in American society as the Second Wave was a continuance of the fight for women’s rights. As part of a broader feminist movement and the Chicano Movement, continued the fight for women’s rights and civil rights.

This article illustrates how women in three metropolitan California cities established their place in the city during the height of the contemporary women’s movement and in the wake of the Chicano Movement. Like their white contemporaries, Chicanas focused on spaces created

² Gilfoyle 181.

³ Gunnell, Kristine Ashton. “Women's Work: The Daughters of Charity Orphans' Fairs and the Formation of the Los Angeles Community, 1858-1880.” *Southern California Quarterly*, Vol. 93, No. 4 (Winter 2011-2012), pp. 373-406

⁴ Wallis, Eileen V. "Keeping Alive the Old Tradition": Spanish-Mexican Club Women in Southern California, 1880- 1940.” *Southern California Quarterly*, Vol. 91, No. 2 (Summer 2009), pp. 133-154.

for their communities. They were also involved in broader issues of the entire Latino community such as job training, adult education, social services, retail development, childcare centers, and financing services for low-income community members. (see Arabella Martinez interview)

Chicanas and The Post War City: The 1950s

The women's movement and the Chicano Movement desegregated the previously gendered spaces of the 1950s which had seen the separation of men and women to the urban workforce and the non-working suburban world. Although this segregation was particularly sharp among white men and women, Chicanos in the 1950s, especially the upwardly mobile had moved out of the urban core and faced similar gender patterns. (Spain 155) Among the poor and urban, the Chicano population stayed in place as the city was systematically ignored or slated for urban renewal and left in a state of blight with many losing their homes.

Narratives of Chicana activists

Gloria Molina became involved in the Chicano Student Movement at East LA College despite being a night student who worked during the day as a legal secretary while most of those involved were young students. She was introduced to various organizations during her time at East LA College and she described how it was difficult to avoid what she calls, the "so-called "student movement" at the Chicano Moratorium, the antiwar movement, and everything else." (Session 1, May 25, 1990, pg. 30-Carlos Vasquez interview of Gloria Molina). She was part of the East Los Angeles high school walkouts of 1969 and was involved with the organization, MASA, the Mexican-American Students Association while a student at East LA College but explained that she was largely involved as a follower rather than a leader.

Molina began her involvement as a self-described follower because while she agreed broadly with the ideas of the Chicano student organizations she did have some reservations about particular attitudes which she found, "almost too radical."(pg. 31) She found herself agreeing with the ideas of the Chicano student movement about "how we were constantly being discriminated against how we had to stand up and challenge all of that."(pg. 32) But, Molina did not agree with two other ideas that circulated in the Chicano student movement. First, she disagreed with the idea that "somebody owed us something," because she felt that it was "more of a socialist [idea]." (pg. 31) Secondly, she did not agree with the Chicano Student Movement perspective of racism in a way that she viewed as conspiratorial, "that it's all planned and staged, and we're just all little puppets in this process."(pg. 32) Instead she suggested that racism could be challenged directly through action.

Gloria Molina suggested in her interviews with Carlos Vasquez, an oral history interviewer at UCLA, that there was widespread hypocrisy among the male Chicano activists who spoke against discrimination and pushed Chicanos to speak out against white racism while "they would oppress me as a Chicana."(pg. 32) Molina's frustrations the male sexism of the Chicano student movement, led to her increasing desire to work with Chicana women who shared a more Chicana feminist ideology that she found lacking in the white feminist movement

of the time period. This was the impetus to her involvement in Chicana female centered groups and she found common ground with the women of the Chicana Service Action group, where she found a space to push for the voice of Chicanas and to find a way to help them gain autonomy in the workforce. (pg. 38)

Gloria Molina

Gloria Molina became a very powerful politician in Los Angeles. She was first elected to State Assembly in (?) and then the Los Angeles City Council in (?) to represent the newly founded District 1. District 1 represented a mostly Latino district and was formed from MALDEF's redistricting civil rights efforts. Molina represented this district from (? To?). In this capacity, she fought for more resources to be invested in her impoverished district. She then went on to run and win a seat on the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. She served in that capacity (from?) until she retired in (?). The Board of Supervisors is a powerful board as they control the county's resources and have seats on powerful county agencies such as the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (METRO), who sets public transportation policies and control the agency's resources. But Molina's political start was not in formal city politics but instead in grassroots efforts and community struggles.

In Molina's time as a state assembly member representing Eastern Los Angeles, she began to reshape the political and spatial struggles in Boyle Heights. She played a central role in opposing the construction of a new state prison in Boyle Heights. The state board of prisons had planned the construction of a new prison facility without any participation or involvement from the public. Molina opposed the prison plan and advocated to build the prison elsewhere as her district was already overrepresented by prisons. But the prison board ignored her advocacy. Hence, she let her community know about the prison plans and that unleashed a grassroots oppositional movement to the prison that ultimately led to the stoppage of the prison construction.

Mary Pardo's book describes Gloria Molina's initial involvement in the prison fight:

Assemblywoman Gloria Molina, familiar with uphill battles, vehemently opposed the Eastside site. Considered an aggressive community advocate and an outspoken feminist, she had opposed a male-dominated Latino political network to win election to the Eastside Fifty-Sixth Assembly District in 1982. Later she became the first Latina elected to the Los Angeles City Council (1987-91) and the first woman and the first Mexican American elected to the five-member Los Angeles Board of Supervisors, which oversees an annual budget of \$13 billion. Molina did not object to the construction of a prison in Los Angeles County; instead, she argued that the chosen site was too close to the long-established Boyle Heights neighborhood, and she pointed out that it was also within two miles of thirty-four schools. She pointed out that 75 percent of the county's prison population was already housed in her district; thus, another prison would add to the over-concentration of penal facilities in the East Los Angeles area. Downtown Los Angeles houses twenty-five thousand prisoners, the largest inmate population of any city in the

nation. Five inmate facilities, including a county jail, a federal prison, the men's city jail, and a juvenile detention center, also lay within a six-mile radius of the site.

When the DOC brushed aside Molina's objections, she explored the possibility of grassroots mobilization” (Pardo, 1998: 54–55).

The Mothers of East Los Angeles (MELA) grassroots organization originated from these struggles. This was a women’s organization that come out of the local Catholic church and fought against the construction of the prison as well as other environmental justice neighborhood concerns. MELA was led by Chicanas who had been politicized during the Chicano movement and were activist’s women who had a long history in Boyle Heights. The community was angered at the lack of public outreach and opposed the prison which lead to the formation of the group. The local Catholic priest helped organize the women and they also worked with Representative Molina, and a progressive urban planner who provided the planning technical expertise, as MELA gathered enough support to stop the construction of the prison. MELA participated in many marches, political rally's, they outreached to media, and traveled to Sacramento to lobby against the prison construction. Gloria Molina would herself translate the prison hearings at the state capital into Spanish since there were no interpreters. Mothers of East LA also connected with universities in LA, like UCLA, to gain support for their fight. They were ultimately able to stop the state's plans to construct the prison. Hence, MELA members used their life experiences in the neighborhood and the relationship of those experiences to outsiders to build positive collective representations of the community. Constructing community identity became a key element in defending Eastside Los Angeles” (Pardo, 1998: 81).

Pardo attributes dynamics of women activism in ELA to four things:

1. Gloria Molina seeking grassroots activist support in Boyle Heights after state officials ignored her arguments. Officials did not provide responsible public participation forums or procedures.
2. Catholic church legitimized the anti-prison struggle and served as a vehicle for communication and grassroots networking.
3. Women relied on their gendered identities via roles as mothers and protectors of the neighborhoods. They defined mothers a woman who "does for children". So MELA were defined as 1. protectors of neighborhoods and 2. those that "do for children".
4. Used their ethnic identity as tool for resistance.
The concept of resistance has been at the core of Chicano Studies and Ethnic Studies as a means to explore the responses of the oppressed to their mistreatment.⁵

Molina’s Role in shaping transit’s light rail Gold Line extension to East LA.

⁵ Ramirez, Catherine. “Saying “Nothin’”: Pachucas and the Language of Resistance.” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (2006). Pg. 2.

Gloria Molina also reshaped Boyle Heights with her efforts as a County Supervisor as she advocated to bring the Gold Line subway into Eastern Los Angeles. The battles over Los Angeles rail have been intense, filled with political conflict and racial undertones. The Metropolitan Transit Agency (MTA) began their investments into rail by building the Redline which was a subway that ran from downtown Los Angeles and stopped at MacArthur Park. The plan was to extend the subway along Wilshire BLVD into West Los Angeles but that was not completed due to lawsuits, residential opposition, and environmental lawsuits. Los Angeles was also investing in a commuter rail system that took away funds from bus services. Hence, MTA was subsequently sued by the Bus Riders Union on racial discrimination grounds. The Bus Riders Union argued that MTA was discriminating against public transit dependent communities who were mainly communities of color and favoring suburban and higher income rail riders by investing their resources on commuter rail (Elkind, 2014).

Gloria Molinas' role in these transit conflicts was to advocate for a subway line extension into East Los Angeles. She argued that most of the population in her district was transit dependent and would greatly benefit from more regional transit connectivity. But most of the transit capital investments were planned for the West of Los Angeles. Hence, Molina relied on her political networks to press the MTA, the County Board of Supervisors, and the state of California to invest in a subway that would run into Boyle Heights. Molina served on the Board of MTA and in 1998 led a charge within the board to reaffirm their commitment to Eastside subway investment (Elkind, 2014). But the political fights continued as the West side and East side fought for transportation investments. These fights culminated over Measure R (R stood for relief as in traffic congestion relief) that would increase county sales taxes to raise \$30-\$40 billion for 30 years for rail investment in Los Angeles. Molina opposed the measure as East LA was only allocated to get light rail instead of a subway but the measure still passed and Boyle Heights got their light rail. If it was not for Gloria Molina's championing of a subway into Boyle Heights when most of the attention was on the West side, Boyle Heights would probably not have seen as much public transit investment and the current light-rail would most likely not exist.

Arabella Martinez

Arabella Martinez was the director of the Spanish Speaking Unity Council a non-profit community organization in Oakland's Fruitvale district. The organization started during the Chicano movement as a coalition of service and community-based organizations in the neighborhood. Arabella Martinez was their leader until she left to Washington DC to serve in President Carter's administration as the first Chicana sub secretary in the US. She was sub secretary of the Human Services Administration. The Unity Council's work needs to be understood from a broader context of community revitalization and history of non-profits in the area. The Council worked on providing job training, adult education, a childcare center, and financing services for the low-income Latino community. But their main project is now the Fruitvale Transit Village, which is composed of low and market rate housing, social services, and retail development that is adjacent to the BART Fruitvale station. The Fruitvale Transit Village has now become a model for conducting equity-based TOD's in a low-income community.

The Fruitvale Transit Village was conceptualized, its funding secured, built, and now managed by the Unity Council. Hence, the Transit Village would have not happened without the leadership coming from the Unity Council. The Unity Council's approach to making the TOD project happen was a combination of gaining community input and participation, collaborating with local government officials, and using its federal connections to help secure funding and support. Arabella Martinez was the president of the Unity Council, and through her strong leadership style she was relentless in developing a vision of the transit village. Her initial community services work in the Council helped her to get appointed in President Carter's administration which subsequently provided her with the important federal contacts she later relied on to gain funding for the Transit Village.

The original idea for the transit village actually emerged from a retail leakage study that UC Berkeley Professor Ed Blakely of the City and Regional Planning Department conducted with his students. Arabella Martinez and Ed Blakely had met during their War on Poverty work and through their social movement experience. Their study revealed that a lot of the residents were shopping outside of the neighborhood, and his idea was to create a connection through street design from International to the BART station to encourage more people riding BART to shop on International. This gave Arabella Martinez the initial idea of creating a paseo between both spaces.

Through Mrs. Martinez's strong leadership style, the Unity Council used a more top-down community driven approach because the organization not only stopped BART from building its initial parking structure (which was to cut off the main street running through the neighborhood to the BART station), but it then created an alternative vision in the establishment of a community-led TOD project in the neighborhood. Arabella Martinez framed the stewardship role the Unity Council played in establishing the TOD, and made facilitated venues for the community's voice a priority in the process. "We were stewards of the community. This wasn't an outside developer [building a TOD]. It wasn't the government coming in. We, in fact, opposed BART in terms of what they wanted to do. We led that fight. We led the fight in terms of community policing too. We led the fight in terms of better recreational facilities and programs. So, I think partly it has to do with that sort of *stewards of the community* mindset." This mindset gave the Unity Council a lot of power to influence the process of developing the TOD. Since they had been working in the community since the 1960s, they had established a great deal of trust and legitimacy in the area.

Arabella Martinez said that community members really got involved when there were grant applications and the Council needed to demonstrate community support for the project. She was adamant in explaining that it was always, from the visioning to the ground-breaking, a Unity Council project. Another former staff member explains how Mrs. Martinez's leadership shaped the project and how the project depended on her connections: "The Transit Village would not have happened without Arabella Martinez's will. She would say, 'You are with me or not with me.' She promoted it and had a lot of say. She brought powerful people from DC to fund it, the Clinton Administration gave lots of funding. It came from community development block grants. But the process was not organic, bottom up. It's not a blueprint for other communities unless they also have all the [political and financial] connections."

Arabella Martinez' networks played a crucial role in supporting the large project. After taking over the Unity Council for the second time, she was also appointed to the board of directors of the National Council of the Raza. During a fundraising celebration event for the National Council of the Raza, she connected with Secretary of Transportation Pena, who was interested in her work in linking affordable housing to public transportation and other social services. That same week, Mr. Pena flew out to Oakland and provided the Unity Council with a check of around \$500,000 for an environmental impact study focused on TOD. That was the initial funding that helped the planning and initial fundraising drive for the Transit Village. Hence, Arabella not only possess the necessary networks but a belief in gaining the urban planning technical skills to embark on a multi-million-dollar TOD effort. Her reputation was key to the success of the project. She possessed two important characteristics: 1) the trust of the community because she had worked for decades in the Fruitvale working on War on Poverty and social service and community development efforts. 2) She was the first Latina sub secretary in US history and that gave her "clout" to link she community and government networks together. She describes the Unity Council's efforts as not top-down or bottom-up but actually being in the middle. "We were the ones that were doing all the planning for it but had the community in mind".

These community connections helped Arabella Martinez secure their key tenant in the development, La Clinica, an important Latino focused health clinic that brings thousands of clients to the village each year. The Unity Council's strategy was to build social services by targeting La Clinica as the development's anchor. La Clinica is a well-established and well-respected community health center that has been in Oakland since the 1970s. La Clinica has 32 sites, and in 2012 served over 80,000 patients and handled approximately 370,000 patient visits. It is the largest community health clinic in the state of California. Hence, it was critical for Arabella Martinez to convince La Clinica's leadership to relocate into the Fruitvale Transit Village to serve as the anchor tenant and add credibility to the TOD project. BART was also very interested in having La Clinica as part of the project. At 40,000 square feet, La Clinica's space in the transit village is the largest facility in its system, which provides medical, pharmaceutical, laboratory, behavioral health treatment, and dental services. The TOD has also helped increase the number of clients for La Clinica in the Fruitvale neighborhood.

The Unity Council demonstrates how women leaders were able to transform this large transportation project. In Fruitvale, Arabella Martinez called most of the shots when it came to making direct decisions on the Fruitvale Transit Village's development. Mrs. Martinez had access and connections to federal and local politicians and staff members. A male staff person who worked on the design of Fruitvale Transit Village called her "La Coronela" and thinks a large-scale project like the village needs someone like her to get things done. "A project like that needs a Godmother." Another key leader within the Unity Council commented on the gendered relationships and sometimes the conflicts that emerged with the male Latino business owners on International Boulevard.

Between Arabella and me, Latinas, and most of the businesses along International Boulevard are Mexicanos. So, you have the big mouth Latina leading the organization and you have the Mexicanos [accentuating the "os," for males]."

Ha, ha, ha, ha, capital OS, right, so there was quite a bit of tension there. I didn't have time to play the subordinate Latina. Right away they wanted to criticize.

In an interview, a UC Berkeley professor, who had been involved in the project from a distance, commented that she believed the project was successful because of Arabella Martinez and her strong leadership style and connections. The participation of strong women and their access to decision-making processes affecting different parts of the TOD projects was also a factor that we believe contributed to the equitable outcomes of both projects. But it wasn't just the Latina leadership through the council where Latina participation was present. From the very beginning, the community participation for revitalizing the Fruitvale was led by women. Before the Fruitvale project, the Council was tackling issues of crime in the neighborhood as a form of community improvement. Women were the ones doing community outreach to form safety committees. As Arabella Martinez explains, "Many of them were women. They took the date down, they wrote when the drug deals were being made and where. That is real bravery". And that also happened when we were organizing in terms of open spaces and recreation because we were talking about their children, and having a safe place for their children to play". The Unity Council specifically organized around women's issues. Arabella Martinez explains, "We were organizing around things that were really local, that they could see, could make a difference and did make a difference in their lives. And the lives of their children".

Community-based organizations in the area also played a key role in developing the necessary political capital to ensure the TOD projects had community benefits. Without the Unity Council in Oakland, the Fruitvale Transit Village would most likely not have been envisioned, funded, or built. The TOD project was the Unity Council's key project for almost a decade, and Arabella Martinez's key leadership helped sustain its process. The Unity Council's role was critical because it served an intermediary role between the government's efforts to build a TOD and the community's needs. Mrs. Martinez had strong connections with federal, regional, and local funding agencies that were able to provide the necessary resources to finish the project. The Unity Council also had strong community-based connections because of its 20-year history of providing important social services in the neighborhood. Hence, they were able collaborate with local businesses that initially opposed the TOD (because they viewed increased competition as a barrier to their continued success). The Unity Council was extremely effective in getting key community leaders on board to create a community vision for the TOD. They also had the needed political capital to oppose BART's initial plans to build a parking structure that would have cut International Boulevard off from the BART station. As Arabella Martinez explains, "you have to have strong Latino institutions to pull something like this off".

Rachel Ortiz

"The movement is everything. Like I told you, the movement is everything". – Rachel Ortiz
Interview

Barrio Logan is an important historically Chicano neighborhood in San Diego. This is the site of Chicano Park, a space under a freeway that was taken over by Chicanos and made into a vibrant public space with dozens of murals painted on the freeway pillars depicting Chicano

history, culture and political struggle. Scholarship has focused on Chicano Park as a space of cultural resistance and self-determination (references). But the community revitalization efforts that in many ways sustained the Latino neighborhood has not been the focus. And even less focused on has been the role that women activist has played in that struggle. Most of the scholarship focus on male muralist that transformed the cultural milieu of the park. However, many of those women activists were involved in the Chicano movement of the 1960's and 70's. They also organized during the takeover of Chicano Park in the late 1970's. One key activists, Rachel Ortiz, the head of Barrio Station community center in Barrio Logan had worked with Caesar Chavez organizing farmworkers. She grew up in the neighborhood and started Barrio Station, a youth community organization that has been in the neighborhood for 20 years. She is probably the most influential activist who was behind the urban revitalization efforts and the construction of the TOD as she fought to maintain its affordability and also fought to gain community benefits from the project.

Rachel Ortiz had spent time in prison as a youth due to her drug addictions but recovered from those addictions and became politicized once she entered the Chicano movement. She had been working in the Mission District in San Francisco when she became involved in the movement. "I just fell in love with the farmworkers. Yeah, Filipinos and Mexicans, some nuns...from the Bay Area who were helping [the United Farm Workers] with their grapes boycott. And Dolores Huerta...she would say, "Rachael...I want you to do this and that...we need an apartment, a refrigerator, we got to get a phone...here's the projector...I want you to..." It was during Rachel Ortiz' organizing work with farmworkers in the Bay Area where she met Arabella Martinez. "That's where I met Arabella...we called her Marty. I don't know why we called her Marty? Marty...she was involved in everything". Ortiz also joined the Chicano national militants group Brown Berets, worked on a prison justice campaign for Los Siete de la Raza (who had been falsely imprisoned) and also took part in the Third World Liberation Front (which was mostly made up of Latinos and Blacks).

She explains how the Chicano movement influenced her generation of women, "Well, I think that the Chicano Movement had a lot to do with...it spurred academia to demand Chicano Studies and you know, farmworkers, and women...I think it spurred us to be vocal, you know. I mean once you're vocal, you're in it. You're in it. I think that it was empowering for us. But the good thing I think was that the empowerment was for the neighborhood, not just for themselves. I think seeing Dolores Huertas...for me...wow, man...the first time I saw her, when those kids put me in that huelga office in San Francisco, she right away started talking to me like I was a regular...she didn't know me...she thought I was a regular in the area".

Rachel Ortiz became involved in urban planning work via environmental justice concerns regarding the concentration of junkyard recycling businesses in the neighborhood. Barrio Logan had the highest concentration of junkyards in the city and Ortiz started a community organizing campaign to rid the neighborhood of those business. This captured the attention of a progressive urban planner who encouraged her to use urban redevelopment as a tool for community improvements. This redevelopment effort lasted 22 years and encompassed the creating of a community plan for Barrio Logan and the construction of the El Mercado Del Barrio commercial development and affordable housing complex.

In the late 1970's, Barrio Logan was the only neighborhood in San Diego that did not have a community plan. Hence, in her efforts to kick out the junkyards in the neighborhood, Ortiz set off a historical undertaking in the community. She pressured then mayor (Pete Wilson), the planning department, and city council to change the codes, land use and zoning in the neighborhood to make it more difficult for junkyard business to locate or remain in the community. Much of her political capital came from Barrio Logan residents who testified at the city council meeting and attended planning meetings in a show of unity and community support for the plan. Her efforts culminated with the creation of a community plan for Barrio Logan neighborhood in 1978.

Rachel started to use redevelopment power to fight for the neighborhood. She took over the planning mechanism in Barrio Logan and even supported the city in their use of eminent domain to kick out corrugated metal junkyards and auto painting dealers where the current site of El Mercado Del Barrio stands.

GS: You actually used a lot of planning tools to push for change?

RO: You have to. You have to get out there. And you got to network...not for yourself, you know? You got to network for the neighborhood. Everything you run into...write it down. Phone number. Now it's email. Yeah, so Rich Juarez, he liked me a lot. He was with Model Cities...that's before Community Development Block Grant money. Model Cities came from the War on Poverty.

RO: They used eminent domain against us with the freeways, and didn't give us notice. So, we reversed it and used it for ourselves.

The revitalization project culminated with the construction of El Mercado Del Barrio development. That development encompasses 200 units of affordable housing, which were initially market based but changed to affordable via the community opposition to market-based projects that emerged. The development also has a Latino themed grocery store. The first grocery store in the neighborhood in 25 years. The project's other commercial developments include locally owned businesses like restaurants, a barber shop, a CrossFit fitness club, a brewery, and Latino art painted on the building's facades. It is also to the construction of a new community college, Cesar Chavez community college, and is a short walking distance to the light rail system. Rachel Ortiz played a key role in ensuring the project moved forward with the community's interest in mind. As one planner explained, "Rachel has a lot of power in Barrio and if you don't get her approval, your project will not go forward". Rachel Ortiz grew up in Logan Heights and has been organizing in the neighborhood for the past 30 years. Her youth organization maintains a lot of legitimacy in the neighborhood as they do a lot of anti-gang work with youth and played a key role in creating a safer neighborhood. Rachel Ortiz has also been a key community voice in the transformation of Barrio Logan in particular. She was on the neighborhood planning group that gave input to the city council and tirelessly worked to help push through and gain community support for the Mercado Del Barrio project. Planners see her contribution, as one explained, "Rachel Ortiz and her pack head the effort for all those affordable housing projects. In any redevelopment project you had to have an arts component and it was important to use local artist to display the art". In many ways, Rachel Ortiz was the person

spearheading the equity components of these projects and making sure local residents benefited from the affordable housing developments in the neighborhood.

Rachel Ortiz also worked with The Environmental Health Coalition who have been organizing around environmental justice work in the neighborhood and has done this by incorporating city planning tools. The coalition were a key group in pushing the update of the community plan in the area that had not been updated since the 1978 plan. The update of the community plan became a very heated political debate between neighborhood interest and industry who catered to the Navy industry. The conflict came down to a small buffer zone that changed the zoning from allowing industry to discouraging it. The community update was approved by the city council but then a referendum was put to vote city wide and the plan was shot down. One former social service worker in the neighborhood observed that, “The city council approved the updated community plan, twice, and then came measure B and C and it was defeated. That was put out into a vote for the entire city of San Diego. And people could care less about communities of color. Nowhere in SD is there a community that has been waiting 37 years for a community plan update. That is criminal. By not having an update with all these incompatible land uses, they are responsible for the health and cancer rates in the community”. The Environmental Health Coalition and Rachel Ortiz’ organization helped lead the way in this community plan which is tied to the TOD because the original vision of the Mercado development came out of the original community plan in 1978.

Activist played important roles in the revitalization of Barrio Logan and the construction of the transit-oriented development project: El Mercado. Rachel Ortiz’ specific role is important to understand because she was there from the beginning and working upfront to gain community support and reshape the revitalization efforts.

Discussion

The stories of these powerful Chicanas demonstrate the key role they played in reshaping socially, culturally, and physically these barrios. Gloria Molina, Arabella Martinez, and Rachel Ortiz were all activist that were influenced by the Chicano movement, began as neighborhood activists, and became involved politically to reshape urban planning interventions in these neighborhoods. Their political activism led to specific community benefits, such as increased affordable housing, access to regional public transportation systems, increased local businesses and social and health care services in these barrios.

Certain themes emerged through these women activist narratives. The important roles their networks served to secure financial resources and political support for their projects. They were linked to developers, non-profits, social service providers, urban planners, politicians and government staff at the local, state, and federal levels. Arabella Martinez had those federal government and philanthropic connections that supported the Fruitvale Transit Village. Gloria Molina had the grassroots support in Boyle Heights as well as her state, county, and city connections. Plus, she was a powerful Los Angeles politician who served on important boards that controlled transportation funding in Los Angeles. Rachel Ortiz had a long history of neighborhood activism and grassroots connections. But she had also supported local Barrio

Logan politicians that later went on to serve important political roles at the state level. Hence, all these Chicanas were well connected and relied on those networks to influence these Barrios. They were all situated in very important positions within these networks. They were the “middle-women” between the state, capital, and these barrios. These projects would not have been built without their support. Hence, this middle position between government planning interventions and the communities’ interest provided them with power.

There was also a gender element in their advocacy work. The women were inspired by their time during the Chicano Movement and had uniquely gendered experiences depending upon the groups they were involved with. For example, Gloria Molina was involved in the student youth part of the Chicano Movement and heard the group rhetoric of speaking against racism while also feeling silenced as a woman. Working with the United Farm Workers, Rachel Ortiz had a different experience as a woman and she highlighted her interactions with Dolores Huerta as a pivotal experience for her political activism. It was these types of experiences that structured the ways that each of the women moved forward as gendered subjects with Gloria Molina becoming more involved in women’s spaces and then moving towards urban politics while Rachel Ortiz became involved in organizations that were not solely focused on women.

Drawing from the research of Mary Pardo’s work on the Mothers of East LA, she argues that the women who were politically involved suggested that their participation was an extension of their role as mothers. She found women who drew an extended metaphor that viewed their own local communities as an extension of their own families and that as mother’s their role was to take care of their communities. In contrast, the women who worked in these political settings to change their urban spaces did not actively highlight the relationship between their own motherhood and their role as community leaders. While Arabella Martinez did mention that some of the women working for the Unity Council in the Fruitvale neighborhood of Oakland did aim to improve their neighborhoods for the sake of their children, she did not highlight her own role as a mother in the work that she did as an activist nor did she extend metaphors of motherhood to her larger community.

Yet what did stand out in the interviews was the comments by a man involved in the process of the creation of the Fruitvale Transit Village’s development. He highlighted Arabella Martinez’s tenacity in the long process of the development and suggested that the project needed a “godmother”, extending a familial metaphor into the realm of the small Oakland community. All their work related to maintaining the community health of their neighborhoods and in a sense they were the protectors of those communities. The women’s advocacy work they engaged included: issue of safety, health care and women’s health, affordable housing, access to daycare, youth development, improving public spaces, and women’s leadership development and empowerment.

Finally, they all learned and engaged the tools of urban planning for revitalizing their community. Such planning tools as urban redevelopment, zoning, land use, linking to public transportation systems, spatially linking social services and education to their plans, and they all advocated for affordable housing. In a real way, these Chicanas transformed urban planning to better represent the cultural identity of their neighborhoods and bring more government investments into those barrios.

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