

Sixth Annual
ERNESTO GALARZA
Conimemorative Lecture
1991

Silent No More—
A Latina's Vision for Leadership

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A Chicana's Vision for Leadership

Presented by

Polly B. Baca
Executive Director
Colorado Institute for Hispanic
Education and Economic Development

Ernesto Galarza

The symbol for this lecture is Dr. Ernesto Galarza (1905 - 1984), a Stanford alumnus, intellectual, visionary, and activist scholar who galvanized national attention on the plight of farm workers in the 1940's and 1950's, and later focused on urban institutions that impeded the health, educational and socio-economic development of Chicana/os in the United States. The legacy of his contributions to civil rights include the founding of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) and the National Council of La Raza (NCLR). A few years before his death, Dr. Galarza donated all of his files to Stanford. Several renowned scholars conduct research based on his materials in the special collections archive at Stanford University's Green Library.

PREFACE

Ms. Polly Baca has been at the forefront of much state and national politics related to our country generally, and to our Mexican American communities in particular, for nearly two decades. She has not only been a path breaker in many areas; she has more often been a path finder. Among her many accomplishments from the time she served as the only Chicana in the Colorado state senate to the time of her positions in the Democratic National Committee, has been her consistent ability to forge consensus and agreement on issues that often divide substantial segments of the American population.

It was this ability to build understanding that made Ms. Baca the overwhelming choice to give the Sixth Annual Ernesto Galarza Commemorative Lecture. I should like to thank the members of the selection committee: Herman Gallegos, Chair, SCCR National Advisory Board; Al Camarillo, Professor, Department of History; Cecilia Burciaga, Associate Dean, Graduate Division; Fernando Mendoza, Associate

Professor, Department of Pediatrics; and Jerry Porras, Professor, Graduate School of Business. I should especially like to thank Mr. Herman Gallegos, for providing the introduction.

It was not surprising that Ms. Baca chose as the topic of her lecture the distinct perspective that a Chicana can provide to public leadership. One will note that this vision is couched in terms that are necessarily critical of gender disparities and insensitivities. Just as importantly, one will note also that the vision provides guidance as to how we can all work to build an inclusive rather than exclusive understanding of the public interest. Her charge is that Chicanas and Chicanos must work together as equals, hand in hand, if communities of Mexican origin are to advance in American society. Ms. Baca's charge must not only be acknowledged, it must be addressed and ultimately accomplished as well.

Luis Ricardo Fraga
Director, SCCR

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INTRODUCTION OF GUEST LECTURER

Herman Gallegos

Thank you very much. It's really terrific to be here, especially to be given the privilege of introducing Polly. In fact when I received recently the information about Polly's activities I was absolutely amazed because I think I know Polly quite well. I have decided that the best thing I can do is to keep my description brief so that you can enjoy Polly's lecture. She is absolutely terrific and I consider it a privilege to call Polly a friend.

Usually friends try to keep in touch. But in the last few years it seems that the best way to know what is happening with Polly is to pay attention to the media. Her name pops up on such lists as "New Democratic Faces for the 80's," "Women to

Watch this Decade," and "Hispanic Woman of the Year." I have seen her quoted in national magazines and TV programs like ABC's "Nightline" and the "McNeil-Leher News Hour." Let me tell you, Polly really knows how to keep in touch.

She first began her professional career as an editorial assistant for a trade union newspaper in Washington, DC, and then she served as a Public Information Officer for a White House agency when Lyndon Johnson was President. In 1968, she was given her first taste of electoral politics by joining the campaign staff of the late Robert F. Kennedy in his bid for President of the United States and, of course, we know the tragic end of his political career and life. Lucky for us, that same year The Ford Foundation initiated a major program to support Mexican Americans in this country through the Southwest Council of La Raza.

In fact, Dr. Julian Samora, Ernesto Galarza and I co-authored a book called, "Mexican Americans in the Southwest"

which was the basic document used to convince The Ford Foundation to support the work of Mexican Americans in this country. We were given a grant to organize what was then called the Southwest Council of La Raza and I was to be the first Executive Director. I had the good sense and good fortune to employ Polly Baca as its first Director of Research and Information. As you may know, the Southwest Council of La Raza changed its name to the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), an organization which has grown over the years. With extensive national affiliations, NCLR has done a terrific job with research and public policy analyses. This affiliation is worth noting because Ernesto Galarza was one of the council's founders. As a senior staff person at the Southwest Council of La Raza, Polly worked very closely with Ernesto. Polly Baca was a very smart and talented colleague who actively challenged us to improve the organization.

From there, Polly became the first — and only — minority woman to be elected to the Colo-

rado Senate where she served for 12 years. Notably she was also the first Hispanic woman to serve in leadership in any state in the United States. Polly also served as a Special Assistant to the Chair of the Democratic National Committee from 1981 to 1989. Lest you wonder why this remarkable, extraordinary person was able to accomplish so much, I have to share a secret with you — she has great political genes. Her great-grandfather's uncle was Don Felipe Baca who served in the Colorado Territorial Legislature in 1870 as a Senator from Trinidad, which is located in Las Animas County. Some 114 years later, Polly was to serve in the same legislature.

You should know also, by way of a historical note, that Polly's great-great grandfather helped found the city of Trinidad where one can visit the Baca house which preserves the memory of Don Felipe Baca.

Polly has served on numerous international delegations and her domestic and foreign affairs expertise has led to an overseas

lecture circuit, including countries as diverse as Japan, the Philippines, Chile, and the USSR. I won't even begin to enumerate her many additional activities on the international arena.

An equally important highlight to the breath of her expertise is that Polly has worked within the not-for-profit sector, as well as the governmental, political, and corporate arenas. She has served on a savings and loan, one which remains solvent. She is also a board member for the the Working Assets Fund which invests in socially responsible ways. Polly has been a member of that Board for some time, while being involved with other economic development activities.

Today you will find Polly meeting a very demanding schedule as the Executive Director of the Colorado Institute for Hispanic Education and Economic Development where she identifies and cultivates the development of emerging community leaders from various and diverse backgrounds. In addition to the development of leadership,

the Institute seeks to facilitate the development of policies and programs to enhance educational and economic opportunities for Hispanics.

Within the Chicano/Latino community, Polly is known, respected and loved for her leadership, vision, and commitment to our community.

With her long record of being the first in many activities, it is not surprising that Polly is the first woman to present the Galarza lecture. Her lecture is entitled, "Silent No More: A Chicana's Vision for Leadership."

Ladies and gentlemen, may I present my dear friend and durable colleague —The Honorable Polly Baca.

SILENT NO MORE —
A CHICANA'S VISION
FOR LEADERSHIP

Polly B. Baca

Thank you for giving me the honor of delivering this year's lecture to commemorate and celebrate the life of a man for whom I had great admiration and who touched the lives of thousands of young men and women seeking answers to problems confronted in their daily lives. It was not uncommon for Dr. Ernesto Galarza to take time to sit down with an inquiring mind and discuss options for addressing the complex problems of the day.

I was one of those young people who had the wonderful privilege of being mentored by Dr. Galarza while I worked with the

Southwest Council of La Raza. I remember seeking his counsel one afternoon on a proposal to address the plight of our young people in an education system that was ignoring their needs. Sensitive to my somewhat naive questions about school busing, he responded with penetrating wisdom, saying "Polly, what is important is **not** how our children get to school but what kind of education they have when they get there."

Dr. Galarza was concerned as much about the education of young girls as the education of young boys. He had witnessed first hand the hardships and injustices faced by his Mexican mother when she brought him to the United States at the tender age of eight. This special sensitivity to the difficult challenges confronting women of Mexican descent was apparent in his poem titled "*The Women of Huanuni*." Listen for a moment to Dr. Galarza's words:

*At fourteen thousand feet
above sea level*

a century or two before today

*where every sunset is a lost
horizon*

*and every dawn a wrath of
wind and stone,*

the women of Huanwni sit,

*their faces scorched, eroded
palimpsests*

*in which unnumbered genera-
tions etched*

*birth pangs and daily crucifix-
ion;*

*their fingers a dark, desperate
gristle*

*from clutching at the dung, the
rocks, the grief.*

*And when they move it seems
the mountains*

*shrink their bare bumps to
human size, and move,*

*so silent are the women of Hu-
anuni.*

So silent are the women of Huanuni— but silent no more as their offspring step forward to challenge the mountains of oppression under which generations of Chicanas have labored. In his lifelong struggle for social

justice, Dr. Galarza recognized the unique power of women "to move mountains" despite the hardships they confronted. The time has come now for these women to help shape a new kind of leadership unencumbered by prejudices of the past.

For too long, Mexican American women have dwelled in a world of myths and stereotypes, burdened by the perceived need to choose between living a life patterned after the Virgin Mary or being condemned as a fallen daughter of Dona Marina sometimes known as La Malinche, the Indian mistress who helped Cortez conquer the tribes of Mexico and who bore his child to start a new race of mestizo peoples.

It is not surprising that generation after generation of Mexican children have been frightened by tales of "*La Uorona*," the weeping woman betrayed by her mate, driven to kill her children in a rage of insanity, and doomed to search the night for her dead offspring. Oh, the stories *we* were told as we grew up. Stories of the harsh punishment doled out to women who fell out of

grace by stepping out of the role reserved for them on the virgin pedestal symbolized by Our Lady of Guadalupe.

The fact that two predecessors of Mexican American women played critical roles in the establishment of a Spanish influence in the Americas has been largely ignored. Historians seem to forget that a young adventurer by the name of Columbus could never have outfitted three vessels to explore the oceans to the west had a Spanish woman not taken the risk of a lifetime. It was Queen Isabella of Spain who funded Columbus and made it possible for him and his Spanish crew to seek a new world in 1492. Nor do we honor the brilliant Indian linguist who enabled Cortez to extend his influence, and that of Spain, over the Americas. Had it not been for Dona Marina, the Indian interpreter who was betrayed by the customs of her time, sold into slavery, and given as a gift to Cortez, much more blood would have been shed in the Spanish conquest of Mexico. Dona Marina was the communications link between two worlds and the mother of a new race.

Whether or not one agrees with the nature of the role played by these two women, both women deserve recognition for they played in the development of the Americas. Chicanas should take pride in the historical leadership of both their Spanish and Indian mothers. But we must recognize also that despite these contributions, mestizo women— like the women of Huanuni — continue to be the victims of triple oppression: the cumulative effect of race, gender, and class discrimination that has placed Chicanas in subordinate social, economic, and political positions as compared to Chicanos and White females.

If Chicanas continue to be relegated to this second-class status, we will never be able to achieve Dr. Galarza's most cherished dreams, as described by Carlos Munoz, Jr., "that some day his people would indeed be the beneficiaries of democracy, freedom and justice." Chicanas are key to the establishment of this genuine social democracy.

Chicanas understand the pain of racial oppression suffered by their male counterparts. We too

have been pierced by the sharp blade of painful slurs and suffered the blows of racial harassment. Because we have known the pain of racism, should we not be in the forefront of those fighting to eradicate racial oppression? Should we not lead the way to a new vision of leadership by promoting and valuing the contributions of all races to our society, trampling beneath our feet all remnants of cultural arrogance, bigotry, jealousy, discord, hate.

By placing value on the beauty of cultural diversity, would we not be promoting the contributions of our own people: the Mexican Indians, the Black Puerto Ricans, the White Cubans, and the Asian Latinos? Chicanas have borne children of all races, adding to the beauty and strength of our unique Latinodiversity.

As females in a male dominated culture, Chicanas have long struggled against sexism to take our rightful place **next to** our male colleagues: not in front of or above them like the Virgin Mary, nor behind or below them as Dona Marina. Our proper

place is working side by side, *mono en mono*, with our male counterparts to confront the collective challenges we face — following in the footsteps of Ernesto and Mae Galarza in the 1930's when they served as co-principals and co-owners of a progressive private elementary school in Long Island, New York. By example, the Galarzas showed the way. Now it is up to us to take seriously the direction set by this example and challenge those who would inflict the pain of sexism on others.

Imagine for a moment what it would mean to have Chicanas serve in the U.S. Congress. California has given us a number of Mexican American male Congressmen, but never a Chicana — nor has any other state in the more than 200 year history of this great nation. We have a Cuban woman (Ileana Ros-Lehtinen) currently serving in the U.S. House of Representatives, a Chicana (Lena Guerrero) serving in a statewide elected position as Railroad Commissioner in Texas, and a Chicana County Supervisor (Gloria Molina) in Los Angeles. But we have yet to elect a Chicana governor or Lt. Gover-

nor, a Chicana U.S. Senator, or a Chicana U.S. Representative.

This lack of representation has contributed to the class or economic oppression suffered by Chicanas — of such primary concern to Dr. Galarza. According to recent census data, Mexican American women continue to have a higher unemployment rate (9.6 percent) than that of White women (4.7 percent), lower educational attainment, and lower income and earnings than Hispanic males or White females. The median income for Hispanic women (\$14,893) who work year round, full time remains 15% below the median income for all women (\$17,504) and 17 percent below that of Hispanic men (\$17,872).

As we look toward the future to establish a new vision of leadership, we are reminded by Dr. Galarza that the past can be a prologue to those willing to learn from it. In his words, "once a historical process is understood, a choice can be made as to one's place in its next moment, and the realization that the best history is that in which one has had an effective part."

It is time for Chicanas to discard the yoke of triple oppression, take an effective part in the development of history, and lead the way to developing a new leadership vision. This vision must take heed of past mistakes that led to oppressive behaviors and take care to nurture the positive side of human nature that:

- places value on racial and cultural differences
- recognizes the contributions of both genders, and
- develops the natural talent within each individual.

Such enlightened leadership will not be threatened by the beautiful uniqueness of each culture nor fall prey to the need to dominate. This leadership will value and appreciate the differences between cultures as well as the differences within cultures—for the diversity within our own Mexican American culture is as great as the diversity between our culture and that of other Hispanic, African, Asian or European cultures.

Think for a moment about our language in which we take such pride. Would you agree that the Tex-Mex Spanish spoken in the barrios of Texas differs somewhat from the Spanish spoken in the colonias of northern New Mexico and southern Colorado and the Spanish spoken in the mission district of San Francisco or the barrios of East Los Angeles? And then there is our beautiful music. How many of you were in my generation and, on occasion, preferred to dance to the Richie Valens rendition of La Bamba rather than the traditional version favored by our parents. Or perhaps some of you know or have raised Chicano teenagers who might prefer the Spanish Rapp music of Kid Frost or the Lighter Shade of Brown to our beautiful corridos and marches. Yes, it is happening — and it is all part of our wonderful, evolving culture and heritage — just as the changing role of La Chicana to a more dynamic one is part of our evolving history.

Culture is not static, nor should it be — just as our leadership should not remain static. I am always stunned by those who perceive leadership as the cen-

tralization of power and the domination of one person or group over another. In more than two decades of work in the political arena, I've learned to recognize this "centralization" as the beginning of the corruption of political leaders. It inevitably happens when a leader begins to "close ranks," He gets caught up in the so-called "glory of power" instead of remaining faithful to the need to serve others. In the process, he smothers the creativity and initiative of those around him. Instead of empowering others as did Dr. Galarza, he becomes exclusive **instead of** inclusive and a gatekeeper **instead of** a gateway for others. This type of leadership leads to dictatorship and the corruption of power which in turn leads to oppressive behavior.

It is this corruption of leadership that Chicanas must guard against, lest we fall prey to that against which we have struggled for generations. Instead, we should encourage "transforming" leadership, where leaders act in concert with the goals and aspirations of their constituents or followers.

The wise leader knows the value of sharing power. She approaches leadership as someone who understands the importance of building consensus in her community. She **listens** to those in need and champions the cause of the disenfranchised. In the process, she empowers those around her and enables them to join in the cause she is espousing. Thus, her circle of influence grows and spreads as the circular rings from a pebble tossed into the middle of a lake.

Perhaps the most enlightened leader is the one who empowers new generations to assume responsibility and then moves on to new challenges in untouched domains as did Dr. Galarza. Why not imitate his life and encourage a "flowing" leadership that flows from one sphere of influence to the next, rather than becoming stagnant and stale by staying in one pond too long ?

It takes a wise and courageous leader to recognize when a leadership mission has been fulfilled and when it's time to move onto the next challenge. This is probably the most difficult quality that a leader must develop. She

must be willing to take the risk to confront new leadership challenges with the full understanding that when you take a risk, you might fail. But to fail occasionally does **not** mean you are a failure. The only failure is not trying.

One of the most painful experiences I have ever had was five years ago. In 1986, I decided not to seek reelection to my state senate position and instead to announce my candidacy to the U.S. Congress. I had hoped to change the makeup of Congress by adding a Chicana to its ranks, but I failed. I lost the primary by a few thousand votes — and it didn't feel good. When Abraham Lincoln was asked how he felt after losing an election, he said he felt like a youngster who had stubbed his toe and was too old to cry, but it hurt too much to laugh. It hurts to lose. I'm not going to gloss over that — but I can honestly say, as I revisit that decision, that I'm glad I tried even though I lost because it's better than if I had never tried at all.

That decision helped me move out of one sphere of leadership

where I had grown stale into another where I am able to exercise far more creative leadership. In my current position, I have been able to draw on all of my past experience and knowledge and focus my energies on the development of an exciting new leadership program. Through this program, called Vision Hispanica, we are developing a national model to teach emerging community leaders from different cultural backgrounds how to communicate across cultural barriers and work together to influence public policies that impact our communities. It's an exciting challenge with enormous rewards.

Together, as Dr. Galarza would say, "we can move mountains" like the women of Huanuni. But none of us can do it alone. We need each other. We need each other's commitment, energy, and strengths to offset our individual weaknesses. If, as Dr. Galarza said, "the best history is that in which one has had an effective part," then we need to join together to effect a new history that reflects our collective will, both male and female, to work together for social justice and a fu-

ture devoid of racism, sexism, and economic oppression.

There is a chance that we could achieve Dr. Galarza's dream of a genuine social democracy for men and women of all races and creeds. Why not try? We are on this earth for such a short period of time. Why not make the most of it while we are here? Why not jump in with both feet and try to make this world a better place than when we first arrived?

As we are reminded by a few lines from the song, "The Rose:"

It's the heart afraid a/breaking

that never learns to dance

Ifs the dream afraid of waking

that never takes a chance.

It's the one who won't be taken

who cannot seem to give, and

the soul afraid of dying

that never learns to live.

Dr. Galarza lived his life to its fullest. Why not imitate as well as celebrate and commemorate his life by living our lives to their

fullest? Because, isn't it better to get involved and make a difference — if only on one occasion — and then cease to exist, than to exist forever and never make a difference? Dr. Galarza made a difference. He would expect no less from us.

STANFORD CENTER FOR CHICANO RESEARCH

The Stanford Center for Chicano Research (SCCR) was established in 1980 to promote cross-disciplinary research on Mexican American and Latino communities in the United States. Under its current director, Associate Professor of Political Science Luis R. Fraga, the Center continues to promote interdisciplinary study, and focuses on major issues of public policy through projects that examine implications of the expanding presence of Latinos in California and in the United States generally, as well as the implications of increased diversity among Latinos themselves.

One important goal of the SCCR is to enhance dialogue between the research community and the public. As concerned citizens as well as researchers in academia, faculty want to contribute to the local, state and national discourse of public policy and promote effective long term problem solving through their work at the Center.

Current projects at the SCCR include: *Environmental Poverty: Assessing the Risk of Pesticides to Farm Labor Children; Latinos, Voting Rights and the Public Interest; The Public Outreach Project: Pediatric AIDS and Infectious Diseases; Cultural Citizenship; Civic Capacity & Urban Education; Bay Area Latino Community Studies Project; The Use of Languages Other than English in the Courts; Visionary Companies & Latino Employees; and International Childhood Immunization Strategies.*

The Center holds public forums, coordinates research seminars, and presents the Annual Ernest Galarza Lecture each spring. Research activities are published through the Center's newsletter, *La Nueva Vision*, and the SCCR Working Paper Series. In tandem with the Chicana/o Fellows program and the Chicano Graduate Student Association, SCCR sponsors colloquia that highlight the research of faculty, visiting scholars, and graduate students.

SCCR sponsors programs, which focus on students, who are central to the center's academic mission. Beginning in the Fall of 1993, the Center implemented the SCCR Student Research Fellows Program to link targeted minority undergraduate and graduate students with faculty conducting interdisciplinary research projects at the Center. Currently this program receives funds from the James Irvine Foundation.

Each spring, SCCR calls for summer research project proposals from the Stanford graduate and undergraduate student community. Funded by the Escobedo Commemorative Fund, students may create on an original research project or may join an on-going project at SCCR. The Center also hosts the Latino Leadership Opportunity Program (LLOP), a one year national program of study and practicum designed for undergraduate Latina/o students interested in public policy and governance.