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The Inequality of the Latinx/Chicana Women in Society

Most of today’s news consists of some new unjust actions of either the police or how

someone was mistreated due to racial profiling. Racial profiling is when someone uses

race/ethnicity as a reason why they committed an offense. In most cases these people that get

mistreated are African Americans. Even though they do get mistreated, the group of minorities

that are often forgotten are the Latinx men and women. Latinx is a new term that means of

Latin American origin or descent. Some things we do see in the news about this community are

things like DACA and the border. It is unfortunate that these are the only topics discussed.

According to NBC News, “[Hate crimes against them are rising](https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/11/13/18091646/fbi-hate-crimes-2017), and they are underrepresented in

film, in high-tech jobs and in the federal government workforce. And when they advocate for

equal treatment and representation.” Since Trump’s run for presidency, many

Latinx in society have taken a stand advocating for better treatment from racist unjust acts.

Hopefully, this is the start of something greater. Yes, the Latinx community as a whole has faced

a lot of challenges throughout history, but the women within the community has faced so much

mistreatment since it is normalized that they work as slaves for their family. They take care of

the children, make the food, do chores, and tend to the husband while often being mistreated by

the husband. The tradition of the women having to tend to the men in the Latinx community is

very common in most families. The Latinx community is easily forgotten when discussing

inequality, but women within the community re discriminated even more due to the roles and

traditions they are supposed to uphold, this is shown in society and film.

Many women within the Latinx community become activists due to the mistreatment they

have seen within their own family. In the reading *Chicana Insurgencies: Stories of*

*Transformation, Youth Rebellion, and Chicana Campus Organizing* it says, “Although some of

these young women’s lives had been circumscribed by traditional motions of family, patriarchy,

and Catholicism, at college a whole range of life experiences informed them and contributed to

their political vision and activism” (pg.3). It wasn’t until someone pointed out that what was

normalized within the community was wrong, these Chicana women began to stand up for

themselves. Chicana refers to solely the women of Mexican origin. If we go back in history and

even refer back to our grandparents, family life was supposed to be ran by the male of the family.

Personally, my grandparents weren’t as dominant as my great grandparents.

The start of the Chicana movement was due to the Chicano movement. According to the

Encyclopedia Britannica The Chicano movement was in the 1960s and it was when Mexican

Americans took a stand from the years of social oppression and discrimination from the white

Americans. They used the word Chicano as an empowerment symbol. This time in history is

significant since it was the first time that as a community the Mexican American took a stand.

This is why usually the word Chicana refers to the activism of feminism in the Chicano

community. Some big names that helped the Chicano movement includes Cesar Chavez, Rodolfo

Gonzales, and Dolores Huerta. The gave a voice for the men and women of the community for

equal rights. It wasn’t until the 1960s that women finally began to fight for equal rights with men

which included education, wage, and political equality. To this day men and women do not have

equal pay, but we are “equal” in education and political equity to an extent. There is still a

gender gap in many majors in colleges and we have yet to have a female president. Within the

Chicano community, we have yet to have a full Chicano win in politics let alone a Chicana.

In my personal experience, I have faced many inequalities as a Chicana. Skin color has to

do with a lot of it. My family is predominantly lighter skin so our race has never been

recognized. My family and I are full Mexican. My parents are both first generation born in the

United States. My grandparents crossed for a better life for their family. I owe my life to them

because without them I would not be here today. Going back to the inequalities I have faced, as a

child I was made fun of for my skin color and because my grandparents could not speak English.

My school consisted of mostly Caucasian families. They were unfamiliar with my family’s

culture so it was hard for me to make friends. I noticed that the Chicano boys had no problem

making friends since their language was through freeze tag or dodgeball. As a Chicana, the girls

had an image to uphold and I did not fit that image. I had a mother tell my mom that her

daughter and her friends probably did not like me because I am a dark, chubby, Mexican. I had

never noticed the many differences I had from those girls until the mom pointed them out. It was

sad since I wasn’t dark. I am the lightest in my family along with my siblings. Because of this, I

did not want to bring those girls around my Grandfather who is extremely dark. I couldn’t

believe that people actually cared about associating with people who are different from them.

The embarrassment they felt for being friends with someone different controlled their actions.

This ties to the media world. Is Chicano news ignored because of how different we are? Is that

why we have television programs like Univision to separate the news from the two countries?

This also ties to the film industry. Many films misrepresent Chicanos particularly women.

When watching films, Hispanic/Chicano(a) characters are based off of stereotypes

created by non-Hispanic/Chicano(a) people. To bring attention to this topic I will provide

examples from the show Modern Family. In the show Sofia Vergara plays a character named

Gloria who ended up marrying a rich white man. In this show, she plays a ditsy, sexual character

that is unfamiliar with American traditions. She is the sex symbol of the show. They put

emphasis on her accent and body to truly highlight the character created by the writers. She

comes across as uneducated and basically is supposed to capture what Chicana/Hispanic women

are like. It can be seen as offensive and stereotypical. Because of Sofia Vergara’s thick accent,

she is primarily this sort of character in every movie she does. I can understand how her acting

can be entertaining and hey she’s getting recognition which may bring positivity to Chicanas/

Hispanics, but it doesn’t really bring positivity to feminism within the community. Another show

that was brought to my attention is On My Block. This show is supposed to capture Chicano life

in Los Angeles. It shows the cholos, family traditions, and the struggles Chicanos face. Two

characters caught my attention. One was Cesar Diaz and the other was Olivia. Cesar Diaz is a

high school teenager who is raised within a gang and is forced into that gang. He wears the

stereotypical outfit and is seen as the hot angsty teen who has all of the girls’ hearts. The actor

Diego Tinoco does a good job representing this character since he is a Chicano teen himself. On

the other hand, Olivia was represented by a non-Chicana/Hispanic. This angered most of the

audience which made the show kill her off so that they can move on. Why couldn’t they have

hired an actress of Chicana descent? They did with the male character, but why not the female

character?

In all cinematic forms whether it is Telenovelas on Univision or American Television, the

women that are hired to play the sex symbol of the Latinx show fits the same description. They

are all light skin or have a nice tan, nice body, and speaks seductively. The women that are hired

to play the mom type characters all have the same casual house cleaning clothes, many children,

and tends to the “hardworking husband”. Why does it feel like there are only two characters for

these Chicana/Hispanic women? All of this ties to history. Since life in the early 1900s and

before had the tradition of Latinx women having many kids and doing housework while the

males go do the hard-manual labor. In the reading, it states, “My grandma would not eat at the

same table until everyone was finished- like a servant, like she wasn’t family” (pg.5). Many

families know that she is not the only one. My own Grandmother would not leave the kitchen all

day. That lady would feed us all until we couldn’t eat anymore. My grandfather would just take

and take and never say thank you. When I was little I had told him that it is rude that he doesn’t

say thank you. He started crying and told me he did not realize what he was doing. He was raised

to expect that from women. As a granddaughter, he made sure that I knew that what he was

doing was wrong, and that I shouldn’t let a man treat me like that. Ever since that happened he

has always showed the women in my family appreciation for what they do for him and my

grandma. Sometimes it is hard to break tradition because the way you were raised. You do not

realize what you are doing is wrong until someone points it out. My great-grandparents never

broke tradition in their lives. They married at 15 and had twelve children. My great grandmother

worked so hard cooking and raising the children. My great grandfather never broke his

machismo act. His pride took over and even mistreated my grandpa since he was the darkest one

in the family. He never showed love to any of his children besides the girls. My grandfather said

that he had never heard his father say I love you. It was not until my great-grandfathers final

years of life is when he started showing love to my great-grandmother.

Traditions are big in the Chicano community. There is Catholicism as the prime religion

which keeps most of these traditions alive. My cousin recently converted and now her parents

aren’t talking to her. Her brother was an addict and was never shun from the family. The parents

babied him. These inequalities with the Chicana mothers babying their sons but treat their

daughters differently is not surprising. In most families, the son does not have to clean up after

themselves. While the daughters clean up after themselves and their brothers. Can you believe

that cleaning is seen as feminine with traditional Latinx families? Machismo is a real thing and is

still here to this day. I have referenced this word multiple times, it means strong, aggressive

attitude to keep the masculine pride. There is not as much pressure to be a Latinx man. On the

other hand, Latinx women are supposed to keep up with these societal pressures. They have to be

motherly/nurturing, a novella sex symbol, a cleaning lady, and more. When are we going to say

enough? When are we going to confront our family that these traditions are toxic? If we confront

them are they going to cut us out of the picture?

Chicana’s in education often face struggles that vary from family issues, unequal

opportunities, and other barriers. When it comes to family life Chicanas often get the short end of

the stick. In the reading, it states, “My parents held conservative social views, and my behavior

was regulated by the confinements of not being seen as a questionable woman. They felt I was

too young and being on my own was seen as if I was out whoring” (pg.8). Many Latinx women

have strict parents with traditional views. They automatically think that as soon as they get away

from the parents, they will go all out. Many women are kept from striving for their goals due to

the lack of support from their parents. School, especially college, is something to be proud of

when discussing your goals. Not many Latinx women have the opportunity to further their

education due to financial issues and responsibilities they need to keep up with their family.

Many families count on their daughters to keep up with the house, help their siblings, and work

to provide for their family. Some of these mothers have told their daughters that they need to find

a rich handsome man to have a better life. My mother recently told me that when she started

dating my father, she overheard his mom tell his sisters that they need to find a wealthy man and

tend to his needs in order to be happy. My mother was surprised that people still thought that this

was the right thing to do. Instead of telling your daughters to go to school or pursue a job she

told them to count on a man for their future. Because of this mentality, my aunts have faced a lot

of trouble with men. They stayed in abusive relationships to make their parents happy. By this I

mean my aunts did not want to disappoint my grandparents by divorcing their rich abusive men

that provided a life that they always wanted for their children. Now, after my grandparents saw

that their daughters dealt some really messed up situations, they completely changed their

mindset, to an extent. When I was fifteen my grandfather asked why I didn’t have a boyfriend

. He explained that he married my grandma at fifteen and I need to start looking for a boyfriend.

I told my mom while crying because I was so embarrassed. They thought that I didn’t want to

have children or be married since I did not have a boyfriend at fifteen. Many Latinx households

have the same expectations. They don’t want us to leave and go party, but they want us to have a

stable serious relationship at a young age? How does this make any sense?

Many Chicana women drop out of school because of the responsibilities they have

outside of school. Their parents want them to help out the family while going to school. They

parents do not understand further education is hard to keep up with since the parents did not have

the chance to go to college. They think that since it is just picking up a book and studying and

not manual labor it is easy. A lot of stereotypes are seen in in situations like this especially when

it comes to choosing a major. A friend I had met my freshmen year of college had told me that

her parents are making her major in child development so that she is prepared for family life

after college. They were not going to pay for her schooling if she changed it. I recently ran into

her and she had told me she moved out and it paying for school herself. She changed her major

to criminal justice. Yes, she was a Chicana. When she had told me that in freshman year I was

shocked that people still believed that a woman is to have a husband and have children by the

age of twenty-eight. I had told my mother and she told me that my dad’s parents did the same

thing to my aunt. I confronted my aunt about it and she said she didn’t know what to do because

it wasn’t something she was interested in. She had said that my grandparents were more proud of

her having a baby at twenty-two than getting into a good college. Currently, my aunt is not

working. She is a stay at home mom that works hard for her family, but she wishes she could go

back to work. As the first granddaughter to attend a university, I have a lot of pressure to finish

my degree to prove a majority of my family wrong. That I can pursue the medical field and I will

be successful. My aunt explained how she feels like she let herself down. She explained how

important it is to finish school for myself. Some great advice that I received was “Do it for you”.

It is so simple but I didn’t realize that I was doing it for the wrong reasons. Not one of my uncles

pursued school since it was seen as too feminine. My dad was the only one to pursue college and

medical school. He did not finish because my parents started a family at a very young age. To

this day my grandfather tells my dad that his schooling was a waste of time, but my grandfather

is so proud of me and my schooling. I had asked him what is the difference between my dad and

I and he simply said it is because you are a woman.

Not one of my aunts finished college. My only aunt that is in the process of getting her

nursing degree is pursuing it while taking care of her four children. My grandparents do not

understand that she is going to school for a better life for her family. They think that she should

drop out and get back with her ex-husband that had affairs. But, if I were to get in an abusive

relationship my grandpa would probably beat him up. The difference in generations affect my

grandparent’s views on things. I thought this was interesting in the Latinx community. You

either have the liberal feminists, or the conservative traditionalist. There really is no in-between.

Chicanas in the United States have come a long way throughout history, but there is so much

more to do.

The lack of Chicana representation is shown in our everyday lives. Whether it is on TV,

film, at school, within families, and in society. No one brings attention to the Latinx community

and much is not being discussed. Latinx as a whole have been misrepresented and ignored

which results in racism and ongoing gender roles. If the community isn’t informed how are they

going to change? Will the film industry ever start hiring the right women and start including

more diverse Latinx characters? Who knows, maybe our generation will be the ones to finally

change the system. The Chicano movement is the concrete of our Chicana femininity. Because of

this movement in the 60s Chicanos are liberated to be able to do more things. But this doesn’t

stop the racial slurs and comments against the society. They are mad that we carry the same

positions, they are mad that minority women are pursuing better lives, they are angry that

Chicana women are going for male jobs; they are mad that we are rising up out of the ashes. Let

them be angry because at the end of the day if we put the effort in, we will succeed. Chicanas

must defy all odds to be heard and start making a change in these film industries, start making a

difference in politics, in our own families. We need to be more like the girl I met in Freshman

year that left her family to pursue what she wanted and not the housewife her parents wanted her

to be.

After all of the sacrifices and hardships the Latinx community faced, nothing compares to

the struggles and hardships Chicana/Latinx women has faced through history up until now. Men

do see some injustices, but they can have these equal opportunities because they are male.

Women do not have the luxury to have the upper hand in society whether you are a minority or

not. Chicana women will no longer be the housewives if they do not wish to be. We will rise as a

community to prove the traditionalist wrong including my own family members. In the end, the

events that I have highlighted have proved that Chicanas are unrecognized and mistreated within

their own community and surrounding communities.

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References

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