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MEXICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN. The history of Mexican-American women is connected to the Indian women of the Americas, who often married the Spaniards who first conquered the region in the 1500s and settled permanently in the 1700s. The Spanish government initiated its policy of *unidad doméstica* to foster settlement in the northern frontier. Along with their families, who were farmers, artisans, and soldiers, mestizo and mulatto women undertook an arduous journey north to colonize the area. They joined entradas such as the Ramón expedition[qv] (1716). A mestizo population also grew up in the Spanish missions and presidios.[qqv] In one mission were 237 women. In the missions, women prepared food, dried meats, and made candles, soap, and clothing. They were also healers in an environment of rampant disease. In 1790 at La Bahía,[qv] mothers typically had two children; widows were also a significant sector. The 1778 census revealed that 45 percent of the population (outside of Indian communities) was female. Women constituted 11 percent of the heads of household in Nacogdoches in 1809. Women also helped found and colonize the pueblos of San Antonio, La Bahía, Nacogdoches, and Laredo. In the 1820s Patricia de la Garza De León[qv] accompanied her husband, empresario[qv] Martín De León,[qv] to settle Victoria, and established a school and church. In pueblos a few women and girls were shepherds, laundresses, cooks, tailors, peddlers, animal skinners, vendors, servants, and prostitutes. Daily life was demanding but simple; women's lives revolved around the domestic sphere, in which they grew and prepared food, made and washed clothes, and raised children. Between 1810 and 1820 María Gertrudis Pérez Cassiano,[qv] at that time the wife of Spanish governor Manuel Antonio Cordero y Bustamante,[qv] conducted official affairs when her husband was away.

Under Spanish law[qv] women had community property rights, and they owned, inherited, administered, bought, and sold property. Spain and Mexico made more than sixty land grants to women. In 1798 Rosa María Hinojosa de Ballí[qv] owned a third of the lower Rio Grande valley.[qv] Class differences existed among Mexican-American women; some were ranchers, some businesswomen, others servants. In 1770 widow María Ana Cubelo owned 300 head of cattle, the second largest herd in Bexar.

On the ranchos, some women made home altars[qv] and sustained a female culture through home visits. In pueblos, women, usually heads of households, also petitioned for land grants. Laws of honor and chastity ruled marriage, but concubinage existed. Adulterous women (but not men) could be severely punished. Godparenthood established social rules. Women could and did file charges for rape and abandonment. During the Mexican War of Independence[qv] loyalist troops on occasion forced Mexican women to cook. During the Texas Revolution[qv] Texans also forced some women to cook and labor. Mexican women accompanied Gen. Antonio López de Santa Anna's[qv] march to suppress the Texas revolution. In 1836 Francita Alavez[qv] saved many of James W. Fannin's[qv] captured soldiers. Andrea Castañón Villanueva[qv] received a pension from the state because of her stay inside the Alamo. Intermarriages such as Ursula de Veramendi's union with James Bowie[qv] occurred primarily among families with land or money. Intermarriage was, however, more common in multiethnic Nacogdoches, where white women were scarce.

After 1836 most Mexican-American women maintained loyalties to Mexico. The process of land dispossession affected Tejano landed families in Goliad in the 1830s but affected other areas such as Hidalgo County after 1880. Luz Escalera De León of Victoria transacted twenty-five land sales, though most Texas Mexicans were not able to protect their land. On the ranchos, women generally tended gardens and domestic animals. Between 1845 and 1898 about fifty Spanish-surnamed women filed homestead claims of 160 acres or less. Among Mexican families of San Antonio in midcentury, women headed 36 percent of households. Most continued to live on ranchos and farms in rural settings and in cities with large Hispanic populations such as San Antonio, El Paso, Laredo, and Rio Grande City. Paula Losoya Taylor[qv] and her sister helped found Del Rio, and Josefa Flores de Barker[qv] donated land to found Floresville. Women and men founded *escuelitas* for children and established churches with monetary and land donations. Nineteenth-century schools in Texas included the Presbyterian School for Mexican Girls[qv] in Rio Grande City, Ursuline Academy in San Antonio, the Holding Institute in Laredo, and Incarnate Word in Brownsville; some children attended schools in Mexico. In towns and cities working-class women worked as domestics and seamstresses. Quilt-making, punch-work, tatting, *deshilado* (drawn work), and embroidery were their art forms. In 1863 innkeeper Josefa (Chipita) Rodríguez[qv] was one of the only two women legally hung in Texas. Adina De Zavala[qv] helped "save" the Alamo and was a charter member of the Texas State Historical Association[qv] in 1892. Lucy E. Parsons,[qv] born in East Texas of mixed-race descent, organized labor outside of Texas. Teresa Urrea[qv] was a

mystic and healer around El Paso and the Southwest. In the 1890s Laredo women participated in women-only *sociedades mutualistas*[qv] such as the Sociedad Josefa Ortiz de Domínguez. Antonia Pineda de Hernández worked as an itinerant actress and managed a theatrical company, and in the early twentieth century, María Sada[qv] of Ojinaga established a store.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, more women immigrated from Mexico to Texas. In 1911, 58 percent of male railroad workers were accompanied by wives. In 1900, 15 percent of Mexican immigrant women in South Texas earned wages outside the home, as did 17 percent of El Paso Mexican women in 1920. They also did laundry, sewed, and kept boarders. In Houston they worked in textiles. Women and girls worked in the fields in South, Central, and West Texas. Work outside of the home, although frequently encountered, was often scorned. In the pre-World War II years, store clerks constituted the middle class. Few Mexican-American teachers existed; after 1910 Praxedis Torres Mata was the first Mexican-American public-school teacher in Uvalde. In education, segregation[qv] provided limited education and prevented mobility. In the early twentieth century women radicals joined the Partido Liberal Mexicano[qv] as organizers and journalists in such places as Dallas. During the Mexican Revolution,[qv] Leonor Villegas de Magnón[qv] founded the Cruz Blanca, an organization similar to the Red Cross. Numbers of middle-class female Mexican immigrants, including Carolina Malpica Munguía,[qv] entered Texas between 1910 and 1930. Instances of marked activism on the part of Mexican-American women include the El Paso laundry strike in 1919, the pecan-shellers' strike[qv] under Emma Tenayuca in San Antonio in 1938, the San Antonio Tex-Son strike in 1959, and the Farah strike[qv] (1972-74) in El Paso and San Antonio. The strikers encountered police harassment and violence by strike-breakers. Mexican-origin women worked in urban-based industries, particularly after 1930. In Dallas, Houston, San Antonio, Laredo, and El Paso they labored in garment work. Perhaps no other group proved as organized as Mexican-American women in the 1930s.

María Flores and Rebecca Flores Harrington have fought for women in the Texas Farm Workers Union.[qv] Female farmworkers in the South Plains and South Texas have struggled for toilets and against sexual harassment. In 1982 El Paso garment workers formed La Mujer Obrera to empower themselves, and the legislature made willful nonpayment of wages a third-degree felony. In the 1990s Fuerza Unida of San Antonio fought plant closures and runaway shops. In 1959 Sophie González was the first Tejana organizer of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union.[qv] In 1995 Linda Chávez Thompson was elected the first Hispanic female on the executive board of the national AFL-CIO. No significant

independent Tejana middle class sector arose until after 1970, though women have owned and co-owned small businesses such as stores since the colonial period. Pre-1970 businesswomen included Escolastica Verdeja of Luling (oil), Jovita Pérez of Laredo (commerce), Herlinda Morales of San Antonio (bottling company), a Sra. Reyes of Corpus Christi (motel), Adelaida Cuellar[qv] of Dallas (restaurant), and Ninfa Laurenzo of Houston (restaurant). Early twentieth-century feminist writers included socialist Sara Estela Ramirez[qv] before 1910, Teresa and Andrea Villareal, who published *La Mujer Moderna*[qv] around 1910, Beatriz Blanco[qv] and María Luisa Garza (*Alma Feminina*) in the 1920s, and Alice Dickerson Montemayor[qv] in the 1930s. Journalist Jovita Idar[qv] stood against lynching,[qv] segregation, and the Texas Rangers.[qv] María L. de Hernández[qv] and Adela Sloss Vento of Edinburg were civil-rights activists. In the 1930s Jovita González of Roma was the first Mexican-American woman scholar in the United States, and in the 1940s Josefina Niggli[qv] published several literary works. Mexican-origin women have been agents of change in their communities for decades in the ranks of Cruz Azul Mexicana (1920s), Spanish-Speaking PTA and Ladies LULAC (1930s-), the American G.I. Forum (1940s-), the Political Association of Spanish-Speaking Organizations (1960s), the Raza Unida party (1970s), and Texans for the Educational Advancement of Mexican Americans (1970s),[qqv] as well as the Industrial Area Foundation (*see* TEXAS IAF NETWORK) and organizations such as Communities Organized for Public Service (1980s-). In the 1970s the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund[qv] established the Chicana Rights Project.[qv] Historically, in both Catholic and Protestant churches, women have been a force. Lubbock women founded Hijas de Guadalupe, for instance, in the 1920s.

Mexican-American women advanced in electoral politics in the 1950s. Olga Peña ran campaigns for Albert Peña, Jr., from 1956 to 1972 and took part in precinct and county conventions of the Democratic party.[qv] In the 1970s some women in the Raza Unida party ran for office and were elected in rural and urban communities. In 1972 Irma Rangel of Kingsville became the first Tejana legislator, and in 1986, Judith Zaffarini was the first Tejana senator. In 1995 Mexican-American women state representatives numbered seven. In 1991 Railroad Commissioner Lena Guerrero was the highest ranking female Mexican-American state official. Mexican-American women have served as mayors in Crystal City, Kyle, Mercedes, El Paso, and Mercedes; María Antoinetta Berriozabal almost became mayor in San Antonio in 1991. Elma Salinas was the first judge in 1983; in 1995 the state had three Mexican-American female appellate judges and four district judges. In 1995 Dolores Briones of El Paso announced her bid for a seat in

Congress. A Mexican American Women's Political Action Committee was formed in 1992 to help increase the group's political power.

The first national Mexican-American feminist conference was organized in Houston in 1970. Feminist historian Martha P. Cotera and Evey Chapa founded the Chicana Research and Learning Center[qv] in Austin. Middle-class feminist organizations such as the Mexican American Business and Professional Women's Association[qv] (1975) and the Hispanic Women's Network of Texas[qv] (1990) emerged. Other women's groups include the Texas Federation of Guadalupanas (1983). Graciela Sánchez and Susan Guerra founded the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center in San Antonio in 1986, while pro-choice feminists established the Mujeres Project and Linda Morales filed a lawsuit against the Texas sodomy law. Feminism has also been expressed through the arts. Popular singers included Lydia Mendoza and Chelo Silva before World War II,[qv] Laura Canales in the 1970s, and Tish Hinojosa in the 1990s. Consuelo González Amezcua and Alice Dickerson Montemayor[qqv] were folk artists. Mexican-American artists organized Mujeres Artistas del Suroeste[qv] in 1975. Carmen Lomas Garza is an established artist; Ruby Nelda Pérez, an accomplished actor, follows early twentieth-century actress Beatriz Escalona Pérez[qv] and Gloria Anzaldúa, a lesbian writer. Physician Clotilde García is a genealogist, and Rose Treviño of Laredo works in historical preservation.

In 1995 typical Mexican-American women earned less than white men, white women, and Tejano men, had less than a twelth-grade education, and continued to experience sexism, racism, and class barriers. Nevertheless, they registered pride in the bilingual, bicultural star Selena Quintanilla Pérez[qv] and her love of family. Like other Mexican-American women, she was an agent of change and a community builder.

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Cynthia E. Orozco

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