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Women's Social Movement Activities in Los Angeles, 1960-1999

UCLA Center For the Study of Women

Timeline for WSMALA Women and Labor in Los Angeles 1960-1998

“From Protest to Policy: Women’s Social Movement Activities in Los Angeles, 1960-1999,” a multi-year research project by the UCLA Center for the Study of Women, examined the how grassroots advocacy has shaped gender-related public policy in the arts, employment, healthcare, and higher education through an analysis of local women’s groups in Los Angeles between 1960 and 1999. During this period, women’s community groups organized around gender-based problems their members encountered in their lives, their families, and their neighborhoods. The following timeline represents the key events surrounding this community activism and advocacy in the area of women’s labor and worker’s rights in Los Angeles and the surrounding areas. This timeline also includes key events in federal legislation regarding labor and worker’s rights in the United States.

- 1963 Founding of Mothers Anonymous of Watts** - Johnnie Tillmon and other women in the Nickerson Gardens Housing Project helped to found the Mothers Anonymous of Watts, the first grassroots welfare mothers’ organization in the country.
- 1964 Creation of Office of Economic Opportunity Task Force** - President Johnson’s Committee on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime became Office of Economic Opportunity Task Force and was chaired by Sargent Shriver.
- 1964 Economic Opportunity Act Signed into Law** - Legislation called Economic Opportunity Act (EOA) signed by President Lyndon B Johnson in 1964. The act was part of the Great Society’s “war on poverty.”
- 1964 Federal Office of Economic Opportunity Established** - Federal Office of Economic Opportunity was established and the first director of the Office was Sargent Shriver.
- 1964 Bracero Program for Agricultural Workers Ends** - The Bracero Program for agricultural workers formally ended.
- 1967 Johnnie Tillmon Elected President of the California Welfare Rights Organization** - Johnnie Tillmon was elected president of the California Welfare Rights Organization (CWRO).
- 1968 International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union Membership Peak** - ILGWU membership peaked in 1968 with 457,000 workers.

- 1970 Women's Liberation Center and NOW Demonstration** - As part of a nationwide women's strike, the Women's Liberation Center and NOW organized a march, picketing, and guerilla theater beginning at the Department of Employment and proceeded to the federal building, where a rally was held. Demonstrators carried signs and distributed leaflets publicizing equal employment, abortion, and childcare.
- 1970 Chic Lingerie Strike** - Three hundred women, mostly Latina, went on strike at Chic Lingerie. The women sought a union shop and a decent hourly wage. The Women's Center Labor Committee began a children's playgroup at the ILGWU Union Hall to allow the striking women more time to participate in picketing and handing out fliers at department stores that carried the brand.
- 1970 Women's Center March** - In honor of International Women's Day (March 8), Women's Center members marched for the establishment of free 24-hour community controlled childcare centers, funded by taxation of corporate profits; passage of the ERA with protective legislation extended to men; paid maternity leave with guaranteed job security and no loss of seniority; a living wage for all people; and organization of a houseworkers union.
- 1970 Chicana Service Action Center Proposed** - Following the annual National Chicano Issues Conference, Francisca Flores, Frances Bojorquez, Amelia Camacho, Vi Muñoz, and Evelyn Velarde Benson met with Regional Director of the U.S. Department of Labor Ed Aguirre. They proposed the establishment of a center called the Chicana Service Action Center (CSAC) to meet the needs for the employment training, childcare, and educational needs of Chicanas in Los Angeles.
- 1970 La Comisión Femenil Mexicana Nacional Created as a Nonprofit** - In October, La Comisión Femenil Mexicana Nacional (CFMN) was created on paper as a nonprofit corporation, enabling receipt a grant of \$50,000 from the U.S. Department of Labor.
- 1970 Francisca Flores Becomes CFMN's First President** - Francisca Flores became CFMN's first president and served until 1972.
- 1971 Biggest Women's Rights Rally in L.A. History** - The "biggest women's rights rally in L.A. history" was held in El Pueblo de Los Angeles State Park on January 21 to pressure the California State Legislature to pass the Equal Rights Amendment.
- 1971 Valerie Vanaman Argues For Allying Women's Liberation with Welfare** - In a January meeting between the CWRO and Women's Liberation, Valerie Vanaman, house counsel for the L.A. County WRO argued that Women's Liberation needed to ally itself with welfare rights, because the most oppressed

women in the country were poor women and women on welfare. She criticized the Women's Liberation Movement for reflecting only the problems and goals of middle and upper class white women, while representing itself as concerned with liberating all women.

- 1971 Women Picket Ronald Reagan's House to Protest Welfare Cuts** - In April, women picketed and held a vigil at Ronald Reagan's house on to protest welfare and Medi-Cal cuts.
- 1971 Gloria Benton Fired from KLOS** - Late in 1971, KLOS DJ Gloria Benton was fired because her manager "didn't like hearing a woman's voice on the air." Judy Goldberg, a KMET newscaster who covered the women's movement, was fired for her "unprofessionalism" around the same time.
- 1972 Chicana Service Action Center Created** - Comisión Femenil Mexicana Nacional developed the Chicana Service Action Center, an employment training program to meet the needs of Chicanas while avoiding the male sexism in the Chicano Movement and the racial discrimination in the Women's Movement.
- 1972 Comisión Femenil de Los Angeles Has First Meeting** - Comisión Femenil de Los Angeles had its first chapter meeting in September.
- 1972 Comisión Femenil Members Testify before California State Commission on Status of Women** - In November, Comisión Femenil members testified before the California State Commission on the Status of Women. This was the first minority testimony presented.
- 1972 Josephine Valdez-Banda Becomes CFMN's President** - Josephine Valdez-Banda became CFMN's president.
- 1972 Johnnie Tillmon Becomes Director of the National Welfare Rights Organization** - Johnnie Tillmon became director of the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO).
- 1972 Elinor Marshall Glenn Elected to Service Employees International Union Executive Board** - Elinor Marshall Glenn, a key organizer of Los Angeles public employees, was elected to the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Executive Board.
- 1972 Johnnie Tillmon's "Welfare is a Women's Issue" Published in Ms. Magazine** - Johnnie Tillmon's piece "Welfare is a Women's Issue" was published in *Ms. Magazine*. The article describes her plight as an African American woman on welfare and the creation of the National Welfare Rights Association.

- 1972 *Los Angeles Times* Reports California Clothing Industry Brings in \$1 Billion Annually** - According to the *Los Angeles Times*, as of 1972, the California clothing industry was bringing in \$1 billion annually and ranked 10th among the leading 20 California industries.
- 1973 First Annual National Comisión Femenil Meeting** - The Comisión held its first annual national meeting in Goleta, California where Comisión was formally established and the organization drafted its first constitution.
- 1973 Anita Ramos Becomes CFMN's President** - Anita Ramos became CFMN's president.
- 1973 Comisión Femenil Creates Centro de Niños** - The Comisión created two bilingual, bicultural child development centers called Centro de Niños, which offered child care and services to the working poor and to mothers in school.
- 1973 CSAC Develops Graduate Institute** - CSAC developed a Graduate Institute to Prepare Chicanas for Administrative Careers in Higher Education. It aimed to rectify disparities faced by the Mexican-American woman in education and encourage and prepare more Chicanas to enter these jobs.
- 1973 Mexican American Woman is Rehired and Receives Compensation after Being Discriminatorily Fired** - The California Fair Employment Practice Commission ordered a Sears, Roebuck and Company store in Pomona to pay \$2,800 in lost wages to a Mexican-American woman and ordered that the woman be returned to the job from which she was discriminatorily fired.
- 1973 Committee on Legal Equality Reports Women Hold Less Than 1% of California Public Offices** - The California legislature's Committee on Legal Equality reported that though women make up 53% of the state's population, they hold less than 1% of public offices.
- 1973 Pregnant Employees in California Become Eligible for Increased Disability Insurance Benefits** - In California Senate Bill (SB) 652 (George Moscone) and Assembly Bill (AB) 809 (Wadie Deddeh) made pregnant employees eligible for increased disability insurance benefits.
- 1973 Child Care Programs Receive Continued Funding** - Assembly Bill (AB) 451 and Assembly Bill (AB) 1244, proposed by Robert Moretti, provided continued funding for child care programs threatened by federal cutbacks.
- 1973 Lawsuit Alleges Discrimination in Los Angeles Government** - A class action lawsuit was filed in Federal Court in Los Angeles alleging discrimination against

Mexican-Americans in Los Angeles County government hiring and promotion practices.

- 1973 Farah Strike Committee Plans Downtown Los Angeles Strike** - The Farah Strike Committee planned a strike in downtown L.A. in front of Bullocks on December 22. The action was in support of Farah's Mexican American garment workers striking at seven plants, mostly in Texas.
- 1974 Yolanda Nava Becomes CFMN's President** - Yolanda Nava became CFMN's president.
- 1974 California Minimum Wage Increase** - The minimum wage in California was raised to \$2 per hour, the third highest rate in the country.
- 1974 Francisca Flores Proposes Guidelines on Fair Employment Practice Commission** - In April, CSAC director Francisca Flores presented recommendations at a hearing held in Los Angeles on the proposed guidelines of the Fair Employment Practice Commission.
- 1974 CSAC Funded under Comprehensive and Training Employment Act** - CSAC was funded under the new Comprehensive and Training Employment Act by the Los Angeles City and County Manpower Revenue Sharing Funds.
- 1974 CSAC Holds First Fundraiser** - CSAC held its first fundraiser; the First Annual Chicana Artisan Festival held in September and raised \$2,000 from the sale of art objects, crafts, plants, clothing, food, and advertising.
- 1974 CSAC and East Los Angeles Skills Center Cosponsor Job Training for Women** - CSAC and the East Los Angeles Skills Center jointly sponsored a program to enroll and train 60 women for non-traditional jobs.
- 1974 Coalition of Labor Union Women Founded** - Elinor Marshall Glenn and others founded the Coalition of Labor Union Women.
- 1974 CSAC Collaborates on Workshops with Poder Femenino** - CSAC began collaborating on workshops and fundraisers with Poder Femenino.
- 1974 CSAC Funding Proposal Rejected for Being Discriminatory** - The County of Los Angeles Manpower Department rejected a CSAC funding proposal because the proposal "single[d] out Chicana women to be served" and, thus, was "discriminatory." Furthermore, it was judged, the CSAC proposal was critiqued as *feminist*.

- 1975 17 Undocumented Workers Arrested at High Tide Swimwear - 17**
undocumented workers were arrested in a raid on High Tide Swimwear in Los Angeles. The 17 workers were ILGWU members, and ILGWU leaders accused the INS of colluding with High Tide, because the raid occurred when striking workers were back on the job rather than when the company was using scab labor.
- 1975 Comisión Femenil Starts Job Preparation Program** - The Comisión started its East Los Angeles job preparation and counseling program, which served 800 women and trained 200 women in 30-day job preparation classes.
- 1975 Madrigal v. Quilligan Lawsuit on Involuntary Postpartum Sterilization of Chicanas** - The Comisión participated in a highly publicized class action lawsuit, Madrigal v. Quilligan, which opposed the involuntary postpartum sterilization of Chicanas.
- 1975 Gloria Molina Becomes CFMN's President** - Gloria Molina became the CFMN's president and served until 1977.
- 1975 Sally Martinez Appointed to L.A. County Commission on the Status of Women** - Los Angeles CSAC chapter member Sally Martinez was appointed by supervisor Ed Edelman to the newly created L.A. County Commission on the Status of Women.
- 1976 California Assembly Bill (AB) 353 Provides Tighter Industrial Controls** - California Assembly Bill (AB) 353 went into effect on January 1, 1976 and provided tighter controls over industrial "homework" and severe penalties for repeated infractions by manufacturers. At the same time, lack of state funds severely restricted the law's enforcement.
- 1977 Women from Comisión Femenil Attend National Women's Conference in Houston, Texas** - In November, women from the Comisión attended the National Women's Conference in Houston, Texas.
- 1977 Sandra Serrano Sewell Becomes CFMN's President** - Sandra Serrano Sewell became CFMN's president and served until 1979.
- 1979 Christine Fuentes Becomes CFMN's President** - Christine Fuentes became CFMN's president.
- 1980 Gloria Moreno-Wycoff Becomes CFMN's President** - Gloria Moreno-Wycoff became CFMN's president.
- 1981 Leticia Quezada Becomes CFMN's President** - Leticia Quezada became CFMN's president.

- 1982 Angie Cisneros Becomes CFMN's President** - Angie Cisneros became CFMN's president.
- 1983 Beatriz Olvera-Stotzer Becomes CFMN's President** - Beatriz Olvera-Stotzer became CFMN's president and served until 1986.
- 1983 Seven-month Strike at Southern California Davis Pleating Company** - In August, a seven-month ILGWU strike began at Southern California Davis Pleating Company. About 150 workers walked off the job after the company demanded they take a 20% wage cut, yield four paid holidays and two weeks' vacation time per year, and give up cost-of-living raises and some medical benefits, as well as give up seniority rights and the right to reject overtime work.
- 1984 Seven-month Strike Puts Southern California Davis Pleating Company Out of Business** - The ILGWU strike at the Southern California Davis Pleating Company put the company out of business. The company agreed to pay \$600,000 into the ILGWU's pension fund to satisfy its responsibilities under the federal Employee Retirement Income Security Act.
- 1985 New Economics for Women Founded** - Organizers from Comisión Femenil de Los Angeles founded New Economics for Women to reduce poverty by providing safe and affordable housing, on-site child-care, educational workshops, and social programs and job training in Los Angeles.
- 1986 Carmen Cantu Becomes CFMN's President** - Carmen Cantu became CFMN's president and served until 1988.
- 1986 California Immigrant Workers Association Founded** - California Immigrant Workers Association (CIWA) was founded in response to passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). Its mission is to "to build a democratic, associate membership organization of immigrant workers who benefited from the amnesty provisions of IRCA and to integrate them into the labor movement."
- 1988 Carmen E. Luna Becomes CFMN's President** - Carmen E. Luna became CFMN's president and served until 1990.
- 1990 Magdalena Cervantes Becomes CFMN's President** - Magdalena Cervantes became CFMN's president and served until 1992.
- 1992 Desiree Portillo-Rabinov Becomes CFMN's President** - Desiree Portillo-Rabinov became CFMN's president and served until 1996.

- 1996 Nina Sorkin Becomes CFMN's President** - Nina Sorkin became CFMN's president and served until 1998.
- 1996 Francisca Flores, Chicana Activist, Founder of CFMN, and Former CSAC Director, Dies** - Chicana activist, founder of CFMN, and former CSAC director Francisca Flores died.
- 1996 Proposition 209 Bans Affirmative Action in California Public Institutions** - California voters passed Proposition 209, which banned affirmative action “on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in the operation of public employment, public education, or public contracting.”
- 1998 Julia Vera-Andrews Becomes CFMN's President** - Julia Vera-Andrews became CFMN's president and served until 2000.