

Women as Social Warriors
Project Outline and Summary
Working draft, September 26, 2004

Mission: *The Women as Social Warriors project is a UC Santa Cruz student, staff, and faculty collaboration that spotlights Chicana and Latina activists and artists challenging local, regional, cross-border and global injustices in their communities.*

Summary: The Women as Social Warriors project was originally conceived of as a one-time event featuring indigenous struggles around Fair Trade cooperatives in November 2002. The event was so robustly attended and warmly received that organizers decided it should become a tradition at UCSC. In its second year, we focused on women who organize around issues of sexuality and sexual identities. This event with the byline, ‘Stigmas of Sexuality’, helped build strong transnational ties resulting in a sizeable UCSC delegation of student-organizers that participated in a week-long exchange and marched in the 2nd Annual Marcha Lésbica in Mexico City just two months later.

Now in its third year, the WSW committee is building a comprehensive project around women’s leadership and feminism in the labor movement. WSW 3 expands local and community ownership of the project through collaboration with campus unions--setting the table for local, regional, and cross-border dialogues and leadership trainings and workshops with the keynote speaker, Iris Munguía, an important leader in the long-standing banana women’s labor movement, here from Honduras for one week.

Though still a relatively new project, WSW events and subsequent actions and organizing have already educated over a thousand students about local, regional, and transnational movement building and inspired many of those into the actual ranks of organizers and activists working for social change. Bottom Line: There are abundant Warriors to highlight and to connect with for *many years* to come!

Timeline Snapshot:

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| November 2002 | 1st Women as Social Warriors event featuring indigenous leaders from Chiapas discussing the struggle against Plan Puebla Panama and their experiences organizing Fair Trade cooperatives |
| September 2003 | UCSC student organizer Sara Emery spends 10 week internship with Jolom Maya’etik in Chiapas doing support work and technology education, working with women to outreach to universities in the U.S. |
| January 2004 | Women as Social Warriors II: Stigmas of Sexuality features panel of cross-border, regional and local Chicana and Latina activists organizing around issues of sexuality |
| March 2004 | Eleven UCSC students and staff march in 2nd Annual Lesbian Feminist March in Mexico City with keynote speaker, Juana Guzmán, from WSW II event. Our banner: <i>Cruzando Fronteras, Rompiendo Barreras—Crossing Borders, Breaking Barriers</i> |
| May 2004 | UCSC Lesbian March delegation presentation and premiere a documentary on the Marcha Lésbica at GLBTI Resource Center to packed house |
| July 2004 | Mexico City lesbian organizers and allies visit Santa Cruz and attend local Triangle Speakers event, Barrios Unidos reception and replenish LeS VOZ magazine stock in local and regional bookstores. Two UCSC alumni are on new cover of LeS VOZ with a full article on their San Francisco same-sex marriage inside. |

- Nov 9 2004** **Women as Social Warriors: THIS is What the Face of the New Labor Movement Looks Like!** event featuring women leaders in the labor movement. Keynote speakers are: Iris Munguía from Honduras and Secretary of Women for the Coalition of Latin American Banana Unions as well as for the Coalition of Honduran Banana Workers; Christina Vasquez, International VP for UNITE-HERE; and Maria Padilla and Maria Elena Alcantar from AFSCME local #3299 organizing efforts on the UCSC campus.
- Nov 20, 2004** **Indigenous reps from Jolom return to UCSC** for another presentation on their current work and a debut of an indigenous-made film documenting the human rights abuses in Chiapas.
- January 2005** **2nd Intern goes to work with Jolom** for a six month period teaching artisans how to communicate and market their products over the web.

Narratives:

WSW I

In November of 2002, Comercio Justo (CJ), a UCSC student organization focused on Fair Trade, partnered with the Mexico Solidarity Network, a transnational NGO based in Washington D.C., to host two indigenous women, Marla Gutierrez Gutierrez and Celerina Ruiz Nuñez from K'inál Antzetik in Chiapas, Mexico. These groups organized a speaking tour throughout California for these women to talk about their struggle against globalization and their experience organizing Fair Trade artisan cooperatives.

This was a cultural event emphasizing social alternatives: in addition to the women from Chiapas, the Latin American Music Ensemble played indigenous tunes, professional indigenous photographers introduced their work, and local Fair Trade vendors sold socially responsible crafts. Fair Trade and homemade food was plentiful as was Fair Trade coffee. Spanish-English translation was provided throughout the entirety of the event.

In organizing this event, Comercio Justo made connections with professors in the Women's Studies, Environmental Studies, LALS, and Sociology Departments who helped to promote the event and attract a large crowd. The women also spoke to classes and took part in a discussion held by the Chicano/Latino Research Center. CJ formed alliances with other active campus groups and community organizations, such as the Student Environmental Center and the Santa Cruz Barrios Unidos. Response to the event was so powerful as to inspire a second year of organizing--Women As Social Warriors II!

WSW II: Stigmas of Sexuality

In Summer 2003, the coordination group for Women as Social Warriors reconvened and, after months of robust discussion and debate, we decided to focus on the work of women activists from both sides of the US-Mexico border who organize around issues of sexuality and sexual identities. This time, the planning committee was comprised of both campus and community organizations from GIIP (Global Information Internship Project), CJTC (Center for Justice, Tolerance, and Community), College 9-10 Co-Curricular Activities, CLRC (Chicano/Latino Research Center), the Women's Center, Triangle Speakers, and the GLBTI Resource Center.

The committee decided to anchor the event by inviting **Juana Guzmán**, a two-time participant in a transnational movement building retreat organized by the CJTC and LALS and called 'Summer Institute: Social Change Across Borders'. **Juana Guzmán** co-founded and is Co-Editor of a lesbian feminist magazine, LeS VOZ, and spoke of her work in Mexico getting the magazine into mainstream and local bookstores, organizing lesbian film festivals, soccer tournaments, and working with lesbians incarcerated due to their sexual identity. Juana also articulated the challenges and successes of organizing the 1st Lesbian Feminist march in Mexico City, which drew over 2,500 Latin American and US women to march in spring 2003, and received widespread media coverage.

Amidst a week of powerful speaking engagements with Juana, the keynote event came on January 15 and also featured two other speakers: author and UC Berkeley Professor **Carla Trujillo**, editor of *Chicana Lesbians: The Girls Our Mothers Warned Us About*, who spoke and read from her new novel, *What Night Brings*; and local activist and UCSC graduate **Mónica Morales** who brought some of the focus-issues home speaking from her experience working in Watsonville and Santa Cruz in HIV/AIDS prevention and organizing around GLBTI issues in the Latin@ community. Again, we had heaps of Fair Trade crafts, food and coffee. For entertainment, San Francisco-based performance artist **Gigi Otálvaro-Hormillosa** presented an artistic installment to open the evening animating the themes of mestizaje and sexual identity.

The Women As Social Warriors II: Stigmas of Sexuality event drew approximately 375 guests completely filling College 9-10 Multipurpose Room. We raised over a \$1000 for Juana Guzman in small cash donations to take home for organizing and movement-building in Mexico City. Moreover, we connected with a student and community population hungry for inspiration and ideas of how to organize around sexual identity.

Marcha Lésbica—UCSC delegation goes to Mexico City

Out of this event, came a group of students and staff interested in traveling to Mexico City to work with Juana Guzmán and her colleagues from LeS VOZ in the 2nd Annual Lesbian March. We took a leap from a powerful campus event to morphing into a diverse delegation ready for cross-border actions. Eleven students and staff formed the UCSC delegation to join over a thousand women from all over Latin America, Canada, and the United States to march for Lesbian and Feminist human rights on March 20, 2004. OUR BANNER exclaimed, “*Cruzando Fronteras, Rompiendo Barreras!!!*” We all wore LeS VOZ t-shirts, helped to organize and facilitate the beginning of the March, and indeed marched right behind LeS VOZ in the 3rd delegation from the front of the entire March. The March built as women on the streets joined us and culminated in the Zocalo in the heart of Mexico City. There, a UCSC student-organizer (Mireya Gomez) made an impassioned speech about cross-border activism on stage in front of a large crowd at the march as our banner flew behind her. Part of our team videotaped the March and did a series of interviews with Mexican and Chicana activists. These interviews formed the backbone of a student-filmed and student-edited documentary on the March and our experiences in Mexico. The documentary was premiered at the campus Report Back from the March.

UCSC Delegation Presentation on March and Documentary

In May of 2004, the students and staff who formed the UCSC delegation reported back on their experiences before, during, and after the March to a very full GLBTI Resource Center. This event highlighted the documentary featuring pre-and post-March interviews and footage of the March itself. Homemade tamales were served. The Report Back drew community and campus folks alike. Building on the documentary, students from the delegation continually work on developing a visual library of all WSW events thus far.

WSW III: THIS is what the Face of the New Labor Movement Looks Like!

Over the summer of 2004, various committee members from past WSW events gathered and decided to turn our energy to women and women’s leadership in cross-border labor solidarity movements. This November, Iris Munguía, from Honduras will be in Santa Cruz for a week. She will be on a panel with Cristina Vazquez, International VP of UNITE-HERE. The panel will also feature, Maria Elena Alcantar and Maria Padilla, two local woman leaders from a campus union, AFSCME, to discuss the ‘Dump Sodexho’ campaign success and local experiences with building women’s leadership in the union. **This event will take place on November 9, 2004 from 6-9pm on the UCSC campus at the College 9-10 Multi-purpose Room.**

Iris Munguía BIO:

Iris Munguía is the first Secretary of Women for both the Coalition of Honduran Banana Unions (COSIBAH) and the Coalition of Latin American Banana Unions (COLSIBA). She grew up on the North Coast of Honduras, near La Lima, on the Chiquita-owned banana plantation where her father worked. In her teens she first worked as a seamstress and in the informal economy; when she was eighteen she started working in a

packinghouse on the plantation, where she worked for sixteen years--working six days a week, ten or more hours a day. With her partner she had three children, Jessica (now 27), Ivan (20), and Toño (17).

In 1989 Iris, first became involved in her union, SITRATERCO (Sindicato de Trabajadore/as of the La Tela Railroad Company), as a rank-and-file activist. Soon after she became deeply involved with SITRATERCO's new Comité Femenil (Women's Committee), which was beginning to launch programs for women's leadership development. She was first elected to union office on her plantation's packinghouse committee, where she became the third woman in the union's history to serve as Secretary General of a base committee.

Beginning in 1990, she traveled with another woman from her union to a three-year long series of workshops on women's issues. Every three months, after returning, the two trained the Women's Committee in what they had learned; and they, in turn, gave workshops to twenty-five women each, at the plantation level--on themes including women and leadership, sex and gender, self-esteem, and parliamentary procedure. Iris herself soon thereafter rose to become the first woman elected as an officer at the sectional (middle) level of the union; and, by 1994, the third woman on the general Executive Committee.

In 1994, when it was first formed, she became Secretary of Women for the Coalition of Honduran Banana Unions (COSIBAH). Since then, together with the COSIBAH staff and women from seven different banana workers' unions throughout Honduras, she has presented over a hundred workshops on gender politics and union empowerment to banana workers. She also helped organize women's committees on all the other unions and establish Secretaries of Women in two others. In 1995 she became the first Secretary of Women for another new coalition of banana unions throughout Latin America (COLSIBA). Through COLSIBA, Iris has helped build a thriving network empowering and educating women banana workers in Central America, Colombia, and Ecuador.

With the women of COLSIBA Iris was an editor of *Lo Que Hemos Vivido: Luchas de Mujeres Bananeras*, a collection of autobiographies by banana women (2003). She was also a co-editor of an extensive self-study the women conducted of the lives, working conditions, and union activities of women banana workers in all seven countries. In her years as Secretary of Women, Iris Munguía has traveled through Latin America and Europe, speaking at union congresses, banana worker conferences, and numerous other events such as the World Social Forum in France.