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MEXICAN AMERICAN LEGAL DEFENSE AND EDUCATIONAL FUND

145 NINTH STREET / SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94103 / (415) 626-6196

June 12, 1974

Marta Cotera
Juarez Lincoln Center
St. Edward Universtiy
3001 S. Congress
Austin, Texas

Dear Ms. Cotera,

MALDEF is currently working on a Chicana Rights Project. The CRP is the first attempt on any scale to counteract the dismal civil rights litigation record that besets Chicana women. The project aim is specifically the legal needs of Chicanas; researching their problems and formulating a litigation strategy based on her needs.

It seems clear that although Chicanos are the second largest minority in the United States, they do not obtain their fair share of attention from civil rights lawyers, traditional funding sources, government programs, publicity, etc. This fact is reflected even more severely in the case of Chicana women. It is clearly evidenced in the almost total lack of hard data available to document the plight of Chicanas, and even more so in the absence of litigation to confront the specific legal problems of Chicanas and obtaining through legal channels equality in employment, education, health care, prisons, housing, child-care, etc.

With the Chicana Rights Project, MALDEF will be the first organization to focus on the legal needs of Chicanas. The director of the project is Patricia Vasquez, a Chicana attorney from San Antonio, Texas. Since the CRP is national in scope, Ms. Vasquez will be handling litigation from all areas of the United States, focusing on the Southwest. The research portion of the project will attempt to define, by mid-'75, the specific legal needs that Chicanas have, state by state, (focusing on California, Arizona, Texas, New Mexico, and Colorado).

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The success of the Chicana Rights Project in the upcoming year depends on the support it receives from individual Chicanas and organized Chicana groups alike. The Chicana Rights Project is asking your support and assistance, if possible, in the following areas:

1) Providing the project with information (essays, atricles, statistics) on the (legal) problems of Chicana women (in the areas of education, employment, health, mental health, prisons, child-care, government programs, etc); or providing us the names of Chicanas whom you know to be involved in or contemplating research in these areas. The research is seeking to document the existing status of Chicana women; and how her problems may be ammenable through legal channels.

2) Providing the CRP with the names of Chicana organizations in your area, whether their orientation be political, community or professional. The project is attempting to contact all Chicana groups, inform them of the CRP, and maintain channels of communication .

3) We are formulating a list of all Chicana lawyers (and law students) in the United States. Our current list has only 40-50 Chicana attorneys, mostly in California; many more Chicanas are in law schools. Please inform the project of Chicana attorneys practicing in your area (include their addresses).

4) The majority of the funds we received from the Ford Foundation are earmarked for litigation. We would greatly appreciate any financial contribution which would make possible more research of the exact legal needs of Chicanas. All contributions are tax-deductible; and should indicate they are specifically for the Chicana Rights Project.

I look forward to your response. We welcome any comments, suggestions or inquiries you may have regarding the Chicana Rights Project.

Sincerely,

Carmen A. Estrada

Carmen A. Estrada
Chicana Rights Project