

## PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

### GLORIA ARELLANES

activist

*"I understand my power as a woman because I give life, I am a teacher, I am a nurturer, I provide spirituality teachings, and when we collectively come together as women, it's such a powerful thing."*

Page | 1



COURTESY OF ROXANA BLACKSEA/THE CORSAIR

#### Background Information

Born April 26, 1946

Gloria Arellanes was born in East Los Angeles and raised in El Monte, California. Her father is a first-generation Mexican American, and her mother is Native American Tongva. She is best known as an influential Chicano movement activist. Her work centers and highlights Mexican American women's issues.

#### Arellanes' Resistance

When Arellanes' family relocated to El Monte, California, she realized that, unlike East LA's environment of ethnic solidarity, El Monte's racial discrimination and tensions were ever-present. Her activism started in high school when she witnessed race riots and discriminatory arrests. After graduating, she completed a year of college but left after deciding to get more involved with community initiatives. In 1967, she became involved with the Brown Berets. This pro-Chicano grassroots organization tackled issues like educational reform, police brutality, illegal occupation of Mexican land, the Vietnam war, and welfare issues. Arellanes was one of the only women to have a leadership position within the organization. She was a leader of the "East LA Free Clinic," now known as "El Barrio Free Clinic," a welfare initiative aimed to combat the lack of access to affordable healthcare in the East LA community.<sup>i</sup> Due to the lack of women in leadership, Arellanes and fellow Chicana members came together to form the "Las Adelitas de Aztlán,". The group's name pays homage to the soldaderas, women soldiers, who fought alongside men during the Mexican Revolution.<sup>ii</sup> Arellanes was also part of the National Chicano Moratorium, one of the largest Mexican American anti-Vietnam War protests.

#### Achievements

Although Las Adelitas de Aztlán disbanded shortly after the Moratorium, it did not stop Arellanes from continuing to do impactful work, such as opening another clinic, La Clínica Familiar del Barrio on Atlantic Boulevard.<sup>iii</sup> She has also donated many of her Brown Berets documents, photographs, and oral history narratives to the Cal State LA Library.<sup>iv</sup> Since 2018, Arellanes has opened for the Los Angeles Women's Marches and invited Brown Berets members to join.<sup>v</sup> She is also a respected elder of the Tongva people.

## Essential Questions

1. In high school, Arellanes witnessed a lot of racial discrimination and tension against Mexican Americans.
  - a. How do you think Arellanes' experiences shaped her worldview?
  
2. Arellanes is passionate about civil rights issues, feminism, and indigenous rights.
  - a. What are some issues you are passionate about?
  - b. What do you think is your responsibility in making others aware of them?
  
3. ***"I understand my power as a woman because I give life, I am a teacher, I am a nurturer, I provide spirituality teachings, and when we collectively come together as women, it's such a powerful thing"***
  - a. How important do you think solidarity is to achieve representation and for your voice to be heard?

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<sup>i</sup> Editors, KCET (2022). "El Barrio Free Clinic | Los Angeles Conservancy." Public Media Group of Southern California. Retrieved from <https://www.laconservancy.org/locations/el-barrio-free-clinic>

<sup>ii</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>iii</sup> Martínez, V., & Barajas, J. (n.d.). "How female Brown Berets created their own Chicana movement." Los Angeles Times. Retrieved from <https://www.latimes.com/projects/chicano-moratorium/female-brown-berets-create-chicana-movement/>

<sup>iv</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>v</sup> *Ibid.*