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Extending Latina Dialogue

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Cover Page Footnote
This article is from an earlier iteration of Diálogo which had the subtitle "A Bilingual Journal." The publication is now titled "Diálogo: An Interdisciplinary Studies Journal."

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On June 9, 2001 the Chicago Foundation for Women and "Mujeres Latinas en Acción" co-hosted "Beyond The Kitchen Table, Extending Latina Dialogue." The event was sponsored by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois, Exito and Kraft Foods North America Inc. and held at Harold Washington College in the City of Chicago.

One hundred and fifty women gathered to bring to the table perspectives and experiences that ranged across age, ethnicity and social backgrounds. The "open space" approach to dialogue facilitated the participation of all the women. The philosophy it engendered assured that everyone's contribution was significant to the development of themes and topics for roundtable discussions. The collective activities of each breakout group were brought to the larger forum at the conclusion of the conference.

The themes and topics presented an opportunity for open microphone, offering each woman the opportunity to voice matters of concern, conviction, importance and relevance to themselves as women, but also for the greater good of their communities. Topics included: Spirituality, Sexual Abuse/Sex Education, Leadership, Balance and Advancement, Relationships, Education, Lesbian/Bisexual issues encountered by Latinas, and Latinas in the Arts.

A timeline of important dates and events in Women's History was created by participants. It was a visually powerful testimony to the wealth of knowledge and strength that is inherent in women and, in this context, especially Latina women. "Our personal stories and our personal events are historic and they really do contribute to shaping who we are in the community as women, as Latinas and what our role and our positions are here in the society," said Sylvia Puente, Community Advocate, Leader and University Administrator.

Overall, the event revealed the great need and urgency for women in the community to gather and generate conversations that may then lead to transformational activities throughout the City of Chicago. It is the first in a series of pending forums that will unite Latinas to discuss topics of importance to them.

Source: Diedre A. Lucas, Chicago Foundation for Women (CFW). "Over the years, support from the Latino community has grown and helped Chicago Foundation for Women achieve these successes. In order to ensure that an even greater number of women and girls can receive the resources and opportunities needed, CFW would like to increase awareness and support in the Latino community, and assist in the development of a network of Latina leaders. The Foundation has created a Latina Leadership Council to aid in reaching this goal."