

Speaker calls on heritage to discuss culture, feminist issues

■ **CONFERENCE:** Flores-Ortiz encourages women of color to speak up, despite the odds

By Kristin Bailey
Student Activities Reporter

The ASUO Women's Center continued its conference "Defining Ourselves: Feminism and Beyond," when keynote speaker Yvette Flores-Ortiz, Ph.D., spoke to a crowd of approximately 60 people at the law school Saturday night.

Flores-Ortiz is an associate professor of psychology in Chicano/Chicana Studies at the University of California at Davis. She drew on her own multi-cultural background to discuss "Voicing the Silence: Women of Color, Feminism and Human Rights."

Raised in Panama by a French mother and a Chinese father, Flores-Ortiz has a rich personal background. This diversity in heritage, she said, helped form her into the person she is today.

"I have people in my family of every color, of every race," she said. "And we are kin."

Her mother, Flores-Ortiz said, was one of her first feminist influences.

"My mother was always a woman of resistance and would not take part in the racial conflicts of the country," she said.

Although Flores-Ortiz discussed women of color and their struggles, she said her opinions could not extend past her own experiences.

"I cannot speak of women of color other than me."

Education played a large role

in helping her voice herself, Flores-Ortiz said. She received her Ph.D. in clinical psychology in 1982 from the University of California at Berkeley.

"I was dangerous because I survived academia," she said. "I had a voice. The efforts of silencing me became a bit more sophisticated."

Flores-Ortiz said she had always been told that women had wisdom and knowledge but it should not be flaunted.

"It threatened the precarious balance between men and women."

Rage is likely to follow this pattern of hiding wisdom, Flores-Ortiz said.

"I smile because my ancestors taught me to smile and to watch and observe," she said. "Sister, if I showed you my rage, you would die."

Flores-Ortiz continued by urging women of color to voice themselves until they are heard.

"It's not that we don't speak; it's that we are not heard," she said. "We are not listened to."

When continuing to further human rights, Flores-Ortiz said that women's freedom must also be included in the struggle.

"We need to remember that the fight for human rights cannot be won unless we include rights for women."

Dr. Flores-Ortiz is a member of the Chicana/Latina Research Center, which is the only research center in the United States that focuses on women of color. She has been published in various subjects, including domestic violence, family therapy, mental health and feminist psychology.

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