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# A Voice for History

As a scholar, Aída Hurtado has marked multiple firsts in her study and teaching of Chicana/o studies and feminist theory. And now she's made history of another kind, as a featured speaker at the recent Women's March in Washington D.C., said to be the largest such civic event ever in the U.S.

"It was a magical moment," Hurtado, who holds the Luis Leal Endowed Chair at UC Santa Barbara, said of being on stage at the National Mall, overlooking a swell of demonstrators. In D.C. alone, estimates number the crowd upward of 500,000; worldwide figures push as high as 3 million people combined participated in the march.

With an academic background in psychology and sociology, Hurtado has focused her research on social and ethnic identity, feminist theory, media portrayals of ethnic and racial groups and equity in education. Gender equity in particular has been a cornerstone of her work. She has penned four books on the topic, in addition to myriad articles and chapters.

Hurtado also has been something of a pioneer. In 2000, as a faculty member at UC Santa Cruz, she taught the campus's first undergraduate course in Chicana feminism, out of the psychology department of all places — "an unusual home for such a course," she recalled, "but the reception by the undergraduates was phenomenal."

“Five years later, I taught the first graduate course on feminist theory in the social psychology doctoral program at UCSC — another first,” Hurtado added. “My research and writing interests converged with the growing interests of undergraduates and graduates in the field of psychology before I joined UCSB’s Chicana/o Studies department. By the time this election rolled around, I was already involved in feminist issues. Participating in the Women’s March was an extension of this longtime career and personal involvement.”

Said Gerardo Aldana, professor and chair of Chicana/o studies at UC Santa Barbara, “Professor Hurtado’s participation in the Women’s March, as it demonstrates clearly her tremendous impact on understandings of gender within scholarly and public realms. Chicana/o Studies aims to have useful effects within communities of all types, and Professor Hurtado provides a shining example of engaged scholarship.”

Over her three decades in academia, Hurtado has received national and global acclaim for her research and scholarship. She’s also been lauded for her commitment to mentorship. And it was in fact one of her mentees who recruited her to speak at the march — lead organizer Carmen Perez, executive director of New York-based nonprofit organization The Gathering for Justice, was a student and research assistant of Hurtado’s during her tenure on the faculty at UC Santa Cruz.

“We advocate for an intersectional approach to feminist organizing — that is, to include social justice issues as they intersect with women’s issues,” Hurtado said of the Chicana Feminisms movement in which she and Perez are both active. “For example, for women of color, the increasing incarceration of men of color is not independent of women’s issues, especially because of the horrible effects of incarceration on the entire family. The program for the Women’s March took this intersectional approach and many constituencies were represented in the selection of speakers. I was lucky enough to be included as well.”

And, in true mentor fashion, Hurtado used her remarks, in part, to laud her onetime pupil-turned longtime colleague in social justice.

“I felt a surge of pride for what we teach at the university,” Hurtado said of watching Perez in action during the march. “I also felt that our public education in California is so precious and extraordinary, so I ditched my prepared remarks and decided to highlight Carmen’s educational success. Many times the academy is criticized for being so esoteric, but yet this young woman took the writings of feminists and

implemented them to help organize an event that will be considered one of the most important ones, perhaps in the history of this country.

“So I went for the moment and spoke in defense of books, ideas and young people’s dedication and vision in implementing the ideas they learn in public education,” she continued. “I was so honored to have been on that stage with Carmen. It’s not often that professors get to witness their students’ success before their very eyes.”

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## About UC Santa Barbara

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