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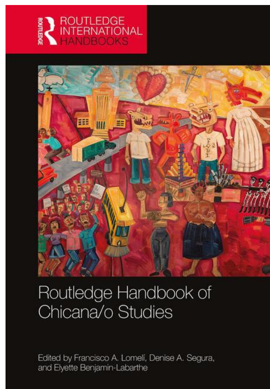

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The Chicano movement

Ramón A. Gutiérrez

This chapter on the Chicano movement surveys its origins, history, and legacy. Most scholars date the years of the movement's vibrancy from approximately 1969 to 1973. These dates, of course, are contested. A movement by definition is usually composed of various interest groups that coalesce for common ambitions and each accordingly has a stake in how the past is remembered, written, and preserved, and by whom. The Chicano movement, like many other movements, has a number of narratives and counter-narratives about its origins and decline.

The Chicano movement's original aim was to construct a new political subject for the world stage – the Chicano – who sought to transform his subjugation as an ethnic Mexican living in the United States into a persona much more powerful and respected in daily public life. The identity politics the movement produced routinely asked: Who is in? Who is out? Who and what troubled the commune, or the *comunidad*, for which these self-appointed young men putatively spoke without election? In its glory days the movement was explicitly anti-colonial, nationalist, and anti-racist. In time it embraced the idea of "internal colonialism" as the theoretical paradigm that best described the circumstances Chicanos found themselves in the United States (Acuña 1972). If Chicanos were to wage an anti-colonial war against American imperialism they needed a vision of liberation, a utopic projection that would serve as the *mecha*, the spark that would ignite revolt. Students who were deeply committed to this fervor accordingly called themselves the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA). This dream was an independent nation-state they called Aztlán, or the five states of the American Southwest lost at the end of Mexican War in 1848: California, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and Nevada. On some maps of Aztlán's geographic sweep Texas too was included.

In the present most university-based programs and academic departments devoted to the study of ethnic Mexicans consciously title themselves Chicana and Chicano Studies, Chicana/o Studies, Chican@ Studies, and recently, ChicanX Studies, though they all began simply as Chicano Studies. What these lexical changes have signaled over time are the identities and voices that were repressed during the movement's ascendency, concerns about the oppression of women, lesbians, gays and the transgendered, and persons of mixed racial ancestry. These were all forms of discrimination deeply and daily felt back in 1969, but that rarely commanded discussion, themes we will return to shortly, to answer the questions: Who was in? Who was out? The most capacious way to encompass the complexity of these personal and political identities

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is to recognize them under the broad rubric "ethnic Mexican," thus noting their origin in persons of Mexican ancestry who have fashioned other denominations as time has passed.

Who is a Chicano?

A number of hypotheses have been advanced over the years about the etymological origin of the word Chicano. Does it come from the Spanish word *chico*, which simply means small, but is often used colloquially to refer to a young boy? Does "Chicano" derive from the word "*chinanco*"? In the city-state of Tenochtitlán, the seat of the Aztec Empire in pre-Columbian times, extensive agriculture was undertaken on floating gardens that were known as *chinampas*. The men and women who kept the irrigation canals clean of debris so that water circulated easily around these floating farms were called *chinancos*; a word that in colonial New Spain later came to be applied logically to street and gutter sweepers. Why young Mexican American men during the 1960s would construct a political subjectivity as "small boys" or as "street cleaners" defies logic. The most plausible hypothesis for the word's origin is in the glorification and idealization of the Aztecs by young Mexican American men. In pre-Columbian times the people we now refer to as the Aztecs called themselves the *Mexica* in their native Náhuatl language. Those who were born into *Mexica* society were called *mexicanos*. When New Spain gained its independence from Spain in 1821, México was chosen as the new nation's name, honoring the country's Indigenous beginnings and taking the *Mexica* national myth of origin as its own. One still sees this graphically illustrated on Mexico's flag which dawns at its center an eagle, perched on a cactus plant devouring a serpent. According to *Mexica* mythology, it was on beholding this sign that they gave up their nomadic roaming and settled as sedentary agriculturalists (Gutiérrez 1986).

If one starts with the word *mexicanos*, which simply means Mexicans, shorten it by dropping the first syllable, or "*me*", we are left with "*xicanos*". The "x" in *xicanos*, pronounced as "*ch*", transforms the word into *chicanos*. In Mexico the word *chicano*, when used in the Spanish language, was deemed a vulgar, derogatory, class-based term that referred to persons of dubious character, to those of lower-class origins, and to tramps. In the 1960s this class-based term of insult and derision was chosen consciously as a badge of pride and ethnic identity, in recognition of the social realities Mexican Americans experienced. The despised thus became the prized, much as African Americans in the 1960s refused to be called Negroes and chose instead Blacks. In 1969 the word's significance was further radicalized as some Chicanos began demanding the formation of an autonomous nation they called Aztlán (Acuña 1972; Gonzales 2001; Gutiérrez 1986). The *Mexica* myth of origin holds that these Indigenous nomads come into the central Valley of Mexico from the north. Whether that north was in what is today the American Southwest, in Mexico's own northern states, or just north of the central Valley of Mexico is not yet definitively known. Locating Aztlán is like trying to establish with geographic specificity where the biblical Garden of Eden is and was.

The notion of Aztlán was embraced as the Chicano's ancestral home, with specific national boundaries, which in the late 1960s they wanted returned to its rightful owners, the Chicanos. As we imagine sociologically how the word Chicano was used in this period, it had a host of persons who so denominated themselves. At one end of the political spectrum were individuals who called themselves Chicanos to symbolize pride in their Mexican cultural roots, and at the more radical end were those demanding an autonomous nation-state. In the middle were many who invoked the identity without consciously subscribing to ethnic, national, or anti-racist agendas, simply voicing it as a way of identifying with society's downtrodden. For persons born into second-generation Mexican immigrant households in the United States, Chicano identity, tied as it was etymologically to a heroic Aztec past, provided an alternative tradition of resistance

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to marginality and discrimination and proved a particularly expansive rhetorical arsenal for the construction of a usable counter-narrative of the Mexican American past in the United States.

Chicano stratification

Sociological studies tell us that the persons who called themselves Chicanos in the late 1960s were largely young men roughly between the ages of 16 and 25 living in the large cities of the American Southwest. Women initially resisted the term because of the vulgarity attached to its older connotations. Proper Mexican American women who aspired to upward mobility did not use such language either in public or private, eschewing its class connotations and perceived gang affiliations. Chicano self-identification and economic status were inversely related; the higher one's socioeconomic status, the lower one's interest in Chicanismo. The term was also profoundly generationally inflected. First-and second-generation Mexican-origin immigrants rarely embraced it. First-generation Mexican immigrants who largely labored in rural areas of the Southwest doggedly thought of themselves as *mexicanos*, whether or not they planned to stay in the United States or eventually return home, as many of them did in the 1920s and 1930s. To fully understand the impact of generation on the emergence of Chicano identity reality, imagine three birth cohorts. Chicanos were largely third-generation ethnic Mexicans born during or shortly after World War II. Their fathers, many as citizens and permanent residents, probably fought in the Great War and benefitted from the economic advances it brought (Gutiérrez 1986).

The upward mobility World War II produced for most veterans was not equally distributed across America's racial landscape in the late 1940s and 1950s, and increasingly, peaceful protests demanding civil rights began gaining national attention as African Americans, Mexican Americans, and Puerto Ricans militated for change. Third-generation Mexican American males, those who called themselves Chicanos, had been integrated poorly into American life (Telles & Ortiz 2008). Public schools were failing them. Local police were constantly surveilling them. They were routinely misidentified as gang members and drug dealers, thus differentially stigmatizing their daily and long-term lives. American labor markets restricted their entry into well-paid unionized jobs, relegating them to poorly paid unskilled work. The courts were routinely locking them up for small legal infractions, further limiting their economic opportunities for well-paid work on release. These were some of the urban grievances of young Mexican American men living in the cities of the Southwest. They began to imagine different possibilities in their lives. Many of them did not speak Spanish or English well, knew little of Mexico's history, and, in general, had almost no cultural memories of Mexico, its regions, and its peoples; something probably equally true of whatever American identity they may or may not have felt.

Chicano political subjectivity initially emerged locally, first in Colorado, and soon thereafter, in California. The catalysts for this diffusion were two nationwide student conferences on Chicano issues – the Chicano Youth Liberation Conference held in Denver in March 1969 and the Chicano Coordinating Council on Higher Education held in April 1969 at the University of California, Santa Barbara (Muñoz 1989). These meetings brought together a plethora of student groups that thought of themselves ethnically as Latin Americans, Spanish Americans, Mexican Americans, *hispanos*, *mexicanos*, *tejanos*, and *californios*. Once together they challenged each other to find unity and power in their collectivity, to abandon their localism and think more globally and strategically, fashioning a political agenda that would empower ethnic Mexicans as Chicanos.

The person largely responsible for doing the spade work for the emergence of this urban variant of the Chicano movement was the Denver, Colorado activist Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales. Corky initially gained notoriety in the American Southwest as a professional prizefighter,

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who was ruthless with his opponents. Relatives say that Rodolfo became "Corky" because like a cork on a pressurized bottle of cider or champagne, he was constantly popping off (Obituary, www.historycolorado.org/sites/default/files/files/Kids_Students/Bios/Rodolpho_Gonzales). Outside the boxing ring, he was equally energetic and merciless towards those who stood in his way as he strove to improve the living conditions of ethnic Mexicans. He sought to ameliorate this state of affairs initially through membership in the Democratic Party, working tirelessly in the "Viva Kennedy" campaign to elect John F. Kennedy president in 1960. This political work soon landed him a job in the mid-1960s as the director of a War on Poverty program. Change came too slowly through these establishment instruments and token programs for this wrestler known for his speed in the boxing ring. In 1967 he began a militant organization called the Crusade for Justice and through it organized high school and college students. His most catalytic act initially, the one that quickly gained a national following, was the publication of his epic poem, *Yo Soy Joaquín/I am Joaquín*,[1] released in 1967. The poem starts:

> Yo soy Joaquín,
> perdido en un mundo de confusión:
> I am Joaquín,
> lost in a world of confusion,
> caught up in the whirl of a gringo society,
> confused by the rules, scorned by attitudes,
> suppressed by manipulation, and destroyed by modern society. . .
> La raza!
> Méjicano!
> Español!
> Latino!
> Chicano!
> Or whatever I call myself,
> I look the same
> I feel the same
> I cry
> And
> Sing the same. . .
> I am Aztec prince and Christian Christ.
> I SHALL ENDURE!
> I WILL ENDURE!
>
> (Gonzales 2001, pp. 16, 30)

The poem circulated broadly, was produced in movie form too, and quickly gained a following among activist Mexican American students who had been militating more moderately for civil rights. The poem addressed educational reform, police violence, the carnage the war in Vietnam was leaving in Mexican American communities, FBI surveillance, and, most importantly, the need for a coalitional force to birth the independent nation of Aztlán.

Chicano as a political identity became more widely diffused and actively embraced, at least among young, third-generation Mexican American males, as a result of Corky Gonzales's activism and the impact of his rousing poem. Chicano subjectivity thus became the political glue that began to unify what had previously been a host of distinct local and regional identities that did not intersect or coalesce. In March 1969 Corky Gonzales convened the Chicano Youth Liberation Conference in Denver (Vigil 1999). The three-day conference ended with

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the dissemination of the manifesto collectively crafted as *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán*. The manifesto began by proclaiming: "We, the Chicano inhabitants and civilizers of the northern land of Aztlán . . . we are a nation, we are a union of free pueblos, we are Aztlán." The Plan spelled out how national unity and political empowerment could be achieved, calling for unity among America's racially oppressed minorities, for community control over local institutions, and for the communitarian management of its resources through responsible capitalism. It called for culturally relevant educational curricula and local control of schools, for the development of institutions that protected civil and human rights and guaranteed fair wages, for community self-defense through humanitarianism, for a cultural politics of contestation around the organization of capitalism, and the rejection of the two-party system, working instead towards pluralist, coalitional politics.

The ethnic militancy Chicanos began articulating in 1969 was profoundly influenced by the radical forms of Black nationalism that had emerged only a few years earlier. As such, recall one of the truly poignant insights in the autobiography of Malcolm X. Reciting the psychic violence that racism and discrimination had wreaked on African Americans, Malcolm X noted that the most profound had been the emasculation of Black men. In the eyes of white America, Blacks were not deemed men. Thus whatever else the Black Power movement was about, it was also a cultural assertion of masculinity by radical men, most of them quite young and marginalized in society.

Chicanos undoubtedly faced a rather similar experience – social emasculation and cultural negation – and sought strength and inspiration in a militant Aztec past. The Aztec past they chose to emphasize celebrated the virility of the warrior caste, their ruthless territorial expansion, and their brute exercise of force. Young Chicano men, a largely powerless group in American society at the time, invested themselves with images of power, a symbolic inversion commonly found in the fantasies of powerless men worldwide and a gendered vision that rarely extends to women. Chicanos dreamed of reclaiming Aztlán, a territory that American Indians could, by anteriority, justly demand as their own.

In its most radical iteration Aztlán was an internal colony of the United States that required a movement of national liberation for its emancipation. Chicanos were an internally colonized population that was socially, culturally, and economically subordinated and territorially segregated by white Anglo-Saxon America (Acuña 1972). This colonization was most profoundly felt in the *barrios* (ghettos) and *colonias* (shantytowns) in the cities of the Southwest. If they were to be liberated, Chicanos had to identify with *la raza*, their race or its collective personhood, promoting the interests of their *carnales* (brothers) with whom they shared a common language and culture because of the putative Aztec blood that ran through their veins.

In offering this history of the Chicano movement, some may justifiably ask, where is José Angel Gutiérrez in this account? In 1967 he, along with Mario Compean, Willie Velásquez, Juan Patlán, and Nacho Pérez, began the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO) as one of the first student organization in Texas committed to the betterment of Mexican Americans, particularly in the schools through access to educationally relevant curricula and personnel (Gutiérrez 1998). MAYO was Texas based. It was Corky Gonzales who gave the student movement its name and its nationwide vision (Navarro 1998; Navarro 2000).

La Chicana

The years 1969 to roughly 1973 were the heydays of Chicano activism, in the fields and streets, in courtrooms and classrooms, protesting racism, police violence, and limited access to educational opportunities, low wages, poor working conditions, and, eventually, the mounting number

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of Chicano deaths in Vietnam. Movement activists articulated most of these concerns in gendered terms, as problems faced primarily by men. While the movement persistently advocated the self-actualization of all Chicanos, the term Chicanos really only referred to men. Given the movement's masculine focus, President Richard Nixon was probably the person most important in weakening its appeal, when in 1973 he abolished the military draft. Nixon wanted to blunt the anti-war movement that he then deemed growing out of control. It worked. Without mandatory military service, most of it in Vietnam, the irritant that provoked demonstrations among racialized minorities was increasingly gone.

A burgeoning feminist movement had begun to grip the imaginations of many young women participants in the movement, and by 1969 it still was being given only symbolic lip service. At the 1969 Chicano Youth Liberation Conference, women met as a group to explore their common concerns. But when their caucus discussions were reported back to the conference as a whole, the facilitator declared, "It was the consensus of the group that the Chicana woman does not need to be liberated" (Nieto-Gómez in García [1975] 1997, p. 88). Reflecting on her experiences at the Denver conference, Enriqueta Longeaux y Vásquez reported, "I felt this as quite a blow. . . . Then I understood why the statement had been made and I realized that going along with the feelings of the men at the convention was probably the best thing to do at that time" (Longeaux y Vasquez in García [1972]1997, p. 29). While some women at other conferences devoted to Chicana feminist issues during the early 1970s expressed a similar lack of interest in their own liberation as women, more common was the growing realization that Chicanas were triply oppressed – by their race, their gender, and their class.

Within the Chicano student movement women were being denied leadership roles and were invited to perform in only the most traditional stereotypic roles – cleaning up, making coffee, executing the orders men gave, and servicing their needs. If women did manage to assume leadership positions, as some of them did, they were ridiculed as unfeminine, as *marimachas*, as butch fems, sexually perverse, and promiscuous, and all too often were taunted as lesbians (Moraga 1983; Moraga & Anzaldúa 1983).

A 1970 incident at San Diego State University was particularly telling about the tenor of the times. There, women had managed to assume leadership over the campus Chicano student group. When it was announced that Corky Gonzales was going to visit the campus, an intense debate ensued and *chingón* (patriarchal) politics emerged with the decision that "It was considered improper and embarrassing for a national leader to come on campus and see that the organization's leadership was female. Consequently, the organization decided that only males would be the visible representatives for the occasion" (Del Casillo [1980] in Blackwell 2011, p. 76).

By 1969 articles began appearing in the student movement press highlighting the contradiction between racial and sexual oppression in the Chicano movement, drawing attention to the rampant sexism in its ranks. Were Chicanos committed to revolutionary struggle including gender was a question often voiced. Chicano men initially regarded the feminist critique as an assault on their Mexican cultural past, on their power, and, by implication, on their virility. If Chicanos were going to triumph in their anti-capitalist, anti-colonial revolt, divisiveness could not be tolerated. Feminist concerns had to be subordinated to *la causa*, the community's cause. Men responded to these perceived assaults by resorting to crass name-calling, labeling Chicana feminists as *malinchistas*, traitors who were influenced by ideas foreign to their community – namely, bourgeois feminist ideology. Be "Chicana Primero" (García 1997, p. 197), the men exhorted, asking the women to take pride first in their cultural heritage and to reject women's liberation. Chicanas responded rather uniformly that they did not want to dominate the movement. They only sought full equality and participation for all.

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The increased mobilization of Chicanas in the movement shifted the political agenda to a broader set of issues. If the aim of the Chicano movement was to decolonize the mind, as the novelist Tomás Rivera once proposed, Chicanas were determined to decolonize the body. Male concerns over job discrimination, access to political power, entry into educational institutions, and community autonomy and self-determination increasingly appeared alongside female demands for birth control and against forced sterilization, for welfare rights, for prison rights for *pintas* (women prisoners), for protection against male violence, and, most important, for sexual pleasure both in marriage and outside it. "La Nueva Chicana," the new woman, was determined to interrogate and eradicate sexism as a form of oppression that was equal to racism. Both forms of subordination had to be equally fought in unison (Correa 1973).

Unlike Chicanos who took their sex/gender privileges for granted, Chicanas, as victims of those privileges, realized that an essential part of their identity as political subjects had to include an exploration of their sexuality. "Our sexuality has been hidden, subverted, distorted within the 'sacred' walls of the 'familia'. . . . In the journey to the love of female self and each other we are ultimately forced to confront father, brother, and god (and mother as his agent)," wrote Norma Alarcón, Ana Castillo, and Cherríe Moraga (1993, p. 2). Subjects that formerly had been taboo began to be openly discussed in the 1970s. Incest, sexual abuse, domestic violence, lesbianism, and gay identity became frequent themes at conferences and in movement newspapers, which by necessity focused naturally on generational relations too (Ruiz 1998).

The long civil rights movement

This chapter began by noting that social movement chronologies are often contestatory. When did the Chicano movement begin and end? Those women and men, the Chicana and Chicano activists of their generation, wrote histories and memoirs about their own mobilization, seeing themselves and their radical ideals and actions as the historical acme of ethnic Mexican attempts to gain political power. What should we make of all that political activism generated by ethnic Mexicans in the United States before 1969? Was it irrelevant? Did it not teach *mexicanos* how to collectively resist the racial and economic oppression they faced daily, creating organizational forms appropriate to their time? The civil rights literature of the last 20 years has expanded the temporal frame of study, urging scholars to look for antecedents, for forms of oppositional consciousness and subjectivity that evolved and morphed over time, but nevertheless taught communities how to exist, resist, and revolt.

The long history of ethnic Mexican mobilization for economic and political rights had its origins in the confraternities the Catholic Church established in the 18th century throughout the Americas. The church racially segregated its faithful into brotherhoods for worship and ritual events, and it was from this associational form that large numbers of mutual aid societies were born in the 1850s to provide social insurance for the poor and destitute, offering food, burying the dead, providing succor to those unjustly jailed or just those who found themselves in desperate straits. These brotherhoods were the very foundation for labor union organizing at the beginning of the 20th century. In 1929 a group of ethnic Mexicans, most of them professional and middle class, formed the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) in Texas to assure the human and political rights of ethnic Mexican citizens; an activism compounded in the name of Mexican American war veterans who founded the American GI Forum in 1948 (Márquez 1993; Ramos 1998). Both of these organizations cultivated a sense of membership, of citizenship, of national belonging, and of shared sacrifice in American society that fighting in World War I and II, the Korean War, and Vietnam created among Mexican American vets. The members of LULAC and the American GI Forum realized that the fruits of American capitalism

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were not equally shared and in the 1950s went beyond their original bread-and-butter concerns to a questioning of school segregation, jury selection, and political disenfranchisement. In the late 1950s they were further inspired by the rhetoric and tactics of decolonization movements around the globe and by structural inequalities that resulted from poor education, inadequate employment, residential segregation, and racism, increasingly understood as not only based on individual and personal animus, but born of institutional and structural forces.

What differentiated the Chicano movement from the activities of LULAC, the American GI Forum, or the numerous mutual-aid societies that Mexicans created to better their socio-economic situation in the United States was the Chicano movement's radical political stance. Civil rights organizations during the 1940s and 1950s had sought slow, peaceful change through assimilation, cultural integration, petitions for governmental beneficence, and appeals to white liberal guilt. Since 1955, women and men had been protesting racial segregation in public transport, as Rosa Parks's refusal to give up her seat in the colored section of the bus to a white in Montgomery, Alabama showed. The political activism of African Americans, Mexican Americans, and Puerto Ricans focused on a rights revolution, which in the mid-1960s was realized with the passage of the federal 1965 Civil Rights Act, the 1965 Hart-Celler Immigration Act, the 1966 Voting Rights Act, and the Fair Housing Act (Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968).

What followed this period of gradualist social change through the legal realm were much more radical and desperate responses to racism, poverty, and public segregation. Large portions of Watts, California, Detroit, Michigan, Chicago, Illinois, and Washington, D.C. crumbled in ashes during those hot summers of rioting, looting, and burning in 1965, 1966, and 1968, leaving many dead. By 1969 Chicanos, in a revolution sparked by rising expectations, demanded equality with white Americans, wanted an end to racism, asserting their right to cultural autonomy, particularly in education, and aspiring to self-determination as an independent nation. Eschewing the ethnic label their parents had embraced as Mexican Americans during the 1940s and 1950s, these young men, and eventually young women, called themselves Chicanos and Chicanas, announcing their oppositional identity and resistance to assimilation and Americanization.

The movement Chicanas and Chicanos created in 1969 was not *sui generis*, spontaneously emerging without images, memories, or models of protest. The antecedents for activism in the large cities of the Southwest among the young was in the rural areas in which agricultural work had been performed by older women and men. Many Chicanos were weaned on the activism of César Chávez and Dolores Huerta who founded the National Farm Workers Association in 1962, which eventually became the United Farm Workers of America (UFW). In 1965, the UFW and Filipino agricultural workers staged a consumer boycott of table grapes to force California growers to improve the wages and work conditions of this multicultural labor force. While Chávez and Huerta were trying to form a robust labor union, and did, it was by their tireless example that inspired many Chicanas and Chicanos to ameliorate the plight of the poor.

Reies López Tijerina's activism was also rural. This charismatic Pentecostal minister and his first wife, María Escobar, militated on behalf of Indo-hispanos of northern New Mexico and southern Colorado who had seen their ancestral land grants known as *mercedes* fraudulently stolen by unscrupulous lawyers and the legal chicanery of American courts. Contesting the ownership of lands then under federal control, engaging in armed confrontation with local authorities over it, and pressing their claims before the United Nations as international treaty violations, Tijerina sought to regain land through the Alianza Federal de Mercedes (the Alliance of Federal Land Grants), which he began in 1963. Note that Tijerina chose to call his movement an *alianza*, the organizational form mutual aid societies had used to help their fellow *mexicanos* since the

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1800s (López Tijerina 2000). The return of the land base of Indo-hispanos was Tijerina's goal. He always resisted any association with Chicanos, much as César Chávez had.

The movement's legacies

The Chicano and Chicana movement focused the nation's attention on the complexity of the ethnic Mexican population in the United States. It was a population that largely shared a similar class location as poor and working class, who originally lost their land base mostly through fraud and the federal government's failure to honor the protections the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo guaranteed Mexicans living in territory acquired by the United States. Once robbed of their lands, these persons of former Mexican ancestry were joined by hundreds of thousands of Mexicans, who migrated north to build the railroads that crisscrossed the land, who planted the fruits, vegetables, sugar beets, and cotton that came to dominate agriculture, and did the labor to mine various ores, but who despite all their work remained dirt poor. After World War II, as some of these industries were eclipsed, ethnic Mexicans migrated into cities seeking unskilled work, compounding their experiences as both a rural and urban impoverished class. It was a population deeply stratified by race and color, by gender and sexual difference, by generational divisions, and by identities tied to region and to locale. The most fractious division was political, most apparent in attitudes towards assimilation and Americanization (Navarro 1998; Navarro 2000).

In the 48 years since *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* was issued many have repudiated its strident nationalism, its fracturing and perhaps even upending of the earlier liberal civil rights coalition, the culture of violence and hyper-masculinity it celebrated, and the homophobia and gender hierarchies that structured its bedrooms, its meeting rooms, and its protest marches. The Plan nevertheless created an alternative vision of cultural incorporation and membership in a body politic, challenging unbridled capitalism, simultaneously linking local struggles for self-determination with global anti-imperialist ones. Creating organization for community policing, such as the Brown Berets, food cooperatives, free breakfast programs, educational campaigns for a safer food supply, and health clinics for healthier bodies.

If one has to point to any failures, it was the movement's limited political vision, undoubtedly born of youthful exuberance and unrealistic assessment of the task ahead. What was learned all too quickly was the extensive and covert power of federal, state, and local governments to silence and repress. And an equally aspiring ethnic Mexican population who believed deeply in the possibilities of upward mobility the American dream held.

Note

1 The author and co-editors gratefully acknowledge Nicolás Kanellos and Arte Püblico Press for permission to quote R. Gonzales's "Yo Soy Joaquín/I am Joaquín."

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