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THE CHICANO MOVEMENT

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"ALL I WANT IS THAT HE BE PUNISHED"

Border Patrol Violence, Women’s Voices, and Chicano Activism in Early 1970s San Diego

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In the midst of increasing incidences of brutality at the hands of immigration authorities, Martha Elena Parra López, a Tijuana resident, was raped by Border Patrol agent Kenneth Cocke on May 31, 1972. A few days later, Martha Elena responded by detailing the event to San Ysidro activist Alberto García who, with area Chicano activists, created an uproar about the injustice. San Diego Chicano activists, already incensed by a series of harassment and brutality incidents undertaken by U.S. Customs and Border Patrol officers against Mexicans and Mexican Americans, called for immediate action from authorities for this atrocious act against who they described as a “young attractive Mexican National” and “mother of two children.” For them, this brutality was part of a larger attack on “La Raza”/“our people,” as they called for a broader investigation of the local effects of deportation-oriented immigration policies. For Martha Elena, telling her story to Chicano activists and to the public was an act of defiance, as she later stated, “All I want is that he (Agent Cocke) be punished.”

The rape occurred after Martha Elena was apprehended with two companions, María Sandoval and Teresa Castellanos, while visiting their friend Vera León’s Chula Vista residence in south San Diego County. Martha Elena was a resident of nearby Tijuana and married to a professional basketball player there. She was likely from “central Mexico” as one report noted that her 11-year-old son was living with relatives there. She had moved to Tijuana with her spouse 6 years preceding the incident. Another report noted that she was a modier of two, suggesting that another child resided with her and her spouse. She stated that while living in Tijuana she had only crossed the U.S.-Mexico border on two occasions, both times for brief visits. She had been in Chula Vista, only about 15 miles from Tijuana and the border, for a week when she was apprehended.
Intimidating character of the officer, “He was a large, blond man. I was afraid of him from the start. He had a uniform and authority.”

Interlacing official inspection procedures with sexual harassment, Cocke stood in front of Martha Elena, who was trapped in the front seat, and asked her to remove her clothing. She refused, after which he insisted. Agent Cocke then took out a flashlight and instructed, “Take your brassiere off, I want to see if they are real and also take your panties off so that I can see if you have concealed money or documents.” Martha Elena then claimed, “After a long struggle with this officer until my strength was out, he stripped me completely and violated me, he made a statement and said ‘I hope you do not have any disease,’ he then told me to get dressed and to get out of the patrol car and go to my country.”

The next day she contacted Vera León, whose home she had been visiting in Chula Vista when she was apprehended, to inform her about what had happened. Vera contacted San Ysidro activist and notary Alberto García who, a few days later on June 7, listened to Martha Elena’s report of the incident and notarized an affidavit. She also visited a San Diego area hospital where she was treated for bleeding due to the sexual assault, an injury she also reported in the affidavit.

While Martha Elena Parra López was not a frequent border crosser, and the actions of Agent Cocke were seemingly isolated and extreme, her voice is instructive in revealing how the increasing number of Mexican migrants entering the United States in the early 1970s were subject to arbitrary acts of harassment and violence through the official questioning and search procedures mandated by U.S. immigration policy. U.S. border agents consistently subjected migrants and other border crossers to procedural inspections that aimed to identify drug users, drug smugglers, economic burdens, illegal aliens, and others that were perceived as potential hazards to the well-being of U.S. society. In 1966, Border Patrol apprehensions peaked back up to more than 100,000—a level they had not reached since 1954. By 1970 the rate was at half a million, on its way to reaching just under one million by 1977. Through reports of official Border Patrol procedures emerged cases of abuse, including physical assault, unwarranted strip searches, and as in the case of Martha Elena Parra López, sexual harassment and rape.

Martha Elena’s testimony is of particular significance because not only was the migrant stream from Mexico growing to unprecedented levels, but it was also becoming increasingly female as employers recruited Mexican women to work in maquiladoras (assembly plants) proliferating on the Mexican side of the border and domestic labor demands in the U.S. increased. When coupled with dozens if not hundreds of complaints by Mexican-immigrant, Mexican American, and other border crossing women from 1970 to 1972 concerning humiliating experiences of being strip searched, Martha Elena’s voice helps unmask the ways that male dominance and gender inequality were part of the systematic acts of racial and class subjugation unfolding at the border. These women’s voices revealed that invasive and humiliating violations of their self-possession were
occurring within the everyday procedures of border patrolling alongside physical beatings, verbal intimidation and racial profiling.

The association between "illegal aliens" and the historic racialized image of "Mexicans" led to racial profiling in which Mexican Americans were also subject to many of these intimidating and invasive experiences at the San Diego border region in the early 1970s. Historically many Mexican American civil rights organizations had sought to differentiate themselves from undocumented migrants up to the 1970s. Yet groups in San Diego such as a local chapter of the statewide Mexican American Political Association (MAPA), the Center for Autonomous Social Action (CASA), and the Chicano Movement third party front La Raza Unida, alongside homegrown organizations such as the United California Mexican American Association and the coalitional Ad Hoc Committee on Chicano Rights, reacted by asserting that the collective abuses experienced by Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans at the hands of border agents were systemic attacks against "our people," suggesting an evolving cross-border notion of Chicano or Chican/o/Mexican identity. Martha Elena's act of holding accountable Agent Cocke, alongside the many border women who came forward with complaints that border officials had unduly strip-searched them, revealed the participation of Mexican immigrant and Mexican American women within this immigrant rights contingent of the Chicano Movement, which was officially led by mostly Mexican American men. Women border crossers participated in these campaigns by telling stories that influenced, contested, and informed Chicano activist calls for social justice within immigration politics. The refusal of these women and other victims of border official violence to remain silent created a context in which an important number of Chicano Movement and Mexican American civil rights organizations began to pay closer attention to the immigration issue, advocate undocumented migrants and Mexican American victims of Border Patrol harassment, and critique what they saw as adverse effects of border patrolling on what they began to define as their mixed-legal status, transnational ethnic community.

Demographic Shifts and the (Re) Emerging Immigration Debate

Rising incidents of Border Patrol violence and engagement by Chicano Movement activists in immigrant rights in the early 1970s were indicative of an unprecedented demographic revolution of the ethnic Mexican population in the U.S. The total Mexican immigrant population in the U.S. grew from 454,000 in 1950, hit 760,000 in 1970, and by 1980 would reach about 2.2 million. The number of Mexican-origin people in the U.S. grew almost ten-fold between 1960 and 1980 from 1.7 million to 8.7 million, in large part due to this migration. This rise followed a brief hiatus of migration from Mexico in the mid-1960s after the Bracero Program, a binational guest worker agreement, was abolished in 1964. The mid-1960s also witnessed an improving economy in Mexico called the "Mexican Miracle" that was credited in large part to U.S. investments. By 1967 this rapid development in Mexico had created a widening gap between rich and poor as job creation failed to keep up with the needs of an increasing population. In this way, the late 1960s/early 1970s surge in Mexican immigration to the U.S. demonstrated sociologist Saskia Sassen's contention that migration is exacerbated, rather than curbed, by the general policy of an emergent globalized economic system. In the hierarchical arrangement of globalization developing in the early 1970s, first world nations such as the United States invested in developing nations such as Mexico to "promote export-oriented growth" as part of creating a global market and breaking down barriers to trade. This is significant in understanding the roots of the new, intensified migration of Mexicans to the United States in that these shifts were not only brought about by the poverty and unemployment within Mexico, but had more to do with U.S. investment activities and pressures from global market institutions such as the International Monetary Fund. These outside influences contextualized decisions made by the Mexican state toward intensifying the globalization of capitalist relations. These political economic shifts manifested in the U.S.-Mexico region via agricultural commercialization and the Border Industrialization Program, which uprooted rural farmers and created migration to urban centers in Mexico, new industries in the north Mexico border region, and low-wage jobs in the U.S.

Indeed these same global economic shifts affected U.S. society as manufacturing jobs were increasingly sent to developing nations in this period leading to the expansion of a service economy. In addition to the nearly 100-year-old practice of recruiting migrant laborers to work for agribusiness in the U.S., the expanding service economy in the 1970s alongside other industries such as construction and domestic work increasingly relied on migrant labor, which was often undocumented. Furthermore, the Immigration Act of 1965 created an administrative situation in which undocumented immigration dramatically increased, leading to intensifying contact and conflict with the Border Patrol. By placing annual quotas on immigration from the Western Hemisphere for the first time, with a 40,000 quota on any one nation, while about 200,000 migrant laborers from Mexico were projected to be needed in the U.S. labor market alongside another 35,000 Mexicans with applications for regular permanent residency, the number of "illegals" would inevitably exceed the scant new quota. Employers in industries reliant on migrant labor would continue to recruit migrants regardless of their legal status. Indeed, many employers preferred undocumented workers as was demonstrated during the Bracero Program in which employers actively sought to avoid the requirements to pay guest workers better wages and provide livable work conditions by opting to hire undocumented workers. While the end of the Bracero Program was in large part due to the work of Mexican American
activists battling against the exploitative nature of the program’s inability to abide by its human rights components, its end marked the emergence of a dramatic increase of undocumented migration as employers continued and expanded the informal decades-old processes of migrant labor recruitment.39

The increase in migration from Mexico in the 1960s and 70s was also characterized by intensifying participation of women. The Bracero Program actively recruited Mexican men and, following its abolition, Mexican migrant women’s participation and network creation ensued and expanded.40 With the rise of the maquiladora industry at this time, scholars have noted that employers of these assembly plants in the border region targeted Mexican women as a cheap, exploitable labor force both in Mexico and the United States.41 In Mexico this shifted gender relations and migration patterns as industrial work was not provided at the same levels for under-employed and unemployed men.42 This process, intended to develop Mexico, socialized many Mexican women to rely on industrial work while maquiladora jobs failed to provide needed stability, inducing migration to other industrial jobs often along the border and the United States in industries such as microelectronics and apparel manufacturing.43 U.S. industries intensified the recruitment of jobs historically circumscribed for Mexican migrant women in the U.S. including domestic work as maids, elderly care, house and office cleaning, childcare, and healthcare. Sociologist Yen Le Espiritu explains the preference for female migrants, particularly Latina and Asian workers, by U.S. manufacturing employers as being due to “the patriarchal and racist assumptions that women can afford to work for less, do not mind dead-end jobs, and are more suited physiologically to certain kinds of detailed and routine work.”44 The result of these developments was that Mexican women formed a larger share of the rising number of Mexicans migrating to the U.S. in the 1970s and onward, arriving not only as dependents of male workers, but as workers themselves.

The rising number of Mexican immigrants was met in the U.S. with the discourse of the “illegal alien.” While based in a history of anti-Mexican sentiment rooted in the Mexican-American War of 1848 and the racial nativism of the repatriation drives of the 1930s and 1950s, debates over the rising numbers of “illegals,” the new anti-immigrant discourse of the early 1970s, again depicted migrants as a drain on U.S. society in a moment of recession. Indeed, a series of hearings led by Representative Peter Rodino (D-New Jersey) in 1971 produced a five-volume Congressional document on the dangers and negative effects of undocumented migration on U.S. citizens, particularly in employment and wages. Concerns were also mounting regarding the suggested migrant tendency toward crime and the association between Mexico and illicit drugs.45

With this discourse proliferating within public debate, Mexican immigrants, usually imagined as male unskilled workers, were characterized as occupying jobs in place of U.S. citizens, bringing their families to consume public services, and engaging in criminal activities. Mexican women were characterized as not only invaders, but reproducers of the invading population. Analyzing national magazines since 1965, anthropologist Leo Chávez identifies three themes relating to fears of Mexican women’s reproduction: 1) high fertility and population growth, 2) reconquest, and 3) overuse of medical and other social services.46

Local and national elites depicted the entrance of “illegals” as a crisis, reinforcing the logic of militarized law enforcement efforts. Geographer Joseph Nevins argues “beginning in the late 1960s, there was growing public perception of the international boundary with Mexico as dangerously out of control, as a porous line of defense against unprecedented numbers of potentially threatening unauthorized migrants entering the United States from Mexico.”47 Indeed, concern about immigration among politicians and the media was increasingly articulated in military language depicting the need to stop an invading force. As a 1972 Los Angeles Times article exclaimed, “Holding the line against the tide of illegal entrants are 350 U.S. Customs, Immigration and Border Patrol officers.”48 While at times considering the immigrant side of the issue, the media often depicted federal border officials as weary combatants protecting the country against “illegal entrants.”

Border Patrol Violence and the Chicano Movement in San Diego

The increased concern about “illegal entrants” alongside increasing numbers of border crossings from Mexico in the early 1970s made San Diego a primary site where routine acts of violence, harassment, and brutality against Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans occurred through official border enforcement efforts of U.S. Customs and the Border Patrol.49 For this reason, Chicano Movement activists in the borderlands were among the first to engage the immigration crisis in a new era. The Chicano Movement was a series of mobilizations beginning in the late 1960s based on an ethnic nationalism that sought to unite Mexican Americans as a people through celebration of cultural difference, recognition of a history of racial oppression, and a strategy of forging community self-determination as a way of organizing for basic civil and human rights.50 While the Chicano Movement put forth a vehement rejection of white supremacy and Mexican-American assimilation strategies through an assertion of pride in Mexican heritage, it was ironically silent on the issue of Mexican immigration in its early years in the late 1960s.51 The exception was the 1968 founding of CASA, el Centro de Acción Social Autónoma, in Los Angeles by veteran trade unionists Soledad “Chole” Alatorre and Bert Corona, the latter of which was a leader in the statewide MAPA organization. CASA sought to provide services to undocumented immigrants and worked to politicize them into Chicano Movement activism. Indeed, Corona and Alatorre were key influences on San Diego Chicano leader Herman Baca’s thinking on the immigration issue in their interactions in
MAPA. According to Baca, a rift developed within the Chicano Movement in the early 1970s along the lines of those who advocated for undocumented migrants versus those that wanted to concentrate on Mexican-American (U.S. citizen) issues separate from immigration issues. Baca would help organize a CASA in south San Diego County later in 1972. Baca recalled, “... there was a lot of misunderstanding, really a sense of irrelevancy that the issue (immigration) didn’t have nothing to do with us.”

The emergence of Chicano political efforts that expressly included Mexican migrants must be contextualized within the complex history of relations between Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants. The creation of deportation-oriented immigration policies in the 1920s with the bureaucratization of the category “illegal alien” alongside the creation of the U.S. Border Patrol shaped this volatile relationship by fragmenting the Mexican-origin community along the lines of legal status. In a context of mass deportation of “illegal aliens” during the Depression era, Mexican American civil rights organizations articulated differing approaches to Mexican immigrant populations. While some sought to incorporate Mexican immigrants into the fold of the ethnic community, particularly Mexican American leaders within the trade union movement, as fellow workers, there were others, best exemplified by the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), who sought to differentiate themselves from Mexican immigrants and supported restrictive immigration policies as a way of authenticating Mexican Americans’ official citizenship. Therefore Chicano Movement efforts that formulated solidarity and inclusion of migrants, albeit in varied and sometimes limited ways, emerged within this historical context of political fragmentation among Mexican American activists on the immigration question that was by no means resolved by the 1970s. Indeed, the rising numbers of migrants in the 1970s exacerbated this debate within Mexican American activist circles, and its intensification was experienced especially in San Diego where Border Patrol harassment was also on the increase.

State policies added further fuel to the flames of concern over “illegals” in San Diego and wider California. For example, the California State legislature passed the Dixon Arnett Bill in November of 1971 seeking to fine employers who hired undocumented immigrants. Herman Baca, Carlos “Charlie” Vásquez, and other San Diego Chicano activists in local MAPA and La Raza Unida chapters participated in a statewide effort for the next several months against the bill’s implementation in March of 1972. Baca argued that the law would “create an adverse effect on a specific ethnic group—Mexican-Americans—who make up the largest portion of the state’s alien population.” This statement represented well this Chicano activist contingent’s emerging position that hysteria over “illegal aliens” led to discrimination against Mexican Americans.

The Parra López incident of May 1972, therefore, occurred as an important contingent of local Chicano Movement organizations were already confronting the ways that immigration policing was affecting ethnic Mexican communities. In addition to the San Diego area chapters of MAPA and La Raza Unida, as early as 1970 the newly created Office of Mexican American Affairs in San Diego County directed by former Urban League organizer Victor Villalpando, and Alberto García’s United California Mexican American Association came to address immigration issues in response to numerous complaints from ethnic Mexicans of all citizenship statuses who were discriminated against by employers, detained, deported, racially profiled, and made the victims of Border Patrol and law enforcement violence. In 1970, not ing how many of his friends had recounted Border Patrol harassment, local newspaper columnist Joe Viesca reported this July 24, 1970 encounter:

The official asked what I had done in Tijuana. Since I believe this was an insulting question, I merely told him it was a personal matter. This was sufficient for him to send me to the second inspection point ... (where) an official took me by the arm and twisted it toward the spine and if I would have resisted in the least he would have broken my arm. When I commenced to tell him that as an American citizen I was fully aware of my rights he said: “No B____ (sic), S.O.B. Mexican has any rights here.” He took me, making a showing of unnecessary violence, to the office where he ordered me to put all my personal belongings on the counter. He began to check all my personal documents and looked for “contraband” in the cards and papers that were in my wallet. When I tried to smoke he slapped my face.

Viesca’s account reveals that Mexican Americans, despite a claim to official U.S. citizenship, could be subject to harassment and violence by border agents. Indeed, as a generic “Mexican” Viesca was informed he had no rights and, like Parra López, was subject to violence within the official procedures of the Border Patrol, being slapped and strong-armed as they searched through his belongings.

Also in 1970, a young Anglo-American woman and an African-American woman underwent an invasive strip search when crossing the border together with two Mexican-American men who were pat-searched. The Anglo woman’s mother reported that a matron inspector had checked her daughter’s vagina and rectum with a flashlight. They were never put under arrest nor told why they were being searched. Her mother explained,

My daughter told me it was a very humiliating experience. I asked her why she thought she had been searched, and she told me she had long hair, was wearing blue jeans and was with a black girl and two Mexican-American men and she thought she represented the counter culture to the customs officials.

Another woman retail worker from National City who described her ethnicity as French and American Indian recalled how she was stopped twice in one week.
and one time strip-searched. On both stops she was accompanied by two African Americans and one Anglo-American acquaintance. A registered nurse from Chula Vista, whose ethnicity was not revealed, recalled a similar experience when she was strip-searched on May 28, 1971 when crossing the border. As a nurse, she testified that the search, in addition to being humiliating, was unsanitary. Revealing again the blurred line between harassment and official border authority procedures, another young woman reported that a male customs officer had twisted her arm and put his hand in her brassiere in a supposed search for narcotics. In some cases, male crossers were also strip-searched, as well as being beaten and abused. For example, a San Diego shipyard welder told of being strip-searched, internally examined and slapped. These cases reveal that the Customs agents' and Border Patrol's concerns about concealing contraband often took the form of strip-searching women on suspicion that their bodies might be harboring contraband. These cases seem to reveal that race was a primary factor in deciding which female border crossers might be harboring such contraband as this practice was extended to white women in situations where they were accompanied by people of color. These reports of harassment at the border came to the fore after Joe Viesca published his account in 1970 and especially when the account of Antonio Cuevas was reported in February of 1972. Cuevas was a Mexican American who claimed he was beaten twice when attempting to cross back into the U.S. after visiting friends in Tijuana in December of 1971. He was beaten while in the presence of an Immigration Department supervisor and beaten again when he remarked that he would report the Border Patrol agent, Agent Ecerdt, who beat him. According to a letter from Vic Villalpando, director of the Mexican American Affairs Office of San Diego County, to Baca and other Chicano activists, the documentation of the Cuevas case represented an opportunity to record and publicize the wider harassment by the Border Patrol of Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans. Villalpando asserted, "Heretofore, I have been appraised (verbally) of mal-treatment cases against Chicanos crossing the Border by Immigration and Customs officials, but I was never able to attain written statements that could be used in a court of law." Villalpando's concern for "Chicanos" crossing the border undoubtedly included Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants as he referenced cases of brutality experienced by both groups. For Villalpando, the Cuevas case was also important because, unlike the numerous other cases of Border Patrol brutality, it was recorded and covered by the media and its exposure could work to reveal numerous other incidents embedded within ethnic Mexican life in the borderlands. San Ysidro activist Albert García, leader of the United California Mexican American Association, asserted that after the National City Star-News ran a story on Cuevas' beating, he received more than 60 additional complaints charging U.S. customs and immigration officers with brutality. Villalpando asserted, "We know, either personally or vicariously, that incidents of brutality by Border officials against our people are frequent and almost common-place."

Indeed, activists began referring to Chicanos and Mexican nationals as "our people" and members of "La Raza," even including undocumented migrants within their reference to the "Chicano community." In February of 1972 Villalpando called for a "Border Project" that would document the harassments and brutalities that border communities often experienced in their everyday lives. With the notary Albert García of the United California Mexican American Association he requested that Herman Baca's MAPA chapter and other Chicano Movement organizations assist in this project. Here Villalpando publicized a kind of border sentiment held by both Mexican migrants and U.S.-born Chicanos ("our people"): a shared experience of racialization at the hands of border officials.

Many of the individuals who came forward to record what they perceived as harassment and abuse by border officials were women complaining about strip searches. As Chicano activists sought to document mounting cases of border violence against Mexicans and Mexican Americans, one source reported that by 1972 several hundred women had come forward to complain about being strip-searched by Customs agents. These women, many if not most of Mexican origin, utilized the Chicano activist call to record the legal violence of border policing to reclaim their bodies and refuse the normalized practice of strip searches utilized by border agents. Indeed, their stories challenged the racial and gendered assumptions that underpinned the perception that the bodies of Mexican-origin women were probable harboring places of contraband. For instance, Roberta Baca (no relation to Herman Baca) filed suit against the San Diego Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) District Supervisor Vernon Han after being strip-searched without explanation in January of 1972. Roberta Baca's complaint was exemplary of a series of other complaints when she asserted that inspectors unjustifiably strip-searched and interrogated her upon her return to the United States from Mexico. She stated that for no apparent reason she, her children, and a friend, Isabel Loranzana, were asked to go into INS offices at the San Ysidro border crossing on January 15, 1972. After being asked to empty their purses, inspectors confiscated Baca's identification card as well as Loranzana's boyfriend's which she happened to be carrying. Roberta and Isabel were denied explanation of why they were being detained as they were made to wait in the office. They were told that they could not make any phone calls because they were not under arrest. Furthermore, because they were not under arrest, they were told they had "no rights." A female inspector then took Roberta into a separate room where she was told to be quiet and stand in the corner. The officer asked Roberta if she had anything concealed on her body to which she replied that she did not. Roberta then claimed,

She had me bend over and through all this she kept asking me repeatedly if I had anything concealed on my body. She made me stand with my feet about two feet apart and put my hands on my knees with my back toward her. She then had me bend way over and place my hands on my buttocks
and spread my buttocks apart. She proceeded to check the inside of my vagina with a flashlight, to see if I had anything concealed.\textsuperscript{58}

After being instructed to put her clothes back on, the inspector asked if Roberta was on welfare, if her husband was the father of her children, and if she had ever been arrested. Isabel was then taken to the room where she was pat-searched and asked the same questions.\textsuperscript{60} Revealing no probable cause other than the women’s ethnicity and gender, the inspector’s interrogation following the strip search reveals the perspective by the INS that Mexican women in particular were threats to the well-being of the nation. As potential welfare recipients, concealer of illegal substances, and reproducers of an unwanted population, these women, who appeared to have legal status in the U.S., were assumed to be a threat. This account further reveals the role that gender and race played in the interface between immigration policy, practice and popular stereotypes of Mexican immigrants. As anthropologist Leo Chávez observes in his analysis of post-1965 media coverage:

Rather than an invading army, or even the stereotypical male migrant worker, the images (of Mexican immigrant women) suggested a more insidious invasion, one that included the capacity of the invaders to reproduce themselves. The women being carried into U.S. territory carry with them the seeds of future generations. The images signaled not simply a concern over undocumented workers, but a concern with immigrants who stay and reproduce families and, by extension, communities in the United States. These images, and their accompanying articles, alluded to issues of population growth, use of prenatal care, children’s health services, education, and other social services.\textsuperscript{70}

Furthermore, the accounts of Roberta Baca and other border crossing women reveal Mexican-origin women as perceived threats to the idealized nuclear family as they were suspected of having children out of wedlock and/or from a number of different fathers. As Chávez notes, popular discourse post-1965 has dichotomized between Mexican-origin women’s fertility as “irrational, illogical, chaotic and therefore threatening” in contrast to Anglo women’s fertility as “autonomous, responsible . . . of sound mind, as in a legal subject.”\textsuperscript{71}

Based on these complaints of border official harassment, particularly by Mexican and Mexican American women, Villalpando and Albert García demanded a congressional hearing on the prevalence of strip-searching and abuse at the border. Chicano activists perceived the proposed hearing as an opportunity for the Chicano community, including Mexican immigrants, to testify against the systematic practices of Customs and the Border Patrol. Herman Baca and the MAPA-National City chapter urged state officials to investigate “a problem that has been prevalent in this area for too long . . . the continual violation of Chicano’s and Mexican Nationals’ civil and God-given rights by the U.S. Immigration Department and the U.S. Customs Bureau.” Baca accused the two departments of being,

more representative of the KGB and the Gestapo than organizations that are supposedly representative of a constitutional government . . . we are tired of this type of attitude and treatment and wholeheartedly support the investigation being called for by Mr. Albert Garcia and Mr. Vic Villalpando.\textsuperscript{72}

Responding to Chicano activist appeals was Mexican American Congressman Edward Roybal who, as chair of the Congressional Treasury Committee which held U.S. Customs within its jurisdiction, agreed to hold a hearing on border issues in San Diego on April 28, 1972. Countering the INS’ depiction of Mexican women as welfare-hungry, decadent child bearers, activists argued that Border Patrol, Customs, and local law enforcement agents physically brutalized Mexican men and violated women’s bodies attacking what might be perceived as “La Familia de la Raza” a popular Chicano Movement conception of a united ethno-racial community organized as a family.\textsuperscript{73} Indeed, the gendered dimensions of Chicano Movement activism were evident in the preparation for the hearings, where García categorized border brutalities in two areas, “women being searched illegally,” and “men beaten or abused.”\textsuperscript{74} In García’s testimony he demonstrated the anti-family policies of the Border Patrol, for example, by recalling how a busload of Mexican children, aged 8–10, returning from a visit to the San Diego zoo were stopped and apparently strip-searched at the border crossing. Chicano activists and border community members sought to counter the depiction of Mexican men and women as threats to the notion of the U.S. family by revealing the anti-family practices of the Border Patrol who strip-searched and harassed women and children and physically abused men. Ethnic Mexican victims of border brutality displayed their grievances to members of the House Appropriations Committee investigating the Treasury Department. Noting the role of women in the hearing, Roybal would report that out of the 1,800 women stripped and searched at the border in 1971, only 285 were found to be carrying any contraband. Of those carrying contraband very few actually concealed it in their body cavities.\textsuperscript{75} Like Parra López, these women struggled for the possession of their own bodies by protesting and making public the ways in which searches at the border subjected them to humiliation and loss of dignity.

The accomplishment of the April 1972 hearing marked an important development within Chicano Movement politics. The systematic Border Patrol violence on ethnic Mexicans across citizenship statuses led many San Diego Chicano activists to develop a cross-border notion of “Chicano” identity, inclusive of undocumented migrants, as a basis for the struggle. Grappling with legal violence at the border, activists constructed the parameters of a transnational Chicano
community by speaking of a shared experience of brutality by both Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants at the hands of border agents. A coalition of Chicano activists was part of the hundred or so participants in a demonstration outside the Federal Courthouse in downtown San Diego against the various brutalities experienced at the border. The El Mexicano newspaper observed,

To the shout of “Chicano Power” and “Raza sí, Migra no” (Our people, yes, the Border Patrol, no!), a group of Americans of Mexican ancestry, walked in a great oval outside of the Federal Court, with placards and slogans that repudiated the attitude of customs and immigration agents.76

According to El Mexicano more than a hundred Chicano activists led by Herman Baca sought to call attention to the federal hearing inside the courthouse and the repeated brutalities of the Border Patrol and Customs agents.77 As these “Raza sí, Migra no” activists asserted, “The issue of immigration brutality, both psychological and physical, is one that affects all Chicanos and Mexicanos throughout the frontera of the Southwest.”78 Through Chicano Movement mobilization as a united “Raza,” activists created space through which abused ethnic Mexicans of all citizenship statuses could voice their resistance. Yet mobilization as a united community was limited in its ability to articulate the complex ways that legal status and gender differences within the Mexican-origin community shaped social relations at the border in the early 1970s. As the mostly male, U.S.-born Chicano response to the Parra López case reveals, there were also significant limits to the gendered construction of “Raza.” Furthermore, most of the women and men who spoke out in the hearings were U.S. citizens, mostly Mexican American, suggesting challenges to grappling with the unique and subjugated experiences of the undocumented.

**Chicano Activists Respond to the Rape**

The rape of Martha Elena Parra López further reveals that the particular violations of women’s bodily possession was a key experience of subjugation for Mexican and Mexican American female border crossers in the early 1970s. Scholarship on more recent periods in the 80s and 90s suggests that rape is an experience that may be more prevalent to undocumented women, suggesting a key differential experience with the social effects of border policing based on legal status. As historian Eithne Luibhéid asserts in her study of cases in which Border Patrol agents raped undocumented women in the 1990s, “The fact that raped undocumented women have virtually no mechanisms for protest means that rape is also a site for the inscription of documented versus undocumented as salient.”79

In other words, the divide between the protections offered by documented and undocumented status are made evident, if not normalized, by the border officials’ rape of undocumented women. This scholarship on more recent incidents of rape of migrant women therefore reveals the systematic and routine nature of sexual violence at the border within the social context of militarization of the border that began in the 1960s and 1970s.80

Citing Beverly Allen’s study of rape as a weapon of imperialist war and Tim Dunn’s assertion that U.S. immigration policy has militarized into a practice of low-intensity warfare, Sylvania M. Falcón argues:

The level of militarization produces warlike characteristics that make rape and other human rights violations an inevitable consequence of border militarization efforts . . . Warlike conditions at the border reinforce a climate that sustains the rape and systematic degradation of women. Agent impunity and the absence of accountability contribute to a border climate in which rape occurs with little consequence.81

Like the other forms of legal violence reported by border crossers and Chicano activists, Agent Kenneth Cocke’s rape of Martha Elena occurred within the militarized procedures of border policing. Agent Cocke’s remark following the rape, “now go back to your country,” reveals the act as part and parcel of the deportation process, or at least enabled by it, as Martha Elena was literally expelled into Mexico. Cocke’s comment that “I hope you do not have any disease” might reflect the larger anti-immigrant narrative that characterizes unauthorized Mexican immigration, particularly female migration, as a threat presence invading the cultural and racial “health” of the U.S. society. These hierarchical discourses on race and nation further legitimized a labor system of superexploitation as “illegal” status maintained and reinforced the subjugation of a racialized labor force that was, and continues to be, a permanent feature of the United States economy. Furthermore, the redeployment of violence targeting women of color was indication of the ways that the authorities responded to the increasing incidence of female border crossing within the economic shifts that deliberately recruited migrant women labor beginning in the late 1960s.

The intersections of nation, race, gender and sex within border policing are important in relation to how research has explored these intersections within Chicano Movement activism. Chicano Movement research has revealed that while activism asserted counterhegemonic politics that challenged racism and discrimination, many organizations tended to reproduce structures of patriarchy practiced within and outside of the ethnic Mexican community. As mentioned, the dominant concepts of ethno-racial unity and the nuclear family were important intellectual bases of articulating the politics of the Chicano Movement. Historian Ramón Gutiérrez notes that the assertion of Chicano masculinity was central to movement rhetoric, within concepts such as *La Familia de la Raza* (collective practices of community extended from the notion of family) and strong male symbolisms depicted from Aztec and Mexican history.82 This counter-assertion of masculinity responded to a history of social emasculation and cultural negation
implemented by the imposition of a white supremacist U.S. society. Gutiérrez asserts, “Young Chicano men, a largely powerless group, invested themselves with images of power—a symbolic inversion commonly found in the fantasies of powerless men worldwide, a gendered vision that rarely extends to women.”

These precedents often normalized almost exclusive male leadership in many cases, centralized male subjectivity within dominant articulations of “Chicano” identity and reproduced notions of Chicano men as the rightful protectors and proprietors of the Chicanita body.

The archives reveal that these patriarchal assumptions were a key part of how Chicano activists struggled for justice on behalf of Martha Elena Parra López. At the same time, Parra López and other border women entered the realm of Chicano politics to contest its limited framework that valued women only in the domestic realm. Coverage of the rape in the San Diego County La Raza Unida Newsletter describes her on two separate occasions as “attractive” and a “mother.” By highlighting Martha Elena’s sexual appeal, the description “attractive” implies that her sexuality was taken by the Border Patrol agent from its proper place under the protection of Mexican men. Indeed, in reporting on Martha Elena’s affidavit, the article reiterates her affirmative answer to Cooke that revealed her marital status. While this is seemingly objective in its reporting of what Martha Elena stated in the affidavit, matched with the article’s description of her as “attractive” and a “mother of two,” the event is framed within the confines of the domestic sphere. The article suggests that Martha Elena’s “attractive” sexuality was displaced from the appropriate domain of her (Mexican) husband and her duties as nurturer to her children. More broadly speaking, this reflects the gender constructions which are often part of the Chicano Movement discourse and activism. As Alicia Schmidt Camacho asserts:

The discourse of El Movimiento hailed women as the symbolic mothers of citizens and bearers of culture. Through their domestic labors, women would defend and redeem la raza. The coercive force of the nationalist trope of race as family did not exclude women from political activity but, rather, delimited their participation so as to foreclose the capacity of Chicanas to voice their interests with any autonomy.

Placing Martha Elena’s sexuality and role as “mother” within la familia de la Raza was a key way in which Mexican immigrants were imagined as “Chicanos” and part of the same “Raza” as Mexican Americans. Furthermore, it reveals how developing notions of a transnational community were articulated through the patriarchal notion of the nuclear family, mobilizing to assert a Chicano/Mexican masculinity in competition with hypermasculine state violence. Chicano activists advocated for Parra López and other victims of nigrum repression in part by acting as defenders against the disruption of ethnic Mexican families who protected Mexican women from being taken away from their roles as wives and mothers by the invading Border Patrol. This type of description worked as a strategy in bolstering Chicano activists’ claims against the brutality of border enforcement policy on their community by highlighting the Border Patrol’s role in disrupting family life, in this case violating a woman’s role as a wife and mother. At the same time, while these transnational Chicano Movement proponents criticized the hegemonic practice of immigration policy and border enforcement, they did not consider how the notion of the nuclear family itself upheld hierarchies within and outside of their community.

In addition, by ignoring the patriarchal dimensions of the rape and publicizing it as only another attack on La Raza, Chicano activists failed to conceive of the ways in which the Chica/Mexicana experience at the border could not be deduced to racial oppression without considering its intersection with sexist practices both within and outside of the Mexican and Mexican American community. Instead, Chicano Movement activists painted the event as another case of the Border Patrol embodying the white political structure’s attack on their transnational ethno-racial community. After San Diego County District Attorney Edwin Miller failed to bring Cooke up on charges, arrest him or even question him, Herman Baca of the Mexican American Political Association (MAPA) criticized him for dragging his feet, arguing that, “if the suspect would have been a Chicano, he would have been in jail long ago.” Baca also exclaimed, “This travesty of justice only serves to symbolize the immorality, brutality, and all the injustices that are committed against Mexicanos and Chicanos (my emphasis) daily along the international border by the racist Immigration Department.” In a later critique of officials in handling the case, other Chicano activists in MAPA, commenting in the La Raza Unida San Diego County Newsletter, used it as evidence of a systemic “double standard . . . one for whites and the other for non-whites.” By modifying the rape into the domestic sphere via race as family then eliding the gender and sexual categories of power at play within this act by defining it as solely an attack on their ethno-racial community, Chicano activists deployed traditional gender roles of male breadwinner/protector and female domestic caretaker to forge Chicano/Mexican notions of transnational community.

Nevertheless, Chicano activists never wavered on Martha Elena’s assertion that she was raped by Agent Cooke even as officials suggested that the sex was consensual. Indeed, officials seemed reluctant to even handle the case. San Diego County District Attorney Ed Miller refused to, calling it a federal matter and citing a lack of evidence to convict the accused of rape. Appealing then to the District Attorney of the State of California, Evelle J. Younger, Chicano activists were appalled to hear him defer to Miller’s decision and argue that a rape did not occur. Younger explained, “While the evidence does reveal that an act of sexual intercourse did occur . . . the evidence also reveals that the Border Patrol officer did not use such threats of force” that would fall within the description of rape under the California Penal Code. In other words the San Diego County and
California State District Attorneys agreed with the alleged perpetrator Kenneth Cocke’s assessment that the sex was consensual. Later in 1974, the newly appointed INS commissioner, General Leonard Chapman, responded to continued pressure from Chicano activists to address the rape case by re-asserting Cocke’s contention that he gained consent from Parra López. The INS did proceed with misconduct and removal action against Cocke under which he resigned in October of 1972. No criminal charges were pursued. Congressman Roybal criticized officials for failing to act, but also considered Cocke’s assertion that he gained consent from Martha Elena. Roybal asserted, “He (Cocke) must be guilty of something, even if the girl consented.”⁹³

Chicano activists were appalled because there seemed to be ample evidence that could bring the Cocke case to a grand jury. Aside from Martha Elena’s statement that she was indeed abducted and raped, her companions whom Cocke forced to leave the situation, María Sandoval and Teresa Castellanos, were witnesses to the events. Furthermore, a medical examiner at University Hospital in San Diego verified that there were physical indications of bruising, vaginal bleeding and use of force.⁹⁴ The failure of the San Diego District Attorney, California Attorney General, and the INS to proceed with criminal prosecution led Chicano activists to conclude and dramatize the role that race might have played. García revealed the frustration experienced by activists in this case when he deduced that “I understand this rape case was stopped in Washington so that no further publicity would be issued.”⁹⁵ Indeed, with the failure to even put forth a trial on these offensive allegations, Chicano activists learned that state actors were not to be relied upon.

Martha Elena and other border women entered the realm of Chicano politics to contest its limited framework that valued women only in the domestic realm. Furthermore, women in all likelihood utilized domestic identities such as “mother” or “wife” as a way of asserting their rights. Yet Martha Elena’s insistence on sharing her terrifying experience with the public reveals the agency, although fragmented within the archival sources, of an undocumented migrant woman that suggests an alternative political subjectivity beyond the domestic realm. Indeed, the fact that her friends refused to leave her side demonstrated an oppositional solidarity among Mexicanas all too aware of the consequences of being left alone with a migra officer.⁹⁶ This Mexican American sentiment revealed a consciousness of and resistance to not only systematized national/racial exclusion and exploitation of physical labor, but also routine exploitation of their bodies, being sexually objectified and violently violated in a way that disciplines Mexican immigrant women in particular. Martha Elena also worked with her friend Vera León to document her story with activist Alberto García, revealing cross-border women’s networks of support and solidarity across differences in legal status. Furthermore, that Martha Elena shared her story with León reveals her refusal to accept sexual violence at the hands of a U.S. state official as routine, and the perception of her own body and dignity despite her undocumented status. This Chicana/Mexicana solidarity shows an awareness of and resistance to forms of sexual exploitation not only at the border, but within work sites, community life, and relationships. Indeed, the experiences that Martha Elena and her compañeras struggled through reveal a class experience shaped by legal status, gender, race, and national affiliation.⁹⁷ Therefore, Parra López’s refusal to remain silent might reveal a nuanced transnational Chicana politics beyond the domestic realm of wife and mother and the limited rhetoric articulated by Chicano activists. Instead, it asserts a de-essentialized and variegated political subjectivity as simultaneously a migrant, a member of a community of border women, and a participant in a transnational network of survival. This political subjectivity often worked outside of the confines of the nation-state, the male gaze within the ethnic Mexican community and U.S. society, and the diversifying forms of exploitation endemic to the evolution of global capitalism.

Conclusion

While an emergent transnational Chicano Movement provided space for Mexican and Mexican–American women to voice their struggles, the gender conceptions deployed within the notion of familia de la Raza proved to limit the evolution of Chicano immigrant rights activism. This might reveal a gap between the Chicana feminist movement that was ongoing within Chicano Movement activism in other spaces/places and the “Raza Sí, Migra No” activism developing, in part, in the San Diego border region.⁹⁸ This was significant at a crucial moment when activists within the Chicano Movement in San Diego were beginning to split over moderate and radical critiques of the immigration crisis. While a liberal/moderate strategy sought traditional mechanisms of redress to serve as a corrective to glitches in the otherwise democratic practices of U.S. society, a transnational Chicano/Mexican American politics emerged to criticize immigration policy as a systematic practice that served the globalizing interests of capital. Indeed, as radical activists within Chicano Movement organizations in San Diego, including the Centro de Acción Social Autónoma (CASA), local chapters of La Raza Unida Party, and the emerging Committee on Chicanas Rights in San Diego, sought to illuminate the systematic class exploitation embedded within immigration policy, the voices of Mexican and Mexican–American female border crossers have offered the opportunity to further unveil the use of differential forms of subjugation by capital within incipient global economic shifts through not only race and legal status, but also gender and sexuality.

The stories by migrant women in particular depict a more nuanced analysis beyond an all-out Border Patrol attack on a monolithic La Raza. For instance, while it appears that women were more likely to report instances of strip-search, it is apparent that male border crossers were also subject to this procedure. This occurrence might suggest that border women were less likely to shame themselves into silence over such a humiliation as dominant notions of masculinity might
social justice might be gauged from the marginalized positions at the intersection of race, gender, sexuality, and legal status. With regard to resistance to the very logic of border patrolling, as Chicano activists initiated in early 1970s San Diego, the archival fragments of Martha Elena’s experience call forth the “interventions and modes of opposition specific to those” exploitative structures at the U.S.-Mexico borderlands and beyond.104

Notes

1 I wish to thank Ramón Gutiérrez, the Twin Cities Chicano@ Studies Writing Group, especially Lorena Muñoz, Cindy Garcia and Yolanda Padilla; and Mario Garcia and all the participants of the Conference on the Emerging Historiography of the Chicano Movement in February of 2012 for solidarity and dialog regarding the writing of this essay.

2 Affidavit of Martha Elena Parra López, June 7, 1972, Box 6, Folder 1, Herman Baca Papers, Mandeville Special Collections Library, University of California, San Diego, (Henceforth referred to as “Baca Papers”).

3 “Border Patrolman Accused of Rape,” La Raza Unida Party San Diego County Newsletter, July 2, 1972, Box 14, Folder 8, Baca Papers.

4 A note on ethno-racial terminology: I use the term “ethnic Mexican” and “Mexican-origin” interchangeably to refer to people of Mexican heritage regardless of their nationality (American or Mexican) or legal status in the United States (citizen, resident, undocumented, etc.). I use the term “Mexican American” to refer to born or naturalized citizens of the United States that are of Mexican heritage. I use the term “Chicano” in reference to individuals who identify with the “Chicano Movement,” who use the term at a self-referent, and in reference to how these individuals are using the term to describe their community. I use the term “Mexican” or “Mexican immigrant” to refer to Mexicans from Mexico who are in the U.S. I use Chicana and Mexican in reference to women in the same framing as above. I choose not to employ the “/a/o” or “@” as in Mexican/a/o or Chicana/o for clarity. Similarly I use “Chicano” in the phrase “Chicano Movement” to emphasize that it was mostly men leading the movement’s organizational efforts, at least in this case. Ethno-racial identity and terminology is always a contentious and ongoing process and therefore cannot be utilized without some degree of ambiguity. I utilize primarily the theoretical work on identity of Stuart Hall as exhibited, for example, in Stuart Hall, “Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities” in Anthony D. King, Ed., Culture, Globalization, and The World System (Binghamton: SUNY Department of Art and Art History, 1991) and the concept of “racial formation” as developed by Michael Omi and Howard Winant, Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s (New York: Routledge Press, 1994).

5 Dial Torgerson and Frank Del Olmo, “Tension Grows in Battle of ‘Chain Link Curtain,’” Los Angeles Times, July 30, 1972, B3.

6 Torgerson and Del Olmo, 1972.


8 Torgerson and Del Olmo, 1972.


10 Affidavit of Martha Elena Parra López, June 7, 1972, Baca Papers.

11 According to sociologist Paula A. Bar, scholarly definitions of sexual harassment describe conduct that is “unwelcomed or unsolicited, is sexual in nature, and is deliberate or

12 Affidavit of Martha Elena Parra López, June 7, 1972, Baca Papers.

13 Ibid.


15 Affidavit of Martha Elena Parra López, June 7, 1972, Baca Papers.


17 Torgerson and Del Olmo, 1972.

18 Ibid.

19 Affidavit of Martha Elena Parra López, June 7, 1972, Baca Papers.

20 Ibid.


22 Affidavit of Martha Elena Parra López, June 7, 1972, Baca Papers.

23 Ibid.


25 Harassment and violence are defined within Ian Haney López’s notion of “legal violence.” Haney López asserts, “The massive police presence, the constant police brutality, the hostile judges, and the crowded jails convinced Chicanos they were brown. ‘Law for Chicanos . . . means the police and the courts, and legal violence refers principally to the physical force these institutions wield. Law carried out on the street—as opposed to law on the books . . .’” In a similar way U.S. Customs and Border Patrol officers, and other mechanisms of immigration law, consistently enacted violence on Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the border region both psychologically and physically. Ian Haney López, Racist on Trial: The Chicanos Fight for Justice (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press at Harvard University, 2003), 9.


27 The director of the immigrant service organization CASA Justicia, Carlos “Charlie” Vásquez claims that about 300 women came forth in early 1972 with complaints of being strip-searched. Interview with Carlos Vásquez, Tape 1, September 7, 2006, Herman Baca Oral History Collection, Baca Papers.

28 Pew Hispanic Center, 2008.

29 According to the U.S. Census Bureau the Mexican-origin population in 1960 was approximated at 1.7 million, 4.5 million in 1970, and 8.7 million in 1980. The Census reported that the Mexican-origin population was at 28.3 million in 2006.


33 Ibid.


38 Ibid.


42 Pescar, 1999, 580.


44 Joseph Nevins, “The end of the 1960s/early 1970s saw the emergence of a conservative-led war—with the Nixon administration at the helm—on crime and illicit drug use, one that often pointed the finger at Mexico for being a source of the illicit commodities.” Joseph Nevins, Operation Getkeeper and Beyond: The War on “Illegals” and the Remaking of the U.S.-Mexico Boundary (New York: Routledge, 2002), 78.


47 Torgerson and Del Olmo, 1972.

48 See Joseph Nevins, Operation Getkeeper and Beyond, 2010, for notions of San Diego as an actual borderland geographic space in which territorial boundaries are divided, erased and policed. On this notion of border and borderlands as specific geographic


Herman Baca Papers/Herman Baca Oral History Collection, Tape 13, Session 11, September 13, 2003. On this see also veteran activist Bert Corona’s analysis in Mario García, Memories of Chicano History; and Gutiérrez, Walls and Mirrors, 1995, 179–205.


Geographer Joseph Nevins argues that the increased anti-immigrant discourse that began in the late 1960s emerged from lawmakers in Washington, D.C. Soon, however, San Diego elites took an active part in constructing a "crisis" concerning "illegal aliens" entering the U.S. and draining its resources.


Herman Baca Papers, September 13, 2006.


Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

72 Herman Baca to Congressman Lionel Van Deerlin, March 20, 1972, Box 13, Folder 7, Baca Papers.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Conceiving of gender as a major modality through which a racialized community was imagined on transnational grounds is related to the notion articulated by Stuart Hall that "race is the modality through which class is lived." See Stuart Hall, "Race, Articulation and Societies Structured in Dominance," in Sociological Theories: Race and Colonialism (Paris: UNESCO, 1989).

Albert García to Congressman Lionel Van Deerlin, November 24, 1972, Box 20, Folder 19, Baca Papers. On Miller’s alliance with MAPA for his election see Herman Baca Oral History Collection, Tape 2, Baca Papers.


This chapter investigates the overarching effects of the Chicano Movement on la gente (everyday people) by focusing on cannery workers—specifically at the Libby, McNeill & Libby plant—and their struggle for labor rights in Sacramento, California. As will be made clear, some of the ideals of the Chicano Movement had permeated many aspects of Chicano life and work. As a case in point, when ethnic Mexican cannery workers in Sacramento organized the Cannery Workers Committee (CWC) in 1969—at the height of the Chicano Movement—they single-handedly transformed local labor practices and did so by positioning themselves in the larger rubric of civil rights. Their organizing tactics and rhetoric, articulated in both print media and meetings, demonstrate how the Chicano Movement moved beyond what some have argued were largely symbolic cultural issues centering on personal and collective identity to bread-and-butter economic issues central to all segments of the Chicano community.

This paper situates labor organizing in the framework of Sacramento Chicano community politics, but also in the context of the larger Chicano Movement. It argues that the Chicano Movement was far-reaching and influenced unionization efforts by uniting workers and providing them with the rhetoric to articulate race and gender oppression in the workplace. In the early 1960s and ending in the late 1970s a political consciousness of being mexicano in the United States gave rise to what historian Ignacio M. García, has called the “militant ethos”—a “body of ideas, strategies, tactics, and rationalizations that community uses to respond to external challenges.” This ethos sought to synthesize the problems of the ethnic Mexican community by addressing years of discrimination, violence, and neglect from the American mainstream. The role of specific groups of workers in the Chicano Movement remains largely understudied, yet in the 1960s it is clear that ordinary Chicanos became increasingly impatient with low-wage labor and