

INSURGENT AZTLÁN: XICANO/A RESISTANCE WRITING

By

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation examines Xicano/a resistance literature within the framework of national liberation theory around the globe and how those Third World anti colonial writings have influenced the ideology and writings of Xicano/as and other indigenous peoples in the United States. The three main sources this dissertation draws upon are the writings of Franz Fanon, Amilicar Cabral, and Mao Tse-Tung. Through discussion of these anti colonial works I will investigate Guillermo Bonfil-Batalla's concept of permanent confrontation, Amilicar Cabral's concept of the return to history, and the importance of literature to the political and cultural development of a national identity. These three concepts are vital to any discussion of how anti-colonial insurgencies are organized, the development of social movements within the structure of national liberation struggles, and the role literature plays in cultural transformation. I examine Xicano/a literature as it relates to the above concepts by situating the emergence of resistance literature within the anti colonial writings of African theorists Frantz Fanon and Amilicar Cabral.

By examining Xicano/a organic intellectuals alongside current trends in Xicano/a pop culture production, this dissertation places those writers within a Xicano/a indigenous nationalist paradigm that foregrounds the creation of a Xicano/a national consciousness that is integral to the development of a national liberation movement. For the Xicano/a community, especially those Xicano/as engaged in resistance writing, the story of Aztlán has been at the center of efforts to put into words the idea of Xicano/a national formation. For Xicano/as within the academy, Aztlán has always been an articulation of cultural reinforcement that—by establishing indigenous origins—allows Xicano/as to press colonial oppressors for civil rights and equal treatment under the

prevailing laws. This dissertation examines the intersections between these dichotomous ideological positions, as expressed by community-based and academic Xicano/a writers.

I examine literature produced by the Xicano/a movement in the United States from 1848 to the present and analyze how Xicano/a literary tropes that originate in pre-conquest culture persist through the centuries, solidifying into themes of cultural resistance for the modern indigenous and ultimately generating a Xicano/a epistemology. I also show how anti-colonial history created through literature by the colonized, is fundamentally oppositional to colonial history in the United States. Within this context I analyze insurgency theories of Third World liberationists, as well as the role of literature in national liberation struggles, and apply the results of this analysis in an examination of the Xicano/a movement in the United States.

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I dedicate this manuscript to the colonized that hold fast to the idea of nation in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds. To my family, in particular my Grandmother Mabelle Pratt, my mother Sharon Patton, my children Ernesto James Mireles, Clinton E. Mireles, Olivia M. Mireles, Leona Naawug Mireles-Kota and finally to my partner in crime Jessica Kota for her undying belief in this project.

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PREFACE

I spell Xicano with an “X.” I do this mainly because I am a product of the Xicano/a student movement of the 1990s, when the X took its place. For me, and I believe for countless others of that generation and beyond, the X is symbolic of a shift toward Indigeneity that occurred during that tumultuous time. I write this in full recognition that the overwhelming majority of academy-trained scholars use the spelling “Chicano/a” in their writings. Since there is no correct way to spell in English or Spanish a word whose roots spring from Nahuatl, I believe it is sufficient to say that language, especially written language, is constantly in flux both in form and meaning, and that flux is an indication of the complexity and sophistication of the people who use it. There are instances throughout this manuscript where the reader will find the spelling “Chicano.” These are almost exclusively quotes from other writers or when the word is used as part of a cultural or political group or naming a specific period (i.e. the Chicano Power period). I have no ideological quarrel with either spelling, although I do believe the different spellings are indicative of distinct past and present politico-cultural periods for Meso-Americans in the United States.

Xicano/as in the United States today are descendants both genetically and culturally of Indians from Meso-America. The words Xicano/a, Indian, and indigenous are used interchangeably throughout this document. In a few instances, I use the specific name of an indigenous nation. That is for clarity only; my contention is that Xicano/as—despite any geo-political borders created within the past five hundred years—were, are, and will continue to be indigenous peoples of the Americas.

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INTRODUCTION

This is our high destiny, and in nature's eternal, inevitable decree of cause and effect we must accomplish it. All this will be our future history, to establish on earth the moral dignity and salvation of man—the immutable truth and beneficence of God. For this blessed mission to the nations of the world, which are shut out from the life-giving light of truth, has America been chosen; and her high example shall smite unto death the tyranny of kings, hierarchs and oligarchs, and carry the glad tidings of peace and good will where myriads now endure an existence scarcely more enviable than that of the beasts of the field. Who, then, can doubt our country is destined to be the great nation of futurity?¹

One of the most cherished and deeply held contradictions of the United States' position as moral beacon for the world is the profoundly unethical system of settler colonial governance established by Europeans and their descendants over the indigenous peoples of the Americas and their insistence as settlers on maintaining a fantasy right to control the land. The above essay by American writer John Louis O'Sullivan opens with the words “we are a nation of progress, of individual freedom, of universal enfranchisement”—this of course applies to those John O'Sullivan would call brothers and sisters, namely other European settlers. Indeed, by the time O'Sullivan wrote this statement for *The United States Democratic Review* in 1839, the ongoing physical and cultural eradication of indigenous people had been happening for over 400 years. Millions of indigenous people in the Americas had died during the initial contact with Europeans through both war and the advancement of settler colonialism. Yet, in spite of the extraordinary efforts on the part of European settlers to eradicate Indigenous peoples, their nations endure to this day as they recreate and reconfigure their political and cultural existence to resist total annihilation. Growing stronger with each passing decade, Indigenous nations are beginning to take up for themselves O'Sullivan's question, “who, then, can doubt our country is destined to be the great nation of futurity?” The

1. John L. O'Sullivan, “The Great Nation of Futurity,” *The United States Democratic Review* 6, no. 23 (1839): 430.

European settlers saw the United States as having a manifest destiny to control the Americas economically, politically, and culturally by creating a system of governance that would serve as a beacon of freedom and equality for the rest of the world, after the military defeat and expunging of the indigenous population. The problem with this position is the attempted extinction has not been completed. Indians and Indian nations are alive today and working to maintain their culture and political viability from the tip of South America to the Arctic Circle. In this dissertation I focus on one group of Indians, descendants of Meso-American Indians living in the United States, commonly known as Xicano/as.

It is possible to divide Xicano/a politico-cultural development into four periods of history, starting in the year 1848. This date is tricky for some people because it marks the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in February of 1848 that ended the Mexican American War and succeeded the northern part of México's territory to the United States. This a purely political act that transformed Mexican citizens into American citizens of Mexican descent overnight. It is important to understand that the colonial conquest of the Americas, the attempted wholesale destruction of indigenous cultures through the process of colonization, created an immediate disruption in the temporal timeline of those nations and took cultural production and its development in a different direction. Even a cursory look at history tells us that to recover from this moment of political and cultural disruption takes time, centuries in most cases. As Chicano Studies scholar Raymund Paredes says, a Xicano/a literary style steeped in the "folklore of the Chicano, four hundred years in the making"² did not develop for several generations after the Mexican American War of 1848. Underscoring this idea that Xicano/a literary and political progression began at this point, Chicano Studies historian Rudy Acuña, in the first edition of his influential book *Occupied*

2. Raymund Paredes, "The Evolution of Chicano Literature," *Melus* 5, no. 2 (1978), 73.

America, describes how Meso-Americans in the northern part of México fought back against Anglo invaders:

From the beginning of the occupation, the Mexican did attempt to organize against his oppressors. In the chapters that follow, we document numerous instances of Mexican resistance. We also refute myths of Mexican docility after the conquest, for the Mexican fought to retain his culture and language even during periods of intense repression. He was not always successful, and many times his efforts were rewarded by even greater measures of suppression. Nonetheless, a study of his reactions to the Anglo colonization supports what many Chicano scholars have claimed; that the movement did not begin in the 1960s but that it has been an ongoing struggle towards liberation.³

The four periods of Xicano/a political and cultural development run from 1848 to the present. The first, which I am calling the Mexican Period, begins with The Mexican-American War and the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 and ends with the Plan de San Diego in 1915. During this period, a politically and culturally resilient Mexicano/a community continues to identify as Mexican and is engaged in different levels of armed resistance to Anglo encroachment, in addition to petitioning and attempting to use the newly imposed United States legal system as a means for justice. The platform written by Las Gorras Blancas a short forty-two years after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo exemplifies this attitude:

If they [the bosses] persist in their usual methods retribution will be their reward . . . we must have a free ballot and a fair count. And the will of the majority shall be respected. Intimidation and the 'indictment' plan have no further fears for us. If the old system should continue, death would be a relief to our sufferings. And for our rights our lives are the least we can pledge.⁴

3. Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: The Chicano's Struggle Toward Liberation*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Canfield Press, 1972) , 3.

4. Las Gorras Blancas, "Platform," *Chicano Literature: Text and Context*, eds. Antonia Castaneda Shular, Tomas Ybarra-Frausto, Joséph Sommer (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1972) , 45.

Shelley Streeby, in her book *American Sensations: Class, Empire and the Production of Popular Culture*, describes the evolving Northern Anglo-American identity in opposition to a moribund racialized population of Mexicans who—in spite of the mass inclusion of the “Irish, Germans and other Europeans . . . in this ‘new’ America . . . remain subordinated to white America.”⁵ For Streeby, any examination of literature (Mexican or Anglo) produced during this period must accept that “sensation is a key word in this study.”⁶ She describes it as key because it identifies the nature of the literature produced in United States popular culture about Mexicans during the Mexican-American War as “something constructed rather than pre-existent.”⁷ Sensational ideas that center on the colonizers’ view of indigenous people, culture, and beliefs as primitive, and as having improved because of conquest, are part of European colonial ideology exerting influence over Meso-American bodies.

Streeby writes, “the year 1848 must also be placed within a longer history of U.S. Empire-building at the expense of North American Indians.”⁸ During the congressional debates about whether the United States should intervene in the Caste War in Yucatan in 1848, United States politicians raised questions about the political relationship between Mexican Indians and creoles that had important implications for the relationships between United States Indians and white United States Americans. Notable moments in the United States war against Indigenous peoples during the nineteenth century include the removal of the Cherokees and other tribes to lands west of the

5. Shelley Streeby, *American Sensations: Class, Empire, and the Production of Popular Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 55.

6. *Ibid.*, 27.

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*

Mississippi in the 1830s. During this time, the ideal of Manifest Destiny marched in The Black Hawk War of 1832, against the Sauk and the Fox; the wars against the Seminole Indians in Florida in the 1830s and the early 1840s; and the genocidal attacks on the California Indians. After the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, “the increasing westward movement of white U.S. settlers provoked conflicts in the newly acquired lands of the Great Plains The resistance of Indians to the encroachments of white settlers in the lands acquired by the rapidly expanding United States during the long, imperial century is another important part of the story of the American 1848.”⁹

The growing United States nationalist mood confronting the Mexicano/a community in 1848 is hardly a surprise. Dragged directly into the United States industrial print revolution by the conflict, Anglo-American writers quickly began regurgitating widespread beliefs/myths about the Mexican. The fact that these ideas and opinions formed so quickly should not be surprising. In order to make sense of the extreme reaction toward Mexicans then and now, it is important to understand that “American responses to the Mexican grew out of attitudes deeply rooted in Anglo-American traditions.”¹⁰ Moreover, they grew in the soil of the struggle between Spain (Catholicism) and England (Protestantism) for world domination in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In addition, “although Americans in the early nineteenth century knew little about the contemporary people of México, they held certain ideas about the aborigines—and the natives of Latin America generally— that affected their judgment.”¹¹

9. Ibid., 8.

10. Raymund A. Paredes, “The Origins of Anti-Mexican Sentiments in the United States” *New Scholar* 6 (1977) , 139.

11. Ibid.

In particular, it is important to keep in mind that the doctrine of Manifest Destiny is the ideological justification for the colonial aggression of the United States and is currently underpinning the conflict between the United States and México. A conflict for legitimacy of the colonial settler mindset concerning the purpose and outcome of the Mexican American War when she writes,

It was the first American war to rely on a truly popular base, the first that grasped the interest of the population, and the first people were exposed to on an almost daily basis. The essential link between the war and the people was provided by the nation's press, for it was through the ubiquitous American newspaper that the war achieved its vitality in the popular mind.¹²

Immediately after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, thousands of Mexican citizens found themselves subjugated citizens of a foreign economic, social, and governmental system that—in addition to working feverishly to develop a “the idea of themselves as an Anglo-Saxon Race”¹³—saw Mexicans in a subservient and highly racialized way. According to Streeby, the incipient United States Anglo-Saxon national identity “crucially depends upon the construction of Mexicans as a ‘mongrel race molded of Indian and Spanish blood’ that is destined to ‘melt into, and be ruled by the Iron Race of the North.’”¹⁴ It is at this moment that a growing sense of persecution and displacement on the part of the Mexicano/a, soon to be the Xicano/a, develops into seething resentment.

Americo Paredes, in his book *A Texas-Mexican Cancionero: Folksongs of the Lower Border*, speaks to this feeling of resentment when he writes “if people are not allowed to share in their own destinies, if they feel they are being governed from above by an alien group, then the ‘law’ is not considered their law, and flouting it becomes one more way of protesting against their inferior

12. Streeby, *American Sensations*, 52.

13. Ibid., 54.

14. Ibid., 55.

status.”¹⁵ Paredes establishes “the theme of fighting with pistol in hand” as a signal that the protagonist is combating injustice. These examples can be read as opposing the growing pressure by “the print revolution of the late 1830s and 1840s directly preceding the war . . . [through which] formulations of a fictive, unifying, ‘Anglo-Saxon’ national identity was disseminated in sensational newspapers, songbooks, novelettes, story papers, and other cheap reading material.”¹⁶ It was in the face of this national discourse that Mexicano/as left behind in the United States struggled to maintain a cohesive identity.

During the second period of Xicano/a political and cultural development (1915–the 1950s), organizations like LULAC, GI Forum, and other American-oriented agencies come into existence. The period of Chicano Power (the 1950s–the 1980s) is most closely associated with the ideology of mestizaje and a proto-nationalism. Shortly after the introduction of Aztlán to the Xicano/a community at the 1968 Xicano/a Youth Liberation Conference in Denver, Colorado, there is an almost immediate split (between academics and community activists) as to the meaning of Aztlán and the struggle over identifying Aztlán as a real place springing from myth. During the 1960s and 1970s the proliferation of Raza newspapers and literary pursuits within the Xicano/a community extended far beyond the university classroom/academic setting, which served as a counter balance to the intellectual bourgeois leanings of the academy.

While all of these periods are important in terms of discussing the evolving Xicano/a response to colonialism, this dissertation will look specifically at the last two periods: the Mestizaje/Chicano Power Period and the Indigenous Period, which entails and is demonstrated

15. Americo Paredes, *A Texas-Mexican Cancionero: Folksongs of the Lower Border*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976), 35.

16. Streeby, *American Sensations*, 39.

through the literature and the practices of the time a deeper recognition, acceptance of the Xicano/as indigenous heritage. When writing, speaking, and theorizing Xicano/a nationalism, it would be unfair to overlay Mexican Nationalism onto Xicano/a nationalism. First, the part of México being discussed is peripheral to the core of Meso-America. México itself did not become an independent nation until 1820. The ties to México as a nation were tenuous as they are in most political situations like this. In order to create an understandable framework for the emergence of a Xicano/a nationalist identity, it only makes sense to fix the date of Feb. 10, 1848, with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, as a beginning point.

From 1848 to 1968 is a scant 120 years. At the beginning of this time, the Xicano/a mentality begins to emerge in the protest newspapers of the late 1800's. After the turn of the last century, between 1912 and 1915, México experiences the world's first socialist revolution and a flood of refugees comes north across the US/México border. Significantly, the Flores-Magon brothers are operating on both sides of the border, publishing their newspaper *Regeneracion*. In 1915, sixty-eight years after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the Plan de San Diego calls for open insurrection by Mexicano/as living in southern Texas, against the Anglo invader. The goals of this insurrection are patently different from those of the Mexican Revolution. The rhetoric of the time has already shifted to the rights of Xicano/as as citizens of the United States through the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, with the rise of Mexican-American organizations like LULAC, the GI Forum, and other civil rights and assimilationist organizations. During this thirty-year period, the tradition of protest journalism is alive within different communities, as well as the continuing identification by Xicano/as as United States citizens. These newspapers continue to chronicle the abuses suffered by Mexicano/as and Xicano/as at the hands of Anglos.

Starting around 1950 and through the 1960s, the publication of books like *North to México* by Carey McWilliams and *With His Pistol in his Hand* by Americo Paredes, and the Barrio Action work

by Ernesto Galarza, would eventually lead to the first Latino research institute in the nation at University of California, Riverside. From 1940 to the 1960s, a developing critical Xicano/a consciousness begins to question United States policy toward Xicano/as, thus providing a nascent theory for national struggle and change.

These works and others laid the foundation for the hopeful Xicano/a nationalism emerging in the late 1960s and early 1970s. During this period, a very close collaboration between the academy and the community in terms of goals and message takes place. Works like Rodolfo Acuña's *Occupied America* (1972) mentioned above and its subsequent revisions set the stage for the codification of Aztlán as a homeland for Xicano/as in the United States, as set forth by the poet Alurista at the 1968 Xicano/a Youth Liberation Conference in Denver, Colorado. During this time there were a number of plans, manifestos, and platforms developed and put forward by community organizations, such as the Crusade for Justice and their *Plan de Barrio* (1968), the United Farm Workers and the *Plan de Delano* (1966), and the Brown Berets with their ten-point political platform. A notable and important contribution is the pamphlet *Fan the Flames: A Revolutionary Position on the Chicano National Question*. These expressions found a common voice in the theories of internal colonialism developing among intellectuals like Mario Barrera, Juan José Quinones, and Armando Rendon in his 1972 book *Chicano Manifesto*.

Moving into the 1990s, a debate emerges between first- and second-generation Chicano/a Studies scholars as to the direction of the Chicano Studies discipline, as scholars who had not gone through the struggles of the 1960s came into the academy¹⁷ with changing understandings of what material is appropriate to cover. In terms of scholarly endeavor, Xicana feminists began putting

17. Maria E. Montoya, "Beyond Internal Colonialism: Class, Gender and Culture as Challenges to Chicano Identity," in *Voices of a New Chicano/a History*, edited by Refugio Rochin and Dennis Nodin Valdes, (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2000), 183 – 195.

forward long-deserved criticisms of patriarchy within the Xicano/a movement and how the movement replicated European patriarchal structures.

In the Xicano/a community, beginning in the late 1970s saw the emergence of groups like Union Del Barrio in southern California and the successful publication of their newspaper *La Verdad* in 1989, which continues to the present. Although the number of Chicano newspapers has dropped dramatically, the real story is the mainstreaming of those papers and their message. *La Verdad* and a handful of others outside of the university context survive and continue to publish materials with Xicano/a Liberation as the main theme. Throughout the 1980s, Xenaro Ayala and the California remnants of La Raza Unida party continued to organize and produce literature from their San Fernando Valley positions, specifically calling for Xicano/a Nationalism and the development of a Xicano/a political machine.

As the second wave of Xicano/a Studies professionals begins to openly embrace the dominant culture of the academy, a deeper separation of Xicano/a community intellectuals from the academy takes place from the 1990s through 2001. This has happened in response to the debates of the 1980s that placed gender, sexuality, identity, and individuality at the fulcrum of Xicano/a knowledge production. Works produced by academics during this time focus more and more on identity and fiction. The works of Sandra Cisneros, Gloria Anzaldúa, Ana Castillo, and Richard Rodríguez provide excellent examples of how the discourse shifted from liberation to identity. While it may seem that Rodríguez does not belong in the same category with Anzaldúa, Cisneros, and Castillo, his work on identity speaks to the dominant racial discourse in the United States in similar ways. Conversely, at the same time in the community a resurgence of publications by public intellectuals takes place. These include works by writers who for the most part are positioning themselves and their writing within a framework of Xicano/a national liberation.

The major event of the 1990s, and arguably of the last 168 years, for re-establishing and fixing Xicano/a revolutionary thought heading into the twenty-first century is the January 1, 1994, uprising of the Ejercito de Zapatista Liberacion Nacional (EZLN) in opposition to the enactment of the North American Free Trade Agreement. The emergence of the Zapatista in Southern México represents the resurgence of indigeneity as a major organizing principle for Xicano/a cultural and political responses to colonialism and I believe it has certainly been received as such by the activist generation of the 1990s. The genius of the Zapatista revolution has been the gift of exposing the nakedness of the emperor and in doing so interpreting another secret widely known but resolutely avoided, namely, “the extended disappointment with democratic realities. The abandonment of the ballot box and political parties was already revealing people’s increasing awareness of democracy’s flaws: not only imperfections (manipulations of suffrage, etc.) but its very nature.”¹⁸

Four major community books and one national speaking tour presentation serve as markers aligning the Xicano/a movement clearly in the space of indigenous rebellion. The books are *The ‘X’ in La Raza: An Anti-book* (1996), by Roberto Rodríguez; *Xicano/a: An Autobiography* (1995), by Apaxu Máiz, who authored a second book in 2004 titled *Looking 4 Aztlan: Birthright or Right 4 Birth; Chicano Journalism: Its History and Its Use as a Weapon for Liberation* (1992 reissued in 2009), a compilation of articles, speeches, and writings by Ernesto Bustillos of Union Del Barrio; and *We will Rise: Rebuilding the Mexikah Nation* (2000), by Kurly Tlapoyawa of the Mexikah Eagle Society. Lastly, but in many ways vitally important, was the national tour presentation “500 Years of Indigenous Resistance in the Americas,” developed by the Raza Unida Party and delivered by their national representative

18. Gustavo Esteva, "The Zapatistas and people's power." *Capital & Class* 23, no. 2 (1999): 154.

Daniel Osuna. By examining Xicano/a organic intellectuals alongside current trends in Xicano/a culture, this dissertation places those writers in an emerging Xicano/a–Indigenist hermeneutics that foregrounds the building of dual power systems and a national consciousness integral to developing a national liberation movement. For the Xicano/a community and those engaged in resistance writing, Aztlán and its mythology have increasingly taken a center position for articulating the national liberation struggle. For the academy, Aztlán has always been an articulation of cultural reinforcement, referring to indigenous origins and allowing Xicano/as to press the colonial system for civil rights and equal treatment under the prevailing laws.

In this dissertation I analyze and document resistance writing based in the community and the academy. I examine how indigenous myths originating in a pre-conquest epistemology have created a Xicano/a epistemology solidified by themes of cultural resistance for contemporary Meso-Americans in the United States. Concurrently, I analyze and apply to the United States context both a Chicano Studies paradigm insurgency theory of the Third World and the role of literature in national liberation struggles. I also show how anti-colonial history created through literature by the colonized is fundamentally oppositional to colonial history in the United States.

In the first chapter, *Literature and Insurgency*, I examine the connection between national liberation movements and the production of politics and culture—specifically, how national liberation movements around the globe have influenced the ideology and writings of Xicanos/as and other indigenous peoples in the United States. To do this, I examine Mao Tse Tung’s position on cultural production in wars of liberation, Amílcar Cabral’s theories on cultural resistance, and Franz Fanon’s theory of how the stages of literature development lead to the national liberation struggle and a return to history. Politico-cultural production is vital to any understanding of how anti-colonial insurgencies are organized and, most importantly, the transformation from political-cultural movement to national liberation struggle. I also examine the role of cultural production in each of

these situations by contextualizing the emergence of a national literature within the work of African theorists, using Frantz Fanon and Amílcar Cabral.

Chapter Two—Writing Insurgency, examines the dominant literary tropes within Xicano/a resistance literature and their importance as themes of Meso-American and Xicano/a resistance. Specifically, I examine mestizaje, the Virgin of Guadalupe, the Mandato de Cuauhtémoc, and Aztlán. I explore the contribution these tropes make to an emerging Xicano/a national identity within the political framework of the United States and consider how these tropes, with the exception of Aztlán, are related to the conquest.. Aztlán is a pre-conquest myth that grounds Xicano/a indigenous irredentist claims; I address the nature of this major pre-conquest trope in this context because of the connection and authenticity it gives to claims of Indigeneity in the current discourse. In doing this, I examine the introduction of Aztlán into the American imaginary.

In Chapter Three—Insurgent Beginnings, I discuss and elaborate on the criteria for identifying a piece of literature as resistance writing by analyzing three community intellectuals and their roles in articulating grassroots politico-cultural resistance to European hegemony. I examine the writings of Kurly Tlapoyawa of the Mexikah Eagle Society and his book *We Will Rise: Rebuilding the Mexikah Nation*; Apaxu Máiz's two books *Looking 4 Aztlán: Birthright or Right 4 Birth* and *Xicano: An Autobiography* and his 1997 MEXA Conference keynote address on Xicano/a Nationalism; and Roberto Rodríguez's book *The X in La Raza II*. Through interviews and analysis of their writings, I show how these authors are furthering an oppositional Meso-American history that cannot be incorporated into European history.

In Chapter 4—Whither Aztlán? The Specter That Haunts the United States, I look at two films produced in the early 1970s: *Boulevard Nights* and *Please Don't Bury Me Alive*. The first film was well-financed Hollywood production and the second a community creation shown regionally in Southern Texas. While *Boulevard Nights* opened to huge protests in Southern California and was seen

as an early commercialization of the cholo/lowrider culture, in retrospect it provides a unique glimpse into the ground level daily acceptance and commercialization of liberation politics that was beginning to emerge in the 1970s. *Please Don't Bury Me Alive* shows the intersection of the movement and daily survival of Xicano/as in Texas barrios. The movie explores issues of sovereignty and the Vietnam War draft.

In Chapter 5—The Question of Mestizaje and Xicano/a Insurgency, I examine the role of resistance writing within current Xicano/a pop culture through film, as Xicano/as head into the twenty-first century. I show how films like *Pancho Goes to College* and *Machete* provide insight into the Xicano/a politico-cultural resistance dialogue happening now. Naming these films as resistance literature makes it possible to analyze how these films articulate, within a Fanonian context, the desire, ability, and space to formulate resistance. Through textual analysis of these films as literature, I examine the role resistance literature plays in developing the will of the people to resist oppression through oppositional consciousness.

All of this cultural production, if writers like Fanon, Cabral, and Mao are to be believed, is first a strenuous effort on the part of the colonized to reestablish their national existence. This return to history is the legitimate exercise of sovereignty. All of this literature, all of this cultural and political production, is in the end not an “I told you so” to the colonizer, but rather one to other indigenous peoples – urging Xicano/as to actual confrontation against their oppressor. Fanon writes,

history teaches us clearly that the battle against colonialism does not run straight away along the lines of nationalism. For a very long time the native devotes his energies to ending certain definite abuses: forced labor, corporal punishment, inequality of salaries, limitation of political rights, etc. This fight for democracy against the oppression of mankind will slowly leave the confusion of neo-liberal universalism to emerge, sometimes laboriously, as a claim to nationhood. It so happens that the unpreparedness of the educated classes, the lack of practical links

between them and the mass of the people, their laziness, and, let it be said, their cowardice at the decisive moment of the struggle will give rise to tragic mishaps.¹⁹

Resistance does not happen because of culture. Culture is resistance. Culture does not serve some benign purpose; it is the foundation of the struggle against colonialism. Cultural production inevitably leads to some form of national resistance, or else it is not the cultural production of the oppressed—it is the culture of the oppressor.

Culture and resistance cannot be separated. They are one and the same. To name culture is to name resistance. If there is a national Xicano/a culture, then there is a national Xicano/a liberation movement.

19. Fanon, *Wretched*, 148.

CHAPTER ONE—LITERATURE AND INSURGENCY

After centuries of unreality, after having wallowed in the most outlandish phantoms, at long last the native, gun in hand, stands face to face with the only forces which contend for his life – the forces of colonialism.¹

This dissertation will explore, categorize, and contextualize resistance themes in Xicano/a literature. African and Asian anti-colonial writers, primarily from the second half of the twentieth century, thoroughly explored the connection of these resistance themes to national liberation movements. I will show how Xicano/a literature emerged from colonial resistance and anti-colonial writers who have shaped this literature operate within a well-known and long-established revolutionary framework. These theorists and writers, in fact, lend continuity to a centuries-old indigenous, anti-colonial position. I will also examine how contemporary ideas of resistance, either expressed politically or via military insurgency, connect to the work produced by earlier Xicano/a resistance writers. Resistance themes have become a mainstay of Xicano/a popular culture and rhetoric. Anti-colonial tropes within Xicano/a national literature have profoundly influenced the development of a national identity among Xicano/as in the United States and have been critical to the emergence of Xicano/as as political agents at least since the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

Although the words “revolution” and “insurgency” are used at times interchangeably, and insurgencies can develop into revolutions, the definitions below make it clear most military thinkers do not view the implementation of these terms as the same thing. I argue Xicano/a literature is insurgent literature because, based on the definitions below it is mostly written in opposition to an occupying force or belief system. In this dissertation, I will concentrate on definitions and theories of insurgency, on how those theories are put into operation through present day Xicano/a resistance

1. Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York City: Grove Press, 1965), 58.

literature, and on the impact of such theories on community organizing methodologies.

Specifically, I will demonstrate how, as a body of work, Xicano/a literature—like literature produced by other colonized people—builds toward a national liberation movement. The literary tropes of Aztlán and Indigeneity, Tonatzin/Virgin de Guadalupe, and the Mandato de Cuauhtémoc have been central to the development of an epistemology that offers an alternative to the overly racialized identity paradigm of “mestizaje.” This alternative, the “indigenous position,” formed primarily from the above-mentioned pre-conquest tropes, has created an intellectual base for the ongoing Xicano/a struggle for national liberation.

Fanon and Cabral

In his book *The Wretched of the Earth*, Franz Fanon—the Martinique-born, French-educated psychologist, Algerian revolutionary, and anti-colonial writer—outlines the stages of literature colonized writers go through during the re-development of national culture in the course of centuries of military and economic colonialism. For Fanon, national liberation is inextricably linked with writing, literature, and cultural expression. Fanon tells us this moment of resistance can only be experienced when the indigenous, through the development of national culture, realizes that “he is not an animal.”² At this moment, the native, realizing “his humanity, begins to sharpen the weapons with which he will secure its victory.”³

The importance of Fanon’s contribution cannot be overestimated: he gives intellectual body and substance to the process of decolonization, sharpening both physical and rhetorical tools.

2. Ibid., 43.

3. Ibid.

Fanon lays out three phases of literature and development within the national struggle when he writes,

in the first phase, the native intellectual gives proof that he has assimilated the culture of the occupying powers. His writings correspond point by point with those of his opposite number in the mother country. . . . In the second phase we find the native is disturbed; he decides to remember what he is.⁴

Finally, in what Fanon calls the fighting phases, the native through anti-colonial organizing will shake the people. Fanon writes, “instead of according the people’s lethargy an honored place in his esteem, he [the revolutionary] turns himself into an awakener of the people; hence comes a fighting literature, a revolutionary literature, and a national literature.”⁵

According to Fanon and Amilcar Cabral, colonial powers interpret the allegiance demonstrated by the colonized to a conquered culture “as faithfulness to the spirit of the nation and as a refusal to submit.”⁶ In other words it is the seed of national liberation. In his 2004 *Foreign Policy* article, “The Hispanic Challenge,” Samuel P. Huntington, a former chair of the Harvard Academy of International and Area Studies, compares the potential political mood and demographic congregation of Mexican-Americans in the Southwest to other irredentist movements across the globe.⁷ Coming four decades after Fanon’s initial observations on the role of literature and culture in the Algerian national liberation movement, Huntington’s article confirms that the memory of United States land grabs lingers on in the minds of United States Anglos. Huntington writes, “History shows that serious potential for conflict exists when people in one country begin referring

4. Ibid., 222.

5. Ibid., 233.

6. Ibid., 237.

7. Samuel P. Huntington, “The Hispanic Challenge,” *Foreign Policy* no. 141, 2004.

to territory in a neighboring country in proprietary terms and to assert special rights and claims to that territory.”⁸ Huntington, a prominent voice in United States domestic and foreign policy in the last half of the twentieth century, interestingly positions the political and cultural assertions of Mexicans and Xicano/as in the United States within the specific political condition of irredentism.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines “irredentist” as “a person advocating the restoration to their country of any territory formerly belonging to it.” This definition implicitly and explicitly expresses the dispute over the ownership of the land. The gravity of these disputes as framed by Huntington is apparent in the way irredentist conflicts, like those of Ireland, Chechnya, and Palestine, have played out over the past century. Taking these examples of irredentist struggles into account, the problem with Huntington’s analysis is that it is Xicano/a citizens of the United States, not Mexicans in México, who claim the Southwest United States; Huntington fears this ethnic solidarity could spell big trouble for United States imperialism. He writes,

this trend could consolidate the Mexican-dominant areas of the United States into an autonomous, culturally and linguistically distinct, and economically self-reliant bloc within the United States. “We may be building toward the one thing that will choke the melting pot,” warns former National Intelligence Council Vice Chairman Graham Fuller, “an ethnic area and grouping so concentrated that it will not wish, or need, to undergo assimilation into the mainstream of American multi-ethnic English-speaking life.”⁹

It is Xicano/as who have been bringing the idea of Aztlán to life, slowly cultivating it, and building a body of national literature around these irredentist claims since the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. The first proclamation to specifically name Aztlán, as a political entity, was made by the poet Alurista at the 1969 Chicano Youth Liberation Conference in Denver, Colorado. In part, it states that

8. Samuel P. Huntington, “The Hispanic Challenge,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 141 (2004): 36.

9. *Ibid.*, 5.

with our heart in our hands and our hands in the soil, we declare the independence of our mestizo nation. We are bronze people with bronze culture. Before the world, before all of North America, before all our brothers in the bronze continent, we are a nation, we are a union of free pueblos, we are Aztlán.¹⁰

At this same conference in 1969 an unsigned manifesto from the Revolutionary Caucus detailed more explicitly the irredentist position of the Chicano movement at the time. The authors of the statement start by positioning Xicano/as as “a non-conquered people living in a conquered land,”¹¹ which immediately establishes Xicano/a land as being held and occupied illegally, one of the main criteria of an irredentist claim. In doing this they name the entire Southwest of the United States as this occupied space. The writers go on to contextualize this contemporary moment as “liberation struggle,” specifically naming nationalism or the belief in the unique identity of Xicano/as as a politically distinct people. They write, “nationalism is an awareness that we are not Caucasian, not Mexican-American or any other label the system puts on us, but that we are a people with an ancient heritage and an ancient scar on our souls.”¹² The irredentist argument clearly present in Xicano/a literature is often dismissed as macho nationalist rhetoric. I believe this happens because the irredentist argument brings with it the political right of secession. Although the statement of the Revolutionary Caucus from the Denver Youth Conference in 1969 is not as widely known as the Plan de Aztlán written by Alurista, the assertions that “we will not attain what is rightfully ours, or our democratic right of self-determination without having to overturn the entire

10. Alurista, “The Spiritual Manifesto of Aztlán,” in *Chicano Literature: Text and Context*, eds. Antonia Castaneda Shular, Tomas Ybarra-Frausto, Joseph Sommer (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1972), 84.

11. Revolutionary Caucus, “Statement of the Revolutionary Caucus at Denver’s Chicano Youth Liberation Conference,” *El Pocho Che* 1, no. 1 (July 1969): 1.

12. Ibid.

system. We will have to do away with our oppressor's entire system of exploitation. In order to do this we must build a revolutionary organization, which will fight on all levels"¹³ make it impossible to ignore the joint call for political, cultural, and spiritual sovereignty made in both pieces of writing.

Harry Beran, a former senior lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Wollongong in Australia, has proposed what he calls the democratic theory of political self-determination. Beran believes that "liberal democratic theory is committed to the permissibility of secession quite independently of its desirability in order to increase the possibility of consent-based political authority."¹⁴ This means that within the consent theory of political legitimacy individuals have the right to emigrate and change their nationality and that "any territorially concentrated group within a state should be permitted to secede if it wants to and it is morally and practically possible."¹⁵ This indicates both irredentism and succession are part of accepted legitimate political thought and recognized as human rights in international law. Xicano/as invented the nation of Aztlán in 1969 and now, because of the irredentist construct of Aztlán, they are experiencing a shift in the way they perceive themselves in relation to the United States national project.

The 2010 United States Census provides an interesting example of this shift toward indigenous identity. According to the United States Census Bureau, for the first time in the history of the census, 175,494 Mexican Americans declared their race as American Indian. This places

13. Ibid., 2.

14. Harry Beran, "In defense of the consent theory of political obligation and authority." *Ethics* (1977): 260-271.

15. Tina Norris, Paula L. Vines, and Elizabeth M. Hoeffel, "The American Indian and Alaska Native Population: 2010," *2010 Census Briefs* (Jan. 2012): 17..

Xicano/as the fourth largest tribal grouping of Indigenous peoples in the United States.¹⁶ I consider this act of self-identification the result of creating indigenous paradigms like the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) model centered on the Four Tezcatlipoca and other Xicano/a cultural and political developments. As I argue in this dissertation, this identity shift is a byproduct of the work accomplished through student groups like Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán, Chicano Studies programs at the university level, rare programs like the TUSD's Mexican American Studies (MAS) program, and community groups like the growing Mexicayotl¹⁷ Danzante movement in the United States. Considering the development of national liberation movements around the world and throughout history, it is no coincidence that the ideas of Aztlán and secession have continued to grow within the Xicano/a movement.

Fanon creates a framework for resistance by setting the stage for protracted political and cultural struggle on the part of the native against settler colonial domination enacted on a continental level. Fanon writes,

the native intellectual who decides to give battle to colonial lies fights on the field of the whole continent. The past is given back its value. Culture, extracted from the past to be displayed in all its splendor, is not necessarily that of his own country For colonialism, this vast continent was the haunt of savages, a country riddled with superstitions and fanaticism, destined for contempt, weighed down by the curse of God.¹⁸

Fanon acknowledges that those who “fight on the field of the whole continent” are able to create a pan-indigenous culture, pulling diverse cultures together to combat the totalizing project of colonialism. Many regard Fanon's critique of the mental and physical circumstances endured by the

16. Ibid., 17.

17. “Mexicayotl” is a Nahuatl word that means “all things Mexican.”

18. Fanon, *Wretched*, 211.

colonized as critically pertinent to the understanding of anti-colonial national resistance. Fanon demonstrates how an imposed colonial culture inescapably replaces indigenous culture century after century, through violence and economic exploitation, until it becomes obvious the original “national culture under colonial domination [is] a contested culture whose destruction is sought in a systematic fashion.”¹⁹ So much so, Fanon writes, before the emergence of the national liberation movement all that is left to native people is “simply a concentration on a hard core of culture which is becoming more and more shriveled up, inert and empty.”²⁰

On October 14, 1970, Amílcar Cabral,²¹ delivered a speech at Syracuse University titled “National Liberation and Culture.” The speech encapsulates Cabral’s thoughts on culture and the role cultural production plays in developing the national liberation movement. Although Cabral produced a relatively small body of written work concerning his vision of decolonization through the national liberation movement, Cabral’s thoughts occupy an important place in the discussion of indigenous resistance in the Americas because of their emphasis on the importance of material culture and how it is inextricably joined with history. In this same speech, Cabral explicitly links his struggle in Bissau-Guinea with the broader struggle against settler colonialism:

The value of culture as an element of resistance to foreign domination lies in the fact that culture is the vigorous manifestation on the ideological or idealist plane of the physical, and historical reality of the society that is dominated or to be dominated. Culture is simultaneously the fruit of a people’s history and a determinant of history, by the positive or negative influence which it exerts on the evolution of relationships between man and his environment, among men or groups of men within a society, as well as among different societies. Ignorance of this fact may explain the failure of several attempts at foreign domination—as well as the failure of some national

19. Ibid., 237.

20. Ibid., 238.

21. Cabral was the Secretary General of the Partido Africana do Independencia de Guiné e Cabo Verde. He was assassinated January 20, 1973.

liberation movements.²²

Cabral says, “The national liberation of a people is the regaining of the historical personality of that people, it is a return to history through the destruction of the imperialist domination to which they have been subjected.”²³ Like other leaders of Third World national liberation struggles, Cabral understood that the actual “return to history,” the means through which the national liberation struggle takes place, varies from country to country because of the unique political environments of each country and the special historical circumstances and characteristics. This does not mean other national liberation struggles have no lessons for the Xicano/a movement. It stands to reason a “return to history” allows for Xicano/as sidelined by colonialism to take center stage once again in their own politico-cultural struggle for national liberation.

It is also important to understand that the process of national liberation, comprising the physical and intellectual freeing of a people from colonial domination, is often a political process and is frequently shrouded in secrecy. As counterinsurgency expert David Galula writes, “that the political is the undisputed boss is a matter of both principle and practicality.”²⁴ When the return to history begins for any politico-cultural movement is difficult to pinpoint, and perhaps unnecessary, since an examination of national liberation struggles demonstrates the typical existence of multiple resistance movements working independently of each other for long periods. This observation provides one example of why the examination of resistance literature is so vital. Action springs

22. Amilcar Cabral, “National Liberation and Culture,” trans. Maureen Webster (Eduardo Mondlane Memorial Lecture, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY, February 20, 1970): 3.

23. Ibid., 7.

24. David Galula, *Counter Insurgency: Theory and Practice* (Shalpur Jat, India: Pentagon Press, 1964), 14. Galula was a French officer who served in the Algerian War. This book is considered a foundational text in the modern understanding of counterinsurgency.

from dialogue; without dialogue, education, and organization, there can be no struggle. Without struggle there is no national culture; struggle for the oppressed centers on the material production of history. As Cabral writes, “history, culture has as its material base the level of the productive forces and the mode of production.”²⁵

This point is particularly salient for Xicano/as’ cultural production since Xicano/as do not have widespread ownership of the means of material production. In his 1937 essay *On Practice*, Mao Tse-Tung makes a point relevant to the development of national liberation struggles (a category I argue and will show the Xicano/a movement belongs to), namely, that such production

is not confined to activity in production, but takes many other forms—class struggle, political life, scientific and artistic pursuits; in short, as a social being, man participates in all spheres of the practical life of society. Thus man, in varying degrees, comes to know the different relations between man and man, not only through his material life but also through his political and cultural life (both of which are intimately bound up with material life).²⁶

Widespread production of meaning occurs through Xicano/a literature—poetry, film, literature, dance, and music. Understanding of how this production of culture and politics provides the foundation of struggle and the will to resist is vital to a proper understanding of how revolutionary culture forms and the oppressed write revolutionary history. At what point does Xicano/a resistance literature diverge from the colonial project of Western civilization to begin the “return to history”? Fanon, as cited above, calls this “return to history” the “fighting phase.” Does Xicano/a literature speak to the future as a “fighting literature, a revolutionary literature, and national literature,” all building a new history? Cabral’s return to history is not some fanciful wish to return

25. Cabral, “Liberation and Culture,” 5.

26. Mao Tse-Tung. “On Practice: On the Relation between knowledge and practice, between knowing and doing,” *The selected works of Mao Tse Tung, Vol. 1*. Peking, China; Foreign Press Service, 1937, 296.

to the conditions existing before Europeans arrived. Rather, both Cabral and Fanon wish to see a distinct people, a political body, a nation of the colonized emerge from a culturally subjugated position to a position of authority on their land by “giving battle to colonial lies,”²⁷ reclaiming and rebuilding a national culture apart from the colonizer.

Settler Colonialism in the Americas

In the last half the twentieth century, Third World military strategists such as Mao Tse-Tung, Che Guevara, Amilicar Cabral, and Vo Nguyen Giap²⁸ challenged European colonial power around the globe by relying on a strategy of resistance that begins with political education and escalates into guerilla warfare and finally conventional warfare. Students of history and liberation movements refer to this as the period of national liberation movements. Military scholar Ian Beckett says this “fusion of traditional guerrilla tactics with political and, especially, ideological objectives marked the emergence of a revolutionary guerilla warfare or insurgency”²⁹ during the latter half of the twentieth century. Traditionally, guerilla warfare is conceptualized as a rural-based military movement where the insurgency grows in relative safety until it controls larger and larger tracts of the countryside. Then the guerillas or insurgents encircle major cities and cut the cities off from each other and bring down the central government.³⁰ This model of organizing warfare developed because, at least until

27. Fanon, *Wretched*, 211.

28. These revolutionary leaders are known for their successes using guerilla warfare against modern armies and for their individual development of and intellectual contributions to revolutionary insurgencies: Mao Tse-Tung in China, Che Guevara in Cuba with a failed attempted in Bolivia that ended in his death, Amilicar Cabral in Papua New Guinea, and Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap in Vietnam, where he fought against the French and the United States.

29. Ian Beckett, “The Future of Insurgency,” *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 16, no. 1 (2005): 2.

30. Thomas Marks, “Urban Insurgency,” *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 14, no. 3 (2003): 100.

2007, the majority of the world's population lived in rural areas; hence the focus on mobilizing where the people are.

Today, however, dramatic shifts have occurred; "For the first time in history, more people live now in urban than in rural areas. In 2010, urban areas are home to 3.5 billion people, or 50.5 per cent of the world's population. In the next four decades, all of the world's population growth is expected to take place in urban areas, which will also draw in some of the rural population through rural to urban migration."³¹ In addition, by 2010 "some 80 percent [of the world's population] will inhabit the developing world . . . [and] by 2020 the developing world will have accounted for 90 percent of global population growth since 1930."³² Urbanization is due in large part to forced migration—caused by war and economic need, brought on by governmental austerity measures—combined with the population explosion of Third World peoples. These demographic and geographic shifts are disrupting what are now considered traditional methods of implementing guerilla warfare and insurgencies. Examining and understanding the impact of these new scenarios on colonial culture and political education will prove essential to understanding the role of the national liberation movement in culturally and physically decolonizing the Americas.

In spite of the new ways of conceptualizing war and the coded irredentist and secessionist rhetoric embedded in the US-Xicano/a dialogue, Xicano/a scholars still portray Xicano/a politics and culture largely in terms of personal identity. A significant amount of scholarly and intellectual work by Western militaries and Third World scholars has emerged that addresses the national liberation movement as a way of ending colonial domination. The scarcity of scholarship in

31. John O. Oucho, and William TS Gould. "Internal migration, urbanization, and population distribution." *Demographic change in sub-Saharan Africa* (1993): 256-96.

32. Beckett, "Future of Insurgency," 26.

Xicano/a Studies circles on the national liberation movement is disappointing since this is such a vibrant aspect of decolonization. Why do Xicano/a scholars forgo serious conversations about political resistance that could potentially reorder the colonial system, especially given the large body of scholarly research that has been compiled regarding the issues of secession, nation building, and national liberation movements? I think this is because Xicano/as have failed, as a community, to develop and incorporate into Xicano/a studies and philosophy a foundational paradigm, independent of the reformist position of the United States civil rights struggle, such as the Tucson MAS, with which to articulate Xicano/a ideas about revolution and social change. I wish to emphasize the point that “colonialism” or “decolonization” is not simply a metaphor-generating tool for rationalizing the experience of Third World people within the United States. Rather, it is in fact a legitimate political position that appears, in the words of Mexican scholar Pablo Gonzalez Casanova, “to apply to a number of cases, and is valuable in emphasizing the structural similarities and common historical origins of the positions of Third World peoples inside and outside the United States.”³³ The first people to whom Gonzalez Casanova applies this term are Indigenous people living in México. In his seminal 1965 article on the internal colony, he writes,

if we take these observations about the colonial phenomenon in elaborating a concrete political definition, we observe that a colony is: (1) a territory without self-government. (2) It is in an unequal position with respect to the metropolis where inhabitants do govern themselves. (3) The administration and responsibility for administration is a concern of the State, which dominates it. (4) Its inhabitants do not participate in elections of higher administrative bodies, i.e. rulers are assigned by the dominating country. (5) The rights of its inhabitants, their economic situation, and their social privileges are regulated by another State. (6) This position does not correspond to natural bonds—but rather to artificial models, which are the product of conquest or of international concession. (7) Colonial inhabitants belong to a race and culture different from that of the dominating people. Customarily they also speak a different language.³⁴

33. Pablo Gonzalez Casanova, “Internal Colonialism and National Development,” *Studies in Comparative International Development* 1, no. 4. (1965): 29.

Gonzalez Casanova calls this political condition “internal colonialism.” Subsequent writers from the United States adapted the concept to subordinated groups in the US, including Xicanos/as.

Denominating Xicano/a existence in this way accomplishes several important things: first, it establishes Xicano/as as indigenous people, native to this land; second, it establishes the existence of a colonizer who is neither indigenous nor native to this land; third, it allows Xicano/as, through study and careful articulation, to develop a way to analyze the effects of living as colonial subjects and further to visualize how the resurgence of national culture and politics can neutralize those effects. Indeed, it is possible to take Gonzalez Casanova’s ideas to the next level of analysis by placing the discussion of Xicano/a national liberation within the context of the settler colony framework. This accurately represents the current political and cultural situation while making it easier to understand the existence, territorial holdings, purpose, and history of the United States as it relates to the Xicano/a.

The colonies that began as economic ventures by Europeans in the Americas and elsewhere in the world come to be understood both officially and in the common vernacular as “a territory in which European emigrants dominated indigenous peoples.”³⁵ Gonzalez Casanova’s definition of colony provides a basis for understanding how and why the history of the US, even after it has achieved political independence, is told through the lens of the European conqueror. The erasing of history and culture subsequent to the historical displacement of indigenous peoples creates a description of the conditions extant in the United States that Rodolfo Acuña, a professor at California State University, Northridge, designates a “false collective memory,”³⁶ in which

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.

Europeans redefine this conquered land as their motherland. This redefinition is the foundation of the settler colonialism position. The Indigeneity of the settler is implicit in this belief and is assumed on the part of the colonizer. Their position is secured because they or their descendants “are founders of political orders and carry their sovereignty with them.”³⁷ Understanding this position—along with internal colonialism—is key to understanding the development of the national liberation movement.

In his 2010 book *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*, Lorenzo Verachi defines the political and economic differences between colonialism as an economic network and settler colonialism, which he believes defies the common understanding of colonialism because “it is premised on the domination of a majority that has become indigenous (settlers are made by conquest and immigration), external domination exercised by a metropolitan core and a skewed demographic balance.”³⁸ In the Americas, though, colonialism has taken on the form of settler colonialism, a form of colonialism where the main prize is “the land itself rather than the surplus value to be derived.”³⁹ According to Patrick Wolfe, settler colonialism at its root is “a winner take all project whose dominant feature is not exploitation but replacement.”⁴⁰ This discussion of anti-colonial resistance takes place with full consciousness of the powerful arguments for coalescing with

36. Rodolfo Acuña, *Sometimes There is No Other Side: Chicanos and the Myth of Equality* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 58.

37. Lorenzo Verachi, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 3.

38. Ibid., 5.

39. Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology* (New York City: Bloomsbury Academic, 1998), 163.

40. Ibid.

the colonizer—arguments urging us to take our place side by side with the colonizer in conquering the rest of this world ideologically, physically, and economically. Indeed, many have already chosen this course, some to ensure survival, others out of a desire to assimilate. As Xicano historian George Mariscal points out, “there was certainly no reason to think that even the most radical Chicano/a could successfully counter the seductive power exerted by consumer society.”⁴¹ Indeed, this is capitalism, colonialism’s bedfellow, at work. Mariscal asserts that activists during the 1960s recognized this danger when they foresaw “the potential for the creation of a Chicano/a professional class disassociated from the ethnic Mexican working class in the United States.”⁴²

How will exploring and understanding different methods of resistance help Xicano/as make better strategic and tactical decisions while developing long terms goals for national liberation?

Fanon pointedly depicts the demise of a nation’s culture under colonialization:

Colonial domination, because it is total and tends to oversimplify, very soon manages to disrupt in spectacular fashion the cultural life of a conquered people. The cultural obliteration is made possible by the negation of national reality, by new legal relations introduced by the occupying power, by the banishment of the natives and their customs to outlying districts by colonial society, by expropriation, and by the systematic enslaving of men and women.⁴³

Xicano/as, particularly in academic and activist circles, endlessly dissect what it means to be a colonized people. I write here mainly about the Xicano/a cottage industry that has developed around the writings of Gloria Anzaldúa and her ideas of the *Nepantla* (in between), the border and the concept of the *mestiza*. I deal in depth with the idea of *mestizaje* first in chapter two and then

41. George Mariscal, *Brown-Eyed Children of the Sun: Lessons from the Chicano Movement, 1965–1975* (Albuquerque: University of New México Press, 2005), 88.

42. Ibid., 72.

43. Fanon, *Wretched*, 236.

extensively in chapter three, finishing with notions of the border and how it relates to national liberation in chapter four. Because of the ascendancy of this field of enquiry, Xicano/a scholars rarely discuss how to physically dismantle the colonized status quo. I think this is mostly because these theories of the border and mestizaje are at the foundation Eurocentric and intellectually incapable of combating “the negation of national reality, by new legal relations introduced by the occupying power,”⁴⁴ as Fanon writes. Fanon also makes it clear this national negation is one of the main reasons why, outside of the national liberation movement, it is nearly impossible to have a conversation about nation for the colonized. National negation results in discussions and debates about Xicano/a oppression and displacement in historical, academic, and identity terms, but rarely in the context of a living and ongoing system of exploitation to be confronted and destroyed. This powerlessness has become so entrenched in Xicano/a national and personal psyche, some Xicano/as label as naïve and simplistic anyone who challenges collective collusion with the colonizing power.

In *Wasase: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*, Alfred describes the nature of settler colonialism facing indigenous peoples in the Americas, by giving the specific example of his people the Haudenashawnee. Discussing the special character of contemporary imperialism, Alfred says, “the close danger of a technological empire and co-optation is the insidious effort of the settler society to erase us from the cultural and political landscape of the countries they have invaded and now claim as their own.”⁴⁵ Alfred goes on to identify the fight indigenous people must engage in as one that must “ultimately overcome the corrupt, colonized identities and irrational fears that have

44. Fanon, *Wretched*, 236.

45. Taiaike Alfred, “*Wasase: Indigenous Resurgences*,” in *Colonialism and its legacies*, edited by Jacob Levy and Iris Marion Young (Plymouth, Lexington Books, 2011), 94.

been bred into us.”⁴⁶ He drives home the idea that “survival will require not only political or cultural resurgence against state power, but positive movement to overcome the defining features of imperialism.”⁴⁷ What do these ideas mean for the Xicano/a movement?

Many claim it is naïve and/or treasonous to publicly discuss Xicano/a nationalism and, seeing how “nationalism” has been used, this is a good thing. That being said, it is important to stress indigenous nationalisms are not confined to liberal nation-state models but in fact must go beyond the contemporary Western model of the nation state. In his 2004 “Hispanic Challenge” article, Samuel Huntington acknowledges and reaffirms the Eurocentric mind-set created through centuries of Western domination by European colonials and their indigenous lackeys: “there is no Americano dream. There is only the American dream created by an Anglo-Protestant society. Mexican Americans will share in that dream and in that society only if they dream in English.”⁴⁸ To be clear, Huntington is not saying, “we don’t want you” to Mexicans, but he is saying, “you have to mimic us.” This position, more than any other, starkly articulates the colonial settler’s vision of the acquired colony as a birthright—a new motherland.

This quote from Huntington (and it is just one example) demonstrates that the fear of the mass presence of Meso-American people, as a threat to the United States White Anglo Saxon Protestant (WASP) way of life, is not limited only to fringe nativist groups; in fact, this concern for “whiteness” and the maintenance of racial and cultural order on behalf of the colonizer reaches far into the ivy-covered echelon of US society. Clearly, politically significant segments of White America do not think the concept of Aztlán is a pipe dream any more than was the idea of a country

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.

48. Huntington, “Hispanic Challenge,” 12.

like the United States, itself formed after a revolution to escape a colonial situation and cemented geographically, politically, and culturally by the eradication of its indigenous population. Neither, it appears, can the United States fully dismiss the historical Xicano/a irredentist claims on the Southwest corner of the United States.

Given the changes already wrought by immigration and massive geographic shifts in global population, who can predict the ultimate outcome if Xicano/a scholar-activists living in the United States internal colony focus on creating anti-colonial structures for Meso-American people as an alternative to colonialism? If Xicano/as accept politico-cultural development as an inevitable by-product of resistance to settler domination, then, how and why do these ideas—after five-hundred-plus years of military, social, and cultural oppression—still hold sway over the lives of colonized people? As a totalizing project, colonialism attempts to rewrite every facet of its subject's lives. Hence, as Alfred posits, “We are facing modernity's attempt to conquer our souls. The conquest is happening as weak, cowardly, stupid, petty, and greedy ways worm themselves into our lives,” and he continues, “the challenge is to find a way to regenerate ourselves and take back our dignity.”⁴⁹ Alfred clearly articulates the observation that indigenous peoples face two stark alternatives: to reorganize their nations for cultural and political resistance to settler colonialism, or to face cultural, political, and spiritual extinction.

In what would become a recurring theme in his writings and study, Huntington enumerates to the 1975 Tri-Lateral Commission the threat to White Anglo Saxon Protestant sovereignty, should a Third World consciousness develop in the United States. Asian American scholar Glenn Omatsu writes about Huntington's involvement in setting the stage for this increased scrutiny of nonwhites: “According to Huntington, this upsurge in ‘democratic fervor’ coincided with ‘markedly higher

49. Alfred, *Wasase*, 38.

levels of self-consciousness on the part of blacks, Indians, Chicanos, white ethnic groups, students and women, all of whom became mobilized and organized in new ways.”⁵⁰ Elaborating Huntington’s position, Omatsu writes that, “the mass pressures [of Third World movements] had ‘produced problems for the governability of democracy in the 1970s. The government [Huntington] concluded, must find a way to exercise more control. This means curtailing the rights of heretofore-subordinated peoples. Huntington saw these developments as creating a crisis for those in power.”⁵¹ In light of this call to limit the rights of subordinated groups, the outcome of the legal challenge to Arizona’s anti-Mexican American Studies law HB 2281 discussed later, speaks directly to the political future of the Xicano/a community, posing the question of how to deal with colonialism. Where will the creative and intellectual forces needed to combat colonialism and to set the tempo for an emerging national consciousness come from?

Resistance literature, as seen through texts I discuss in later chapters, is built on the idea that emerging nations have two choices: submission or resistance. If Xicano/as choose to resist, they do so with the understanding that they are resisting a series of circumstances not of their making. Furthermore, forces greater than the Xicano/a community have created this colonial circumstance, which means Xicano/as are forced to try to find a solution to a puzzle for which they have no guide. Indeed, as Fanon warns, “each generation must out of relative obscurity discover its mission, fulfill it or betray it.”⁵² Within this totality of resistance and discovery, which in his mind rests on remembering the struggles of our ancestors, Fanon reminds us that

50. Glenn Omatsu. “The ‘Four Prisons’ and the Movements of Liberation,” *Amerasia* 15, no. 1, (1989): xxv.

51. Ibid., xxvi.

52. Fanon, *Wretched*, 206.

we must rid ourselves of the habit, now that we are in the thick of the fight, of minimizing the actions of our fathers or of feigning incomprehension when considering their silence and passivity. They fought as well as they could, with the arms they possessed then; and if the echoes of their struggle have not resounded in the international arena, we must realize that the reason for this silence lies less in their lack of heroism than in the fundamentally different international situation of our time.⁵³

Given what is learned from Fanon, Alfred, and others, Xicano/as can easily discern that any successful effort at resistance must center on politico-cultural warfare. This does not mean, however, that an examination of physical methods of resistance would be a waste of time. Fanon tells us the native facing the program of colonization is ready for violence at all times because, “from birth it is clear to him that this narrow world, strewn with prohibitions, can only be called into question by absolute violence.”⁵⁴ This challenge to hegemony through the national liberation movement has been spoken and has succeeded for its time; Xicano/a political cultural existence is proof of their resistance. Therefore, Xicano/as must understand, within the context of United States internal colonialism, the necessity of dissecting different historical methodologies of organizing and resistance, and the need to analyze the merits of these methodologies in the context of present-day efforts.

Theories of National Liberation

In his May 1938 essay, “On Protracted War,” Mao Tse-Tung quotes Carl von Clausewitz, who famously wrote that “war is a continuation of politics,” a truth understood by many cultures around the world. Mao goes on to write, “in this sense war is politics and war itself is a political

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid., 37.

action, since ancient times there has never been a war that did not have a political character.”⁵⁵

Warfare conducted through the national liberation movement is first a revolutionary war, meaning it is a political effort.⁵⁶ Conventional warfare differs from revolution because while “either side can initiate the conflict, only one—the insurgent—can initiate a revolutionary war.”⁵⁷ Revolutionary war, particularly since the end of World War II, has successfully addressed issues of social and economic inequalities around the globe. In a counterrevolutionary maneuver, imperialist governments use multinational corporate media outlets to cleverly, and successfully, misrepresent contemporary revolutionary wars as simple terrorism produced by violent extremists.

Insurgencies cannot be equated with wars of terror or indiscriminate violence. Although insurgents and counter insurgents do adopt violent, among other, tactics,⁵⁸ insurgencies primarily

55. Mao Tse-Tung, “On Protracted War,” *The Selected Works of Mao Tse Tung, Vol. 2* (Peking, China: Foreign Press Service, 1938), 152.

56. Robert Taber, *The War of the Flea: A Study of Guerilla Warfare Theory and Practice* (Dulles, Potomac Books, 1965, 2002), 10.

57. Galula, *Counter Insurgency*, 4.

58. Thomas Marks writes this about standard Counter Insurgencies (COIN) tactics: Just how consistent the demand of COIN [are across time and cases—Celeski, after all, uses current Afghanistan as his case study—can be ascertained by comparing his lines of operation with those in a 1984 BDM technical report. Identified as 14 principal activities (called course of action and lines of approach) which form the bulk of any counterinsurgency effort, they cover much of the same ground (though the final point is so crucial that it normally receives the independence line or campaign status identified by BDM): (1) military leadership; (2) unconventional tactics and strategy; (3) competent military intelligence; (4) discipline, behavior and military civic action; (5) air and naval operations; (6) civil-military relations; (7) establishment of a popular militia; (8) police operations; (9) intelligence operations; (10) psychological operations; (11) unified management of COIN activity; (12) the political framework; (13) programs to improve rural conditions and administration; and (14) the legal framework. Thomas Marks, “Counterinsurgency and Operational Art,” *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 13, no. 3 (2005): 171.

manifest as wars conducted by nationalist forces⁵⁹ against an occupying military. Such wars attempt to gain control of the land, the support of the people, and establish a ruling political structure. Thus, political mobilization becomes the first job of the guerilla, not in the liberal or reformist sense of electoral politics, but in the sense of working and developing among the people a political awareness of their subjugated position. In most countries in which revolutionary situations develop, the ruling sector often uses elections as a means of protecting the political status quo and solidifying established paradigms, mainly through the rule of existing law. Taber in his discussion of Mao explains the relationship between political consciousness and revolutionary struggle as follows:

Raising the level of political consciousness of the people and involving them actively in the revolutionary struggle—is the first task of the guerillas; and it is the nature of this effort, which necessarily takes time, that accounts for the protracted character of the revolutionary war.⁶⁰

Insurgencies begin when a group of people, under the control of an occupying military force considered by that group to be either a colonial or an oppressive government, attempts a military solution to end the occupation of their nation. The eruption of a military solution “presupposes the existence of valid popular grievances, sharp social divisions, an unsound or stagnant economy, and oppressive government.”⁶¹ The success of any insurgent mobilization crucially depends on the insurgents’ ability to articulate common politico-cultural grievances in a way that persuades others to accept the insurgents’ version of the political problem. Mao characterizes this search for understanding as exploring the fundamental contradiction. He writes, “We must shun subjectivity, one-sidedness and superficiality. . . . To be one sided means not to look at problems all-sidedly, for

59. By “nationalist forces” I mean insurgents, those who fight for the creation of their nation or the political and cultural regaining of their nation.

60. Taber, *War of the Flea*, 49.

61. Ibid., 153.

example to understand only China and not Japan, only the Communist Party but not the Kuomintang, only the proletariat but not the bourgeoisie . . . only underground revolutionary work but not open revolutionary work, and so on. In a word, it means not to understand the characteristics of both aspects of a contradiction.”⁶²

For Xicano/as in the United States, it is the articulation of these politico-cultural grievances through resistance literature that reveal “the contradiction between the colonies and imperialism” that can only be “resolved by the method of national revolutionary war.”⁶³ Because the national liberation movement is a part of and rises from the people, according to Mao, it cannot be separated from the people.

If Xicano/as accept that “revolutionary propaganda must be essentially true in order to be believed”⁶⁴ and that “if it is not believed, people cannot be induced to act on it,”⁶⁵ then framing the insurgency as a political consequence of one side of the fundamental contradiction⁶⁶ reifies the “process of development of a thing [national liberation movement] and the essence of the process determined by this fundamental contradiction will not disappear until the process is completed . . . [because] the fundamental contradiction becomes more and more intensified as it passes from one stage to another in the lengthy process.”⁶⁷ So then, despite the efforts of the popular media to

62. Mao Tse-Tung, “On Contradiction,” *The Selected Works of Mao Tse Tung, Vol. 1* (Peking, China: Foreign Press Service, 1938), 321.

63. Ibid., 322.

64. Taber, *War of the Flea*, 172.

65. Ibid.

66. Galula, *Counter Insurgency*, 21.

67. Mao, “On Contradiction,” 325.

portray insurgents as terrorists or lunatics, as scholars we must demonstrate how revolution and revolutionaries are part of a “historical, social process, rather than an accident or a plot. . . .

Guerrillas are of the people, or they cannot survive, cannot even come into being.”⁶⁸

After the Second World War, ideas emanating from the “Third World Nonaligned Movement”⁶⁹ connected, first ideologically and later militarily, “aspiring U.S. revolutionaries to the Third World parties and leaders . . . who were proving that ‘the power of the people is greater than the man’s technology.’”⁷⁰ Based on the belief that the political education of the nation is primary for those seeking to overthrow the political and physical yoke of the colonized, Mao Tse-Tung wrote, “Without a political goal, guerilla warfare must fail, as it must if its political objectives do not coincide with the aspirations of the people and their sympathy, cooperation and assistance cannot be gained.”⁷¹ Within the context of the national liberation movement this statement prefigures the intersection of culture, the military, and resistance literature so prominent in the writings of Fanon and Cabral. Culture, specifically a revolutionary culture emerging from the political mobilization of the people, is Mao’s third point of political mobilization: “How should we mobilize them? By word of mouth, by leaflet and bulletins, by newspapers, books and pamphlets, through plays and films,

68. Taber, *War of the Flea*, 113.

69. Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People’s History of the Third World* (New York: The New Press, 2007), 103.

70. Max Elbaum, “What Legacy from the Radical Internationalism of 1968?,” *Radical History Review* 82, Winter (2002): 41.

71. Mao Tse-Tung, “Mao’s Primer on Guerilla War,” in *The Guerilla and How to Fight Him*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith III (1962; repr. Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, 1990), 5.

through schools, through the mass organization and through our cadres.”⁷² The national liberation movement is a total movement; it encompasses every aspect of a society.

This chapter will show how the seizing of political power (or creating political change) is designated in three distinct ways: as “revolution, plot (or *coup d'état*), and insurgency.”⁷³ Galula defines these terms as follows: a **revolution** “usually is an explosive upheaval—sudden brief, spontaneous, unplanned (France 1789; China, 1911; Russia, 1917; Hungary, 1956). It is an accident, which can be explained afterward but not predicted other than to note the existence of a revolutionary situation. . . . In a revolution, masses move and then the leaders appear.”⁷⁴ A **plot** “is the clandestine action of an insurgent group directed at the overthrow of the top leadership in its country. Because of its clandestine nature, a plot cannot and does not involve the masses. . . . It is always a gamble.”⁷⁵ An **insurgency** is “a protracted struggle conducted methodically, step by step, in order to attain specific intermediate objectives leading finally to the overthrow of the existing order. . . . To be sure it can no more be predicted than a revolution. . . . When an insurgency starts is a difficult legal, political and historical problem. . . . Though it cannot be predicted, an insurgency is usually slow to develop and is not an accident, for in an insurgency leaders appear and then the masses are made to move. . . . the revolutionary situation did not have to be acute in order for a the insurgency to be initiated.”⁷⁶

72. Mao, “On Protracted War,” 155.

73. Galula, *Counter Insurgency*, 4.

74. Ibid.

75. Ibid.

76. Ibid., 2.

In practice, while different, these three categories commonly exhibit areas of overlap. Further, by definition none of these three categories is inherently progressive; in fact, each may be just the opposite. Xicano/a scholars who wish to engage in the study of revolutionary movements, particularly armed movements, must also consider literature written by governments and military leaders on the suppression of guerilla and insurgent movements through counterinsurgency. This large body of published research speaks directly to the seriousness, legitimacy, viability, and success of insurgent movements, particularly post-World War II and post-United States 9/11.

For instance, Kathleen Bruhn has examined the political discourse of two current Mexican guerilla forces: Ejercito Zapatista Liberacion Nacional (EZLN), located primary in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas, and the Ejercito Popular Revolucionario (EPR), located in the state of Guerrero. Bruhn contrasts the differences between the armed insurgency of the EPR and the propaganda efforts of the EZLN, noting, “cultural warfare (war of positions) today plays a more significant role in Third World revolutions than Gramsci had any reason to anticipate.”⁷⁷ Unlike the situation in México, the strength of United States civil society limits similar military action or any “war of maneuvers”⁷⁸ by Xicano/as. The nature of this reality demands that Xicano/a Studies scholars develop a different understanding of political discourse as it applies to methods of resistance beyond those based exclusively on race, sexuality, and gender; such a revised

77. Kathleen Bruhn, “Antonio Gramsci and the Palabra Verdadera: The Political Discourse of México’s Guerrilla Forces,” *Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs* 41, no. 2 (1999): 30. The theoretical work Bruhn is discussing is that of Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci, imprisoned by Benito Mussolini in Italy during the 1930s. While imprisoned, Gramsci developed theories of working class resistance that engaged two basic phases of struggle. When the working class is strong and able, it conducts a war of maneuver or a traditional military campaign to overthrow the ruling class. When the working class does not have the military strength to confront civil society, it engages in a war of positions or propaganda that serves to educate and mobilize the population until they reach the point where they can engage in a war of maneuver.

78. Ibid., 1.

understanding is crucial to building a meaningful critique of United States colonialism and imperialism. A Xicano/a war of positions must be “one which civil society alliances and struggles over cultural hegemony become critical resources in the fight to bring about societal transformation,”⁷⁹ thus taking inspiration from Fanon’s exhortation to the oppressed to create a new revolutionary culture⁸⁰ that replaces the culture of colonization—which is in fact the only culture the colonized know.

The varying successes of a “head-on challenge to white supremacy”⁸¹ by Third World people rebelling within the boundaries of the United States make it possible to imagine contemporary frameworks of resistance built on the application of cultural warfare, with an eye to current political reality. In a 2002 essay outlining the chronology of United States Third World Marxism, Max Elbaum writes that this ideology “held tremendous initiative in communities of color, where Marxism, socialism, and nationalism intermingled and overlapped.”⁸² He pinpoints the year 1968 as a high mark, writing that Third World Marxism “linked aspiring U.S. revolutionaries to the Third World parties and leaders—from Mao and Che Guevara to Ho Chi Minh and Amilcar Cabral—who were proving as stated before that ‘the power of the people is greater than the man’s technology.’”⁸³ Elbaum warns, however, against investing too much into the successes of the past

79. Ibid.

80. Fanon, *Wretched*, 206-248.

81. Elbaum, “Radical Internationalism,” 40.

82. Ibid., 41.

83. Ibid.

as roadmaps for the future, since—as he demonstrates—the importance of that movement has diminished through the relentless advance of global neo-liberalism:

The world has changed tremendously since the years between 1968 and 1973, and there is no way repeating approaches from that earlier time can be effective. Third World countries' battles for genuine sovereignty and economic development are taking far different forms than they did in the 1960s. No counter-system exists for liberation movements to connect with, so the old strategy of taking the non-capitalist road by hooking up with a socialism camp is a total nonstarter. The mix of mechanisms by which the imperial centers control the Third World has altered substantially. Technological, demographic, and cultural shifts have changed the contours of politics and class struggle in the United States and all over the world.⁸⁴

Although the world has changed considerably from the period mentioned above, Elbaum gives readers a clear picture of the momentum Third World Marxism possessed and shows how ideological remnants of this moment organized and produced a number of progressive victories up to the 1999 Battle in Seattle. If the world has indeed changed to the extent Elbaum maintains, then it is equally conceivable that new methods of resistance can be formulated outside of Elbaum's strict historical reading. A more accurate critique of the contemporary Xicano/a movement should logically start with its relationship to current United States neo-liberalism, as opposed to whether or not it intends to be "exclusively" Marxist.

Before the end of the Second World War, delegates from the United States and the allied nations met at a conference in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire; this meeting established the basis for the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Bretton Woods established a sharp line between what came to be known as First World or capitalist countries and Second World or socialist countries. The Third World, which included the non-European, non-white, unindustrialized countries, was left out of this equation. For the most part, countries included in the "Third World" designation were greatly impacted by the European colonial system, its colonies and

84. Ibid., 62.

former colonies, so heavily dependent on economic aid from either the First or Second World camps they were considered satellite countries, regardless of whether they declared open allegiance to the benefactor countries. One of the first major efforts to organize Third World nations occurred in 1955 at a conference held in Bandung, Indonesia. At this conference, the efforts of both the United States and the Soviet Union to continue colonization through economic means was rebuffed as these poor non-white nations banded together to create the Third World Non-Aligned Movement. By providing a critique of colonialism and neocolonialism as a stepping-stone to armed resistance, this movement had serious ideological repercussions for non-Europeans living in the United States internal colony.

The last half of the twentieth century saw tremendous conflict as colonial subjects undertook liberation movements in earnest around the globe. In consequence, study of the growing indigenous movement in the Xicano/a community can benefit from a closer look at the impact Third World anti-colonial thought had on organizing efforts within the United States internal colony. It is important to reiterate at this point the quintessential definition of the national liberation movement, as a political war is the furtherance of politics by the means of the gun. Insurgency or guerilla warfare by definition constitutes a protracted or long-lasting war. A quick escalation of revolutionary or guerilla warfare can backfire for the insurgent because “it takes time for a small group of insurgent leaders to organize a revolutionary movement, to raise and develop armed forces, to reach a balance with the opponent, and to overpower him.”⁸⁵ Galula reiterates the notion that time is on the side of the insurgent, writing, “Revolutionary war is short only if the insurgency collapses at an early stage.”⁸⁶ Even a cursory examination of cultures around the globe, including

85. Galula, *Counter Insurgency*, 10.

the Xicano/a community, shows how cultural expressions, and literature has become the refuge of those expressing revolutionary ideas. Such means of expression can go on for years; in fact, until hidden intentions are revealed through “subversion or open violence . . . an insurgency can reach a high degree of development by legal and peaceful means, at least in countries where political opposition is tolerated.”⁸⁷ With this in mind, an astute observer can understand why “the insurgent has no interest in producing a shock until he feels fully able to withstand the enemy’s expected reaction.”⁸⁸

The use of culture in literature and other expressions of national consciousness are well established within anti-colonial resistance. Most importantly, students of the relationship between resistance and culture must keep in mind that little separates the cultural from the political, and only slightly more separation can be found between both of those and military action.

Although multiple Third World liberation movements have arisen, military analysts tend to identify contemporary guerilla/insurgent warfare in terms of one of two distinct theoretical systems. The first comprises the Chinese/Vietnamese theories of war originally developed by Mao Tse-Tung and subsequently expanded on by Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap during the Vietnam War. The second is the Focoismo theory of guerilla warfare developed by Cuban revolutionaries and imported throughout Africa and Latin America.

The two theories differ significantly in organization and in their impact on the literature created by adherents. They share some similarities but they approach societal change very differently. Both theories express ideologies designed to create revolutionary situations within

86. Ibid.

87. Ibid., 6.

88. Ibid., 10.

countries. An analysis of the two theoretical bodies in terms of their similarities, differences, and rules of engagement offers a powerful tool for Xicano/a and Third World scholars, organizers, and activists currently working in the United States for developing a better understanding of the implementation of political change by segments of the Xicano/a–Latino/a community in the United States.

Further discussion of the theories of Mao Tse-Tung on guerrilla warfare will assist in appreciating what it means to develop the will of the nation to resist, as well as understanding how this development leads to a people's war, synonymous with the production of "military power as a consequence of political mobilization."⁸⁹ Mao views this initial education primarily as a political operation concerned mainly with the mobilization of the people for what he terms "total resistance." Mao and his generals developed this model of resistance because the Chinese were not an industrialized power, and thus did not control the manufacturing resources with which to create the tools of war to fight, first, against a Japanese invasion of mainland China during the Sino-Japanese War from 1937 to 1945 and, later, against the nationalist forces of Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang.⁹⁰

Lacking the material industrial base needed to defend the nation, Mao turned to the intangibles of "time, space, and will,"⁹¹ constantly avoiding and delaying military decision by surrendering territory in exchange for time in order to develop the will of the people to resist Japanese aggression. "This philosophy of "trad[ing] space for time and us[ing] time to produce will:

89. Marks, "Urban Insurgency", 14.

90. Taber, *War of the Flea*, 50–53.

91. E. L. Katzenbach Jr., "Time, Space and Will: The Politico-Military Views of Mao Tse-Tung," in *The Guerilla and How to Fight Him*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith III (1962; repr. Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, 1990), 13.

the psychological capacity of the Chinese people to resist defeat”⁹² later became the basis for revolutionary political mobilization around the globe. The paramount importance of this particular equation in envisioning a change in Xicano/a resistance and resistance writing emerges from a close read of the following passage from Mao’s “On Protracted War”:

As everybody knows, although in fighting and shedding our blood in order to gain time and prepare the counter-offensive we have had to abandon some territory, in fact we have gained time, we have achieved the objective of annihilating and depleting enemy forces, we have acquired experience in fighting, we have aroused hitherto inactive people and improved our international standing. Has our blood been shed in vain? Certainly not. Territory has been given up in order to preserve our military forces and indeed to preserve territory, because if we do not abandon part of our territory when conditions are unfavorable but blindly fight decisive engagements without the least assurance of winning, we shall lose our military forces and then be unable to avoid the loss of all our territories to say nothing of recovering territory already lost. A capitalist must have capital to run his business and if he loses it all he is no longer a capitalist. Even a gambler must have money to stake, and if he risks it all on a single throw and his luck fails, he cannot gamble any more. Events have their twists and turns and do not follow a straight line, and war is no exception; only formalists are unable to comprehend this truth.⁹³

The Maoist approach relies on having the time to politically mobilize the people. Within this context, guerilla fighters, political organizers, and cultural workers occupy the front line of developing revolutionary consciousness. Knowing the guerilla fighter is first and foremost a defender of the nation, both through cultural production and military action, helps us to understand that “when we speak of the guerilla fighter, we are speaking of the political partisan, an armed civilian whose principal weapon is not his rifle or his machete, but his relationship to the community, the nation, in and for which he fights.”⁹⁴ For the Xicano/a community, cultural and

92. Taber, *War of the Flea*, 48.

93. Mao, “On Protracted War,” 183.

94. Taber, *War of the Flea*, 18.

political work are vital in defining the terms “immigration” and “citizenship,” as they are conflated more and more by white settler rhetoric with ideas like Aztlán and words like “indigenous.”

Personal and group accounts of “desperadoism, the process by which one gains glory by losing one’s shirt,”⁹⁵ flourish in Chicano history and lore, while frequently the idea that “the successful small action . . . the material from which militant enthusiasm is woven”⁹⁶ is lost on us as we continue struggling to bring into being a particular type of sustained movement. Katzenbach explains in detail Mao’s belief that “only the destruction of the enemy’s ‘force in being’ can end resistance,”⁹⁷ positing that the essence of resistance resides within the physical. The will to resist is created in part by victories of every type because, “although defeats frequently make heroes they do not encourage the spirit of resistance,” and “continuous victory . . . is not a matter of gallantry and glory, but of caution and self-restraint.”⁹⁸

Acknowledging their industrial inferiority, the Vietnamese people and leaders approached the development of political will, in their war with France and the United States, as a necessary component of national survival. While France and the United States “were fighting to control the national territory . . . the guerrillas were interested only in winning its population.”⁹⁹ This is the essential distinction between conventional warfare, where “the army fights to occupy territory, roads, strategic heights, vital areas,” and guerrilla warfare, where “the guerrilla fights to control

95. Katzenbach, “Time, Space and Will,” 16.

96. Ibid.

97. Ibid.

98. Ibid.

99. Taber, *War of the Flea*, 66.

people, without whose cooperation the land is useless to its possessor.”¹⁰⁰ In other words, a people’s war produces military power because of the cultural and political mobilization of the people. This is why Vietnamese General Vo Nguyen wrote that the main responsibility of a people’s war is first to “educate, mobilize, organize, and arm the whole people in order that they might take part in the resistance”¹⁰¹ and to form a people’s army which, according to Mao, “is not an instrument of the state, but the essence of it, its spirit, its life and its hope.”¹⁰²

In resistance literature produced by community scholars as well as academic scholars, the paradigm for analyzing current cultural, political, and physical struggles is many times based on indigenous epistemologies like those developed by the Tucson Unified School District’s Mexican American Studies Program.

Tucson and the illegality of resistance

The Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) K-12 Mexican American Studies (MAS) program was created in 1998 by TUSD teachers Armando Trujillo, Ray Chavez, and Sean Arce.¹⁰³ According to Sean Arce,¹⁰⁴ the national controversy surrounding the MAS program began during the 2006 Cesar Chavez celebration at Tucson High School. At the event, Arce, a former United

100. Ibid.

101. Vo Nguyen Giap, “Inside the Vietminh,” in *The Guerilla and How to Fight Him*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith III (1962; repr. Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, 1990), 147.

102. Katzenbach, “Time, Space and Will,” 17.

103. Arce continued with the program and eventually became the director. He was discharged as the director in the summer of 2012. Arce maintains his dismissal was in retaliation for testimony he gave to Congress concerning the role of then TUSD superintendent John Pedicone’s role in dismantling the TUSD MAS program.

104. Sean Arce, in discussion with the author, Tucson Freedom Summer 2012 July 15.

Farm Workers Public Action staffer during the 1990s Strawberry Campaign, introduced long-time labor activist and United Farm Workers founder Dolores Huerta. She told students and community members present, among other things, “Republicans hate Latinos.” That same day, the Bill O’Reilly show picked up this message and extended an invitation to Huerta to appear. Huerta agreed to appear on O’Reilly’s show to defend her statement. Two weeks later, Tom Horne, a Republican, and then Arizona State Superintendent of Education (currently Arizona Attorney General), sent his representative Margaret Garcia-Dugan, a Mexican American Republican to speak with Mexican American students enrolled in TUSD. According to Arce, when Garcia-Dugan began talking, a number of students, all enrolled in TUSD MAS classes, stood silently with tape over their mouths in protest and later during her speech they walked out.

Between 2006 and 2010, Horne and former Arizona State Senator Russell Pearce¹⁰⁵ twice tried to pass a version of HB 2281; they were finally successful on April 11, 2010. Not coincidentally, the passage of HB 2281 followed Arizona State Bill 1070, more commonly known as the “papers please” law. This law, since upheld in federal court as constitutional, makes it legal for local and

105. Jeff Biggers, a columnist for The Nation, wrote about Pearce in a May 31, 2011, article: [you need to give all of the ref info for this source at the end of this note]

In a celebratory display of unprecedented organization, a bipartisan group of activists poured into [the] Arizona Secretary of State’s office yesterday with more than 18,300 signatures to demand the recall of State Senate president Russell Pearce; the filing of the petitions marked the culmination of a campaign that has defied experts and a watershed moment for the beleaguered state. Once the state and Maricopa County recorder verify the legal requirement of 7,756 signatures from the traditionally conservative and Mormon-founded Mesa district, Pearce—who is considered by many as the de facto governor and motivating force behind the state’s notorious blitz of extremist policies on education, health, guns and immigration—will become the first state senate president in American history to be recalled. Jeff Biggers, “Arizona Turns the Tide: Voters Demand the Recall of Russell Pearce,” The Nation Magazine (2011).

state law enforcement to stop individuals based on whether or not they appear to the officer to be citizens of the United States.

HB 2281 ended the MAS program in the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) and made the following activities illegal for any school in Arizona receiving state funding:

1. To promote the overthrow of the United States Government.
2. To promote resentment toward a race or class of people.
3. To present courses designed primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group.
4. To advocate ethnic solidarity rather than treat pupils as individuals.

Tom Horne, as the Arizona Superintendent for State Instruction, immediately declared the Tucson MAS program illegal and ordered the disbanding of the program. In response, Save Ethnic Studies Arizona, an organization created by the eleven teachers from TUSD's MAS program and legally represented by Tucson attorney Richard Martínez, set in motion a series of legal maneuvers around HB 2281. Martínez filed two lawsuits against HB 2281, the first in the state courts of Arizona under Judge David Bury, and the second in the ninth circuit federal court under Judge Wallace Tashima. Martínez intends to force a federal decision by challenging the constitutionality of HB 2281. Since both state and federal courts have subsequently upheld the constitutionality of HB 2281, it is now against the law to teach Mexican American Studies at any school receiving state funds.

In 2007, Curtis Acosta, one of the eleven TUSD teachers who served as a plaintiff in the state and federal suits against the state of Arizona, published "Developing Critical Consciousness: Resistance Literature in a Chicano Literature Class" in *The English Journal*. In this article, Acosta explains the theoretical and pedagogical foundation of the MAS program, situating MAS as a combination and braiding together of different Indigenous Meso-American philosophies. Acosta

writes that the concepts of Hunab Ku, Panche Ve, In Lak'Ech,¹⁰⁶ and the Four Tezkatlipokas are used (and have been used) successfully to help students reinvent their personal and collective expectations about education. Acosta describes how the MAS pedagogy that arises from teaching the Four Tezkatlipokas has molded his personal pedagogy in teaching Xicano/a literature at the high school level. Acosta explains each aspect of this teaching as follows:

Tezkatlipoka—self-reflection. Literally translated, Tezkatlipoka means “the smoking mirror” and is a concept meaning memory as well as self-reflection. This represents the active journey to find our inner self. . . . Quetzalkoatl—precious and beautiful knowledge. Learning about our history follows self-reflection. Gaining perspective on events and experiences that our ancestors endured allows us to become more fully realized human beings. . . . Huitzilopochtli—the will to act. Huitzilopochtli literally translates as “hummingbird to the left.” This is in reference to the heart being on the left side of the body and the hummingbird’s tenacity of work rate to fly and the strength of its will. . . . Xipe Totek—transformation. Identified as our source of strength that allows us to transform and renew.¹⁰⁷

These concepts are not new, but rather are based in Indigenous epistemologies. Nevertheless, their articulation to Xicano/a students in early twenty-first century Tucson had a profound effect. These teachings, challenging western hegemony, disturbed the ruling classes, which the passage of HB 2281 makes clear. They also provide a platform for philosophical debate and a way to reorder and create meaning in the world, based on a knowledge system that owes its existence to indigenous and not Western or Eastern traditions.

106. Roberto “Dr. Cintli” Rodriguez, in his essay titled *In Lak Ech: Panche Ve & Hunab Ku & the Forgotten Debate of 1524*, writes “these three maize-based concepts—In Lak Ech, Panche Be and Hunab Ku—in effect constitute the essence of who we are or who we can be; human beings connected to each other, to all of life, and to all of creation. Part of creation; not outside of it. This is the definition of what it means to be human.” Roberto Rodriguez, *Amoxitli X the codex In Lak Ech – Panche Be & Hunab Ku & The forgotten 1524 debate*. Austin: Eagle Feather Research Institute, 2010.

107. Curtis Acosta, “Developing Critical Consciousness: Resistance Literature in a Chicano Literature Class,” *The English Journal* 97, no. 2 (2007): 36.

Acuña writes that “the threat of Chicano history is its political dimension.”¹⁰⁸ This dimension can provide, as Acuña tells us and Acosta and others have shown us, an oppositional paradigm to western hegemony in the culture and politics of education. Acuña writes that it is human nature “to participate in history,” that Xicano/as are and should be the creators of their own history, and that the “acquisition of historical consciousness means learning the ‘discipline of memory’ . . . identifying your personal and community interests.”¹⁰⁹ Acuña goes on to tell us that “interpretations of history, and the right to define truth, are at the base of the culture war, for history is at the foundation of the social sciences and humanities.”¹¹⁰ This means that, for Acuña, the paradigm as a defining tool establishes order and sets “structural guidelines that influence the thinking and actions of its social and social scientists.”¹¹¹

The courts and the state government forced Acosta and his MAS colleagues, in particular Sean Arce, the director of the MAS program whose theory of “Barrio Pedagogy” formed another cornerstone of the MAS program, to answer questions about the purpose and intentions of Xicano/as Studies. The current situation for students of Chicano Studies demands an answer to a crucial question: how does the shifting of focus from personal to group emphasis inform different understandings of Xicano/a liberation theory and its relationship to political development? Acosta explains this position and the importance of the emerging Xicano/a paradigm as follows:

The study of indigenous heritage becomes significant beyond the historical context. . . . It is also essential to develop a different lens for the students to view the idea of education and academics because of their negative experiences within that

108. Acuña, *No Other Side*, 57.

109. Ibid., 58.

110. Ibid.

111. Ibid., 35.

system. The Xicano Paradigm emphasizes self-actualization and action to create a better community, a better world. . . . The paradigm represents a cyclical process that is fluid and malleable like life and not a hierarchical or linear process.¹¹²

Existing paradigms, such as Manifest Destiny and American Exceptionalism, “restrict the growth and expansion of the new and competing models,”¹¹³ and one can safely predict that such paradigms by nature are incapable of disbanding themselves. I believe existing paradigms can be overthrown through physical, social, and intellectual struggle that centers on the national liberation movement. Struggle against power is not unique to any group of people, scholars, or time, and today’s Xicano/a political and cultural movement must explore alternative methods of community mobilization, methods that incorporate the development and understanding of resistance literature and explore the means to build educational structures that enable and support the national liberation struggle.

Moving toward a theory of resistance

As the arguments in this dissertation develop into the next chapters one must not lose sight of the fact that revolutionary situations that grow out of intense cultural and political situations have developed and continue to develop around the world. This politico-cultural model of national liberation has resulted in successful anti-colonial insurgencies and to date is the only successful model for toppling the military, political, and technological strength of the colonizer. The existing body of literature concerning guerrilla movements, insurgencies, and revolutionary thought is global and considerable. Based on these two facts alone, I believe Xicano/a Studies scholars should find insurgency literature worthy of examination as a legitimate way of understanding our colonial

112. Acosta, “Developing Critical Consciousness, 38.

113. Rodolfo Acuña, “Truth and Objectivity and Chicano History,” in *Julian Samora Research Institute Occasional Paper 09* (East Lansing: Michigan State University, 1997), 6.

situation and as a way Xicano/as can confront their colonization. These are methodologies and ideas produced by intelligent people dedicated to the liberation of their nation from colonial domination.

Perhaps, as I mentioned above, the Xicano/a emphasis on a type of heroic desperadoism, rather than patient organizing with a focus on political education and cultural invention, could explain the inability of Xicano/as to confront the power structure's disruption of political mobilization and immigration organizing, as well as its techniques of imposed criminality. Understanding the differences and similarities between the Southeast Asian and Latin American theories of armed struggle is necessary in order to make an informed decision about how to structure and implement long-term mobilization campaigns in Xicano/a and other Third World communities within the United States. For Xicano/as, testing the nature of our colonized reality involves understanding that "the truth of any knowledge or theory is determined not by subjective feelings, but by objective results in social practice."¹¹⁴ As Mao writes, "only social practice can be the criterion of truth."¹¹⁵ Having shown in this chapter that the development of national culture and politics paves a major path to colonial resistance in this world, in the following chapter I look closely at the foundational tropes found in Xicano/a literature. In order to bring these tropes under the umbrella of resistance literature, it is necessary to contextualize the literature produced within the framework of the national liberation movement. The principal rules of physical engagement and the goal of creating a revolutionary situation are similar and have broad implications for liberation struggles within the United States and the Americas.

114. Mao Tse-Tung. "On Practice: On the Relation between knowledge and practice, between knowing and doing," *The selected works of Mao Tse Tung, Vol. 1*. Peking, China; Foreign Press Service. 1937, 297.

115. Ibid.

CHAPTER TWO—INSURGENT BEGINNINGS

Do not for a moment, darling, imagine I propose Timm William's story as a sad story. His is a triumphant story. And if I seem to have fashioned from its shadow, from the privacy he wore, from all I cannot know, a parable for my own life, do not, for a moment, think you know what an Indian is. You are idle, shallow creatures. And we are not of your element.¹

The previous chapter discussed the political and military theories of insurgency along with the role cultural production plays in the national liberation movement. This chapter will interrogate narratives of resistance, indigeneity, and national consciousness specific to Xicano/a literature and anti-colonial tropes. I will do this by examining the major tropes in Xicano/a literature: mestizaje, Aztlán, the Virgin of Guadalupe, and the Mandato de Cuauhtémoc. My purpose in doing this is to show how Xicano/a literature by featuring anti-colonial tropes is incorporating the study of physical resistance.

Stuart Hall, writes that cultural groups produce meaning “whenever we express ourselves in, make use of, consume or appropriate cultural ‘things’; that is we incorporate them in different ways into the everyday rituals and practices of daily life and in this way give them value or significance.”² The examination of these concepts is first and foremost an attempt to place meaning on these artifacts within a cultural context because, as Hall tells us, “things ‘in themselves’ rarely, if ever, have any one single, fixed and unchanging meaning.”³ In the pursuit for understanding there is a certain slipperiness that must be embraced and acknowledged in the exploration for meaning.

1. Richard Rodriguez, *Brown The Last Discovery of America*, (New York: Penguin Putnam, 2002), 78.

2. Hall, *Representation*, xx.

3. *Ibid.*, xix.

According to Hall, culture is “a process, a set of practices” that deals primarily with the production and the exchange of meanings between members of a given group.⁴ Hall goes on to say that “cultural meanings are not only ‘in the head’ they organize and regulate social practices, influence our conduct and consequently have real, practical effects.”⁵ Our understanding of cultural meaning and representation has been formulated through oral traditions, writing, cultural expressions, and political actions. While analyzing the nature of knowledge and how it connects to the ideas of truth, belief, and justification, Xicano/a epistemology must apply a similar analysis to the production of meaning that centers on Xicano/a culture. First, Xicano/as have knowledge of themselves as indigenous people. Knowledge of colonization and its effects on Xicano/as as a people is being produced daily, along with the knowledge and the experience of resistance to colonization.

Because of the psychological and physical violence perpetrated on Xicano/as in the United States, the cultural meanings incorporated into Xicano/a resistance literature play an important role in creating oppositional stories that launch directly from the material conditions created by European conquest and colonization. Several pre-conquest myths occupy a central position in the construction of Xicano/a resistance literature; astonishingly, they have survived to the present through the ongoing transformation of their meaning and provide the foundation of Xicano/a resistance literature.

The first significant event that shapes Xicano/a resistance is the conquest of Tenochtitlan or, as the Spanish chroniclers have called it, the fall of the Mexica Empire. On the surface it would appear that three foundational narratives of indigenous resistance come out of the conquest and

4. Hall, *Representation*, xviii.

5. Ibid., xix.

survive until today: the Mandato de Cuauhtémoc, the appearance of the Virgin de Guadalupe to Juan Diego on the hill of Tepeyac, and the Mexica myth of Aztlán. The myth of Aztlán remained a part of the Mexicano/a cultural undercurrent for centuries before becoming prominent again during the latter part of the twentieth century; a trend began in the late 1960s and continues through the present in which Xicano/a nationalists seeking a unifying mythology combine the three foundational myths. This secular reframing continues as twenty-first-century Xicano/a scholars, organizers, and activists dissect and re-conceptualize what it means to be indigenous in the United States. The outcome of this conceptualization, particularly for Xicano/as, is far from settled.

As stated earlier, from the indigenous perspective colonialism can be defined as a total disruption of the political and cultural development of a group or nation of people. Therefore, any meaningful attempt to analyze Xicano/a thought and material culture must contain an analysis of the physical oppression endured by the colonized. Cabral tells us oppressed peoples are “only able to create and develop the liberation movement because they keep their culture alive despite the continual organized repression of their cultural life.”⁶ So, if the building blocks of our national identity arise as a consequence of the material production of cultural resistance, then for the oppressed “even when their political and military resistance is destroyed . . . it is cultural resistance which at a given moment can take on new forms—political, economic, military—a fight to end foreign domination,”⁷ a fight that can and will produce resistance within an anti-colonial, anti-capitalist movement.

Fanon identifies three phases of literature through which colonized writing must pass on its way to creating an anti-colonial national voice. Cabral echoes Fanon’s three phases from a slightly

6. Cabral, “Identity and Dignity,” 53.

7. Ibid., 53.

different perspective. He writes that the first phase is “cynically called pacification” by the colonized.⁸ According to Cabral, “the second phase is the golden age of triumphant colonialism,” in which the natives offer passive resistance, “replete with many revolts, usually individual.”⁹ Finally for Cabral, “the third phase, that of the liberation struggle, it is the masses that provide the main strength which employs political or armed resistance.”¹⁰ Like the model of literary development put forth by Fanon, these phases—pacification, triumphant colonialism, and the liberation struggle—broadly outline the ever-growing consciousness of the emerging post-colonial nation.

As mentioned above Fanon confirms the uniqueness of each national liberation struggle, both geographically and generationally, when he writes, “each generation must out of relative obscurity discover its mission, fulfill it or betray it.”¹¹ As with the three different phases of literature produced by the colonized, Fanon is asserting the different and unknown roles of resistance each generation must discover and play out. In his writing, Fanon acknowledges the ever-changing nature of colonialism, its ever-evolving relationship to capitalism, and the necessity for the colonized to offer a fluid, evolving resistance to rigid ideological structure. Since the members of the emerging nation must discover their own unique means of understanding their path to national liberation, the best one can do is to look at other initiators of resistance to supply the tools to interrogate the colonial structure, and to trace current methods, practices, and attitudes within anti-colonial resistance literature.

8. Cabral, “Identity and Dignity,” 47.

9. Ibid., 47.

10. Ibid., 47.

11. Fanon, *Wretched*, 206.

Since the colonizers in their genocidal aspirations attempt to link Xicano/a identity to genetics, our identity as colonized people is oppositional, based in a cultural and material struggle that creates national consciousness, resistance, and eventually a fully developed national liberation movement. Fanon tells us national consciousness “gathers together the various indispensable elements necessary for the creation of a culture, those elements that alone can give it credibility, validity, life, and creative power.”¹² Unlike the fantastic description of mestizo/a identity founded in the metaphysical bloodlines of ideological mestizaje, our Xicano/a cultural meaning offers an opportunity for an identity founded in the building of national consciousness. Indeed, as Hall writes, “representation can only be properly analyzed in relation to the actual concrete forms which meaning assumes, in the concrete practices of signifying, ‘reading’ an interpretation; and these require analysis of the actual signs, symbols, figures, images narratives words and sounds—the material forms—in which symbolic meaning is circulated.”¹³

The ongoing reorganization of Xicano/a cultural meaning is imperative to the politico-cultural narrative that plays an essential role in developing, intellectually and culturally, an epistemology that ultimately produces the material goal of Xicano/a culture—Xicano/a liberation. Identifying with and recognizing the symbolic meaning produced through the study of Xicano/a literature is important to our understanding of how these reorganized meanings inform, establish, and interpret a political and cultural way of understanding the Xicano/a nation.

12. Fanon, *Wretched*, 244.

13. Hall, *Representation*, xxv.

El Mandato

Oral tradition tells us that Cuauhtémoc,¹⁴ the last Tlatoani (Speaker/Leader) of the Mexica, hurled his words of defiance into the future when he delivered his Mandato to the people of México-Tenochtitlan at the surrender of that city on August 13, 1521:

Our beloved sun has disappeared and has left us in total darkness. But we know that it will again return, will again come out and will come anew to shine upon us. But while it stays there in Miktlan, we should rapidly gather and embrace ourselves. And in the center of our heart we will hide all that which our heart appreciates and considers a treasure. And we know like a great jade we will destroy our houses of youth, our universities, our houses of young men, and our houses of song. That our roads may remain deserted and that our homes may preserve us. For now we do not know until when our new sun will come out. That the fathers and the mothers may never forget to teach their children. The fathers with the boys, the mothers with the girls. And that they teach their children while they live, precisely how good this has been that which has been until today. Our Beloved Anawak! The refuge, the protection and the care of our energies. And as a result of our customs and the behavior that our venerable elders received and our venerable parents with effort sowed in our essence. Now we deliver the task to our children that they guard our writings and our knowledge. From now on our homes will be our houses of youth, our universities, our houses of young men, our houses of song. And do not forget to inform our children intensely how it will be. How we will rise! And exactly how its destiny will be realized and how it will fulfill its grand destiny. Our beloved motherland Anawak.¹⁵

Taken as it stands, this is one of the first anti-colonial statements in the Americas. It frames the essentially oppositional nature of Meso-American identity (and subsequently Xicano/a identity) to settler-colonial domination by acknowledging defeats both physically and metaphorically.

Cuauhtémoc states, “our beloved sun has disappeared, and has left us in total darkness.”¹⁶ At the

14. The name Cuauhtémoc is usually translated into English and Spanish as “Falling Eagle” or “Descending Eagle.” But recently, as a greater understanding of the Nahuatl language is gained among English and Spanish speakers, the translation “Swooping Eagle” is gaining prominence. It has been suggested that the earlier translations were put forward to suggest an inevitability of defeat.

15. Kurly Tlapoyawa, *We Will Rise: Rebuilding the Mexikah Nation* (Victoria: Tlapoyawa and Trafford Publishing, 2000), 43.

same time commanding faith and hope in its return, by saying, “we know that it will again return, will again come out and will come anew to shine upon us.”¹⁷ After telling the people to take the secrets of their national culture and hide those secrets within their homes and family circles, Cuauhtémoc finishes with “How we will rise! And exactly how its destiny will be realized and how it will fulfill its grand destiny”¹⁸—prophetic words if they are examined in the light of history, in which hijos y hijas de Cuauhtémoc (sons and daughters of Cuauhtémoc) living in the United States have “identified Aztlán as the Chicano nation” and have seen it as “their duty to establish it as [a] political-territorial entity.”¹⁹ With the disruption of the indigenous world at the time of the conquest of the Meso America, all myths, symbols, and other ways of creating meaning for indigenous peoples were thrown into disarray. Aztlán as the past homeland of the Mexica people becomes, centuries later, the future homeland of the returned Xicano/a.

Cuauhtémoc’s final public admonition delivers the first insurgent message of the Americas, since its primary goal is the preservation of the Mexica nation through cultural and material opposition to the European occupiers. Contemporary counterinsurgency theory addresses the danger of the Mandato that lies in the way it clearly situates resistance to invading forces within the general population. That move protects the embers of resistance from the invading powers, permitting future confrontation after a period of regrouping, education, and development. Galula tells us that “if the insurgent manages to disassociate the population from the counterinsurgent, to control it physically, to get its active support, he will win the war because in the final analysis, the

16. Tlapoyawa, *We will rise*, 43.

17. Ibid., 43.

18. Ibid., 43.

19. Michael Piña. “The archaic, historical and mythicized dimensions of Aztlán ” *Aztlán essays on the Chicano homeland*. (Albuquerque: El Norte Publications/Academia, 1989), 15.

exercise of political power depends on the tacit or explicit agreement of the population . . . thus the battle for the population is a major characteristic of the revolutionary war.”²⁰

Cuauhtémoc commands through the Mandato that “our homes will be our houses of youth, our universities, our houses of young men, our houses of song.”²¹ As a result, the Mandato is fundamental to understanding Meso-American opposition to the Western invasion and to the future creation of an indigenous Meso-American nation. It puts in the hands of each indigenous person the duty to resist the foreign invader both culturally and physically, and clearly places the onus of education and resistance on the family.

In his article “El Movimiento Mexicanista: Imaginario prehispánico, nativismo y neotradicionalismo en el México contemporáneo,”²² Francisco de la Peña identifies the person primarily responsible for bringing (what I call) the Mexica-ist movement to a greater presence as Rodolfo Nieva, who was born in 1905. In the early 1950s Nieva experienced “a revelation to make contact with different groups trying to revive the pre-Hispanic past [who] knew the Word or the Mandato proclaimed by indigenous rulers at the time of the destruction of México-Tenochtitlan.”²³ De la Peña writes that Indigenismo as a movement works tirelessly to reestablish an unbroken line of resistance and thought from the moment of conquest in 1521 to when Nieva’s movement

20. Galula, *Counter Insurgency*, 4.

21. Tlapoyawa, *We will rise*, 43.

22. Translated, “The Mexican Movement Imaginary Pre-Hispanic Nativist and Neo-Traditionalist in Contemporary México”. Francisco De la Peña, “El Movimiento Mexicanista. Imaginario prehispánico, nativismo y neotradicionalismo en el México contemporáneo” *Ciencias Sociales y Religión/Ciências Sociais e Religião* 3, no. 3, (2001), 96.

23. Ibid., 96.

produces this document in 1957 “the Movement Mexicanista or Mexizikayo Ahkomanlli,”²⁴ and that “from 1964, Nieva politicized and radicalized his speech and his position against the government (of México) organizing a Mexicanidad Party that would not have any electoral impact.”²⁵ Nieva died suddenly in 1968 at the age of sixty-three and, according to de la Peña, “his supporters dispersed, founding many of the Mexicanist organizations that exist to the present.”²⁶

Kurly Tlapoyawa is one of the community intellectuals I will discuss in much greater depth in the next chapter. Tlapoyawa is a founder of the Mexika Eagle Society, whose stated mission is, in part, “to preserve, maintain and advance the indigenous cultural inheritance of Chicano-Mexicano/as through the principles of Mexikayotl. Mexikaresistance.org soundly rejects the paternalistic, racist and oppressive ideologies of Indigenismo, Mestizaje, and La Raza Cosmica.”²⁷ Tlapoyawa also participates in and is considered a maestro (teacher) in the growing Danzante movement, which advocates a reintroduction of Mexica philosophy and religion to Xicano/as within the United States.

Tlapoyawa places the Mandato as a direct creation of Nieva. In a blog post dated December 11, 2012, Tlapoyawa writes, “I for one, think the following excerpt from *Crónica Mexicayotl* should be used instead of the ‘Declaration of Kuauhtemok’ as a sort of ‘foundational document’ of Mexicayotl. In fact, I suspect the ‘consigna’ was heavily influenced by it:

Thus they have come to tell it,
Thus they have come to record it in their narration,
And for us they have painted it in their codices,

24. Ibid., 105.

25. Ibid., 106.

26. Ibid., 105.

27. www.mexikaresistance.org

The ancient men, the ancient women.
 They were our grandfathers, our grandmothers,
 Our great-grandfathers, great-grandmothers,
 Our great-great grandfathers, our ancestors.
 Their account was repeated,
 They left it to us;
 They bequeathed it forever
 To us who live now,
 To us who come down from them.

Never will it be lost, never will it be forgotten,
 That which they came to do,
 That which they came to record in their paintings:
 Their renown, their history, their memory.
 Thus in the future
 Never will it perish, never will it be forgotten,
 Always we will treasure it,
 We, their children, their grandchildren,
 Brothers, great-grandchildren,
 Great-great grandchildren, Descendants,
 We who carry their Blood and their Color,
 We will tell it, we will pass it on
 To those who do not yet live, who are yet to be born,
 The children of the Mexicans, the children of the Tenochcans.²⁸

I agree with both Tlapoyawa and de la Peña that the statement known today as the Mandato de Cuauhtémoc is a product of the Mexicanist movement that gets underway in the 1930s with several organizations that pre-date Nieva and his organization.²⁹ The Mandato re-imagines a clear insurgent message that translates effortlessly through the centuries, carrying backward the narrative of a slow cultural and political reaction that allows this insurgent irredentist sentiment to ferment.

At this point, several issues need to be addressed concerning the Mandato as a piece of resistance literature and its impact on Xicano/a writing in the United States. First, whether it is

28. Kurly Tlapoyawa, blog discussion with Ruben Arellano; he is quoting from Alvarado Tezozomoc: *Crónica Mexicayotl* The language of Kings.
<https://plus.google.com/113711450536712619447/posts/AcrCZHeAzpx>

29. According to Tlapoyawa in the same thread on December 11, 2012, the names of those organizations are Weyi Tlatekpanaliztli Iknuihtik Aztekatl (1927), Indigenous Confederation of México (1930), Mexihkayotl (1946), and Mexihkatl Itonalama (1950).

Nieva's 1957 version or the translation from the *Crónica Mexicayotl*, this written and spoken word performance signifies, on the very brink of defeat, indigenous insurgency based in Meso-American culture and nation. Nieva intended the Mandato to be a call for expulsion of the colonial administrators by indigenous forces. Its nationalist and anti-colonial sentiment cannot and should not be overlooked.

Second, Nieva and the Mexicanist movement are writing about and contemplating Anawak or central México, and this is where things get interesting. As the Mexicanist movement makes its way north, one year after Nieva's death in 1968, the Southwest United States becomes Aztlán in the hands of Alurista at the Denver Youth Conference. It is the shared cultural 'space' in which the production of meaning through language—that is—representation—takes place. Then we also understand that authenticity has no bearing on relevancy.”³⁰ Authenticity is matter of sustaining dialogue through “the presence of shared cultural codes, which cannot guarantee that meanings will remain stable forever.”³¹ In fact, it is irrelevant whether the Mandato as delivered in any form in 1521 or was simply a cultural production of Nieva's in the twentieth century. Just as the story of George Washington and the cherry tree provides the United States nation state a framework for understanding the ethical character of the first president, the Mandato offers us a fundamental understanding of how to maintain resistance to European invaders in preparation for when the proper moment of action arrives. All around, Xicano/as are debating nation, identity, and politics, struggling to find answers through direct action, academic research, and politico-cultural production. The struggles with immigration, poor schools, and generational poverty contribute to a growing awareness certain wrongs must be addressed. How does the Mandato set the stage for those issues

30. Hall, *Representation*, xxvi.

31. *Ibid.*, xxvi.

to be addressed? Before the building of the political party, the family becomes a small cultural insurgent group, the center of national resistance, the building block of a national liberation party.

How does the Mandato build meaning for Xicano/as around national resistance? First, it establishes a claim to the land. This irredentist claim, in one form or another, has survived five hundred years of European occupation and continues to assert itself into the twenty-first century. The explicit claims to religion, education, and self-determination in the Mandato are fundamental to a current Xicano/a understanding of indigenous nationhood and the national liberation movement. The power of this statement lies in how it establishes limits to European colonial intrusion, laying the foundation for an implicit refusal to cooperate with the invader, a refusal that permeates Xicano/a literature.

This call to insurgency, for the expulsion of an occupying force through an always-secret gathering of power, is what makes this piece so important. Cuauhtémoc's mandate (as re-imagined by Nieva) clearly addresses the need for an "insurgency." The question remains: how much of this idea has been metabolized by the Xicano/a psyche? As Xicano/as move toward developing a national consciousness, how does this mandate affect the decision to resist, either consciously or unconsciously? This ancient seed of remembrance of and opposition to invaders offers a solid example of the nuances around which the ideas of resistance, culture, and politics continue to develop. The Mexicanist movement spawns the Mandato de Cuauhtémoc and then carries it forward into the United States, where Aztlán becomes an irredentist demand for the Xicano/a movement in general.

Aztlán

Aztlán became a battle cry, for it represented Chicano roots that extended deep in the history of the land. This land was the land of the ancestors; and those who crossed the river came not as strangers but as the sons and daughters of the former Aztecs, seeking to reclaim what was once theirs. . . . The concept of Aztlán went beyond the political or even historical. It was mythical in proportions and it had to

be, to give Chicanos the collective strength to overcome the obstacles of poverty, assimilation, violence and self-doubt they faced daily.³²

Xicano/a resistance literature establishes Aztlán as the homeland, as a developing and/or future political goal rather than a dying symbol of a past civil rights movement moving past its apex of exposure and falling out of everyday use in the Xicano/a community/movement.

For the portion of the Xicano/a community engaged in resistance writing, the necessities of survival under colonial rule have overshadowed Aztlán and its mythology for centuries. Yet, since 1969 Aztlán has occupied the center of an ever-widening discourse on the Xicano/a nation and Xicano/a identity. More recently, primarily white nativist groups have perceived Aztlán as the centerpiece of a Mexican plot to re-conquer the southwest portion of the United States.

Today Aztlán is a site of current irredentist dispute. Michael Pina writes it is land militarily occupied and controlled, mythologized by the time the Spaniards arrived in México-Tenochtitlan. As a mythological place, it predates the European conquest, as a product of Meso-American nation building and representation. Histories relate that this legend was saved by Fray Bernardino de Sahagun years after the fall of Tenochtitlan on August 13, 1521.³³ Rafael Perez-Torrez, in his book *Mestizaje: Critical Uses of Race in Chicano Culture*, writes, “the myth was written down by Sahagun native informants . . . in Nahuatl in 1555 for a Spanish friar who lost the original account, reconstructed it in Spanish and completed a Nahuatl revision in 1585.”³⁴ Subsequently, various indigenous and

32. Ignacio M. Garcia, *Chicanismo the forging of a militant ethic among Mexican Americans* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1998), 95.

33. Perez-Torrez, *Mestizaje*, 148.

34. Ibid., 148

Spanish chroniclers throughout the first century documented the evolution of Aztlán;³⁵ the different accounts show remarkable agreement.

Fanon recommends that contemporary colonized people examine closely the past struggles of their ancestors for guidance in the process of decolonization when he writes, “the preceding generations have both resisted the work of erosion carried by colonialism and also helped on the maturing of the struggles of today.”³⁶ While the future emergence of Xicano/a political culture may have not been the conscious goal of the creators of the legend of Aztlán, I think it would be naïve and harmful to our understanding of Meso-American resistance to assume that indigenous peoples so close to the conquest did not harbor ulterior motives and hopes for future military resurgence.³⁷ The only known fact about Aztlán is that the homeland of the Mexica was located somewhere to the north of central México. Where exactly is unimportant; what is important is the belief in nation, entitlement, and Indigeneity. I wonder why this story should survive, of the countless that have perished. Even more astonishing, mainstream Anglo scholars, politicians, and political pundits of the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century have awarded this myth some recognition. All of this demonstrates the complex nature of indigenous identity. This story survived because at its root it creates a future escape from and promise of indigenous resurgence in the face of the domination and control of first the Spaniards and later the twentieth-century United States. It again provides a military answer to what Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzalez in his epic poem “Yo soy Joaquín” described as the condition of Xicano/as:

And now! I must choose between the paradox of
victory of the spirit, despite physical hunger,

35. Ibid.

36. Fanon, *Wretched*, 206.

37. Ibid., 245.

or to exist in the grasp of American social neurosis,
sterilization of the soul and a full stomach.³⁸

As Spain's colonial rule hardened over central México and extended to the Mexican periphery, the dream of a resurgent Anawak manifested in a shift northward. In the later part of the twentieth century, anti-colonial cultural production of resistance literature that was—like the poem above—steeped in Third World liberation theory, once again reiterated this dream of a resurgent Anawak by evolving it into insurgent Aztlán. Aztlán had survived over the course of five centuries as a Mexican myth. The second political separation that occurred in the Mexican psyche took place after the invasion and conquest of México by the United States between 1846 and 1848. The signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, in which México ceded its northern territory, causes another splintering of Mexican identity that resulted in the Xicano/a. The Xicano/a, as a distinct group of people within the United States national project, began to emerge as persecution and displacement intensified. At this moment, conquest, the seed of Aztlán, began to take on a new and different importance.

In 1969, a scant one hundred and twenty-one years after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, a young poet calling himself Alurista³⁹ took the stage at the first National Chicano Youth Liberation Conference in Denver, Colorado, and read a poem which I quote in part:

In the spirit of a new people that is conscious not only of its proud historical heritage but also of the brutal 'gringo' invasion of our territories, we, the Chicano inhabitants and civilizers of the northern land of Aztlán from whence came our forefathers, reclaiming the land of their birth and consecrating the determination of our people of the sun, declare that the call of our blood is our power, our responsibility and our inevitable destiny.⁴⁰

38. Rodolfo Gonzalez, "Yo Soy Joaquín" *Latin American Studies*, 6/24/14, <http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/>

39. Alberto Baltazar Urista Heredia born August 8, 1947.

40. Alurista "The spiritual manifesto of Aztlán," 84.

It is Alurista's call to an "inevitable destiny" that makes these proclamations seem so shocking to many average Americans. That Xicanos claim Aztlán and pre-Mexica history exposes a deep shift of national allegiance away from México. The development of a new national identity, calling for alternative political solutions to Mexican mestizaje, naming a large part of what was and still is considered a permanent part of the United States as disputed territory, amounts to little less than a declaration of war. With his irredentist claim, Alurista began to hack away at the mental and physical subjugation of Xicanos, writing, "we are free and sovereign."⁴¹ In this poetic call to insurgency, he names and categorically challenges the oppressed, colonized, and dispossessed status of Xicano/as in the United States as well as the right of Europeans to control the land.

These irredentist proclamations, combined with the political explosiveness that has been building since the separation from México in 1848, found fertile ground. The reason this moment is so important and enduring is because in the struggle for a national consciousness a "non-existent culture can hardly be expected to have a bearing on reality or to influence reality. The first necessity is the re-establishment of the nation in order to give life to national culture in the strictly biological sense of the phrase."⁴² To make this contested culture a national reality it first needs to be named; Alurista does this and in doing so gives this dream of military resurgence another chance at life.

This moment marks a giant leap forward for Xicano/as. It signals a desire for sovereignty and freedom from oppression, felt by a critical mass of people. Because as colonized people Xicano/as so often try to downplay the impact of declarations like this, Xicano/a scholars perhaps from a sense of safety try to fit sovereignty and freedom into rhetorical categories. The truth is Aztlán is an old idea come back to life, reconstituted, reinvigorated, and re-imagined, filling a void

41. Ibid.

42. Fanon, *Wretched*, 245.

created by three hundred and fifty-six years of Spanish colonization and one hundred and sixty-four years of domination by the United States. Aztlán is and should be read as a site of legitimate political activity on the part of indigenous people. Indigenous sovereignty is legitimate in Quebec, Ireland, Palestine, Kurdistan, Chiapas, and New Zealand. Aztlán is real; people are talking and writing about it, and they make it real because meaning is produced through dialogue and dialogue establishes the political and cultural sea in which Xicano/as swim.

Alurista should be credited with a substantial rhetorical move toward creating a national consciousness. Luis Leal, in his 1971 anthology on Aztlán, writes that “Alurista published the anthology *El ombligo de Aztlán*, and a year later his *Nationchild-Plumarojo* appeared, published in San Diego by Toltecas de Aztlán. From this point forward, books in whose title the word Aztlán appears would multiply.”⁴³ Leal goes on to write,

it is necessary to point out the fact that before March, 1969, the date of the Denver Conference, no one talked about Aztlán. In fact, the first time that it was mentioned in a Chicano document was in “El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán,” which was presented in Denver at the time. Apparently, it owes its creation to the poet Alurista . . . beginning with that date; Aztlán has become the symbol most used by Chicano authors who write about history, the culture, or the destiny of their people.⁴⁴

This melding of the past with the present reclaims the legend of a people, wandering, searching for a destiny that perfectly suits the state of Xicanos in the United States. In the opening journal of *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, Alurista offers a poem titled “Poem in Lieu of Preface,” which “links the pre-Hispanic mythology of Aztlán to the Chicano mythology of nation-building.”⁴⁵

43. Luis Leal, “In search of Aztlán ” *Aztlán essays on the Chicano homeland* (Albuquerque: El Norte Publications/Academia, 1989), 11.

44. Ibid., 11.

45. Piña, “Dimensions of Aztlán,” 15.

It is said
 That Moctecuhzoma Ilhuicamina
 Sent
 An expedition
 Looking for the northern
 Mythical land
 Where the Aztecs came from
 La tierra
 De
 Aztlán
 Mythical land for those
 Who dream of roses
 Swallow thorns
 Or those who swallow thorns
 In powdered milk
 Feeling guilty about smelling flowers
 About looking for Aztlán⁴⁶

In our contemporary era, those “Looking for the northern mythical land” are the Xicano/as in the United States. Looking for a mythical land is a double play on both Aztlán and the image of the United States as having streets paved with gold. The phrase “looking for Aztlán” leaves us wondering—looking where? Are Xicano/as always looking inward for Aztlán as a place of introspection? Or are they seeking outwardly, in terms of finding a physical location to serve the needs of the people “who swallow thorns/in powdered milk/feeling guilty about smelling flowers/About looking for Aztlán.” Alurista’s words remind us that the physical oppression of the Xicano/a is an inescapable fact, manifesting in chronically high dropout rates for K-12 students, chronic generational poverty, and high incarceration rates. Alurista’s thorns are real. The issues are real. Nevertheless, is not our need for self-determination very real as well?

Here Alurista clearly contrasts the hopes for a better life with the desperate economic situation Xicano/as faced and still face today. His reference to “those who swallow thorns in powdered milk” places the Xicano/a in the United States as part of the welfare system, suggesting

46. Leal, “In search of Aztlan,” 11.

poverty; while doing this he unmistakably “drives home the point that in their own spiritual homeland Chicanos suffer pain inflicted by the thorns of deprivation.”⁴⁷ The visualization of Aztlán as a cultural and political escape hatch for Xicano/as is constantly reinforced by the harsh realities of life Xicano/as in the United States experience on a daily basis.

Almost from the beginning, the political power of the Aztlán narrative produced backlash for its present day originator. Alurista recounts in the book *Chicano! A History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* how his artistic work was challenged almost immediately, especially by “Chicano infiltrators from the Socialist Workers Party (SWP),” charging Alurista as an inventor of “mystification and way of confusing people,” distracting the Xicano/a movement from the class struggle.⁴⁸ Despite the troubles and attacks he suffered, Alurista understands the broad implications of Aztlán in creating a focal point for building a national consciousness among Xicano/as. As he explains, “the fact of the matter is that Aztlán has prevailed and has become the unifying symbol I intended it to be.”⁴⁹

Indeed, the moment was right for the introduction of the Aztlán idea. Liberation movements around the world were succeeding by following the guerilla models of Mao in Southeast Asia, Fanon and Cabral in Africa, and Guevara in Latin America. The formation of new countries, as well as the creation of the Third World unaligned movement, gave hope and inspiration to young radicals like Alurista. The sensation of challenging power, and in doing so discovering a part of one’s power as an individual or group, is profoundly liberating. Watching liberated spaces expand across the world leads to the inevitable question of “why not here?” The history of the conquest

47. Piña, “Dimensions of Aztlán,” 41.

48. F. Arturo Rosales, *Chicano! The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Houston: Arte Público, 1997), 262.

49. Ibid., 262.

and the genocidal treatment of the indigenous in both the United States and México have been clearly documented. The indigenous claim to the land clearly exists.

These collective experiences of resistance forge the identity of those involved. The sharing of struggle and the deprivation it brings, along with the triumph of rediscovering their humanity (or as Fanon has put it, “it is at the moment they discover their humanity they begin to sharpen their tools”⁵⁰), makes it possible to trace the arc of insurgency and revolutionary thought through the writing produced within a movement. Resistance writing speaks to this collective feeling/understanding among its readers that transcends the individual. It does this because meaning has been established; and, as discussed earlier, meaning can only be made through dialogue. Any understanding of “cultural” symbols must be part of a collective agreement; Stuart Hall writes, “the essence of language is communication and that, in turn, depends on shared linguistic conventions and shared code.”⁵¹ Hall goes on to say that language is a social system, “it acknowledges that neither things in themselves nor the individual users of language can fix meaning in language. Things don’t mean: we construct meaning, using representational systems—concepts and signs.”⁵² The fact that Aztlán means so many different things is good news for any potential Xicano/a liberation movement.

As the political idea of Aztlán has continued to solidify in the national consciousness of Xicano/as, discussions of it as a physical place, inhabiting space and location, have become more common in Xicano/a literature since 1968. Starting then, with the introduction of the concept of Aztlán to Xicano/as,

50. Fanon, *Wretched*, 43.

51. Hall, *Representation*, 25.

52. Ibid.

Aztlán has become the symbol most used by Chicano authors who write about the history, the culture or the destiny of their people; and the same thing occurs with those who write poetic novels or short stories. During the spring of the following year, 1970, the first number of the journal *Aztlán* was published, and in it the Plan [de Aztlán] was reproduced in both English and Spanish.⁵³

Since then countless books, scholarly journal articles, dissertations, and writings have used the word “Aztlán” in their titles.

The same is true of mainstream culture and American pop culture. For instance, according to a report by the group Media Matters Action Network, “during 2007, the alleged connection between illegal immigration and crime was discussed on 94 episodes of *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, 66 episodes of *The O'Reilly Factor*, and 29 episodes of *Glenn Beck*.”⁵⁴ All of this was done within the political framework of settler colonialism that acknowledges the irredentist position of indigenous people living in the United States. The Media Matters report goes on to state,

the worst offender has been CNN's Lou Dobbs. Since January 2006, Lou Dobbs Tonight has discussed or mentioned “reconquista” or “Aztlán” nine times. In two of the earliest mentions, the show described reconquista as not having “broad support” and not representative of “the views of most Latinos.” But in subsequent reports, the show portrayed it as growing in strength. On the March 31, 2006, edition of the show, correspondent Christine Romans said, “Long downplayed as a theory of the radical ethnic fringe, the la reconquista, the reconquest, the reclamation, the return, it's resonating with some on the streets.”⁵⁵

As the Media Matters report documents, it is clear that these two things (immigration and la Reconquista) are tied together. As the report cites, quoting CNN news correspondent Lisa Sylvester from a May 2, 2006, story,

53. Leal, “In search of Aztlán,” 11.

54. Media Matters Action Network, *Fear and loathing in prime time: Immigration myths and cable news* (policy paper, <http://mediamattersaction.org/>), 2.

55. Media Matters, *Fear and loathing*, <http://mediamattersaction.org/>.

the organizations [supporting pro-immigration boycotts and demonstrations] want amnesty for all, and many openly embrace the reconquista movement, México taking over the southwestern United States. The reconquista theory was also raised by studio guest Pat Buchanan, who has also written about it in his book, *State of Emergency: The Third World Invasion and Conquest of America* (St. Martin's Griffin, 2007). "The ultimate goal of [then Mexican President] Vicente Fox is the erasure of the border between the United States and México," Buchanan told Dobbs in September 2006. La Reconquista is the objective, Lou.⁵⁷

Samuel Huntington himself, in "The Hispanic Challenge," speaks directly about his concerns over the irredentist claims of the Mexicano/a community when he writes, "no other immigrant group in U.S. history has asserted, or could assert a historical claim to U.S. territory. Mexicans and Mexican Americans can and do make that claim . . . Quite understandably, they feel that they have special rights in these territories."⁵⁶

It is entirely possible Huntington and the others felt this growing Xicano/a sense of ownership, as the United States Empire fell into noticeable decline in the last decade and a half before he died in 2009. This, coupled with increasing references to Xicano/a/Mexicano/a secession or 'reconquista' of occupied Mexican territory in mainstream conservative TV and radio programming, revealed a growing political awareness among Xicano/a activists and the recognition of a new threat to United States hegemony in the Americas. Huntington, forever the consummate Anglo-Saxon intellectual, patriot, and nationalist, perhaps understood better than most Xicano/as how the concept of Aztlán is dangerous because the birth of a nation is a process. He accepted the process is already underway, set in motion by Alurista and other Xicano/a Nationalists, where Aztlán is going "from mythos to logos, that is, the mystery of myth is made more explicit through its articulation and revelation."⁵⁷

56. Huntington, "Hispanic Challenge," 5.

57. Piña, "Dimensions of Aztlán," 44-45.

In his explanation of Aztlán as a narrative of resistance, as well as a marker of belonging, Perez-Torres writes that, “by referring to Aztlán, Chicano artists signal that the United States is neither a wholly sovereign nation state nor an end point of migration, but rather a part of a more extensive political, economic, historic, and cultural landscape, one that predates the arrival of European civilization.”⁵⁸ This illustrates the power of images and the spoken word. Aztlán, as it is remade by Xicano/as, is the contemporary fulfillment of the Mandato de Cuauhtémoc the return of political control to their descendants. The continuity of the indigenous claim to the land is surprising to Western civilization as indigenous insurgents articulate these claims consistently over the past five hundred years. The position of ongoing insurgency is integral to the Meso-American cultural and political positions. It is pervasive in the song, poetry, politics, and national identity of Xicano/as and other indigenous peoples.

The music of Robert López, a performance artist known as “El Vez,” the Mexican Elvis, showcases the continued and growing interest in Aztlán as a physical space where indigenous people reclaim occupied territory as the “passage from mythos to logos,” a literary journey becoming more pronounced when examined in the light of pop culture. This passage takes on an interesting tone as López translates one of the greatest United States pop icons into Xicano/a politics, or as López quoting folksinger Phil Ochs says, “the only hope for revolution in the United States is the melding of Elvis and Che Guevara.”⁵⁹

On his 1994 CD titled ‘Graciasland’ López sings about Aztlán as a physical destination he and other Xicano/as arrive at after journeying with “My traveling companions, La Virgen, Miss

58. Perez-Torres, *Mestizaje*, 147.

59. El Rey De Rock ‘n Roll. Directed by Marjorie Chodorov. 2001. www.videobeat.com. DVD.

Liberty, a map and my MEChA books.”⁶⁰ Perez-Torres attempts to frame López with a strict identity framework of becoming as he writes, “Aztlán becomes . . . the interwoven myth, the utopian hope of some vaguely articulated nation-state that characterizes the most ardent expressions of Chicano nationalist thought, can become a means to articulate a sense of self always in the process of becoming and transforming.”⁶¹ Yet, when examining the lyrics of this song more closely, it is important to ask if López is not referencing something a little larger than the individual hopes and dreams? López sings of Aztlán as a locality, and in so doing echoes, the irredentist claims of the Xicano/a movement from 1848 onward. This is where the split between the academy and the community’s idea of Aztlán as a place of identity metaphors and Aztlán as a physical location that, unlike identity, can be built on to develop the will to resist European domination. Aztlán, like Anahuac the Valle de México, is a real place. It is real because Xicano/as know it, believe in it, and like the insurgent theory it springs from this belief in national liberation is the motivating factor for revolutions around the world. More importantly, if Aztlán is part of an ongoing transformative political cultural dialogue, one answer to the attempted monologue of domination by settler society then why is it this transformation Perez-Torres and other write about seem to always end with the individual?

How can the Meso-American struggle to reclaim national history and national sovereignty over indigenous land after five hundred years suddenly be reduced to a personal sense of development? The emphasis on the individual embraces the heritage of United States individualistic critique and upholds the basic United States ideology of extreme individualism. This critique is safe and acceptable within the boundaries of Western discourse because in the final analysis it offers only

60. El Vez [Robert Lopez], “Aztlán” on *Graciasland*, CD, 1995.

61. Perez-Torres, *Mestizaje*, 150-151.

the opportunity to be subsumed into the dominant United States paradigm centering the individual as the pinnacle of political development. For Xicano/as the broader issue of national liberation makes this a moment of political transformation, in which the community-wide dialogue of Aztlán as a real place of politics interlocks with other visions of Aztlán to embrace the whole of the people. Aztlán is a collective activity, a 'return to history' in which political direction is not activated on a strictly individual basis. This view of Aztlán requires citizen participation. Participation that began in 1968 at the Chicano Youth Conference and continues to the present, where narratives of physical resistance based in insurgent theory, of political organization and party building, are replaced in the Academy with theoretical analysis of personal development and belonging. The issue is not one of conflict between the academy and the community but of understanding how these different approaches are building, however unwittingly the same foundation.

Focusing on artistic endeavors, the following section of the El Vez song *Aztlán* places López (El Vez) and his lyrics directly within the Xicano/a analysis of Aztlán itself, it also marks López and other Xicano/a/Latinos as members of a colonized group. Colonization caused by political conquest, social discrimination, or economic class warfare, is not the point of this song that "re-territorializes the ideas about geography, culture, heritage traditions and migrations that have driven Xicano/a discourse since at least 1965."⁶² The point is the search itself, the "process of becoming and transforming," making room for the idea transformation isn't confined solely to the individual and even it were there is a tipping point in everyone's movement. At some future time it is

62. Saldívar, José David. *Border Matters remapping American cultural studies*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997, 195.

inevitable that the Xicanada, which I posit as the entire politico-cultural spectrum of the Xicano/a community, will have to deal with Aztlán physically as well as emotionally.⁶³ López sings,

Well I've reason to believe
We all have been deceived
There still is Aztlán
Miss Liberty tells me Aztlán's gone
As if I didn't know that
As if I didn't know my own back yard
As if I didn't know
To get in you need a card
And she said losing home
Is like a bullet in your heart
I am looking for a place
A myth of my people
That won't get torn apart
I'm going to Aztlán⁶⁴

López accomplishes a number of things in these verses. First, he captures the ever-growing revolutionary spirit present in the Xicano/a people. Second, he establishes a lie has been told. He bases this not in personal transformation but in geopolitical boundaries. This lie centers on the illegality of Xicano/as/Mexicano/as in the United States. He charges Miss Liberty (USA), a clear reference to the Statue of Liberty, has told him “Aztlán’s gone.” Here is the literal expansion of the territory of Anahuac over the past 30 years. Does this mean, as Huntington has written, there exists no room for Xicano/as within the physical boundaries of the United States, or there is no room for alternative narratives of sovereignty within the boundaries of the United States as cultural outsiders? Lastly, López reaffirms he is searching, “looking for a place, a myth of my people.” Aztlán is speeding toward creation with this basic insurgent operation: engage in political education, organize people, and resist invaders.

63. Perez-Torres, *Mestizaje*, 151.

64. El Vez, “Aztlán,” CD.

The Virgin of Guadalupe

These surviving myth/narratives have become the spears of resistance launched from the ruins of Tenochtitlan toward the new land of Aztlán. Again, the Mandato helps us to grasp immediately the significance of the Virgin appearing to Juan Diego a short ten years after the fall of the Mexica Empire. It is an incredibly open syncretistic moment, where members of a conquered race endeavor to “hide all that which our heart appreciates and considers a treasure.”⁶⁵ Some consider it the first act of cultural mestizaje and it could be understood as an early attempt to blend cultures. However, I believe this is a surface level reading tainted by European hegemony.

Take a moment to look at this moment within the fullness of history. From that moment emerges a symbol and affirmation of resistance Fanon might call the beginning of a “national consciousness, which is not nationalism [but] the only thing that will give us an international dimension.”⁶⁶ The Virgin’s physical appearance can be read as defiance and resistance to the new power. Her appearance is no coincidence. Indeed the cult of Tonatzin/Guadalupe has again reached international dimensions as it had already by the time of the conquest. This belief is a bonding factor similar to the use of corn in the survival of Meso-America in the face of a determined European cultural, religious, and physical onslaught.⁶⁷ It is also no coincidence two of the most potent resistance narratives Xicano/as have are pre-European in origin.

Ana Castillo explains the significance and deep symbolism around the appearance of the Virgin in the introduction of her book, *Goddess of the Americas: Writings on the Virgin of Guadalupe*. She writes, “The Mexican indigenous account of the apparitions of the Mother Goddess is rich with

65. Tlapoyawa, *We Will Rise*, 43.

66. Fanon, *Wretched*, 247.

67. Bonfil-Batalla, *México Profundo*, 4, 22.

Nahua symbolism and meaning. To ignore the meaning the account of her apparitions may have had for the Nahua people, merely ten years after the violent conquest and destruction of their world, and despite their recent (imposed) conversion to Catholicism, would be a travesty.”⁶⁸

I understand the readiness of many current academics to attempt a thoroughly European/Christianized cultural reading of the Virgin of Guadalupe, an image uniquely produced by Meso-American culture and thought formed a scant ten years after the fall of Tenochtitlan. It is an attempt centuries later to further entwine the colonizer and the colonized and meld Nahua (indigenous) culture with Spanish culture thus strengthening the settler colonialist claim. When one considers the amount of death and destruction wrought by the conquest, it seems more likely the two men, who were (unlike us) newly subjugated and, no doubt, intensely longing for their past lives, would attempt to aid the Spaniards by contributing to the further pacification of their own people, especially in promoting such a powerful symbol, which Castillo writes, “[is] rich with Nahua symbolism and meaning.”⁶⁹ It is not hard to imagine the two men standing with the other inhabitants of Tenochtitlan as Cuauhtémoc delivers his Mandato.

The Nahua account of the Virgin’s appearance written in the Nican Mopohua (which means “Here is recounted”) in the late 1550s tells us “Juan Diego’s Nahuatl name before he was baptized was Cuauhtlaohuac. In English this would translate to He Who Speaks Like an Eagle. . . . Such a name would suggest that Juan Diego, although among the humblest of the new society . . . may have been considered an elder speaker of his people.”⁷⁰ This powerful piece of indigenous writing

68. Castillo, *Goddess*, xviii.

69. *Ibid.*, xviii.

70. *Ibid.*, xix.

chronicles the political cultural practices created as a result of resistance among Meso-American peoples springing up immediately following the conquest of Meso-America.

In the Nican Mopohua, a distressed Juan Diego/Cuauhtlaohuac is comforted by the return of his goddess and reaches into his recent memory for the courage to return repeatedly to the Bishop Zumárraga. Although Juan Diego/Cuauhtlaohuac's actions in going to the Bishop may look like a capitulation, a cause for reproach, keep in mind, as Fanon writes, that during the colonized struggle to overthrow colonial domination "we must rid ourselves of the habit, now that we are in the thick of the fight, of minimizing the actions of our fathers or the feigning incomprehension when considering their silence and passivity."⁷¹ Juan Diego/Cuauhtlaohuac and many others did what they could to survive so Rodríguez and others could stand in the heart of Anawak, in the center of México-Tenochtitlan, and ask "where then is this famous conquistador?"

The Virgin's statement to Juan Diego/Cuauhtlaohuac "For am I not here I, your Mother," spoken in Nahuatl, clearly establishes her indigenous to the land and the hill of Tepeyac. Juan Diego is a patriot of the old world nation and maybe the first of a new one. How many of us would face death to ensure the survival of our culture? Tonatzin cannot be what she was before the conquest; however, it is Western cultural arrogance to assume that she is strictly the Virgin. Centuries later a conspiracy set in motion by Juan Diego/Cuauhtlaohuac has become the first step toward returning to history.

According to Castillo in this image of Guadalupe we see that "La Virgen wears the fertility sash, she is *en cinta*, but the little symbol of the forthcoming child that dangles below it is the nagvioli flower, which represented Huitzilopochtli, the great, ferocious sun god of the Aztecs."⁷² Castillo

71. Fanon, *Wretched*, 206.

72. Castillo, *Goddess*, xix.

goes on, saying, “She is bathed in gold, a metal reserved for nobility and for the sacred. Her mantle which covers Her head is not a queenly crown but similar to the *rebozo* used by Indian women; it is the color of the quetzal—a highland bird whose feathers were quite valuable and used only to connote nobility and that which is holy.”⁷³ Even her body position produces meaning as F.

Gonzalez-Crussi points out in their essay “Anatomy of a Virgin” -- Guadalupe is poised with her left foot raised as if to step, hands clasped in front of her in a manner Christians would assume is prayer, but when coupled with her stance could be read as the beginning of a dance. She is pregnant and as Gonzalez-Crussi identifies herself as such in the indigenous way: “she wears a black sash around her waist . . . and wears it above the waist to indicate that she is with child.”⁷⁴ The fact Guadalupe is pregnant has been taken by Christian proselytizers over the century to indicate, “that the central figure of the painting is not the Virgin at all, but Jesus Christ . . . about to come to deliver his salvific message.”⁷⁵ When read, however, in terms of anti-colonial resistance it provides insurgent imagery for unborn generations and their resistance to come, generations would grow under her care to eventually throw off the yoke of their Spanish oppressors. Her skin is the color of her native people the sun, the foremost deity of the Mexica people, illuminates her image and under her feet “is a crescent black moon, symbol of the ancient, cruel deities of the Aztecs.”⁷⁶

As discussed in the first chapter, resistance to colonial oppression is not a byproduct of happenstance but a coordinated and guided process, founded on observation and scientific methods

73. Ibid., xx.

74. F. Gonzalez-Crussi, “The anatomy of a virgin” in *Goddess of the Americas writings on the Virgin of Guadalupe* ed. Ana Castillo (New York: Riverhead Books: 1996), 11.

75. Ibid., 11.

76. Ibid., 11.

rising from the natural desire of the oppressed to express themselves through culture and struggle. As with all people who embark on a return to history, symbols and beliefs continue to exist well past the moment of conquest, and it is safe to assume they retain their original meaning for quite some time. After all, the Mexica and other Meso-American cultures were not ignorant savages waiting for culture, philosophy, religion, or self-awareness. They already possessed those attributes as a people, and there is no reason to believe, conquered or not, they would not have wanted the essence of who they were as a civilization to survive.

I contend the literary style surrounding the Virgin “may be properly called a literature of combat, in the sense that it calls on the whole of the people to fight for their existence as a nation.”⁷⁷ Resistance literature is an answer to colonial oppression and is resistance to the cultural and physical annihilation continuing long after the material destruction of Tenochtitlan. It is a resistance movement birthed on the hill of Tepeyac into the cloak of Juan Diego, nursed through the efforts of indigenous intellectuals to record the legends of the Mexica people, and grown slowly through the centuries. Xicano/as exist today because of indigenous refusal to submit to genocide, indigenous refusal to forget in the face of death. In a startlingly clear declaration of resistance and comfort the Nahua goddess Tonatzin, renamed Guadalupe, reminds Cuauhtlaohuac, renamed Juan Diego, as he searches for a priest to confess to his Uncle Bernardino, who is dying of small pox:

For am I not here,
I, Your Mother?
Are you not in the cool of My Shadow?
in the Breeziness of My Shade?
...
Are you not cradled in My Mantle?
cuddled in the Crossing of My Arms?
Is there anything else for you to need?⁷⁸

77. Fanon, *Wretched*, 240.

It is clear who has survived: the nurturer, the mother who comforts and protects the giver of life from whence Xicano/as come. There is no coincidence here. Could Cuauhtlaohuac, “He who speaks like an Eagle,” have carried a more powerful image of hope and resistance to the conquerors and his own people?

She is the mother who has marched in the front ranks of indigenous armies since the moment of conquest, armies seeking equality, justice, and a return to the history. These armies have fought European hegemony repeatedly, from the War of Independence in 1820 to the Revolution of 1910 to the Grape fields of Delano to the Immigration struggles of the twenty-first century. Armies of indigenous men and women carried her image on banners hoisted by dark rough hands across the continent, as a reminder,

“For am I not here,
I, Your Mother?”⁷⁹

Indigeneity v. Mestizaje

To be Mestizo is to cop-out. It is to accept the Spaniard’s colonialist-racist ideology. It is to fall supine before the European’s racial grading system instead of struggling for psychological liberation. It is to den one’s own people’s history in order to have a masochistic, obscene relationship with the invaders and conquerors. It is to be suspected that many Chicanos, Mexicans, and other non-white groups in Anishinabe-waki grasp at being called mestizo, not because of a desire to acknowledge Anishinabe (native) descent, but quite the opposite reason, to affirm white descent.⁸⁰

Indigeneity is a discourse of national liberation. Mestizaje is a discourse rooted in and assumption of genetic improvement. Indigeneity fixes Xicano/as and Mexicano/as as native to the

78. Antonio Valeriano, “Nican Mopohua,” *Norte Dame—Cathedral Latin*. 7/2/14
http://ndclmurray.weebly.com/uploads/3/1/6/2/3162790/nican_mopohua_english.pdf

79. Valeriano, *Nican Mopohua*, Website.

80. Jack Forbes, *Aztecas del Norte: The Chicanos of Aztlán* (Fawcett Premier, 1973), 202.

Americas, inheritors of an ancient culture and civilization enduring in the face of almost insurmountable death and destruction. Mestizaje fixes the Meso-American at best as a living example of a dead Indian past and at worst some type of hybrid creation bearing no resemblance to their indigenous past, a creature with uncertain meaning systematically vanquished, first through war and disease and then finished off and reconstituted through eugenics and moral training.

Mestizaje is an outdated scientific and social theory that makes the fantastic claim that there are different races of humans. It serves to further the outrageous claim the European invasion of the Americas was good for the indigenous people living here and for their descendants. It is a justification for rape, murder, genocide, and cultural obliteration. It fosters the idea Xicano/as as an oppressed group could arrive at some type of transcendent understanding of themselves and their political situation in the Americas and in the world by using as their primary identity a belief their essential condition was improved solely because of genetics is delusional.

José Vasconcelos, a criollo Mexican philosopher and politician who wrote the foundational tract on mestizaje “La Raza Cosmica” at the turn of the last century, trumpets the good done by the conquest when he writes, “the mixture of similar races is productive, while the mixture of very distant types, as in the case of Spaniards and American Indians, has questionable results.”⁸¹ Vasconcelos goes on to say, “a religion such as Christianity made the American Indians advance, in a few centuries from cannibalism to a relative degree of civilization.”⁸² Forever the Hispanophile, Vasconcelos, despite his reservations about the worthiness of Indian blood, receives comfort from the idea of moral enlightenment through Christianity. These religious and racial sentiments form the foundation of how mestizaje is understood from an established Xicano/a perspective. How can this

81. José Vasconcelos, *The Cosmic Race/La Raza Cosmica*. Trans. Didier T. Jaén (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1997), 5.

82. Ibid.

belief be productive for Xicano/a culture when it repudiates Meso-American history and accomplishment and privileges the European paradigm of physical conquest? Is it any wonder Xicano/as continue to argue about identity, stuck in theoretical debates, when “official” history is imprisoned in a fairy tale of mixing good with bad?

Many years after his introduction of Aztlán to the Xicano/a movement, Alurista in his book *as the barrio turns . . . who the yoke b on?* questions where Xicano/as as searchers, asking for a beginning, might have to return: “how far back do we go now: 1848? 1836? 1821? 1521? 1492? Do we dare go back before that? . . . How far back beyond the logos on to the mythos in mestizaje do we care to search for our roots to our *nueva conciencia*, for the roots to the new *chicano y la nueva chicana*?”⁸³ These are probing questions curiously pointing the wrong way. Can a colonized people search backward to uncover a “*nueva conciencia*?” The past cannot be recovered; it can only be studied. Because of colonization, the past that existed is gone. This is the essence of what Fanon and Cabral are getting at when they talked about a national culture through a return to history. It is not a reclaiming of old traditions and customs it is the regaining of the historical personality of a group. The understanding of themselves as unique, distinct, and politically and culturally sovereign people, the future can be molded and directed. Study the past. Direct the future.

In developing the will of the people to resist, an examination of history must take place in order to understand the present. If Xicano/as are constantly looking back and privileging the idea European civilization upon reaching the Americas began to “consummate the task of re-civilization and re-population”⁸⁴ of the continent as Vasconcelos writes. The question then that needs to be asked is how positioning mestizaje as a basis for cultural advancement is any different than Jews

83. Alurista, *as the barrio turns . . . who the yoke b on?*, 73.

84. Vasconcelos, *La Raza Cosmica*, 9.

implementing Nazis theories of racial purity as a basis of Zionism? If this belief in the manifest destiny of Europeans to control the Americas constitutes the opening rhetorical moves of Vasconcelos' mestizaje manifesto, then to what extent must those who are clearly not of European descent take affront with his idea that has "set the moral and material basis for the union of all men into the fifth universal race."⁸⁵ Clearly there is no choice. To be clear, mestizaje carries at its core the belief in the racial and cultural superiority of the European.

In his book *México Profundo*, Mexican anthropologist Guillermo Bonfil-Batalla provides an alternative paradigm to Vasconcelos' official ideology of state-sponsored mestizaje. Bonfil-Batalla writes, "the Indian genetic contribution was the fundamental one in the physical makeup of the Mexican population."⁸⁶ Bonfil-Batalla calls this is an undeniable reality saying that, "the racial difference/s are a basic historical fact that indicates the most profound aspect of our reality during the last five centuries. A colonial society was established who's nature made it necessary to distinguish subject populations from those who were dominant."⁸⁷ It is an ordering Bonfil-Batalla tells where, "the colonial order was based ideologically on affirmation of the superiority of the dominant society over those colonized."⁸⁸ The colonizers ultimately developed a system of superiority based on "race" allowing claims to ownership of the land based in mestizaje.

As conquerors Europeans set and maintained standards of beauty and goodness that have been dominate for centuries. But there were challenges over who set standards for Europeans in ward of imperialism in the Americas from the sixteenth century through the eighteenth century.

85. Ibid., 9.

86. Bonfil-Batalla, *México Profundo*, 16.

87. Ibid.

88. Ibid.

According to Raymund Paredes, the English in their long war against Spain created “a scale of human beauty ranging from the blond perfection of the northern European to the ebony hideousness of the African. The Spaniard was placed near the bottom of the scale . . . when Englishmen increasingly esteemed purity not only in a religious sense but also in an incipient racial context the Spaniard was manifestly ‘impure’ being the product of European-Moorish miscegenation.”⁸⁹ Acknowledging the English/Spanish obsession with religious and racial purity helps us to correctly identify how Meso-American Indigeneity after the conquest operates as a narrative of resistance counter to mestizaje.

As Xicano/as consider different critiques of their present situation, it becomes clearer the fantasy of race mixing provides very little recourse politically. Jack D. Forbes, a Delaware-Lenápe scholar, deals with this junk scientific claim directly in his book *Aztecas Del Norte* by attacking the notion of racial purity of whiteness in contrast with the eternally dissected nature of Xicano/as in the United States.

The system of mestizaje, Forbes observes accomplishes several things, even after centuries of discussion and interpretation. “It accentuates notions of white supremacy and encourages people to try to be as white as possible.”⁹⁰ Forbes goes on to warn us that mestizaje, “made people caste conscious and encouraged disunity among the oppressed non-whites.”⁹¹ From a certain standpoint, the discussion of mestizaje as a reclaimed category of oppression is understandable since it is the primary way colonized people have been taught to enter a relationship with the colonizer. However,

89. Raymund A. Paredes “The origins of anti-Mexican sentiments in the United States” *New Scholar* 6 (1977), 141.

90. Forbes, *Aztecas del Norte*, 194.

91. Ibid., 194,

based on just the points Forbes makes above, its development as a paradigm of liberation for indigenous peoples is beyond my understanding.

This idea of blood quanta continually reinforces what Forbes calls “the categorization of Anishnabe by degree of blood . . . to transform the Anishnabe people from a group of nationalities into a series of castes,”⁹² which also applies, in Forbes opinion, to Xicano/as. One can see the stratification of the Xicano/a nation through its political fragmentation. To be clear, when I speak of the need to fight against fragmentation I am not arguing for a monolithic coalescing of all politics into one hegemonic understanding. I consider this desperate and naïve claim for an unattainable unity as just another measure of Xicano/a imprisonment in colonial thinking, a crippled vision of unity in which the litmus test of total agreement is applied to everyone’s political situation, and which then suffers dismissal when such complete unity cannot be achieved.

I believe the study of resistance literature as a genre leads to the conclusion that all politico-cultural production labeled under the identity tag Xicano/a is part of a nation building project. This expanded definition of politics speaks to the ever-growing sophistication of the Xicano/a people. This unwillingness to agree with each other about every little thing should be read as a growing political sophistication resulting from a continuing emergence from the shackles of colonialism. These different opinions represent a variety of positions along the total spectrum of the Xicanada. The position of political inclusivity is the hardest position of all, the gathering together of power and diverse intellect for the present and coming struggle. As matter of practice it appears the settler class has a wide range of political positions to advocate from that are seemingly not allowed in the politics of the colonized. Forbes writes about this saying that, “European imperialist thinking has denied Anishinabe the right to possess large (mass) nationalities. The anthropologists and colonists

92. Ibid., 195.

generally have decided that Indians are tribal forever. Whereas other peoples have had the right to merge tribes together and form large nation states, Anishinabe become something else whenever they leave the village.”⁹³ Any understanding of nation that moves outside the metaphor of personal identity is challenging the physical structure of colonialism the state has created and maintains through physical structures of oppression. Thus, when individual Xicanos or Xicanas speak of liberation in any fashion other than on a metaphorical personal level dealing with personal economics or sexuality, they are perceived as lunatics.

Like Forbes, Fanon continually rejects the concept of mestizaje as a progressive ideology by taking the struggle for national liberation out of the context of race and placing it firmly within a political nationalist framework. His demand to recover the nation supersedes the limited racist understanding of the colonizer. Fanon exposes the adversarial relationship between mestizaje and national liberation when he writes, “The nation is not only the condition of culture, its fruitfulness, its continuous renewal, and it’s deepening. It is also a necessity. It is the fight for national existence, which sets culture moving and opens to it the doors of creation.”⁹⁴

Mestizaje that grows out of conquest and cultural disruption can only limit historical analysis to a metaphysical discussion of the past, preventing indigenous people’s return to history. As discussed earlier this settler colonialist version of history freezes the development of culture in, suspending it forever and refashioning it into a subsumed version of settler culture that never quite lives up to the original. Mestizaje dismisses the resiliency of the colonized politico-cultural existence and reinforces its inherent inferiority. This version of history created within a Xicano/a paradigm is the fulcrum of national identity, along with this version comes the ability to see the future as

93. Forbes, *Aztecas del Norte*, 199.

94. Fanon, *Wretched*, 244.

something more than a repeat of colonial subjugation. This persistent vision of nation could serve to answer the psychological damage suffered by conquest, suffering mestizaje is incapable of addressing, incapable of erasing the stamp of second-class citizenship because it is a constant reminder of subjugated status.

It is no accident the “dynamic” culture of the Anglo American is set in contradiction to the “traditional” culture of the Xicano/a. My intent in examining Xicano/a literature is to discover a jumping-off point from which we can examine the nature of resistance, in language constructed by Xicano/as through liberation practices instead of a language created through colonial oppression. As Xicano/as move forward culturally and politically it makes sense that colonial traditions like mestizaje rooted in European culture will be abandoned, since “the desire to attach oneself to tradition or bring abandoned traditions to life again does not only mean going against the current of history but also opposing one’s own people.”⁹⁵

Those colonial traditions, unfortunately, keep Xicano/as rooted in servitude and servility. It is simply untrue that mestizaje, as an ideology dominating Xicano/a literature, can hold within in it all of the bitterness and despair of conquest and loss. The ideology of mestizaje relegates both the indigenous and their feelings of bitterness over conquest to the past. Why should indigenous people feel bad about being conquered if out of the pagan rubble they can truly rise like Christ, reborn in the image of the father (the Spaniards) to a new life of greater beauty and spiritual fulfillment?⁹⁶

There is little justification for continuing to identify as *Mestizo* within a context of resistance and national consciousness. The ideology of mestizaje propagates European superiority and is based in an unscientific racist mentality of blood quanta; this false equation has been used repeatedly and

95. Fanon, *Wretched*, 224.

96. Vasconcelos, *La Raza*, 9.

reprehensibly, from the genocide of Native Americans to the enslavement of millions of Africans to the Holocaust of Jews in Nazi Germany. Forbes writes, “Regardless of mythology, however, the fact remains that perhaps eighty percent of the genetic makeup of the Mexican people is Indian or Native American and only about ten percent is Spanish-European. For practical reasons, then, the typical Mexican can be considered, racially, as if he were a pure blood Indian, since his non-native racial heritage is relatively insignificant.”⁹⁷ Consequently, the continued and ubiquitous use by Chicano/a scholars of race and genetics as a means of fixing identity points to a growing desire on the part of the academy to separate from the reality of a return history and focus instead on a claim to whiteness, which allies those scholars with settlers colonialism.

Many Third and Fourth World Feminist writers, particularly Gloria Anzaldúa, use the metaphor of *mestizaje* to explain the circumstances of their lives. *Mestizaje* becomes a metaphor for everything that is constantly in the act of becoming, and because of that position, meaning is fixed in the *Nepantla* or the in between. Anzaldúa writes,

As a mestiza I have no country, my homeland cast me out; yet all countries are mine because I am every woman’s sister or potential lover... soy un amasamiento, I am an act of kneading, of uniting and joining that not only has produced both a creature of darkness and a creature of light, but also a creature that questions the definitions of light and dark and gives them new meanings.⁹⁸

In the opening sentences of her essay *La conciencia de la mestiza Towards a New Consciousness* Chicana writer Anzaldúa writes about José Vasconcelos and his ideology of *mestizaje*, saying, “opposite to the theory of the pure Aryan, and to the policy of racial purity that white America practices, his theory is one of inclusivity.”⁹⁹ Vasconcelos’s writing contains a genetic essentialism,

97. Forbes, *Aztecas del Norte*, 151.

98. Gloria Anzaldúa. *Borderlands/La Frontera the new mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987), 103.

regarding the questions of race and the present definition of Mestizo defies known scientific knowledge. Vasconcelos openly embraces the cultural and genetic superiority of the European in his writing. Inclusivity for Vasconcelos is based solely on the death of the Indian and the refutation of the Meso-American paradigm.

Mestizaje is an intellectual catchall contrived by European racialists to maintain power in a land their ancestors stole from its indigenous inhabitants. Xicano/as are neither Spanish, nor English. They are not Mexica, but are carriers and replicators of Meso-American Culture, members of a resistance still robust after more than five hundred years of encroachment by the European on their ancestral lands where the “the last five hundred years is the story of permanent confrontation between those attempting to direct the country toward the path of Western civilization and those, rooted in Meso-American ways of life who resist.”¹⁰⁰ Xicano/as can no longer rely on any past understanding of themselves as a nation; understanding as a Meso-American people must come from the national liberation struggle. During the 1960s, when the concept of mestizaje was very popular the common vernacular of the Xicano/a Movement shifted the emphasis toward reaffirmation of the Indian. That legacy is now shouldered by the grassroots of the Xicano/a movement.

Xicano author and essayist José Antonio Burciaga writes that “Chicanos recognize the racial and cultural complexity of their makeup: Chicanos recognize they are Indios, Hispanos, Mexicano/as and United States citizens. José Vasconcelos’ theory of La Raza Cosmica has more validity in this country with the Chicano than with the Mexicano/a.”¹⁰¹ Viewing mestizaje as

99. Ibid., 99.

100. Bonfil-Batalla, *México Profundo*, xv.

something that changes within the context of the United States is also problematic in terms of racial narratives—indeed how could a racial ideology created by descendants of European conquerors, that operates efficiently as an agent of suppression for indigenous peoples, in both Anglo-American United States and México, the country of its origin, be revolutionary or even progressive? Both countries have long histories of attempting to erase culturally and physically their indigenous population. In the United States it is called blood quanta. In México, it is mestizaje.

Adopting mestizaje as an ideology weakens Xicano/as politically and culturally, unable to finish the project of nation building that has limped along for the past 40 years. This ideology is an agent of debilitation even in narratives of resistance such as Aztlán: at first Alurista identifies Aztlán as a “mestizo nation” when in fact it has nothing to do with mestizaje. Later, he changes his wording to “Red” embracing indigenous nationalism. Indeed, why should mestizos worry about revolting against European domination? Are they not themselves European? None of the narratives discussed in this paper can realize their true potential as building blocks of national awareness until they abandon the ideology of mestizaje.

Insurgent Writings

Our object, as you have seen, has been to chastise the villainy of our enemies, which heretofore has gone unpunished. These have connived with each other, and form, so to speak, a perfidious inquisitorial lodge to prosecute and rob us, without any cause, and for no other crime on our part than that of being of Mexican origin, considering us, doubtless, destitute of those gifts which they themselves do not possess.¹⁰²

101. José Antonio Burciaga, *Drink Cultura c/s Chicanismo* (Santa Barbara: Josh O'Dell Editions, 1993), 46.

102. Juan Cortina, “Juan Cortina Proclamation,” in *Chicano Literature: Text and Context*, eds. Antonia Casteneda-Shular, Tomas Ybarra-Frausto, and Joséph Sommers (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1972), 79.

As I discussed earlier, the overwhelming economic power resting in the United States print industry made the emergence of folk expression like the corrido necessary and inevitable within the context of resistance. These popular expressions offer another view into the “psychology of the border Mexican. They express not only an intense resentment of Anglos but also denounce Anglo views of Mexican character.”¹⁰³ Raymund Paredes writes, “It was in the realm of literature that Chicanos have full control of their lives. There were no facts to contradict Chicano liberation, in poetry Anglo-Americans were simpletons; policemen cowardly; Americans culturally degenerate; and Chicanos organic, brave intellectuals with a rich and moral culture.”¹⁰⁴

Tracing the path of Xicano/a and Mexicano/a resistance, first to Spanish invaders and secondly to Anglo-American oppressors, shows colonialism as a system¹⁰⁵ does not “dream of wasting time in denying the existence of one national culture after another”¹⁰⁶ this is demonstrated again and again in the relations of United States imperialists leading up to the Mexican-American War. The colonizing Anglo power structure does not deny Mexican culture; it dismisses it to a subaltern status, replaying the Spanish conquest of Meso-America. This of course creates a similar reaction in terms of survival, with the creation of the folklore heroes through acts of collective and

103. Paredes, “Evolution,” 78.

104. Ibid., 53.

105. Sartre writes concerning the nature of the colonial system, “the fact is that colonization is neither a series of chance occurrences nor the statistical result of thousands of individual undertakings. It is a system which was put in place around the middle of the nineteenth century, began to bear fruit in about 1880, started to decline after the First World War, and is today turning against the colonizing nation. The internal necessity, how it was bound to lead us exactly where we are now, and how the purest of intentions, if conceived within this infernal circle, is corrupted at once.” The Spanish conquest in the sixteenth century marked the birth of the system—in México.

106. Fanon, *Wretched*, 212.

individual resistance. From this alienation emerge counter-narratives of belonging based in indigenous myths predating both the Spanish and Anglo-Saxon arrival.

Fanon makes a point particularly salient to the enlarging of identities Forbes said was denied the indigenous when he writes individual attacks on colonialism are fruitless and as a result, “the reply of the colonized peoples will be straight way continental in breadth.”¹⁰⁷ Raymund Paredes sees these literary developments within the literature as a class issue. He explains, “The body of early Mexican-American literature . . . both in Spanish and English—is less interesting than the folklore and certainly less representative of the collective spirit.”¹⁰⁸ Since it can be assumed the majority of Mexican-Americans of his time suffered discrimination, Paredes’ argues of a study of vernacular literature. However, considered within the context of a colonial situation, the educated class after 1848, much like the nobility of Tenochtitlan, “had a considerable stake in cultural and political accommodation.”¹⁰⁹

For indigenous people in the Americas, from the shattered beginning in 1521 and again in 1848, the native will continued to resist European encroachment. However, the need to articulate new methods of national resistance has become paramount, particularly as these new methods might inform an expanding consciousness among Xicano/a men and women. The feminist thought and literature of the 1980s emerged as an essential element of a growing Xicano/a consciousness. As the analysis of their colonized position continues to develop, Xicanas operating within a Third World feminist position use the body effectively to articulate a double oppression or, as Fanon recounts, “the oral traditions—stories, epics and songs of the people . . . are now beginning to

107. Ibid.

108. Paredes, “Evolution,” 87.

109. Ibid., 88.

change. The storytellers who used to relate inert episodes now bring them alive and introduce into them modifications which are increasingly fundamental.”¹¹⁰

Responses both in the literature and in the actions inspired Xicano/as to find their “continental breadth” rooted in an indigenous heritage where the “oral traditions . . . were essentially a proletarian form of expression, articulating the sentiments of those who had little capital and few material goods to lose.”¹¹¹ The following passage taken from Oscar Zeta Acosta’s *The Revolt of the Cockroach People* shows how the “gun in his hand” tradition from the border *corridos* survives within a strictly Xicano/a context and has developed for a moment into a revolutionary mentality,

Just because the Viet Cong or the Chicanos temporarily lay down their arms doesn’t prove shit. For me, personally, this is a kind of end. And a beginning. But who cares about that? I was just one of a bunch of Cockroaches that helped start a revolution to burn down a stinking world. And no matter what kind of end this is. I’ll still play with matches.¹¹²

As the passage from Acosta clearly points out, the journey of national liberation is one of ebbs and flows. As Hames-Garcia points out, it is “no coincidence that nearly every major anti-colonial theorist of the past half-century has written extensively on art and political education.”¹¹³ As Fanon and other Third World strategists and thinkers have noted, the reconstruction of a national culture first names the nation, then draws boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, all the while acknowledging the need for nation in the early stages of nurturing and growing a national consciousness.

110. Fanon, *Wretched*, 240.

111. Paredes, “Evolution,” 88.

112. Acosta, *Cockroach*, 257-258.

113. Michael Hames-Garcia, “How to tell a Mestizo from an Enchurito® colonialism and national culture in the borderlands,” *diacritics* 30, no. 4 (2000), 116.

Pertinent to resistance and the role of literature in raising the will of the people or developing the national consciousness, Acosta's *Revolt of the Cockroach People* provides an excellent example of Fanon's literature of combat in his protagonist Zeta Brown, who seeks revenge for the murder of Robert Fernandez, his former client. Zeta Acosta places Zeta Brown firmly within the tradition of Joaquin Murrieta and other corrido heroes. Zeta Brown first incites and then participates in the fire bombing of a Safeway Store with his two *vato loco* friends, Zeta Acosta describes his feelings and the situation among the three friends as they watch the store that gave Pelon's "old lady a hard time" burn,

"Viva La Raza!" Gilbert shouts.

"Chicano Power!" Pelón says.

My heart is still trying to claw out of my chest. I can't control the tears in my eyes. My hands are wet and itching with excitement. I am in a state of complete joy and delirium. The flames inside lick the plate glass. I pound the steering wheel and shout, "Viva Pancho Villa!"

"Viva Zapata!" Gilbert shouts and pounds Pelón on the back.

"Look at that beautiful fire!" I say.¹¹⁴

Acosta takes significant, bold steps in the description of this Safeway bombing, which not coincidentally is the final act of the book. First, as a lawyer sworn to operate within the strictures of law, Acosta through this action has gone beyond the boundaries of law in expressing physical opposition to the state. Outside of this agreement, Zeta Brown and his Cholo friends take on the position of the partisan, the insurgent. Within the new political venue this rhetoric of reform (his time as a lawyer) becomes irrelevant and outdated and must make way for a new rhetoric of unsanctioned violence under the banner of the "Chicano Liberation Front." This decision places Acosta and his compatriots squarely on the partisan battlefield, both rhetorically and physically, in a front where "a completely structured new space of action emerges, because the partisan does not fight on an open field of battle nor on the same plane of open frontal war. Rather, he forces his

114. Acosta, *Cockroach*, 128.

enemy into another space.”¹¹⁵ By operating outside the framework of the law and flaunting established rules of combat, Zeta-Acosta overturns the fiction of the docile Mexican and takes a prominent position among revolutionary Xicano/a writers in promoting the will of the people to resist.

Examining the development of Xicano/a literature since 1848 and indigenous narratives of resistance developed over the past five centuries reveals a remarkable record of resistance and survival has helped in the creation of Xicano/a resistance literature. It is indeed a beautiful fire.

115. Carl Schmitt, *The Theory of the Partisan a commentary/remark on the concept of the political* trans. A.C. Goodson (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1963), 49.

CHAPTER THREE—ARMING THE NATION

Resistance literature was written in the context of organized resistance movements and national liberation struggles. There are no more national liberation struggles. There are no more organized resistance movements. There is no more resistance literature. There are other kinds of literature, just as there are other kinds of struggles. But that one is over, as a literature it is closed.¹

This chapter lays the foundation for understanding resistance literature on the community level by examining several Xicano organic intellectuals and their writings. These writings are presented as a counter-balance to the writings of traditional academics within the Academy. The writers discussed here deal with Indigeneity, resistance to colonizers, and nation building. How these themes are written, and increasingly hegemonized through Xicano/a pop culture, is important in fixing the Xicano/a as part of a contemporary indigenous effort to separate from Western civilization's version of an enforced colonial modernity on the indigenous populations of this continent through mestizaje and political oppression of the Indian.

The above claims by Barbara Harlow about resistance literature are problematic in multiple respects. To begin with: how does one define a resistance movement or national liberation struggle from a material and/or politico-cultural point of view? How and why should limits be set for these categories? In her book *Resistance Literature*, Harlow uses three writers to represent struggles from three different parts of the world: Ghassan Kanafani of the Palestinian Liberation struggle, Roque Dalton of the liberation struggle in El Salvador and Ruth First from the anti-apartheid struggles in South Africa. Harlow illustrates how each individual worked both as an active participant engaged in the production of resistance (culture and politics) through writing, and as a member of an organization actively engaged in forming an armed insurgency against an occupying colonial force.

1. Barbara Harlow, *Resistance Literature* (London: Methuen, 1987) , 14.

Harlow's belief in the end of resistance literature informs her vision of how resistance is organized and developed to the point of a "national liberation struggles [and] organized resistance movements."² From her work one could easily infer Harlow assumes such movements burst forth, fully developed, to confront the occupying colonial powers. Cabral, Mao, and Fanon, among others, have demonstrated political resistance to colonial power must ultimately end in armed struggle. If so, why doesn't Harlow think the era of armed struggle is over, or that liberation movements can only exist with the framework of nation? Her statement would seem at this point to be at least four years premature as demonstrated by the emergence of the Ejercito Zapatista Liberacion Nacional (EZLN) on January 1, 1994, after her declaration resistance literature was dead because national liberation movements no longer existed.

If resistance literature as a genre is closed, what role do culture and politics play in current insurgent movements? When does an insurgency start? Harlow fails to understand or perhaps disregards the process of national liberation in relation to armed struggle in its relationship to the necessity of self-identification. The will to resist foreign occupation is found within the people and nowhere else. In the United States the Xicano/a will to resist is represented within a duality of acceptance and recognition of both Western ideology and the acknowledgment of the individual as a political entity with the communal identity of the indigenous. Galula tells us an insurgency (armed resistance) is:

A protracted struggle conducted methodically, step by step, in order to attain specific intermediate objectives leading finally to the overthrow of the existing order. To be sure it can no more be predicted than a revolution; in fact, its beginnings are so vague that to determine exactly when an insurgency starts is a difficult legal, political and historical problem. . . . Though it cannot be predicted, an insurgency is usually slow to develop and is not an accident, for in an insurgency leaders appear and then the masses are made to move,"³

2. Harlow, *Resistance Literature*, 15.

As Galula establishes, insurgencies, anti-colonial resistance movements, and national liberation struggles are politico-cultural wars fought for the furtherance of political goals. National liberation struggles are by definition protracted military conflicts meaning the goal of the conflict is to keep it going rather than bring it to a conclusion. Quick solutions to revolutionary or guerilla warfare cannot prove beneficial for the insurgent because “it takes time for a small group of insurgent leaders to organize a revolutionary movement, to raise and develop armed forces, to reach a balance with the opponent, and to overpower him.”⁴ Galula reiterates time is on the side of the insurgent when he writes, “revolutionary war is short only if the counterinsurgency collapses at an early stage.”⁵ With this central theme in mind it is clear why “the insurgent has no interest in producing a shock until he feels fully able to withstand the enemy’s expected reaction,”⁶ a process that could go on for years. In fact, according to Galula, until intentions are revealed through “subversion or open violence . . . an insurgency can reach a high degree of development by legal and peaceful means, at least in countries where political opposition is tolerated.”⁷

As their writing clearly demonstrates, all of the Third World writers Harlow invokes understood that “political mobilization—raising the level of political consciousness of the people and involving them in the revolutionary struggle—is the first task of the guerrillas.”⁸ These writers

3. Galula, *Counter Insurgency*, 2.

4. Ibid., 10.

5. Ibid., 172.

6. Ibid., 6.

7. Ibid.,

8. Taber, *War of the flea*, 49.

were revolutionaries because they acted out of a state of resistance; as Mao puts it, “A revolutionary war is a mass undertaking; it is often not a matter of first learning and then doing, but of doing and then learning, for doing itself is learning.”⁹

Delaying military action, in the beginning of a resistance or national liberation struggle, provides space for the execution of cultural and political work. In other words, the military power required for a people’s war arises out of the political and cultural mobilization achieved through writing and propagandizing by the insurgent army. This is why Vietnamese General Vo Nguyen Giap in his book *Inside the Vietminh* wrote the main responsibility of a peoples war is first to “educate, mobilize, organize, and arm the whole people in order that they might take part in the resistance.”¹⁰ The day-to-day work of building a political party among the colonized involves the physical production of resistance literature through pamphlets, plays, books, manifestos, and newspapers. All of this cultural production contributes to the formation of a national culture and identity and the national liberation movement, and it helps in the formation of a people’s army, which according to Mao “is not an instrument of the state, but the essence of it, its spirit, its life and its hope.”¹¹

Examining the traditional formation of an armed resistance struggle, as theorized by Third World fighters, patterns emerge refuting Harlow’s assertions. Formations of national resistance begin with the written word: manifestos, pamphlets, poetry, and song, all focused on a single goal to raise the will of the people to oppose their oppressor. Resistance arises from the imagination of the

9. Mao Tse Tung, “Problems of Strategy in China’s Revolutionary War” *The Selected Works of Mao Tse Tung, Vol. 1* (Peking, China: Foreign Press Service, 1938), 190.

10. Vo Nguyen Giap, “Inside the Vietminh” *The Guerilla and how to fight him*, Quantico: Marine Corp Gazette, 1962, 1990, 147.

11. Katzenbach, “Time, space and will,” 17.

oppressed envisioning a new and better world. Harlow's assertion that literature written by occupied peoples does not rise to the level of resistance literature, simply because it is produced allegedly outside a framework of "national liberation struggles [and] organized resistance movements,"¹² ignores the historically secretive process of organizing insurgencies and national liberation movements.

Understanding the relationship between cultural production and physical resistance, and keeping in mind the basic organizing strategy for a good number of the revolutions and insurgencies conducted in the twentieth century use Mao's fundamental military stratagem of protracted struggle beginning with party building basic community organizing. One has to wonder exactly what Harlow was getting at when she declared the closure of resistance literature as a genre. In examining the Xicano/a movement in the United States the conclusion it lacks certain definable characteristics of a national liberation movement might be reached. However, it is impossible to deny the existence of an ongoing Xicano insurgency movement without access to crucial information of every Xicano organizations and their programs within the United States. In this regard, Harlow is mistaken about the nature of resistance in the world today; liberation movements clearly operate on a continuum of politics and culture. Resistance, like culture, is constantly developing, meaning it is never fully present.

This is perhaps Harlow's greatest blind spot with regard to resistance literature. It is almost as if she believes the world has moved past the friend/enemy practice of politics to what Chantal Mouffe explains, in her dissection of Third Way philosophy, as "the establishment of a world 'beyond left and right', 'beyond hegemony', beyond sovereignty' and 'beyond antagonism.'" Such a longing reveals a complete lack of understanding of what is at stake in democratic politics and the

12. Harlow, *Resistance Literature*, 35.

dynamics of constitution of political identities and . . . it contributes to exacerbating the antagonistic potential existing in society.”¹³

In terms of resistance writing and Meso-American culture in the Americas, and particularly with the Xicano/a, this indigenous viewpoint combining the two perspectives represents a leap toward a new intellectual future. By acknowledging for the moment Xicano/as are inescapably immersed in Western thought and philosophy when discussing indigenous liberation in the United States, makes identifying resistance literature by Xicano/as critical to understanding the developing state of a potential Xicano/a liberation struggle in the United States today.

Resistance literature and its revolutionary potential represent a profound challenge to the colonial settler system. This is true first because either side (or both) must acknowledge the existence of a colonial relationship based in inequality.¹⁴ This relationship exists, throughout the Americas and certainly in the United States, between European settler descendants and indigenous peoples. Second, a body of literature must be produced that is critical of this unequal relationship and simultaneously engages in advocacy for national liberation. Third, a group of people working in organizations dedicated to making “the return to history” happens must exist on a national level.

In *Resistance Literature*, Harlow calls attention to the distinction made by Palestinian writer and critic Ghassan Kanafani on the nature of literature produced under colonial occupation (*that al-ibtihal*)¹⁵ and literature produced in exile (*manfra*)¹⁶:

Such a distinction presupposes a people’s collective relationship to a common land, a common identity, or a common cause on the basis of which it becomes possible to

13. Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political* (London: Routledge, 2005), 2.

14. Galula, *Counterinsurgency*, 3-4.

15. Harlow, *Resistance Literature*, 2.

16. Ibid.

articulate the difference between the two modes of historical and political existence, between, that is, 'occupation' and 'exile.' The distinction presupposes furthermore an 'occupying power' which has subjugated a given population and has in addition significantly intervened in the literary and cultural development of the people it has dispossessed and whose land it has occupied. Literature, in other words is presented by the critic as an arena of struggle.¹⁷

While Khanafani's work explicitly pertains to a Third World framework outside of the United States, his context of "under occupation"¹⁸ certainly applies to the political reality of the indigenous within the United States and the Americas who have struggled against a system of settler colonialism for the past five hundred years.

As a Palestinian intellectual living under occupation, Kanafani in his study *Literature of Resistance in Occupied Palestine: 1948-1966* creates the distinction that "no research of this kind can be complete unless the researcher is located within the resistance movement itself inside the occupied land, taking his testimony from the place in which it is born, lives and is propagated: the lips of the people."¹⁹ Galula's definition of insurgency is easily extrapolated to the situation of Xicano/as, when the literature produced by Xicano/as in opposition to the occupation by Western military and cultural imperialism of native lands in the United States is recognized as "an arena of struggle."²⁰

Continued examination of Harlow's assertions leads us back to the original theoretical formulations of how industrially underdeveloped peoples could compete militarily with highly industrialized and technologically advanced nations. As I discussed in the first chapter, E. L. Katzenbach, in his essay on Maoist military/politico theory of space + time = will, demonstrates

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid., 3.

19. Harlow, *Resistance Literature*, 3.

20. Ibid., 2.

how underdeveloped peoples have combated the overt industrialization of first world militaries by developing an epistemology of anti-colonial conflict based on the intangibles of war. Katzenbach writes, “Although Mao never stated it quite this way, the basic premise of his theory is that political mobilization may be substituted for industrial mobilization with a successful military outcome.”²¹ Today Xicano/as find themselves in a similar situation regarding industrial mobilization. Xicano/a production as a conquered colonized people is limited to the production of culture. Culture is the space in which oppressed people trade, thrive, and evolve. Are the ideas and identities Xicano/as are currently debating as a community up to the definition of political mobilization?

While the Xicano/a civil rights movement demanded civil rights and the granting of full access to citizenship, other tendencies existed. Groups like the Black Berets, Brown Berets, and Crusade for Justice and the Alianza Federal de Mercedes engaged in paramilitary activities, armed struggle, and were operating openly across the southwest United States. Neither the American Indian Movement nor the Xicano/a movement, with the exception of the United Farm Workers under the leadership of Cesar Chavez, was overtly committed to rhetoric of non-violence. These organizations along with the numerous land occupations staged by American Indian Movement provided excellent indigenous example to Khanafani’s description of resistance literature as a literature produced by those ‘under occupation or in exile’ as an arena of struggle against occupying powers. Given the dominant civil rights rhetoric of the Chicano Power movement, assigning works to the Xicano/a resistance genre might seem problematic. This is especially true if, as consumers, critics, or scholars of Xicano/a literature, we look only at the very short time period known as the Chicano Movement for examples of resistance literature. I would argue the contemporary period is particularly important in examining the history of the last forty years, not from the vantage point of

21. Katzenbach, “Time, space and will,” 13.

the dominant discourses within Xicano/a studies (i.e. inclusion to institutions of higher education, identity and gender) but from the arena of political and cultural production dedicated to a national liberation struggle as we begin to unpack indigenous identity in terms of national liberation.

While it may seem counterintuitive to set aside the bulk of Xicano/a academic work as accommodationist, it does make sense from the perspective of examining resistance movements. Harlow makes the point that “writers and critics writing within the context of organized resistance movements comprehend the role of culture and cultural resistance as part of the larger struggle for liberation.”²² Some of today’s professional academics remain trapped within disciplinary paradigms; they owe their allegiance to career and the integrity of their disciplines, as opposed to the task of contributing to the integrity and development of Xicano/a studies as “cultural resistance [a] part of the larger struggle for liberation.”²³ These academics most often attempt to fit their ideas and theories about Xicano/a existence into an academic structure, which inevitably works to reinforce the Western modernizing ideal of racial and cultural assimilation.

Xicano/a scholars have documented the nature of this split. Rodolfo Acuña theorizes the development of a Xicano/a Studies paradigm as the path to creating a fully responsive epistemology. He writes,

Chicano/a studies at most has kept pace with the semantic shift away from a monoracial, noncultural model of society. However, Chicano/a studies have failed to challenge the dominant cultures and ideas. It has failed to challenge mainstream truths. Its scholars have used old models, incapable of interpreting current social phenomena ...the truth be told, with a new narrative to challenge the old, a paradigm shift cannot take place in interpreting Chicano/a reality.²⁴

22. Harlow, *Resistance Literature*, 10.

23. Ibid.

24. Acuña, *No other side*, 37.

What is this new paradigm Acuña calls for? Certainly from his perspective, the answers can still be found within the confines of academia. What type of interpretation could Acuña be talking about? How can Xicano/a scholars mount serious challenges when the mainstream narrative of Xicano/a Studies rejects the idea of occupation and instead makes up stories about the blending of races and cultures (*mestizaje*) will eventually bestow economic benefits upon those colonized peoples who accept incorporation into the dominant culture?

I consider Khanafani's framing of indigenous resistance as "under occupation," a compelling oppositional source knowledge that cannot be found in the traditional structures of academia and its dominant paradigms, continuing from our earlier discussion of Acuña's explanation of paradigms. In his discussion of the purpose of Xicano studies Acuña does the same work as Khanafani in positioning resistance as against occupation by challenging and then explaining the dominance of paradigms when he writes,

[Thomas] Kuhn, at the height of his popularity in the 1960s and again in the 1970s, popularized "paradigms," the theory that in every field of study the established order sets structural guidelines that influenced the thinking and actions of its scientists and social scientists. The concept holds in this context, existing paradigms restrict the growth and expansion of the new and competing models.²⁵

This statement is particularly true since academics tend to believe that "they and their fellow scholars make fully informed, rational choices"²⁶ where the chosen view had been tested and as a result their academic field is "constructed from truths that are universal."²⁷ Thorough doing this Euro-American scholars are convinced every attempt has been made in their discipline to arrive at

25. Rodolfo Acuña, "Truth and Objectivity and Chicano History" Julian Samora Research Institute Occasional Paper #09, Michigan State University, 1997, 6.

26. Ibid., 35.

27. Ibid.

the truth.²⁸ Acuña like Khanafani is positioning his community to pop the paradigm through denying settler colonialism as a universal truth.

The restriction of thought through paradigmatic dominance further serves the status quo. It directly abandons the possibility of new knowledge while accepting a single worldview as politically dominant. Traditional Chicano Studies similarly has its own paradigm, a straightjacket, and Xicano/as must struggle to escape the “traditional variables such as gender, class and race,” which in the confines of academia obfuscate the political situation. Our goal should be to fill the existing knowledge vacuum with theories of resistance, based on successful models that deepen the analysis of Xicano/a political conditions and devise means to implement Acuña’s proposed paradigm shift in Xicano/a studies. It could lead to the emergence of a distinct Meso-American paradigm, one fully invested not in the “a concentration on a hard core of culture which is becoming more and more shrivelled up, inert, and empty,”²⁹ but in the ripe fullness of the future, the return to history.

We must also follow Cabral, who links national liberation with a “return to history”: the two are consequences of each other. In the case of Xicano/as, the history is an Indigenist history. Reclaiming indigenous history is critical to understanding resistance for the indigenous in the Americas. In *Struggle for the Land* Ward Churchill ascribes to the identifier “Indigenist” and defines it as a person who “takes the rights of indigenous people as the highest priority,” and who “draws upon the traditions values—evolved over many thousands of years of native peoples the world over.”³⁰ This acknowledgment of a disrupted past puts each of us as Indigenist on the path to

28. Ibid., 5.

29. Fanon, *Wretched*, 238.

30. Ward Churchill, “I am Indigenist,” *A Land Rights Readers Struggle For the Land: Indigenous Resistance to Genocide, Ecocide and Expropriation in Contemporary North America* (Winnipeg: Arbieter Ring Publishing, 1999), 403.

developing indigenous knowledge. By recognizing these alternative ways of knowing and being we turn away from colonial methodologies that have robbed us of Xicano/a history, Xicano/a culture, and the will to resist and toward an understanding that “increasingly, the struggles on this planet are not for ‘nation states’ but for nations of people bound together by spirit, land, language, history and blood.”³¹ Indigenist history is liberation history, it is history written as an emerging vision, written by an emerging people. It is difficult, and perhaps unnecessary, to identify when this return to history begins for any movement, since “like history, or because it is history, culture has as its material base the level of the productive forces and the mode of production.”³² The materiality of history is important in understanding how Xicano/a culture is formed and Xicano/a history is written.

Conversely, Xicano/a literature of the past forty years deals primarily with Xicano/a identity issues in the context of a Western civilization’s modernizing project. This externally imposed version of contemporaneity fixes indigenous people as the perpetual subject of Western scientific inquiry, which ultimately defines the very nature of colonial existence as one of accommodation by the colonized to the colonizer. We can observe this phenomenon as a growing discourse of otherness mired in a confused debate about immigrant “illegality” directed toward Xicano/as and explored in detail by the dominant United States society.

At what point does Xicano/a resistance literature abandon the modernizing project of Western civilization to return to its own process of collective history? Whose literature speaks to the future or to the past? Whose literature is obsessed with reexamining history or building toward a new history? It is important to understand Cabral’s “return to history” does not express a wish to

31. Cherie Moraga “Queer Aztlan Madre Tierra/Madre Mujer: the struggle for land” in *The Last Generation*, 168-69.

32. Cabral, “Identity and Dignity,” 5.

return to the conditions that existed before the European arrived, but articulates a desire for the colonized, as a distinct people, to emerge from their historically obscure position as colonial subjects to one of political and cultural authority on their repossessed land.

Because Western culture privileges the written word over other forms of communication, the act of writing itself distinguishes between modern and primitive. In colonial struggles, the use of writing as a tool for liberation by the colonized signals an irreversible change in the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. While it may be argued the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house,³³ in reality as colonized people struggling toward freedom, Xicano/as must accept and adapt for their own use some of the master's tools. In this case, writing and the production of works of literature can only be viewed as legitimate avenues of defining resistance within colonized communities. If, as Cabral and others have pointed out, the fundamental contradiction of colonization is the separating of the colonized from their history, when we acknowledge this contradiction, then we understand how "the model of power based on coloniality also involved a cognitive model, a new perspective of knowledge within which non-Europe was the past, and because of that inferior, if not always primitive."³⁴

Recognizing this implicit notion of inferiority and deconstructing how it shapes every interaction between the two groups becomes particularly important in terms of how we choose to read and situate the work and role of Xicano/a community intellectuals within the Gramscian context. In his prison notebooks Antonio Gramsci writes under the entry "The Intellectuals" that "every social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the

33. Lorde, Audre. "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house." *Feminist postcolonial theory: A reader* (2003): 25-28.

34. Anibal, Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America," *International Sociology* 15, no. 2, (2000) : 552

world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields.”³⁵ Based on this idea I use this term to mean individuals who rise out of a social political class to act as intellectuals for the group. As a group they exist outside the framework of academic work sanctioned by the colonizers through universities and other institutions, and as a result do not owe their subsistence or legitimacy to the academy. For purposes of this paper, my primary question is whether those writings build the category of resistance literature? I believe their existence, as a group of writers is a vital component of the return to history, manifesting as a group of writers consciously operating with a political and cultural consciousness in direct opposition to the colonial scheme.

Apaxu Máiz and the national question

Apaxu Máiz was born Jaime Garcia in 1950 in Kalamazoo, Michigan where he grew up. In the late 1960s, he became involved with the Xicano/a movement while living in Kalamazoo. During that time Máiz organized Brown Beret Chapters in every major city in Michigan with the exception of Detroit. Because of his political work, Máiz was eventually tired, sentenced, and imprisoned on the charges of rioting and unlawfully assembly According to Máiz his incarceration while difficult when it happened is a source of pride as he maintains he served a year as a political prisoner in Michigan. He was discharged in 1970 and stayed out of public activism for the next few decades. Máiz said the lesson he learned from his incarceration was no one was behind him so he suffered the consequences alone. This moment had a profound impact on how and where Máiz would choose to get involved.

35. Antonio Gramsci, “The Intellectuals,” *An Antonio Gramsci Reader*, edited by David Forgacs. (New York: Schocken Books, 1988) , 301.

In the 1990s while his children were in high school Máiz said he used the skills he acquired while organizing with the Brown Berets to advocate for his sons. By the time Máiz was a successfully self-employed paint contractor he resurfaced in high profile public activism after the shooting murder of Cipriano Torres Jr. by the police in Lansing, MI., on November 4, 1991, Máiz led the community effort for justice on the part of Torres. The murder of Cipriano Torres Jr. in Lansing had a profound impact on the Xicano/a community and it was during this struggle I first became associated with Máiz.

Later Máiz would lead a picketing campaign³⁶ against a local radio station Q106 whose morning shock jock Tim Barron had run racist on air skits demeaning Mexicans.³⁷ Also during this time Máiz took on the mentorship of the Movimiento Estudiantil Xicano de Aztlán (MEXA) chapter at Michigan State University. His participation with the MEXA group would play a major role in bringing the 1997 National MEXA conference to Michigan State University (MSU).³⁸ As a

36. Tony Scotta, "Mexican picket radio station over skit," *State Journal* (Lansing, MI.) May 15, 1994.

37. In 1993, a young Xicano Paulo Gordillo a lifelong resident of Lansing, Michigan, began gathering names on a petition to request Lansing City Council change the name of Grand Ave. to Cesar Chavez Ave. After several public meetings between the Xicano community and the city council where hundreds of people turned out to voice their support of the name change the city council agreed and the street name was changed. Fred Stackable, a lawyer whose office was located on Grand Ave. began a petition drive to change the name back that for the most part was getting nowhere. On May 5, 1993 a local radio personality Tim Barron broadcast on his morning show a skit that featured the giveaway of an undocumented Mexican for use as domestic help. The winner was responsible for delousing. The uproar over the Q106 incident created an alliance between Barron and Stackable. Barron began to use his platform as Lansing's leading "shock jock" to fan the flames of hatred. Barron championed Stackable's cause and gave his racist listeners a forum. Together Barron and Q106 help create an atmosphere where racist individuals within the Lansing community grew strong enough to win their petition drive and ultimately the vote they worked so hard for. Overwhelmingly, voters in Lansing, Michigan turned out to return Cesar Chavez Ave. to Grand Ave.

38. Ernesto Todd Mireles, "We demand Xicano studies": War of the flea at Michigan State University" *Latino Studies* 11, (2013) 570–579. For a longer discussion of the activities of Máiz and

member of MSU MEXA at the time and later one of the founders of the Xicano Development Center I believe it would impossible to overstate his importance to the MSU/Michigan Xicano/a student movement in the 1990s. He unquestionably served as the source of courage and strategic advice Xicano students needed in the beginning to confront first the university, then the police and later the local political structure as Brown Berets through the XDC. His unwavering nationalism, activist experience and ability to communicate his beliefs and experiences in a sophisticated manner along with what was being learned from white environmental activists created the powerful combination of theory and practice.

It was during this time in the early 1990s he began writing his first manuscript, which he eventually self-published in 1995 under the title “*Xicano: An Autobiography*.” It was with this monograph Máiz became what he calls an organizer of thought. Coming off a long hiatus where he acknowledges “throughout the course of my life I was never a leader of any big movement, something that I had to lead or participate in. I could always stand back and try to evaluate what was going on carefully and slowly and independently.”³⁹ It was this position of observer participant that allow Máiz to take in the lessons of the Xicano/a movement to rethink and reevaluate those lessons. He goes on to say it was only when he was able to distance himself from the rhetoric of the Xicano movement that he, “began to learn about nationalism and sub national communities using other models in different parts of the world.”⁴⁰ It was this moment of intellectual development and deep reflection that allow Máiz to lay the foundation of his work over the past two decades he said,

That’s what I learned when I stepped out of the box. I was like everyone else I got caught in the glossary, in the literature. At first there was liberation movement rhetoric but there wasn’t really any liberation movement because we had no idea

MSU MEXA during the 1990s.

39. Máiz, Personal Interview, 2012.

40. Ibid.

what a liberation movement was. We had no idea how to become a liberation movement. I was interviewed in Albuquerque recently, they were interviewing Brown Berets throughout the country and we had organized the Brown Berets in Michigan and one of the things I pointed out was they would probably learn more from me than anyone else—cuz I’m gonna tell you what we didn’t know. And that’s the thing Xicanos have to understand. We didn’t know that we didn’t know. We didn’t know what nationalism was and for the most part we don’t know today. A few of us do understand that nationalism is an incredible science that for the most part has been kept away from oppressed people. Oppressed people have discovered it and now they are utilizing it so it’s a very powerful tool but we didn’t know what nationalism was but we had all the rhetoric—all the Aztlán rhetoric, the mestizo head and all the symbolism of us becoming a people and so forth and we were just very very naïve.⁴¹

In his 1997 keynote address titled *Nationalism* to the Movimiento Estudiantil Xicano de Aztlán national conference held at Michigan State University in East Lansing, MI, Máiz is arguing along the lines of Cabral’s return to history when he says that “we live in the same country as the white man. But we are not treated equally like the white man. So we have to resort to a different understanding, definition, and application of Nationalism. Because they don’t get it, being in the same boundaries, being citizens of the same country is not enough. So we have to examine the possibility of building a nation within a nation.” Not through the reacquisition of a culture disrupted and lost to colonialism but through the building of a new revolutionary political and cultural power.⁴²

Throughout the body of his work, Máiz is a strong proponent of developing independent political power through nationalism. Three of his written texts speak to this development. The first is the 1995 monograph mentioned above, the second is the keynote address to the 1997 national MEXA conference titled *Nationalism* and the third is his 2004 book *Looking 4 Aztlán: birthright or right 4 birth*. For Máiz, each piece represents a specific point of his work.

41. Ibid.

42. Apaxu Máiz, “Nationalism” (presentation, Movimiento Estudiantil Xicano de Aztlán National Conference, East Lansing, MI, April 9 -12, 1997).

The 58 page *Xicano: An Autobiography* is an opens Máiz' intellectual writings by articulating an emerging shift for national identity among Xicano/as in the United States. At the time of publication, Máiz acknowledged his "research and exploration of the birth of the Chicano people inevitably led me to the word 'Chicano.'" ⁴³ He goes on to write, "Once you abort the German imposed label Aztec and decode the mystery of the letter X the word 'Chicano' takes the reader through the course of phonetic evolution." ⁴⁴ Throughout his writings, Máiz makes it clear the power of colonialism is exercised through the political and cultural oppression of the colonized and its extreme emphasis on definition, categorization, and separation attempts to obscure the underlying reality of nationhood. He writes that,

You can be indigenous, you can be Xicano and you can be Indian. But it means nothing. Being here first means absolutely nothing. You must become powerful and that's what we don't seem to understand we keep pushing "well you know we're Indians. You know we were here first. Well you know we're powerless. That's the problem. So what we have to ask ourselves is how do we manufacture power? How does an oppressed people manufacture power? Somehow we get lost into 'Oh My God we're indigenous' we invented the taco and all that kind of nonsense." ⁴⁵

In the book Máiz contends the word Chicano was more accurately spelled Xicano, and the anthropological trade name Aztec "was a label that was reintroduced, popularized or possibly invented by white Europeans . . . The label of Aztec has remained since its introduction and has created more problems in tracing our roots as Chicanos and Mexicano/as, than any other obstacle." ⁴⁶ In the monograph Máiz lays out a compelling argument of using the letter X to spell Xicano/a that resonated throughout the country. The depth of the debate on the spelling Chicano

43. Máiz, *Xicano*, 1.

44. Ibid.

45. Máiz, Personal Interview, 2012.

46. Máiz, *Xicano*, 32.

or Xicano eventually became the basis of the ideological spilt, which occurred during the 1997 National MEXA Conference at Michigan State University where the hosting chapter MSU MEXA was expelled from the national body. One of the reasons stated in the packet produced by other student representatives was the spelling of MEXA. At that time very few chapters used that spelling. It was considered radical and abrasive. Another contention was the title of the conference *Nationalism: What it is, what it isn't*. I wrote the conference statement with input from Máiz and Daniel Osuna of the La Raza Unida Party. In part it reads,

Two decades pass the birth of MEXA, at the height of the Xicano movement, we remain one of the only national organizations carrying on the Xicano agenda, if it can be argued there is such a thing. This is a scary thought indeed because in order to be a national group three things are necessary: national leadership, national policy, (or more exactly a way to implement it quickly) and national activity. National activity builds and develops a shared experience and collective conscience along with identity. We presently lack these three basic building blocks. The fact MEXA remains primarily a student group is also disheartening since the original intent was to have the campus serve as a nucleus for the community. However, if it both starts and ends there, we the intellectual heirs of a street born mass movement rising from the disenfranchisement and poverty of an entire group of people have fallen in the trap of being nothing more than a social club climbing the ladder of bourgeoisie success.⁴⁷

Bruce-Novoa writes, “to name oneself is an act of conscious self-creation,” he goes to say that, “Chicanos and Riqueños have chosen names that fit a reality—or an ideology,” that “the point of the names [is] to emphasize a language and culture of our own, here and now.”⁴⁸ The assertion of the “here and now” lends to certain Xicano/a literature the rhetorical urgency of the oppressed engaging in rebellion, “the here-and-now” essence of rebellion that demands no more delays, no more negotiation with the oppressor. Novoa goes on to say that “the names are signs of new

47. Ernesto Todd Mireles, Apaxu Máiz and Daniel Osuna, *From Conversation to Nation* (presented at National Movimiento Estudiantil Xicano de Aztlán in East Lansing, MI. 1997)

48. Bruce-Novoa, *Retrospace collected essays on Chicano literature theory and history* (Houston: Arte Publico, 1990), 39.

identity, perhaps still in the making. . . . The literature is both a product and a producer of the sign.”⁴⁹ He tells us “time and time again Chicano literature will save the past from silence, while simultaneously offering itself as the new source of orientation in the present.”⁵⁰

All of the community works analyzed concur in a single conscious act of naming: the acceptance of the spelling of Xicano/a with an X. This may seem a small thing; nevertheless, more and more the use of the X is found within works calling for a national identity. This process of self-naming for Xicano/as, “stresses the historical and emotional connection to Mexicano/a and it screams of Indian pride and rebirth.”⁵¹ Stuart Hall reminds us that “difference matters because it is essential to meaning, without it, meaning could not exist,”⁵² Hall is clear, everything is relational. Clearly, the need to name and control the resistance process is an important and necessary step in the decolonizing process for Xicano/as. It is a reaction to the dissonance created by colonization within indigenous communities throughout the Americas. Just as European conquerors took it upon themselves to rename the things they found in the Americas, a process is underway in Xicano/a resistance literature that supports an evolving rhetoric of resistance based on the political struggle for national liberation.

While Xicano/a writers generally share a written desire for emancipation from a subjected colonial position, they find little common ground regarding the political path to liberation. However, all these works illustrate a tendency to solidify Xicano/a resistance literature as an emerging genre underscoring the indigenous identity while repudiating the Spanish and English as

49. Ibid., 39.

50. Ibid., 82.

51. Máiz, *Xicano*, 57.

52. Hall, *Representation*, 234.

colonizers and conquerors. Given the contentious nature of this statement and the discomfort it caused among alleged proponents of Xicano nationalism is understandable from the viewpoint of the colonizers' need to erase the history of the colonized. Máiz continues:

When historians adopted the “catch-all” phrase of Aztec, they never questioned its accuracy, examined the impact, or recognized the importance of rightfully naming a people. Their purpose was to simplify for themselves the diverse identities of indigenous peoples of México.⁵³

Writers such as Máiz and others we will examine espouse a Xicano/a Indigeneity that calls for a deeper examination of the term Xicano/a and its relationship to Indigeneity and liberation struggles. Through this process of naming, distinctions are drawn on of the first steps in the development of political power. However, the politically specific nature of Máiz' enquiry in terms of how the foundation of nations and nation building is accomplished provides a clear road map for those interacting with his work to continue to build.

Máiz's argument concentrates on building political power that introduces the functions of nation. That argument is based on irredentist thought and is a direct challenge to the system of settler colonialism in the Americas. His identity work revolves exclusively around the formation of this political reality. Máiz, in this regard, comes the closest of my examples to Third World resistance writers by advocating directly for the creation of political power and cultural revival. He writes, “the word Aztlán has become the mythological ‘open sesame’ of Xicanos. . . . Aztlán is an imagined place and we are an imagined citizenry. Worse, we are in a frozen state of imagination. We have restricted ourselves to the safe and polite efforts of writing, reading, discussion, poetry, song, dance, and wishful thinking.”⁵⁴ This push toward the transcending identity as the ultimate

53. Máiz, *Xicano*, 47.

54. Máiz, *Looking 4 Aztlán*, 152.

marker of resistance is a mainstay of Máiz's writing. He emphasizes primarily the creation of the body politic and steps toward the reforming of structures of governance.

Máiz and other writers have dedicated sections of their books to describing what they consider the basic formulations for creating a national government, what to this point I have called parallel structure or dual power structures. Máiz builds these ideas on centrality. How do oppressed peoples build centralizing political structures that bring cohesion to the cultural and political process of colonial oppression that has been churning away for Xicanos the past 168 years? Máiz writes that Xicano/as must start building by understanding the need for "Xicano/as with Congress like responsibilities to represent and mobilize in unison a people who desire to become a nation. This national body fundamentally will act to centralize (1) leadership (not power); (2) policy; (3) activities."⁵⁵ It is clear that Máiz is working out one version of a path to national liberation through the politico-cultural struggle. I would argue, as did Kanafani, that is the duty of the writer to use literature as an arena for struggle in the development of the revolutionary situation not to exact out military strategy. That the important function of an organic intellectual like Máiz is to provoke dialogue from "the lips of the people"⁵⁶ regarding nation.

Although Máiz currently does not engage in party politics, or what Harlow would call organized resistance, his history with the Brown Berets in Michigan and his work as a youth with the Crusade for Justice certainly places him within this framework. His writings certainly call for the creation of a party and the centralizing of policy for Xicano/a people. As I mentioned above his writings played a vital role in the ideological formation of the Detroit, Michigan-based Xicano Development Center in 1997, whose own manifesto begins with these statements: "The Xicano

55. Máiz, *Looking 4 Aztlán*, 191-193.

56. Harlow, *Resistance Literature*, 3.

Development Center (XDC) is a political re-education space for an indigenous revival ... We believe in the rights of Indigenous peoples across the world to self-determination. We must free ourselves from cultural colonialism, oppressive capitalism and governmental occupation.”⁵⁷

The XDC was founded and created by students from Michigan State University, University of Michigan, and Eastern Michigan University. All of these students, particularly the MSU MEXA students were deeply influenced and mentored by Máiz and his call for nationalist organization within his writings.

Unlike the prevailing attitude among Xicano/as about their indigenous heritage Máiz’s focus is not Mexica-centric. He does not use Aztlán as the main marker of identity for Xicanos or as an irredentist claim to citizenship although he does use the concept. Rather, he argues for the creation of a pan-indigenous culture by pointing out, “When we as Xicanos strictly stereotype ourselves as descendants of the Aztecs and Aztecs only, we self-restrict our boundaries leaving little need for the European-American to restrict us with his definitions.”⁵⁸ Here Máiz clearly is arguing for a broader Xicano/a view of identity that transfers political ownership; he goes on writing, “we tell European-Americans we are indigenous to the southwest yet when we as Xicanos tell our history to him we immediately emigrate over a thousand miles south and talk about the Aztecs of México City. . . . That’s our interpretation of indigenous? That is birthright? No, that is ridiculous!”⁵⁹ I believe he echoes the position of Fanon, who writes,

The native intellectual who has gone far beyond the domains of Western culture and who has got it into his head to proclaim the existence of another culture never does

57. Xicanocenter.org

58. Máiz, *Looking 4 Aztlán*, 170.

59. Ibid.

so in the name of Angola or of Dahomey. The culture, which is affirmed, is African culture.⁶⁰

Máiz likewise affirms the Xicano/a culture. Like other resistance writers, he frames Xicano/a liberation as a viable and attainable political and cultural reality, a political evolution into national existence something beyond what Xicano/as have experienced as colonial subjects. He also affirms that culture is the root of resistance. He argues for the continued development of a political culture. He writes, “it does not matter if Aztlán ever existed at all! If you want respect, justice, and equality then you need power. History does not make power. Power makes History.”⁶¹ For Máiz the return to history through the national liberation movement is rooted in the building of indigenous power structures through political and cultural resistance.

Roberto Rodríguez and Centeotzintli

In his seminal article titled ‘*Who Declared War on the Word Chicano?*’ Roberto X. Rodríguez writes,

Chicano . . . Resistance . . . Defiance. It was more than understanding our bloodlines. . . . It was more than understanding our history. It was more than understanding the savagery of the Spanish and Yanqui Imperialism, which was responsible for the rip-off of the Southwest. Chicano was to rebel. To be Chicano was to take a stand. To be Chicano meant NO COMPROMISE—NO ACCOMMODATION. To be Chicano was to say, ‘WE ARE NOT THE FOREIGNERS!’⁶² (formatting original)

This powerfully direct paragraph fairly exemplifies Xicano/a resistance writing across the board. Most importantly, he directly and repeatedly names Xicano/a opposition to ‘Spanish and ‘Yanqui imperialism.’ The growing awareness over the past four decades of the indigenous place Xicano/as

60. Fanon, *Wretched*, 212.

61. Máiz, *Looking 4 Aztlan*, 147.

62. Roberto Garcia Rodriguez, “The X in Xicano” *The X in La Raza II*, (Tucson: Self Published, 1997), 30.

occupy in the United States has become widely accepted with the development of Danza Azteca and resistance identity. Rodríguez, like Máiz identifies the Xicano movement of the 1960s and 1970s as rebellion when he writes to be “Chicano was to rebel.”⁶³ The final page of Roberto Rodríguez’s *The X in La Raza* carries a cartoon of a Meso-American man seated in front of a computer screen and writes at the keyboard. This image is a clear reference to the fusion of history with contemporary technology. It is also a direct confrontation at the belief in the primitive, illiterate nature of indigenous peoples in the Americas. Rodríguez also addresses the articulation of Xicano/a Indigeneity and what this means in terms of identity and building political capacity.

When looked at as a whole, the spiritual and Indigenist trajectory of Rodríguez’s work is apparent both in the first and second editions of his first major community work, *The X in La Raza*, that set the stage for his later work on corn-based culture. In this work he writes that, “I write this in hopes it helps those who have dedicated their lives in promoting the philosophy and spiritualism of Xicanismo.”⁶⁴ The book impresses the reader by the intensity of the emotion. It represents a call to action, an exhortation to fight for the development of a Xicano nation.

Rodríguez⁶⁵ greatest contribution consists of the creation of a glossary that takes indigenous ethical concepts and reformats these concepts into current Xicano liberation discourse. This type of cultural reinvention allows us as political beings to begin establishing hegemonic cultural norms of behavior, responsibility, and duty in opposition to colonial oppression. Writing extensively on the indigenous condition in the Americas and the United States, Rodríguez is also responsible for the

63. Rodríguez, “The X in Xicano,” 30.

64. Ibid.

65. This dissertation specifically focuses on academic work done outside the university. Rodríguez is a special case in that he has a large body of writing and intellectual work published before he received his doctorate in 2008. Because of this I draw from Rodríguez’ dissertation, which I see as a culmination of his pre-doctorate writings.

creation of grassroots research projects centering on the promotion of indigenous beliefs within the Xicano/a community. All of these books have a common thread of elevating or returning to the Xicano/a condition an indigenous spiritual legacy, in effect, returning Xicano/as in the United States to history through a spiritual awakening and the building of a national identity. In doing this Rodríguez adds what I believe is a finishing piece of the Xicano/a return to history.

Rodríguez has written extensively on the subject of indigenous spirituality and the central position of corn in the development of that system, so much so, in fact, that his ideas have become prominent in Xicano studies and in particular in the ideological foundations of the Mexican American Studies program in Tucson where he played a well-known role in teaching on the university level and defending the program.⁶⁶

As we have also seen, a nation's return to history is predicated on the establishment of revolutionary national culture, the belief in the worthiness of that national culture, and the development of the will to resist. For some this can be a matter of politics. For others it may be spiritually based: in Rodríguez' vision of indigenous revival, nation and spirituality go hand in hand. Huntington writes that the United States is a Christian Protestant nation. He vehemently expresses concerns that predominantly Catholic Mexicans in the United States will change that status, changing the very nature of United States civil society. Indeed, the undeclared wars now operating across the globe, pitting state actors against non-state actors are based almost entirely on religious

66. Rodríguez was heavily involved in the defense and promotion of the Tucson MAS program until around 2012. In the summer of 2012 I was invited by the MAS teachers to come to Tucson and organize a national call to action I titled Tucson Freedom Summer. After I returned home to Michigan in August 2012 I had several phone conversations with Rodríguez about fundraising for Sean Arce and José Gonzalez, both whom were being sued in a million dollar defamation suit by a former TUSD teacher John Ward. During these conversations Rodríguez intimated to me he felt left out of the decision making process around the MAS struggle as a result was suspicious of how money was being handled. As a result he refused to help either Arce or Gonzalez raise money to help in the defense costs. After extensive depositions and court time the lawsuit was dismissed.

lines. Religion and nation go hand in hand. Rodríguez' organic spiritualism is just one more aspect of the overall move toward resistance with the construction of a Xicano National liberation movement.

As with other resistance writers, the exciting aspects of Rodríguez work center not on his explanation of Indigenous spirituality but on his articulation of indigenous identity applied to the twenty-first century Xicano struggle. Considering the reformation of the nation under a pan-indigenous banner, Rodríguez notes the inseparability of the political from the cultural, just as he notes, "that as a people, we should maintain or acquire our indigenous traditions and if we choose to, we can voluntarily add new ones. It can mean immersing oneself in one or more cultures."⁶⁷ This admonition toward a reconstituted pan-indigenous identity places Rodríguez's writings firmly within the resistance category, as he writes about this imagined future as a twenty-first century ghost dance; the return of the dead—the return to history when he writes about the future, "in history, the revolt of the Chicanos will also be seen as an indigenous revolt."⁶⁸

Xicano scholar Juan José Quinones writes that indigenous spirituality "can be understood as a reflection upon the great changes and great constancy of the cosmos."⁶⁹ Rodríguez's writings argue for the development of a Xicano/a Meso-American ethics that becomes a pillar of Xicano/a liberation, the reclaiming and remaking of a devalued cosmology, including a system of ethics that enables Xicano/a participation in history. From this vision rises Quetzalcoatl, the precious knowledge of who Xicano/as are as individuals and a culture. As the emerging Xicano/a culture

67. Rodriguez, "The X in Xicano," 112.

68. Roberto Rodriguez, "Who declared war on the word Chicano?" *The X in La Raza II* (Tucson: Self Published, 1997), 23.

69. Juan José Quinones, *Indigenous Quotient/ Stalking Words: American Indian Heritage as Future* (San Antonio: Aztlan Libre Press, 2012 , 79.

becomes the third fissure and the future of Indigeneity in the Americas, Xicano/as certainly represent major sources of resistance to colonialism within the United States. Rodríguez links the return to history to prophecy: “we have been told that there are prophecies that we—those of us whose indigenous soul was ripped out—would return or would one day regain our indigenous way and consciousness.”⁷⁰

Rodríguez sees the practice of Danza as a meme of mass communication that predates the printing press in the Americas. This sort of cultural transmission forms the centerpiece of Rodríguez’ work. Among other things, it creates a space for a kind of education not found in Western educational structures. Rodríguez writes that Danza is “also knowledge of a way of life . . . understanding the language of ritual and ceremony—including Danza and music—as places of communication and sites and repositories of memory.”⁷¹ The importance of Danza transcends the simple continuation of a culture fractured by colonization. Rodríguez tells us,

Prior to the arrival of Europeans to Mesoamerica, Dance, or Danza, was utilized as part of an integrated system, which included music, poetry and song to communicate the culture, including creation, origin and migration myths and historical events . . . to ritually govern peoples’ births, lives and deaths . . . in which the emphasis is not simply on communicating a message, but in representing ‘shared beliefs.’⁷²

While Máiz and the other authors examined here approach national liberation from a strictly political perspective, explicating how to build political resistance, Rodríguez shows us the importance of creating culture and maintaining an understanding of the past through the exploration of indigenous spirituality. Such ethics involve the creation of new ritual and ceremonies—myths Xicano/as use to

70. Rodríguez, “The X in Xicano,” 78.

71. Roberto Garcia Rodriguez, “Centeotzintli: Sacred Máize a 7,000 year ceremonial discourse” (Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2008), 46.

72. Ibid.

“make sense of the world”⁷³ where ritual and ceremony is “a collective manner of storing and communicating memory.”⁷⁴

Rodríguez creates a separation that is critical to the growth of Xicano/a political identity within the framework of Western liberalism, i.e. the ascension of the individual—or perhaps in this case the creation of a definable group where one did not exist before—beginning with the definitions of the individual Xicano/a. Rodríguez also calls for Xicano/as “to take a stand”⁷⁵ on behalf of the past. This acknowledgement of the past provides a reference point for the defeat of settler colonialism through the national liberation movement. In the sense that this past bestows a sense of authenticity on Xicano/as—and for the future, through the idea of “insurgent metaphors,” a term he borrows from Otto Santa Ana, who described these as “conceptual metaphors explicitly designed to replace social metaphors that induce stigmatizing bias.”⁷⁶ Rodríguez uses the past almost exclusively to justify the rationale of indigenous belonging in the United States. Rodríguez is driven to prove the indigenous nature of Xicano/as in the United States. Like Máiz, Rodríguez founds his entire body of work within the irredentist claim of indigenous peoples. Rodríguez is clearly saying North America originally belongs to Indians and advocates the creation of a pan-indigenous identity although his position is much less advanced than Máiz’s in terms of the development of political power.

73. Ibid., 65.

74. Ibid.

75. Rodríguez, “The X in Xicano,” 17.

76. Otto Santa Ana, *Brown Tide Rising: Metaphors of Latinos in contemporary American public discourse* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), .

Xicano/a liberation movements encompass the reconstruction of culture as well as a renewal in understanding history as a culture, or nation. However, as a result of colonization, Xicano/as unfortunately view history or the history of the colonization as their legacy. If we accept the idea that colonialism is part of a specific period that can end, then it becomes easier to understand how the calls for indigenous liberation are deeply rooted in the writings of Xicano/as. It burrows into the ground, planting firmly the Xicano/a claim to be present, and the immovability of that claim; once that has become clear, the rest of the struggle becomes much easier to understand. Desire and opportunity meet, the past in the form of national identity returns to the new present, and the deep psychological crevices created by conquest and five hundred years of colonization begin to seal themselves through the mortar of politics and culture. The process of self-love and healing begins, lighting the path to liberation. Once begun, the return to history is inevitable and inexorable. The pace of the return is not guaranteed but, I believe, the success of it is.

Kurly Tlapoyawa and the manifesto insurgency

Kurly Tlapoyawa's book *We Will Rise* is the clearest example of manifesto writing in the group. From the title onward, he uses the all-encompassing "WE," which he immediately binds with the subtitle "rebuilding the Mexikah nation." He states directly that "WE" should engage in a period of economic, social, identity, and political reconstruction. Tlapoyawa writes, "By taking back who we are as a people, we will once again be able to think, see, and feel from a completely indigenous perspective."⁷⁷ With these statements we begin to see clearly the importance of this position, as the "WE" resonates with the suggestive power of the limitless, volatile masses. . . . It is a

77. Tlapoyawa, *We will rise*, 129.

pronominal gesture toward both a limitless kinship and indomitable mass resolve.”⁷⁸ It is within the “suggestive power of the limitless masses,”⁷⁹ all of these Xicano writers find home and agreement.

As the positions of Xicano/a resistance are restated, retested, and re-imagined, the “genre’s whole raison d’être [is] to critique the uneven implementation of universalism.”⁸⁰ Until the question of universalism and the equal delivery of civil rights is addressed and Xicano/as must decide whether to a) accept their position as unequal citizens (as so many other in the United States have) and move forward as a part of the United States project, or b) continue to flesh out their position of “againstness” and how that will evolve into the greater political project of Xicano/a national liberation. Each of these writers, Máiz, Rodríguez and Tlapoyawa are using the manifesto form as a way of dealing with and exposing what they feel is the hypocrisy of the supposed inclusivity of the current United States colonial dialogue. Until the question of universalism is fully addressed fully Xicano/a resistance writers must continue their critique in the face of hegemonic backlash like the passing of HB 2281 in Arizona.

In her book, *Manifestoes: Provocations of the Modern*, Janet Lyon asserts, “the manifesto declares a position; the manifesto refuses dialogue or discussion; the manifesto fosters antagonism and scorns conciliation. It is univocal, unilateral, single minded. It conveys resolute oppositionality and indulges no tolerance for the fainthearted.”⁸¹ Lyons adds that the use of the pronoun “we” “provided an edge of urgency that was sharply at odds with the gradualist agenda of political

26. 78. Janet Lyon, *Manifestoes Provocations of the modern* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1999),

79. Ibid.

80. Ibid., 32.

81. Ibid. 9.

modernity.”⁸² I believe in the case of these three writers the ideological position is nation/nationalism and what comes with it—politics, culture, and spirituality.

Raul R. Salinas’ poem “We hafta shaft NAFTA”, recorded in 2000 on the spoken word album titled *Los Many Mundos Of Raúl Salinas: Un Poetic Jazz Viaje Con Friends*, provides a post-1998 example of the political urgency that is moving rapidly to reintegrate a Meso-American history with indigenous resistance in the United States. Salinas, speaking in the classic manifesto form of ‘we’, writes,

“We hafta shaft NAFTA
Beside maquiladora madness
in hovels
dies la población
mientras profits soar skyward
in classic coca-cola/nización
anti-obrero/ anti-gente
those takers not makers
of jobs”

Salinas finishes this call to action by assuring the listener/reader that “in the southeastern mountains/en un nuevo amanecer”⁸³ the rapid change of militant armed resistance waits with armed guerrillas and “militant mayans.” After five hundred years outside of history, ‘Militant Mayans’ are, along with Salinas’ Xicano/as in the United States, returning, as Cabral suggests through the national liberation movement, to history. Mary Ann Caws writes, “A manifesto has a madness about it.”⁸⁴ In this case I argue the madness refers to the indigenous returning to challenge not only the linear notion of time imposed by Western civilization but the sense of failure in the liberal belief in the ascension of the individual as the basic political component of democratic societies. This, according

82. Ibid., 11.

83. In a new Dawn (translation mine).

84. Mary Ann Caws, *Manifesto a century of ISMS* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), xvi.

to Lyon, is the essence of the manifesto. It poses both a challenge and a revelation of the failed promises of western democratic inclusivity, so deeply intertwined with the “gradualist agenda of political modernity.”⁸⁵

For Xicano/as, the manifesto form continues to play an important role in imagining and maintaining, from the community perspective, a genre of writing that encourages, promotes, and theorizes the recovery of nation (irredentist positioning) and promotion of the will of the people to resist colonial settler domination. It is a document that has from the beginning remained, “a deliberate manipulation of the public view. Setting out the terms of the faith toward which the listening public is to be swayed, it is a document of an ideology crafted to convince and convert.”⁸⁶ It is simultaneously a “genre that gives the appearance of being at once both word and deed, both threat and incipient action.”⁸⁷

These moments of rhetorical clarity within resistance writing are important because they speak to the efforts of Xicano/as to define and institute a version of modernity that deals with the external forces exerting pressure on their political decisions. In the same vein the importance of the manifesto form to Xicano/a resistance writing lie in its “posing some ‘we’, explicit or implicit, against some other ‘they’ with the terms constructed in a deliberate dichotomy, the manifesto can be set up like a battlefield . . . [for] the listener or reader, who should be sufficiently convinced to join in.”⁸⁸

85. Lyon, *Provocations*, 11.

86. Caws, *Manifesto*, ix.

87. Lyon, *Provocations*, 14.

88. Caws, *Manifesto*, xx.

All of the currently produced works considered in this paper are created outside of the traditional academic framework. They are written in opposition to the perceived call by traditional academics to accept, understand, explain, and futurize the colonial situation of Xicano/as in the United States. Rodríguez makes no bones about it in his in the acknowledgements of *The X in La Raza II*,

Some people might call this, “The X in La Raza,” a monograph. I call it an anti-book. Writing this in a sense is a continued act of defiance; that is, I didn’t ask anyone permission to write it and I seek none, particularly from editors, publishers or grammarians. I also refer to it as an anti-book because I’m free to say whatever I want to say—or use whatever words I want to use, in whatever language I choose, without having to ask Webster for permission.⁸⁹

For most Xicano/as the latter positions remain elusive, which enables and propagates a system of intellectual privileges foisted on Xicano/as and other indigenous peoples, positioned as the eternal subject of the Western gaze. They derived from notions of racial superiority and ideas of modernism that represent “the Eurocentric pretention to be the exclusive producers and protagonist of modernity . . . therefore, a Europeanization . . . an ethnocentric pretention.”⁹⁰

From this Xicano/as can extrapolate no legitimate understanding of indigenous culture can be produced through an interpretation of the ones responsible for the dismantling of that culture. This simple, basic formulation calls into question every attempt by purveyors of Western civilization—through anthropology, sociology, and history—to categorize, explicate, or otherwise explain indigenous peoples in the Americas. It also explains why the manifesto form is both powerful and popular in Xicano/a writing. Caws writes, “The manifesto generally proclaims what it

89. Rodríguez, “The X in La Raza,” 8.

90. Quijano, “Coloniality of Power,” 544.

wants to oppose, to leave, to defend, to change”⁹¹ by proclaiming new spaces, the manifesto then becomes a plan for the future, a future where the oppression of indigenous peoples is ended.

The use of space as it is imagined and understood through indigenous thought is critical to the application of the space + time = will equation. Mao was talking explicitly about geography. However, the geographic question was answered a while ago for indigenous peoples in the United States and the rest of the Americas. Pertinent to the discussion of space vis-à-vis resistance, Juan José Quinones writes, “Space is not just terrain and distance, space is also history and memory; there is also the space of imagination. Space, in short, is contextualized. . . . It can be literal or figurative.”⁹² So then what does space + time = will mean for the Xicano/a movement in terms of creating space for political mobilization?

The different uses of figurative or literal space that develops can lead to national formation. Xicano/as do not have geographic space as a commodity to trade, since the conquest and subsequent Indian wars eliminated literal space that might have been traded for time. Therefore, thinking of space as the physical and mental areas we inhabit, and as individuals and groups, helps map the connection of how phases of development, for instance, from Action Research to Third World Liberation, Women of Color Feminism correspond to space. With this kind of analysis Indigenous people can trade these spaces, these different intellectual segments formed around organizing community and identity, to construct the mental boundary needed to make the theoretical elbowroom allowing us to map the Xicano/a return to history. These spaces allow for the production of time. Time to avoid assimilation, intellectual captivity, and the time necessary to work through the political implications of creating a vision of Xicano/as as a unique people. All the

91. Caws, *Provocations*, xxiii.

92. Quiones, *Indigenous Quotient*, 75.

time understanding this is possible because “Indigeneity, Indian being, is both historical and contemporary.”⁹³

This means constructing an understanding of who Xicano/as are is at its base predicated on the belief, as Quinones puts it, that, “Indigenism is not per se ‘anti’ anyone or any entity; Indigenism is a multifaceted heritage independent of a sponsoring or sustaining state apparatus(es)”⁹⁴

Xicano/as measure to their own stick. As discussed in this and preceding chapters, one of the goals of the writers cited was to develop and shake awake in the Fanonian sense the will the will of the Xicano/a people to resist occupation. Another goal was to encourage the study of liberation movements and the business of liberation organizations and how the articulation of politico/identity boundaries shape where Xicano/as fit into an indigenous worldview. The clear use of the “WE” indicates how the “indigenous have envisioned the cosmos and the entirety of human relations. . . . Whether global or local, formal or informal, indigenous tendencies raise the problematic of an imagined future; as much has changed in the past, much can change in the future.”⁹⁵ The total corpus of Xicano/a writings contains a literature that allows the Xicana and Xicano to claim national liberation as a valid movement.

If the long-term goal of Western modernizing is to maintain the superior position of settler colonialism by reducing the indigenous to the status of primitive, then it is incumbent on resistance writers to resist with all their ingenuity the attempt of colonial hegemony to concretize the meaning of Xicano national reconstruction. The fight to defer meaning is in many ways the preeminent battle—to defer meaning is to allow for the existence and creation of an emerging future from the

93. Ibid., 64.

94. Ibid., 65.

95. Ibid., 67-68.

ashes of conquest and devastation, are stories that explain and ultimately, if they survive long enough, provide new rationalizations for national consciousness, culture, and resistance. These moments of un-conciliation survive in manifesto writing as an “oppositional tone . . . constructed of againstness”⁹⁶ that provides the intellectual base of resistance movements and, in the opinion of Third World theorists, leads inevitably to arm resistance against what French existentialist Jean Paul Sartre called the system of colonialism. Fanon elaborates,

The native intellectual nevertheless sooner or later will realize that you do not show proof of your nation from its culture but that you substantiate its existence in the fight which the people wage against the forces of occupation.⁹⁷

In order for writing to be resistance literature, it must be created in opposition to the occupying power and part of the liberation struggle. It must advocate and supply a conduit for the removal of foreign interest and for the creation of a national consciousness and identity, thus allowing critics and community activists to place what is happening within an understandable context of conflict?

The revealing moments in Xicano/a resistance literature focus on the positioning of the Xicano/a as outside of the citizen relationship with the United States. In the interpretation of history provided by the Xicano/a authors discussed in this paper, there is an effort to solidify a new identity, one placed firmly within an emerging indigenous history. In the material used for this analysis, each of the writers situates Xicano/as as indigenous people, arguing for Xicano/a nationalism (at the very least self-determination); within an explicitly political framework in which identity is created and maintained through the process of political development.

This call to “consciousness and knowledge” echoes the admonitions of Fanon and Cabral to recapture history. Tlapoyawa⁹⁸ emphasizes the need to raise this consciousness by embracing the

96. Ibid., xxiii.

97. Fanon, *Wretched*, 223.

teaching/philosophy of “Mexikayotl (everything that is Mexican) . . . the antithesis to European thought and culture.” With this, Tlapoyawa insists on a return to indigenous languages and religion (all things Mexican), so as to lead Xicano/as in the United States not back toward a lost past but advancing toward a new future. Tlapoyawa envisions this happening as part of a political awakening in which Xicano/as realize “one of the greatest factors holding us back is that our people do not realize we are an Indigenous NATION. . . . We must build our national identity as Xikano—Mexikano—Mexikah . . . and to do this we need to build up the institutions which all nations have.”⁹⁹

The end of resistance

Xicano/a resistance literature is alive and growing today. It is rooted, as all resistance literature is, in a longing for freedom and a better life for Xicano/as as a distinct an indigenous people in the United States. The ability of community intellectuals to continue articulating anti-colonialist, anti-imperialist versions of Xicano/a existence plays a vital role in propagating resistance in the community, even if resistance attitudes resides only in a small portion of the Xicano/a population. The position paper for the 1997 national MEXA conference states in part, “we are not American or Mexican, we are Xicano/as, and we must find our way to form a new visible, viable

98. Tlapoyawa’s book bio reads in part “At age 20 Tlapoyawa set out to write this book as a resource for his sister, whose public school teachers refused to accept any information about Mexican history that did not come directly from a book. He began to take what he was being taught by maestros and jefes of Mexikah Dance, as well as his mother and books she had saved for him from the Chicano Movement, and put them into an accessible format geared for youth. . . . Over the course of eight years, Kurly has amassed a huge collection of written accounts that no historian, scholar or certainly high school teacher could dismiss. . . . Tlapoyawa is founder and national representative of the Mexika Eagle Society; a danzante under Tleyankanke Patricio Zamora in Kalpulli Ehekatl; a former member of MEChA at UNM and El Partido Nacional de la Raza Unida of New México.

99. Tlapoyawa, *We will rise*, 110.

Indian nation within a nation.”¹⁰⁰ This idea of nation weaving its way through all the works serves in the estimation of the writers as the germ of an emerging Xicano/a resistance movement. All the writers agree on the necessity of creating in the United States structures of resistance to European domination, and to great extent are engaged in the articulation and implementation of building such structures.

If, as we mentioned earlier, Xicano/a movements after the initial rebellions in the 1840s increasingly adopted the substance and nature of civil rights movements, then I would argue writing resistance to Western ideology returned in full force during the early 1990’s and continued to develop through the expansion of an indigenous awakening in music, film and literature.

Xicano/a resistance writing is a political force. While this force is small and confined to a specific segment of the community, it is equally clear each of the examples used here is, as Khanafani said, “located within the resistance movement itself inside the occupied land, taking his testimony from the place in which it is born, lives and is propagated: the lips of the people.”¹⁰¹

Modernizing, as an ideological component of the colonial process, privileges the written word over the spoken. This exclusionary literacy provides the colonizer with an ideological comfort zone. In the colonial situation faced by Meso-Americans in the Americas, and more recently the United States, it creates and sustains a racial binary supported by ideas of racial impurity within mestizaje, in which proof of belonging is always required. A racial binary contrasts primitive ‘non-literate’ indigenous societies with modern ‘literate’ Western civilization. This binary over the past five hundred years has served as partial justification for the military, cultural, and economic domination of indigenous people in the Americas and around the world. Conversely, in the

100. Mireles, *Nationalism*, 2.

101. Harlow, *Resistance Literature*, 3.

mentality of the colonized this literate/illiterate duality supports another seemingly inescapable paradigm of submission to the belief in the ‘modern’ state of the colonizer. Like all unequal relationships between colonizer and colonized, power dynamics centering on literacy reinforce the modernity of the settler and nourish paradigms of power (cultural superiority) within colonial cultures over potential resistance movements, both intellectual and physical.

Taking into account the relative age of the Xicano/a community in the United States (roughly one hundred and sixty two years), and the nature of the Xicano/as understanding of nationalism and relationship to nationalism, the supposed absence of an organized resistance movement says more about the availability of the literature than the validity of the message it carries. It is not surprising a lucid articulation of Xicano/a national resistance to colonial oppression has just emerged within the last 40 years. Nevertheless, in no way does this vitiate the validity of the articulation, since the “moment” of humanity Fanon speaks of is not predicated on a specific length of time. It happens as part of a process, and—every nations process is unique.

Xicano/a nationalism rooted in indigenous politics, cultural and spirituality provides a foundation for Xicano/as to position themselves as a distinct people with a board and inclusive culture that continues to grow as evidenced by the proliferation of music, poetry, and prose. Therefore, to say there was a corpus of resistance literature being consciously produced from 1848 until now would be incorrect. To say since 1848 Xicano/as have produced and experienced a groundswell of literature and understanding about themselves as a people and their political and cultural place within of the United States context is not incorrect. The outcome need not be stated to be achieved. A basic understanding of the Xicano/a position as conquered colonized people informs the underlying reasons for resistance. How this struggle for national identity will continue to unfold in terms of the Xicano/a contribution to indigenous resistance, literature and liberation movements in the United States remains to be seen.

CHAPTER FOUR—WHITHER AZTLÁN? THE SPECTER THAT HAUNTS THE UNITED STATES

And you, Guadalupe, when will you get tired of seeing your bronze people suffer? Tell the Lord I can't handle it anymore and to forgive me of my ways.¹

In this chapter the use of film as a medium to advance many of the tropes discussed earlier and their place in the national liberation movement. Also considered are compelling questions about the nature of oppression and the role of the colonized in perpetuating the cycle of poverty and violence in the Barrio. Like most Xicano/a productions of the time, the feature length motion pictures *Boulevard Nights* directed by Michael Pressman (1979) and *Please Don't Bury Me Alive* (PDBMA) directed by Efrain Gutierrez (1976) deal with cultural and internalized aspects of colonialism. *Boulevard Nights* does so via the dramatic life and cinematic murder of Chuco Ávila, a young Los Angeles gangbanger, while *Please Don't Bury Me Alive* treats the subject through the metaphoric death and entombment of the young protagonist Alejandro Hernández.

Similar to many of the films appearing on screen during the 1970s, these two films represent some of the first attempts by Xicanos—and Hollywood—to reach a mass Xicano/a audience through the medium of cinema. As a group, the films as groups depict the struggles of Xicano/a activists finding new ways to recreate culture and identity through the previously inaccessible venue of film. The power of film to create lasting stereotypes had been well established by the 1970s. The two films address the problems and issues facing the Xicano/a community, but they do so from disparate ends of the Xicanada. Read as a mainstream colonialist creation of Hollywood, *Boulevard Nights* focuses on the popular conception of Xicano/as as troubled gang members caught in cycles of violence and inescapable poverty.

1. Sabino Garza, *Please don't bury me alive*, DVD, directed by Efrain Guiterrez, (1976 , Chicano Arts Film Enterprise), DVD.

Both films acknowledge the Xicano/a movement and issues dominating contemporary Xicano/a politics; in addition, they reflect an economic trend in Hollywood that produced culturally specific cinema for socially turbulent communities. Both films depict not only the rampant contradictions in the Movement, they also speak to the critical importance land, its political control, and irredentism have assumed as part of the normal conversation within the Chicano Movement. In addition, in that crucial era, the political idea of Aztlán, complete with its irredentist implications, began to take hold in the Xicano/a consciousness, and became a major part of white conservative rhetoric. This irredentist position has provided an undercurrent of Xicano/a politics and continues, in my opinion, to offer a foundation of the United States imagination regarding Xicano/as that produces the greatest backlash among Anglo-American nativist.

Please don't bury me alive! Por Favor, no me entierren vivo? was produced in 1976 (staged in 1972), by the Chicano Arts Film Enterprises (CAFE), and credits itself as the first "Chicano Feature Film produced, written, directed and acted by CHICANOS."² Set in Texas during the Movement, it provides an introspective critique of the internal aspects of colonialism: sexism, inadequate political consciousness, and the violence of maintaining state power from the grassroots level. Other foundational Xicano/a cinema classics of the period include *I Am Joaquín* (1969), *Requiem 29* (1971), *Yo Soy Chicano* (1972), *Raíces de Sangre* (1976), *Agueda Martínez* (1977), and *Chicana* (1979). These films represented a growing Xicano/a nationalist consciousness and political expression seeking to articulate itself through ever-diverse formats. Juxtaposed to this emerging anti-colonial stance, mainstream Hollywood films as *Rio Lobo* (1970), *Bring Me the Head of Alfredo García* (1974), *Valdez is Coming* (1978), *Boulevard Nights* (1979), *Walk Proud* (1979) and *The Streets of L.A.* (1979) portray the dominant colonial view of Xicano/as as criminals, peasants, and foreigners.

2. Garza, *Bury Me Alive*, DVD.

These films reveal the development of resistance discourses centering on issues of land, identity, and national reformation under a colonial system. Tunisian anti-colonialist Albert Memmi reminds us, regarding cultural production, “What is left of the colonized at the end of this stubborn effort to dehumanize him? He is hardly a human being. He tends rapidly toward becoming an object as an end, in the colonizers supreme ambition, he should exist only as a function of the needs of the colonizer.”³ By placing the films in the context of the Memmi quote, Xicano/as can begin the process of demystification unraveling the metaphysical definitions of Xicano/as, indeed all-colonial subjects.

In response to the dismantling of colonial narratives by Xicano/a intellectuals, a national Xicano/a cultural and political movement is germinating an indigenous counter-narrative, one systematically turning its back on the dominant Spanish version of Mexican history. This anti-hegemonic narrative actually brings the current narrative surrounding the illegality of Xicano/as, i.e. brown bodies (illegality in every form) into a contextualized discourse around indigenous identity. It is not that the Hollywood portrayal of Mexicans and Xicano/as is or was false. However, until the emergence of these films the examination of the colonial discourse myopically focuses only one end of the spectrum—the colonizer’s end. Film, or the representation of Xicano/as in film, has become a significant part of Xicano/a national identity, an identity that never fully realizes true meaning or understanding but is constantly evolving through dialogue and reinterpretation. Identities tend to monopolize the view, offering a single, particular vision as an explanation for the entire group; this often happens with the colonized, especially before they have any meaningful access to printing presses, novels, photos, or film. Until then, the overwhelming superiority of European settler colonialism imposes identity for Xicano/as as a colonial identity.

3. Memmi, *Colonizer and Colonized*, 86.

In both films, the Xicano/a character functions emotionally and intellectually as hardly a human being in how their interpersonal objectification—sexual, political, and patriarchal— influences their relationships with each other and other Xicano/as. In *Boulevard Nights*, Raymond and Chuco act out violent hyper-masculinities based on colonial notions of manhood, rooted in postures of violent machismo. Xicano historian George Mariscal tells us that this important episode—which most Chicano Studies scholars call the Chicano Power period, but I think is more accurately characterized as the beginning of the Xicano/a anti-colonial insurgency period for literature and politics—was less a moment or a stage to be transcended than a foundational moment in national formation. Given that the time period has become a revolving, constantly reinterpreted set of facts about the political and cultural situation of Xicano/as in the United States, Mariscal's assertion seem well founded.

Mariscal goes on to say that, “the cultural nationalist impulse [is] a constant to be deployed or supplanted as objective conditions changed.”⁴ These “cultural nationalist impulses” provide the fountainhead for all cultural re-imaginings. They imagine an authentic sovereignty that allows cultures to construct new traditions as they return to history. These impulses play to both the basest of stereotypes and to the strongest of revolutionary descriptions through the daily actions of the colonized. They form a pathway to forging a cultural sovereignty, in other words—the creation of meaning.

For those who attempt to explain the Xicano/a anti-colonial struggle through apology, consider Aimé Césaire, in *Discourse on Colonialism*, striking at the heart of this colonial system, its intellectual foundation, the dialectic of domination and liberation. In order for physical domination to take place, Césaire writes that, the oppressed rationalize their oppression. This rationalization of

4. Mariscal, *Brown-eyed Children*, 66.

violence and dehumanization happens on the ordinary level of society, where it must be admitted “once and for all, without flinching at the consequences, that the decisive actors here are the adventurer and the pirate, the wholesale grocer and the ship owner, the gold digger and the merchant appetite and force, and behind them the baleful projected shadow of a form of civilization.”⁵ Césaire puts his finger to the point when declaring the “hypocrisy is of recent date; that neither Cortéz discovering México from the top of the great teocalli, nor Pizzaro before Cuzco (much less Marco Polo before Cambuluc), claims that he is the harbinger of a superior order,”⁶ but that the main culprit is “Christian pedantry, which laid down the dishonest equations *Christianity = civilization, paganism = savagery*.”⁷ Césaire is clear, oppression is systemic, and the colonized all participate.

Please Don't Bury Me Alive presents an exchange between Alejandro Hernández and his mother over the role of religion in the Xicano/a community. In one exchange, Alejandro echoes the anti-colonial position of Césaire by calling into question the priest's role in urging submission to the colonial system,

Radio Priest: Fellow brethren, everyday there is another fight with another test. Life is God's testing ground we are God's children those who follow in the steps laid out in God's commandments will truly inherit his kingdom as we find ourselves in the midst of corruption and trying times we must become inspired by God's word we must find in our souls, in our hearts to restrain ourselves and accept the conditions of our society and pray to God that they get better to involve ourselves in violent tactics against our government is sinful and has no merit in the eyes of god. So let's pray to God so that he can inspire our leaders to guide us to better times and for God's presence we must be thankful.

Alejandro: (Gets up from the dinner table and unplugs the radio)

Mrs. Hernández: Why did you do that?

5. Césaire, *Discourses*, 33.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

Alejandro: That priest doesn't know what he is talking about. He's too damn old he's still living in the past.

Mrs. Hernández: He has to know what he is talking about. He studied to be a priest.

Alejandro: And with all of that education he still thinks that God is the solution for everything.

Mrs. Hernández: Well he is! You should try praying once and a while.

Alejandro: No. For what? God is not responsible for the way things are. It's the man, the white man. He's the one that is responsible. We oughta do something about it. We can't blame God for everything.

The national liberation movement offers a moment of clarity for the oppressed, in which every facet of colonial domination is called into question and disputed, especially the idea of pacification Christianity promotes. In the exchange, Alejandro undergoes a moment of self-realization and demands a personal accounting of the conditions of oppression and the level of resistance to those conditions; his assertion that "we can't blame God for everything" strikes at the heart of the metaphysical conditions of predestination colonization creates through Christianity.

The specter of irredentism

Please Don't Bury Me Alive was filmed and staged in 1972, three years before the end of the Vietnam conflict and three years after the Chicano Youth Liberation Conference. The film begins with a traditionally styled *corrido*⁸ narrating a trip to the cemetery. Here the viewer witnesses the burial of Ricardo Hernández, Alejandro's brother, slain in the Vietnam War. The *corrido* serves a dual purpose by setting the stage for the opening scene and Alejandro's eventual incarceration, also acting as a marker against the cultural, political and social entombment of the colonized as they

8. Goodbye Funeral Procession I'm headed for the graveyard. And all of my relations are wailing in bitter sorrow. I'm leaving it all behind and the world in general. Till we see each other in heaven at universal judgment day. Goodbye, funeral procession. Everything is now finished. Place me inside the tomb in the land of the forgotten. (2x) Goodbye, for the final time. That you'll see me on this earth. They're throwing me in the tomb, which is now my true home. (Translation mine)

struggle to free themselves from settler oppression. Starting with the internment of his brother, the prophetic words of the opening corrido, “I’m headed for the graveyard, and all of my relations are wailing in bitter sorrow,” outline the death act that follows. Like all colonized subjects, Alejandro must sacrifice, and in this instance, the required sacrifice is his liberty (metaphorically his life) as he is sentenced to 10 years in prison. He is handed this punishment for selling drugs to an undercover police officer who lured him into the scheme with promises of big money, which Alejandro envisioned as a means to lift his family from poverty.

The words “all my relations are wailing in sorrow” serve as a reminder of the personal loss so many Xicano/a families suffered as their young men sacrificed their lives in Vietnam. It also allows us to grasp the reality of the slow death Xicano/as have experienced under United States imperialism. The refrain of the corrido, “place me inside the tomb in the land of the forgotten,” calls to mind Cabral’s admonition to the colonized to return to history and Fanon’s warning against the shriveled, dry nature of a colonial culture rotting in a slow death under occupation. This death builds the tomb, what we might call the sepulcher of colonization, this sacred and unmolested spot where the resistance to oppressions lies “in the tomb, which is now my true home.”⁹ It is in the tomb that the ultimate removal from the land happens.

However, it is Alejandro’s mother who first invokes opposition to the colonial system by hurling the combat medals awarded to her dead son Ricardo, at the feet of the military representative. She demands instead of the folded American flag the return of her son, whose memory in no uncertain terms dominates the psychological undercurrent of the film. Although the production is short on strong Xicana characters, these opening moments reflect roles Xicanas played in the anti-war and anti-draft movement. Lorena Oropeza, in her book *Raza Si! Guerra No! Chicano*

9. Garza, *Bury me alive*, DVD.

Protest and Patriotism During the Viet Nam War Era notes that even in the process of developing their own Brown nationalism, Xicanos and Xicanas across the country saw clearly the internationalist ties between Vietnam and Aztlán. This scene plays out repeatedly through the film as the sentiment against United States imperialism builds, not only in the film but also in the reality of growing anti-war sentiment. To this point, Oropeza writes, “From a radical perspective, Chicanos and the Vietnamese were both members of the Third World in that both were a non-white people suffering from the exploitative nature of U.S. imperialism and capitalism. From this perspective, moreover, the Chicano claim to the land was an anti-colonial struggle similar to the one that the Vietnamese were waging.”¹⁰ This helps us to contextualize the following quote in a larger framework than the simple grief a mother would feel over the death of a beloved son. Mrs. Hernández in this scene sets the bar in terms of a broad political commentary on national liberation struggles portrayed in the film,

Mrs. Hernández: (closing the medal box that is on top of the American flag she throws it to the ground) I don’t want no medals. I want my son; my son is what I want. How much will you give me for this one? Let’s make a deal right now. You just want him for your dirty war in Viet Nam.¹¹

This incarceration in the tomb, or prison, does a number of things; but within the struggle for land and national liberation, it effectively removes individuals like Alejandro (potential revolutionaries) from the day-to-day struggle for sovereignty taking place in a nascent national liberation struggle. Oropeza further contextualizes the moment when she writes, “moreover, the Chicano claim to the land was an anti-colonial struggle similar to the one that the Vietnamese were waging.”¹² The concept of Aztlán as a stolen land dominates the film as the political justification for many types of

10. Oropeza, *Raza Si*, 95.

11. Garza, *Bury me alive*, DVD.

12. Oropeza, *Raza Si*, 95.

criminal behavior. The film itself is a clear denunciation of settler colonialism and United States imperialism. It manages to take a rhetorical swing at apparatuses of the colonial system of oppression, from the church to the legal system. In this regard, it is a superb recording of anti-colonial sentiment articulated by Xicano/as at the time. By seriously establishing the role Aztlán played in the normal conversation of the day, *Mariscal* tells us that as early as 1970 Xicano/a academics were attacking Aztlán as a nationalist fantasy that was “narrow and chauvinistic” in nature. *Please Don't Bury Me Alive* is a serious glimpse into the community-level feelings about community politics and internationalism within the Xicano/a community. Written six years after the August 29, 1970, Chicano Moratorium on the Vietnam War in East Los Angeles and the anti-draft publication “La Batalla Está Aquí: Chicanos and the War,” it clearly portrays the problems and triumphs facing the Xicano/a movement at the time.

Alejandro, like many Xicanos of his generation, faces the dilemma of the draft. His older brother Ricardo is drafted into the Army and killed fighting in Vietnam. Throughout, the film implicitly charges that Ricardo has given his life for United States imperialism and that the sacrifice of his life is no more a blow for American democracy than Alejandro's refusal to go into the military is a blow against it. In the following exchange Pancho Hernández, Alejandro's father; speaks with his friends about the Vietnam War and their confidence in the political direction of the Xicano/a movement.

Pancho:	My son Alejandro says he won't go.
Friend #1:	That's good! You know, they should take the white kids. They've been taking ours too long. Now it's their turn.
Friend #2:	The Army didn't take the son of my boss. He's the only son and the only one that can take over his father's business. Isn't that fucked up? If things continue like this where will it end?
Pancho:	I think the best solution is to keep our boys out of the Army.
Friend #1:	Yes.
Pancho:	My son Alejandro has a deep pride for his people and he understands how things are, how they've treated us. And he feels it with all his heart.

Friend #1: That's it compadre! Congratulations! If only all the young people were like that.

Pancho: Yes compadre, a lot of young people are starting to see how things are and are standing up for themselves.

Friend #1: It's about time. All we have left is our children.

Pancho: Yes compadre, we're already old men, but the kids of today are clever.¹³

This interaction shows the transformative power of the national resistance movement to colonialism. Will Alejandro's refusal to participate in the Vietnam War end U.S. imperialism? Obviously not, however, the long-term radicalization of the Xicano/a community has a much broader and more lasting impact, as demonstrated in the Anglo-American response to the idea of Aztlán.

The differences between Alejandro and his father are subtle. Pancho sees and recognizes political and social changes directly resulting from the Xicano/a movement, while Alejandro's naïveté and rage fuel bad decisions based solely on desires for revenge against the colonizer. His petty criminal activity is not so much a viable get rich quick scheme as an outlet for his immature political ideology, within a colonial system whose destruction he preaches while engaged in senseless banditry. Alejandro sees his community trapped in poverty, forced to fight colonial wars of oppression around the globe, living on land previously governed by his indigenous ancestors. The sting of second-class citizenship runs through this film, as Alejandro wrestles with and rationalizes his banditry as revolutionary acts of insurgency against the occupying force of European culture, religion, and ultimately military power.

The evidence of Alejandro's oppression builds awareness of the systematic structure of colonialism in the film. Here it becomes clear that "colonization is neither a series of chance

13. Garza, *Bury me alive*, DVD.

occurrences nor the statistical result of thousands of individual undertakings. It is a system.”¹⁴ This understanding is shared from Césaire, Fanon, Memmi, the present day Zapatistas, and the current writings of indigenous liberationists including Howard Adams, Jack Forbes, and Taiaiake Alfred among others. Both films contain cinematically accurate representations of the stereotypes that make up the Xicano/a community and its unique forms of resistance to settler colonialism.

The rule of colonialism is premised on a systemic dismissal of the history, culture, religion and laws of indigenous people, process anti-colonial writers call cultural negation. Specifically aimed at destroying the colonized culture, these negations serve as the basis for the Manichean outlook created by the colonizer. For instance, indigenous people, as opposed to the colonizer, are “not fully human, they were not civilized enough to have systems, they were not literate, their languages and modes of thought were inadequate.”¹⁵ These types of negations provide justification for European and United States military excess and systems of oppression in the Americas and around the world. The dismantling of indigenous systems of thought, religion, and daily life through “imperialism and colonialism” Māori writer Linda Smith tells us, “brought complete disorder to colonized peoples, disconnecting them from their histories, their languages, their social relations and their own ways of thinking, feeling and interacting with the world.”¹⁶ Smith here is talking about the fragmentation of indigenous nations under colonialism. In any colonized nation, multiple perspectives (the bourgeois, the native) exist, yet these do not add up to fragmentation per se. When each of these tendencies works toward nation, solidarity among the oppressed is re-established. Nationhood neither demands nor assures monolithic thought.

14. Sartre, “Colonialism is a System,” 31.

15. Smith, *Decolonizing Methodology*, 28.

16. Ibid.

In thinking about resistance to imperialism and colonialism, understanding that “for indigenous people fragmentation has been the consequence of imperialism”¹⁷ allows those interested to correctly assess the past and current positions of indigenous peoples. Recovering culture and transforming it from the broken version produced under colonialism to a vibrant revolutionary reclamation of Indigenist thought and action poses a serious challenge. The problem is that oppression appears as a monolithic force. Colonialism is viewed similarly. By failing to grasp the fundamental truth it is a system, the fragmentation of identity is perceived a weakness instead of the strength it can be.

Xicano/a cinema creates anti-colonial thought by combating the settler colonialist monologue. Along with the other facets of resistance writing I have talked about, Xicano/a resistance literature directly confronts the idea that “colonization to be the only story of Indigenous lives.”¹⁸ The anti-colonialist who engages in national liberation writing and political struggles defines his/her stance with the understanding that “colonialism is a narrative in which the Settler’s power is the fundamental reference and assumption, inherently limiting Indigenous freedom and imposing a view of the world that is but an outcome or perspective on that power.”¹⁹ Post-colonialism, on the other hand, acknowledges the full impact of colonialism by defining it as a system that has run its natural course. Alternatively, as Smith writes, “post colonialism is viewed as the convenient invention of Western intellectuals which re-inscribes their power to define the world.”²⁰ In a post-colonial world the nature of indigenous people is fundamentally altered in

17. Ibid.

18. Alfred & Corntassel, “Being Indigenous,” 601.

19. Ibid.

accordance to “a bogus ‘we are you’ agenda” put forward by settlers “calling for a vote to legitimize the occupation,”²¹ at which point social scientist, politicians, and business people become willing, indeed anxious, to enter, thereby putting an official end to the resistance. What is left to resist? Xicano/as have to ask if it is possible to end settler colonialism this way. To answer this Fanon writes,

Decolonization, which set out to change the order of the world, is, obviously, a program of complete disorder. But it cannot come as a result of magical practices, nor of a natural shock, nor of a friendly understanding. Decolonization, as we know, is a historical process: that is to say that it cannot be understood, it cannot become intelligible nor clear to itself except in the exact measure that we can discern the movements which give it historical form and content. Decolonization is the meeting of two forces, [domination and liberation] opposed to each other by their very nature which in fact owe their originality to that sort of substantification which results from and is nourished by the situation in the colonies. Their first encounter was marked by violence and their existence together that is to say the exploitation of the native by the settler—was carried on by the dint of a great array of bayonets and cannons.²²

Decolonization is at its core a Xicano/a irredentist movement, consisting of the reclamation of land and culture for political purposes. While it is true that the mind can be decolonized, what is that but another phase of the national liberation movement? It is this process of opposition that seeks to dismantles the system of colonialism. For the Chicano Indigenous movement in the United States, acknowledgment that “little intellectual or practical effort has gone into examining the precise nature of revolutionary (as opposed to ritual) confrontation or the literal requirements of revolutionary struggle within fully industrialized nations.”²³ It is the “complete disorder” of decolonization that creates the dialectic between domination and liberation and makes it a violent affair from the beginning to the end. No peaceful accord can be reached between those that dominate and those

20. Smith, *Decolonizing Methodology*, 14.

21. Alfred, *Wasase*, 601.

22. Fanon, *Wretched*, 36.

23. Churchill, *Pathology*, 85.

who seek liberation. The National Liberation Movement is for the colonized a process that re-instills humanity and hope. The way of resistance can only be learned; liberation can only be earned through engaging in actions defiant to domination.

In one scene from *Please Don't Bury Me Alive*, Alejandro finds his father working on a road crew shoveling dirt. As Alejandro approaches his father it is revealed the older man is suffering from a heart condition, when he stops working and begins clutching at his chest and breathing heavily. Greatly concerned for his health, Alejandro confronts his father and urges him to leave the work site. His father refuses, claiming that if he leaves the worksite he will lose his job.

In response, Alejandro invokes the coming war for Xicano/a liberation, making reference to how the colonized participate in the colonial project, saying, "When you die, they won't even remember you. They'll just replace you with another brown face to do their dirty work. While they sit on their ass. No Dad, their day is coming and it's coming sooner than they think."²⁴ Like his dead son, Alejandro's father faces the inevitable decay not only of his own body but also of his usefulness to the colonial system, the American empire. Nevertheless, Alejandro believes a day of reckoning looms, when the colonizer will pay a heavy debt.

De-colonial methodologies

In his book *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*, Vine Deloria Jr. writes, "to be an Indian in modern American society is in a very real sense to be unreal and ahistorical . . . in so many ways, Indian people are re-examining themselves in an effort to redefine a new social structure for their people."²⁵ This internal "re-examining" by the oppressed opens the gateway for the evolution of an Indigenist epistemology, reconstructing a national prescience beyond the colonial binary model

24. Garza, *Bury Me Alive*, DVD.

25. Deloria, *Custer*, 2.

of settler/colonized or Us/Other, and supplanting the existing structures of colonial knowledge. So, how and why anti-colonial knowledge is constructed and developed becomes increasingly important to indigenous people and others who resist alien explanations of their world. Deloria explains and contextualizes the pathological need for European Americans to understand indigenous peoples.

He writes:

There is no subject on earth as easily understood as that of the American Indian. Each summer, work camps disgorge teenagers on various reservations. Within one months' time, the youngsters acquire a knowledge of Indians that would astound a college professor. Easy knowledge about Indians is a historical tradition.²⁶

In her book *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Maori) makes clear the shortcomings of past and contemporary research centering on the construction of knowledge about indigenous people. What makes Smith a significant voice, and one of the striking commonalities between her and indigenous writers in the Americas, is that she acknowledges the precarious position indigenous activist scholars occupy in the Academy, with what difficulty they find acceptance, as legitimate sources of information, from their non-native peers. Smith exposes this allegedly compromised position, citing the commonly held belief that “our Western education precludes us from writing or speaking from a ‘real’ and authentic indigenous position. Of course, those who do speak from amore ‘traditional’ indigenous point of view are criticized because they not make sense (speak English, what!). Or, our talk is reduced to some ‘nativist’ discourse, dismissed by colleagues in the academy as naïve, contradictory and illogical.”²⁷ With this type of thinking, the Academy acts on its own behalf to fortify its legacy against criticism and critiques of collusion with conservative systems of oppression. However, as Freire explains, “the oppressed are not ‘marginals’, are not people living

26. Deloria, *Custer*, 5.

27. Smith, *Decolonizing Methodology*, 14.

‘outside’ society. They have always been ‘inside’—inside the structure which made them ‘beings for others.’”²⁸

The thinking exposed by Smith and Freire puts under a magnifying glass the utter refusal of Western academics to admit their place within the colonial system. They deny the hegemonic protection of Western civilization research that places indigenous peoples on the block as specimens (and indigenous scholars as anomalies) to be examined and prodded for clues to authenticity, an authenticity generated within the colonizer/indigenous binary, against which Smith and many Indigenist writers in the Americas rebel.

We see the beginning of a pan-indigenous thought re-inscribed by Xicanos and other indigenous peoples into a claimed “superior” way of being. Claiming that ethical the nature of Indigeneity is vital to the subversion of European hegemony, a process that inverts the colonizer binary that privileges European over indigenous. At its root, Xicano/as must also deal with issues of inclusion and the violence of exclusion inherent in the colonial system.

Alejandro: Nosotros Tenemos sangre de indio. Por eso tenemos corazon. That is why we have conscience. And those politicians don’t know how wonderful it is to be brown. We are descendants of a superior people. But with all the heart and consciousness that we had we let them steal all this land. All this land was ours, and we let the white man take it. The Indians have a prophecy that says one day their descendants of brown skin will re-inhabit all that the white men took. What they called Aztlán. I just want to be around when it happens.

What theoretical and practical fruit is yielded because of this “re-examination” that Deloria writes about? Increasingly the Xicano/a and other indigenous scholars are turning to a tougher critique of the state of affairs and experiences. Mariscal writes that, “while drawing appropriate lessons from the Movement, Xicano/a progressive agendas will have to be reconfigured in order to affect events

28. Freire, *Pedagogy*, 74.

and policies in a more dangerous and less hopeful historical moment.”²⁹ This reconfiguring of identity, history, and sense of place within the ongoing anti-colonial struggle in the Americas harkens back to Deloria and the other indigenous writers examined here.

Mariscal constructs unique insights into the role of the Xicano/a movement in present day politics clearly aligning the Xicano/a movement with Third World liberation movements across the globe. Mariscal’s work is particularly important, as it centers on the specific period that produced those films, and he warns against oversimplifying the Xicano/a movement in searching for current applications of political, cultural, and social meanings.

Reclaiming Xicano/a indigenous heritage is the foundation of decolonizing methodologies for indigenous scholars in the Americas. As discussed earlier, Ward Churchill defines an “Indigenist” as a person who “takes the rights of indigenous people as the highest priority,” and who “draws upon the traditions . . . of native peoples the world over.”³⁰ By recognizing these rights, indigenous people turn away from the colonial methodologies that have served to rob Xicanos and Xicanas of history, identity, and the will to resist, thereby turning toward a greater understanding that “increasingly, the struggles on this planet are not for ‘nation states’ but for nations of people bound together by spirit, land, language, history and blood.”³¹ This idea itself can serve as the basis of new scientific inquiry because, as Smith writes, “methodology is important because it frames the questions being asked . . . within an indigenous framework, methodological debates are ones concerned with the broader politics and strategic goals for indigenous research.”³²

29. Mariscal, *Brown Eyed*, 266.

30. Churchill, *Indigenist*, 403.

31. Moraga, “New Generation,” 168-69.

It is important to build on the efforts of past and present anti-colonialists in finding new ways to challenge Eurocentric research in and outside the academy. In examining the writings of anti-colonial writers, it could be beneficial to examine three intellectual staging areas for helping indigenous writers in the Americas to de-colonize their own methodologies. They are: first, accepting a pan-indigenous as well as a local identity is a formative act of resistance; second, promoting, developing, and passing down Meso-American and pan-indigenous culture is an act of resistance; and third, working with other Meso-Americans (indigenous) to actively resist colonial oppression. Each of these points must be explored with an affirmation that rejection of Western research methodology, as the only way of collecting information or understanding the world, is an inherent act of resistance on the part of indigenous peoples all over the world.

Alejandro: Because it makes me mad that all this was ours. That's why when I steal from them it doesn't bother me. I'm just taking what really belongs to me. One of these days they will pay for it. Whenever I look at gringos they're pretty like a painting. They don't have life. And I feel sorry for the Black man. But when I look at Chicanos or Chicanas whether it's an old woman or a poor man or whatever, when I look them in the face they're alive, they feel, they know how to live. We're not made of plastic.

Accepting your indigenous identity is an act of resistance. Rejecting the European intellectual fantasy that tries to define indigenous people through the existence of blood quantum or the idea that "it is possible to mathematically divide blood amounts in order to determine the biological pedigree of a person"³³ Tlapoyawa writes is an act of personal and national self-determination. When Xicano/as assume the mantle of indigenous identity, they reject the idea of blood quantum and the racist concept culture is transmitted through genetics; second, they acknowledge, as Xicano/as, Meso-American culture the centrality of revolutionary culture in evolving resistance

32. Smith, *Decolonizing Methodology*, 143.

33. Tlapoyawa, *We will rise*, 73.

movements in the Americas and elsewhere in the world. Stressing the importance of this awareness, Métis activist/scholar Howard Adams issues this warning: “if we perceive ourselves, our status, and our future in terms of the mainstream free enterprise system, then we have completely abandoned our Aboriginal consciousness for a false one. . . . Without an indigenous consciousness Indians, Métis and Inuit peoples’ only claim to Aboriginality is race and heritage. That is not enough to achieve true liberation. . . . We must have aboriginal nationalism, an understanding of the state’s capitalist ideology and its oppression, and, ultimately, counter-consciousness.”³⁴

Secondly, indigenous scholars should be promoting, developing and passing down Meso-American culture as a deliberate act of resistance. The presence of two distinct civilizations (Western and Meso-American) obviously points to the existence of two imagined but conflicting plans for the future.³⁵ Therefore, any action on behalf of Meso-American culture, as a variable of the colonial binary is an act of resistance. Indigenous peoples throughout history have found that

during the rebellion, many resources that had remained latent in Indian culture were put into play. These different rebellions openly activated forms of organization and communication that existed clandestinely up to that point. Implicit loyalties based in culture and politics created new alliances. Forgotten symbols were revived and given new power. Recourse was also made to cultural elements from the dominant culture, which had been appropriated by the Indian peoples who were not in a position to use them in the service of the uprising.³⁶

As we have seen in previous chapters, the strength of indigenous cultural symbols shows the flexibility and tenacity of Meso-American culture from an Indigenist perspective.

Third, Xicano/as must work with other indigenous peoples to actively resist colonial oppression by creating a pan-indigenous culture. Since the end of World War II, indigenous peoples

34. Adams, *Tortured*, 45.

35. Bonfil-Batalla, *México Profundo*, xv.

36. Ibid., 131.

around the globe have risen up to throw off the yoke of colonialism. For better or worse, many have been successful. In the Americas, Xicano/as have yet to significantly challenge the hegemony of Euro-American society. Mariscal lays out this challenge when he writes candidly of the rising odds against indigenous resistance in the Americas: “Faced with such an intimidating environment and a radically different context than that of the Vietnam war era, Xicano/as and Mexicano/as will be ill served by relying too heavily on concepts, rhetoric and practices devised by an earlier generation of activists.”³⁷ How Xicano/as accomplish this significant task in the United States first depends on the ability of Meso-Americans to educate and organize themselves for a successful challenge, a challenge predicated on developing new methods of community education and organizing based on indigenous epistemologies like the one used in the Tucson MAS program.

North American society overtly emphasizes skin color diversity, at the expense of social justice. The temptation to create a parallel corporate culture that is simply an economic mirror of the American way presents a great danger to anti-colonial Xicano/as and other indigenous people working to define and awaken the national liberation struggle. As the Xicano/a proportion in the population continues to grow the demand for political and cultural compromise strengthens, magnified by the lure of the economic advantages of becoming a bigger and more deeply assimilated part of the Western European power structure here in the United States.

To demand justice is to plainly say an injustice exists. The action of indigenous scholars or organizers, who abandon reformist calls for diversity to instead demand justice based in cultural and political power of indigenous sovereignty fundamentally challenges their status as colonial subjects. These scholars and organizers present an oppositional critique of Western research methodologies, in essence placing the onus of responsibility on the colonizer by saying, “in the colonial process, the

37. Mariscal, *Brown Eyed*, 266.

native people are conditioned to a servile and oppressed status, which is part of the culture of the ghetto.”³⁸ Demanding justice means not only an end to colonialism but also to systemic oppression “in the forms and institutions of colonialism, and in its manifestations,”³⁹ including the racist, biased, and antiquated methodologies still in practice among allegedly enlightened Western scholars.

The demand for justice grows out of the domination/liberation dialectic. This argument hosts a tremendous number of misconceptions about the “fundamental nature” of Xicano/as and other indigenous peoples, all based on the current political framework Xicano/a/indigenous in which people find themselves. In his essay on internal colonialism, Mario Barrera writes that literature written by Western researchers of Xicano/a politics about Xicano/as shows that “they perceive [Xicano/as and indigenous peoples as having] weak leadership and lack of political organization. . . . [Western researchers] project solutions based on an analogy with European immigrants, calling for cultural assimilation and the politics of accommodation.”⁴⁰ Such “analysis” flourishes in the oppressive atmosphere of colonial management. While for many the idea of the United States as an imperial power and colonizer is hard to accept, without a doubt multiple populations in the U.S. have been constructed by means of colonial activity as subordinate either through law, educational attainment, incarceration, or simply the lack of value placed on their lives in general. Xicano/as, Mexicano/as, and other indigenous peoples, living on reservations and in the widespread and crushing poverty of the inner city, mirror the conditions of Third World countries

38. Adams, *Prison of grass*, 176.

39. Adams, *Prison of grass*, 188.

40. Mario Barrera, Carlos Munoz, & C. Ornelas, “The Barrio as an Internal Colony” People and Politics in Urban Society (ed.) Harlan Hahn Volume 6 *Urban Affairs Annual Reviews* Beverly Hills and London: Sage Publications (1972) , 482.

around the globe; these people pay the cost of U.S. imperialism, either as victims or foot soldiers in the imperial cause.

Therefore, academics and community organizers use the term internal colony to apply to specific criteria that can be useful in assessing the colonial status of “second-class citizens.” Barrera and others who have worked with the internal colony model argue that in this situation the relationship of the metropolis to the colony is less one of territory than of legal status,

A colony can be considered ‘internal’ if the colonized population has the same formal legal status as any other group of citizens and ‘external’ if it is placed in separate legal category. . . . Black and Chicano communities in the United States are internal colonies, since they occupy a status of formal equality, whatever the informal reality may be.⁴¹

The history of Xicano/as and other indigenous in the twentieth century is a history of settler colonialism, manifested through political terms “by a lack of control over the institutions of the barrio;”⁴² as stated earlier, the issue resides in the question of equality before the law. If such equality existed, *de facto* then “a lack of influence over those broader political institutions that affect the barrio”⁴³ would not exist and the current social, economic, and political climate for Xicano/as would be more equitable. Increasingly since Barrera’s work first appeared in the 1970s, a deepening situation in which “public and private institutions, in their dealings with Chicanos, are able to function in exploitive and oppressive ways.”⁴⁴

41. Barrera, “Internal Colony,” 483.

42. Ibid., 481.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

This is simply the starting point with the concept of anti-colonialism, the lingering hegemonic notion of “otherness” attributed early on to American natives that arose from the ignorance of European explorers. The very presence of indigenous natives in the Americas caused deep philosophical and religious problems. Bernard McGrane describes the puzzlement Europeans experienced on first contact with indigenous people: “were they human beings fundamentally similar to the people encountered in the Old World, or sub-humans with a completely different place in the ‘natural order’ of things?”⁴⁵

Cholo murder films and the settler colony

Boulevard Nights, produced in 1979 by Warner Brothers and written by Japanese-American Desmond Nakano⁴⁶ (who interestingly in 1992 co-wrote the Xicano/a gang classic *American Me*), deals on the surface with the socio-economic problems of disenfranchised East Los Angeles Xicanos and Xicanas living in and around low riders and the gang life. It tells the story of the Avila family: the mother Consuelo Avila, Raymond Avila the older brother, and Chuco Avila the younger brother. Both Raymond and Chuco have an established history with the local gang, the Big VGV (Varrio Vista Grande). Raymond is a respected, although “retired” member who has made the economic and social transition from cholo to Lowrider. Chuco is caught up heavily in the gang life

45. McGrane, *Beyond Anthropology*, 49.

46. Desmond Nakano is a third generation (Sansei) Japanese American. Born in 1953 to second generation (Nisei) parents who were interned at the Heart Mountain Relocation Center in Wyoming during World War II, Nakano is the screen writer of several films *American Pastime* (2007), *White Man's Burden* (1995), *American Me* (1992), *Last Exit to Brooklyn* (1989), *Black Moon Rising* (1986), *Body Rock* (1984), and *Boulevard Nights* (1979). Nakano has a history of dealing with racial and class issues in his films. His most recent film *American Pastime* is a fictionalized account of his families experience in intern camps during World War II. Nakano's father Lane Nakano starred in a 1951 film title “Go for Broke” about the history of the 442nd regiment. The only all American all Japanese fighting unit in World War II, Lane Nakano was also a volunteer in this regiment.

at the time. The stated main issues of the film revolve around the relationship between Raymund and Chuco, the encroachment of the 11th Street gang, a rival neighborhood clique making inroads on VGV territory and cruising low riders on Whittier Boulevard. The film documents the escalating violence where all of the action takes place within the barrio. The fight for territory, respect, and humanity takes place between the vato locos of the Big VGV and 11th Street gangs. Raymund in a desperate attempt to save Chuco from the violence of the street watches over him and attempts to guide him away from what appears to be a self-destructive path.

It would be easy to dismiss *Boulevard Nights* as a fantasy created by Anglo and Asian American attitudes and beliefs about the lives of Xicano/as in East Los Angeles. In reality, it describes a section of Xicano/as lives in the United States. However, the film makes a number of critical moves toward what Mariscal calls the “cultural nationalist impulse”⁴⁷ that allow us to examine the ramifications of personhood under colonialism and the inescapable choice between claiming humanity and continuing under colonial domination. *Boulevard Nights* also makes a representation of hyper-masculinity based in colonial oppression founded on what some would term a sensationalizing of Xicano/a life.

When first released *Boulevard Nights* became the target of protests in the Xicano/a community. Those protests centered on stereotype of characters as gang members, vato loco low riders, and car clubs, all looking for a way out of poverty that usually entailed moving to the suburbs. As colonial subjects, Xicano/as can use an analysis of these colonial stereotypes for dissecting the dominant discourse; acknowledging, and challenging those stereotypes can also help establish a new internal dialogue for Xicano/as acting in opposition to the colonial dialogue.

47. Mariscal, Brown Eyed, 120.

This internal dialogue of failure, Memmi tells us, depends on the fact the colonized are without national structures and as a result “cannot conceive of historical future for itself, it must be content with the passive sluggishness of its present.”⁴⁸ Memmi’s words are relevant to *Boulevard Nights*, as the film demonstrates how the production of culture (even pop culture) and examination of the daily life of the oppressed simultaneously challenge and expose the lethargy of oppression. To accomplish a Xicano/a return to history the grotesque surreal ideal of who Xicano/as are as a people, an identity created through the dehumanizing system of settler colonialism must be confronted. Only after the colonized acknowledges this distorted vision of them originates with the colonizer can they unravel its truth to reveal the true work of national liberation in progress. The ugly truth is this system of oppression offers no escape on an individual level.

From the opening scene Chuco is involved in a series of escalating confrontations with 11th Street gang members that eventually leads to both his mother’s murder, as well as his own. Chuco’s death, unlike his mother’s, is an intentional choice on his part. Some would argue his death results from Chuco’s addiction to senseless violence so often attributed to the Cholo and gang members, to oppressed people in general, as if they had a consistent choice to not respond as violently and thoughtlessly as they had been treated. As Albert Camus writes in the *Myth of Sisyphus*, “I see many people die because they judge that life is not worth living. I see others paradoxically getting killed for the ideas or illusions that give them a reason for living (what is called a reason for living is also an excellent reason for dying),”⁴⁹ Camus’ description applies to Chuco’s suicidal *raison d’être*: throughout the film Chuco’s character comes to an ever-increasing understanding of his own mortality and how it is tied to his reasons for living and ultimately dying.

48. Memmi, *Colonizer and Colonized*, 145.

49. Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and other essays*. trans. Justin O’Brien (Vintage International: New York, 1955), 4.

Chuco's choice

The film provides excellent examples of how settler colonialism has organized Xicano/a life and politics from 1848 to the present. *Boulevard Nights* exemplifies the colonial response to liberation cinema like *Please Don't Bury Me Alive*. In *Boulevard Nights*, Chuco is surrounded by artifacts of Xicano/a culture (statues of the virgin, political posters, several versions of the Mexica sunstone). It appears Chuco lacks a political understanding of those artifacts beyond their aesthetic value as room decorations and wall hangings. All of the political rhetoric is found in the scenery. Slavoj Zizek in his documentary *The Perverts Guide to Ideology* says it was Karl Marx who emphasized that an object or commodity is “never just a simple object that we buy and consume. A commodity is an object full of ideological even metaphysical niceties its presence always reflects an invisible transcendence.”⁵⁰ Zizek goes on to assert that this transcendence is the “real thing that cannot be scientifically determined. It is the mysterious something.”⁵¹ What is this mysterious something for Chuco and the Avila family? Clearly it is the hope of dignity and social advancement existing all around the Avilas but just beyond their grasp as they repeatedly fail to escape the confines of the barrio constructed for Xicano/as by five hundred years of colonization.

In this regard the characters at their most active when immersed in the “mysterious something” emanating from their Xicano/a surroundings. Their home furnishings are a natural and accepted part of the cultural landscape accepted and unremarkable to the extent they don't need to be commented on or explained they are an integral part of the scenery. Most significantly, all political dialogue is found in the spaces the Avila family inhabits and the artifacts they own. In spite of the deeply symbolic nature of his East Los Angeles landscape the greater meaning of Chuco's

50. Slavoj Zizek, *The Perverts Guide to Ideology*, directed by Sophie Fiennes, A P Film Productions

51. Ibid.

humanity escapes him. Instead he acknowledges the domination of colonialism and the toll it has had on him and his family in playing out his role as the vato loco. Trapped in a surreal, childish allegory of justice where young men fist fight each other over spray paint and stalk each other over the most trivial of slights Chuco is the embodiment of the colonial subject mindset. Desperate for personal approval and outside validation of his intelligence Chuco is constantly defending his actions with greater acts of violence. What is the meaning behind this violence?

Zizek writes, “Violence is never just abstract violence,”⁵² meaning the viewer of the violence sees it as abstract or random because they “lack a clear picture of what is going on.”⁵³ So while to the colonizer the violence of the colonized may seem abstract or without reasons to the colonized, all too familiar with these expressions of rage intimately understand how the barrio has become the default playground of the oppressed, the killing fields settler colonialism has devised to socially control the indigenous masses. This imagined, generalized inability of the oppressed to get along with each other of course never takes into account the absurd, surreal nature of poverty and illiteracy, the conditions sufficient to create a walking, waking nightmare where the colonized remain constantly trapped in a landscape over which they have little control beyond deciding whether to turn left or right or move forward. Indeed, as Zizek offers, “even the most brutal violence is the enacting of a certain symbolic deadlock.”⁵⁴ Chuco’s violence, the violent setting of his life is symbolic of the deadlocked relationship between the colonizer and the colonized before the national liberation movement.

52. Zizek, *Ideology*, DVD.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid.

“I ain’t no chavala”

Chuco faces a powerful internal paradox: a deepening awareness of his own looming mortality versus the potential future of the Avila family. As Camus tells us, “it is hard to fix the precise instant, the subtle step when the mind opted for death, it is easier to deduce from the act itself the consequences it implies.” It is within Chuco’s mental wrestling we, as the outside observers of Chuco’s growing awareness, see the daily battle between conformity to the colonizer paradigm and assimilation. Chuco’s internal struggle is revealed with the oft-repeated phrase, “I ain’t no chavala [little girl].” In the final scene, Raymond, driving a fatally wounded Chuco to the hospital asks, “Why’d you do it Chuco? Why?” meaning why did Chuco go alone in pursuit of the 11th Street murderers of their mother. Chuco replies very succinctly, “for you.” Chuco makes the ultimate sacrifice for Raymond because he sees the potential for family survival within the relationship between Raymond and Shady. A new beginning foreshadowed by the sacrifices made as Xicano/as struggle out of colonialism toward their return to history. Chuco chooses to die and in doing so ends the supposed abstract nature of the violence he has endured and perpetrated concretizing that violence within the liberation struggle, the struggle for the future.

And while it may seem on many levels this stilted exchange is perhaps a plea for reassurance it moves the viewer directly to the crux of the situation—Chuco’s growing awareness of the absurdity of his existence under colonialism and the necessity of ending it as a sacrifice to the future of the Avila family who acts as a proxy for the Xicano/a community at large. After missing Raymond’s wedding day, Chuco explains, “I just get real mad sometimes and I don’t know what to do. I just get so fucking mad and I want to do something but I don’t know what. So then I fuck up and do something dumb.”⁵⁵ It is Chuco’s inability to articulate his growing dread that stands as

metaphor for the silence of the colonized, the process of development the colonized go through until they reach the stage of vocalization—Fanon’s literature of combat.

Chuco has looked behind the curtain, glimpsing what Memmi calls the “great void” of history. Chuco recognizes that his existence as a gangbanger mirrors the condition of the colonized, which experience history as a frozen moment in a historical void where “nothing else happens in the life of that people. Nothing peculiar to their own existence that deserves to be retained by the collective consciousness and celebrated.”⁵⁶ Acknowledging the grotesque absurdity of his situation, Chuco claims the freedom produced by the dread of the choice between life and death as a reward—the reward being his recognized and self-embraced manhood. Chuco sees beyond this frozen moment to a new future, one containing the possibility of life and nation. As the sacrifice for the future, Chuco has but one job. This is evidenced by his inability to complete any of the business he has with his family, his homeboys, or his enemies, with one exception—the killing of his 11th Street opponent, the murderer of his mother—after which Chuco dies. Chuco is tormented by his unfinished business, by the expanding lack of fulfillment and longing and by his growing awareness he will conclude his affairs by dying. Then and only then will he escape the brutal oppression of the colonial system.

Chuco’s apparent fate is what Søren Kierkegaard calls “precisely the unity of necessity of chance” he is a dreamer caught up in the nightmarish reality of colonialism. He experiences on every level the feeling of uncertainty, trying vainly to exercise some control over the nightmare landscape colonialism produces. This control is demonstrated in this brief exchange between Chuco and Raymond as they drive the city looking for their mother’s killer, “I’ve never been to the beach,”

55. Desmond Nakano, *Boulevard Nights*, directed by Michael Pressman. 1979. Burbank, CA: Warner Bros. 2009. DVD.

56. Memmi, *Colonizer and Colonized*, 148.

says Chuco, as he and Raymond drive by it. “Do you wanna see the beach?” says Raymond. “For what?” replies Chuco? Chuco is single minded about his fate. Nothing not even a pleasant detour will sidetrack him.

Chuco’s behavior is reminiscent of a dreamlike state as he stutters and lurches his way through every encounter, always watching, always one step behind the action, until with the bravado of invincibility Chuco takes center stage where a sort of distorted manhood created by colonialism is endemic. Xicano poet Marc Pináte in his poem *Searching for Cesar* tells us,

“In the urban fields del sexto sol a harvest of broken dreemz and disillusionment
is tended by young vatos and
warrior wanna-beez
who adorn their skins
 with placas,
 la virgen
 and harlequin jokers
 hoping this armor of ink
will hide their true faces.”⁵⁷

As Chuco’s moment of martyrdom draws near, his homeboys take him to see “old man Díaz,” the ancient, wheezing tattoo artist who will perform the final rites of passage from onlooker to partisan combatant. Díaz provides the last sacrament of ink for acceptance on the street. He decorates Chuco’s body with the symbol of the snake ready to strike, Chuco’s first and last addition to this “armor of ink” that provides him with the face of certainty: the striking visage of the cobra. In this way Chuco is decorated for death. He has received the indelible outward markings of this subjugated position.

Big Happy (the current leader of the VGV) tells Chuco he is going to “look good when we come down on 11th Street” echoing the bravado of the “warrior wanna-beez” decorated in this “armor of ink” making war against other colonized youth also trapped in shattering poverty and

57. Grito Serpentino, [Marc Pináte], “Searching for Cesar” on *Para La Gente*, 2001.

disenfranchisements of colonization. As Chuco suits up for battle in this new armor, the reality of his inevitable sacrifice crashes down. Big Happy tells Raymond in the next scene, “You see Chuco’s tattoo man. He’s the vato loco the craziest dude around.” The vato loco, the ultimate Xicano/a symbol of resistance to forced assimilation to the colonial system in which these young men and women live and die.

Pináte helps us to understand the acceptance and embrace of alienation from dominant society when he writes how

Y La Helen, Joséfina, y Lourdes all missed their
proms on account they were pregnant
pero a que les importaba eso
cholos y sus rucas were too cool for that
shit anyway, que no?⁵⁸

As Pináte asks, what does it matter? It matters within the unexpected sense of freedom where Chuco operates outside of the acceptable order of colonial assimilation, in the “urban fields del sexto sol a harvest of broken dreemz and disillusionment,” where the growing implication of freedom Kierkegaard and other existentialists call Dread or as Kierkegaard calls it “the unity of necessity and chance,” that consumes Chuco.

This “dizziness of freedom which occurs when the spirit would posit the synthesis, and freedom then gazes down into its own possibility,”⁵⁹ comes from understanding your purpose—not fearing or running from it but embracing it as a participant recognizing for the first time one’s humanity transcends the boundaries of colonial existence. Within the limitations of this colonial landscape in the barrio, Chuco brawls to understand the struggle for humanity within the Xicanada. Chuco faces the dilemma of his immediate existence. The theme of his family’s survival (a

58. Ibid.

59. Soren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Dread*, translated by Walter Lowrie, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946) , 55.

secondary issue of the film) allows the emergence of the larger narratives surrounding land, sovereignty, and colonization. The temporal nature of Chuco's existence is dramatized through the different soundtracks played for him and for Raymond. The sounds of the oldies tethered Chuco's existence to his barrio. He is in effect, forever a man out of time, the "vato loco, the craziest guy around," the one constantly courting death through confrontation with other oppressed people and with the colonizer—or through embracing their own internal colonization.

Chuco cannot be bothered with the banalities of existence, such as school, a job, or even a romantic interest. From the moment he appears on the screen, he is wrestling with questions of existence and suicide. This may appear juvenile in its cinematic articulation of young machos fist fighting each other over spray paint; however, in the context of colonial existence this behavior is read as a calculated stance toward survival. Like most colonized individuals, the true brilliance of their existence is directed toward survival—of culture, self, and family. It is the intimate relationship of the oppressed with daily survival the colonizer finds the most disturbing and compelling, hence the routine fetishtizing and distorted image of indigenous masculinity and the idea of animal power oppression creates.

One surprising aspect of this film is how much information the setting conveys. Dialogue is terse and jerky—on many levels, the viewers fill in the blanks through personal experiences and preconceptions about life in the Barrio. In the following exchange driven by the machoist attitudes ruling his environment Chuco rebuffs Raymond when Raymond warns Chuco of his impending death. After Raymond tells Chuco 11th Street is looking for him, Big Happy, with an unsolicited response, replies to Raymond with classic cholo swagger.

Big Happy:	Hey we know they've been looking for him. So what? VGV takes care of it's own.
Raymond:	(To Chuco) Hey I want you to stay off the Boulevard for a while.
Big Happy:	(Sneers)
Chuco:	Eh. I'm firme with my brothers ese.

Big Happy: All right! Hey Raymond you see Chucos tattoo man. He's the vato loco the craziest dude around. Hey, I heard you got hit up man by those fucking putos from 11th Street street, hey don't worry about it we understand there were a lot of dudes around and you were with your ruca but we're gonna take care of it for you alright.

Raymond: It's none of your business.

Big Happy: Oh wow. I don't understand. Some dude hits you up and you ain't gonna do nothing about it? You ain't gonna come with us? What are you—some chavala or something?

Raymond: Hey, you wanna find out ese?

Big Happy: Hey, all I know is that when a dude gets hit up and he doesn't do nothing about it—he's ranking on his own Barrio man. What, the hell, have we got? He's ranking on his Barrio and his homeboys.⁶⁰

The question “what, the hell, have we got?” is fundamental to the understanding of the Xicano/a colonial experience. Invasion and military conquest are foundational in the construction of “otherness” (identity understandable by Europeans) for indigenous peoples in the Americas. A construction Big Happy and the other cholos are constantly at odds with in terms of their bottom up critique of the Barrio in their role as defenders of VGV land. Colonialism in the Americas is a continuing project of European modernization. The intellectual reimagining of indigenous people, through pseudo social science like anthropology along with the mass appropriation of their material resources by the colonizer, is the grandfather of international capitalism and globalization. For Europeans both during the initial contact and today, “societies that were other than our own were actually primitive expressions of our own society. . . . Anthropology transformed The Other into being a concrete memory of the past.”⁶¹ The desire to transform indigenous society into European society is deeply rooted in the ideology of the Enlightenment, according to anthropologist Bernard McGrane.⁶²

60. Nakano, *Boulevard Nights*, DVD.

61. McGrane, *Beyond Anthropology*, 94.

62. Ibid.

Escaping colonial domination

When indigenous peoples were conquered and categorized as primitive by Europeans this classification served as justification for colonial exploitation through the discourse that “primitive people are not the sort of thing that can be ‘discovered’: ‘primitives’ are made not found. . . . Progress produces primitives; primitives do not prove progress. Primitives are progress, the dark, velvety, necessary reverse underside of the concept.”⁶³ This statement helps us to understand the foundation of anti-colonial resistance in the Americas: how the greatest lies of the conquest: the imposition of religion, culture, law, and humanity have, in spite of five hundred years of genocide, been of benefit to the original inhabitants of this land.

Raymond is not afraid as suggested by Big Happy. He is attempting to turn this very public attack by Eleventh Street into a private event. However, the public nature of oppressions within the panopticon of the barrio continuously reasserts itself over his wishes; the boulevard landscape unfolding like the eternity of a dream as the surreal lowriders carrying the hopes of the Xicano—those magical machines as the embodiment of cholo magical realism. Although a surface reading of both films provides on many levels a reinforcement of the ostensibly criminal aspects of Xicano/a culture. Ward Churchill provides these underlying notions of resistance in the analysis below,

As Native Americans you must develop strategies for preserving your integrated past and for resisting the hegemonic encroachment of the capitalist way of life. Times are increasingly perilous. Critical analysis and action is imperative.⁶⁴

The survival strategies exhibited in both films are diverse. The social organization of the barrio in *Boulevard Nights* shows how a community under attack fights back culturally and physically. Pináte examines these survival strategies in his poem *Cruzín'* where he writes,

63. Ibid. 99.

64. Sipe, “Culture and Personhood,” 110.

so we cruized slow and low especially over speed bumps but then slow and low got twisted by forked tongues into describing La Raza themselves and not the cars we drove. And the whole pinche system came down on low riding but what were we to do? You see there were no plaza's in this place, no plazas with the big fountains in the middle with the benches for the pretty girls to sit on. No plazas in the melting pot. Just big wide streets and the most chignon caruches in the world.

The film ends on an apparent note of hopelessness as Shady and Raymond face the rising sun together, silent absorbed in their thoughts. But far from being a gloomy commentary on the futility of Xicano/a life in the Barrio the characters are rising up to meet their individual responsibilities—Chuco embracing in the finest tradition of heroism his role as the trade piece. The colonized agonize everyday over these life and death decisions formulated like mazes used to test the intelligence of rats.

While attitudes that prevailed centuries ago may seem counter-intuitive today, this history of imperial conquest must be examined in order to secure and understand the basis of anti-colonialism thought today. Bernard McGrane writes that contemporary scholars who classify the early writings of Europeans as ethnography are forgetting that in the sixteenth century the concept did not exist. Instead these writings and their descriptions of foreign peoples were “not experienced as being instances of primitive behavior or instances of different cultures, as in nineteenth-century anthropology. Rather their actions and behavior were experienced as being manifestations of barbarism and savage degeneracy—a hybrid composite of Christian ‘nature’ and Christian ‘evil’.”⁶⁵ The establishment of indigenous peoples as non-human sets the stage for what would happen under settler colonialism. Even to understand the words (“primitive,” “savage,” “heathen”) used by Europeans to describe them shows how the initial contact set a dangerous and often deadly precedent for natives. McGrane writes

65. McGrane, *Beyond Anthropology*, 17.

Columbus, rather, initiated the paradigm revolution in geography and cosmography whereby ‘America’ *and also the world that could be contain such as entity* were slowly constructed. Columbus ‘discovery of America’ that was always silently there (merely hitherto unknown), but rather a profound paradigm revolution in the science and practice of geography and the geographical imagination.⁶⁶

We can also discern from the current public outcry concerning Mexican immigration in the United States that, even when used as a simple metaphor by progressive Xicano/as, the notion of Aztlán and national unity outside of United States hegemony is in no way reconcilable with the geographic and political imagination of European-Americans who believe when Xicano/as seek Aztlán, those Xicano/as are indicating the United States is not a redeemable project—as a result of this stance Xicano/as become apostates to the creed of American Exceptionalism.

Another aspect of Fanonian thought lies with the revitalization of national culture. Fanon is explicit; he means fighting for a national culture is to “fight for the liberation of the nation” he goes on to link the people to this new culture when he says, “there is not another fight for culture which can develop apart from popular culture.”⁶⁷ It is, however, within the binary of culture/cultureless that the insidiously reactionary nature of mestizaje within the Mexican and Xicano/a context, as the regressive notion of the blending of two distinct civilizations, becomes apparent.

Fanon speaks directly to colonial options like mestizaje charging, “A national culture under colonial domination is a contested culture whose destruction is sought in a systematic way.”⁶⁸ As the centuries pass Fanon maintains all that remains of the original culture is “simply a concentration on a hard core of culture which is becoming more and more shriveled up, inert, and empty.”⁶⁹ Any

66. Ibid., 31.

67. Fanon, *Wretched*, 233.

68. Ibid., 237.

actions on the part of the colonial system to create cultural institutions are suspect. Both films show the stilted nature of barrio life in which the poverty of the Xicano/a makes the emergence of a new culture almost impossible.

To understand how this influences the future of indigenous resistance, it is important to understand that “Meso American civilization is not the product of the intrusion of foreign elements unknown in the region, but, rather, of cumulative development based on local experiences.”⁷⁰ If descendants of a Meso-American culture continue to develop Xicano/a culture, the survival of plans for the reclamation and redistribution of the land to indigenous communities within the United States survives. Fanon provides a broader vision of why mestizaje as a pillar of colonial tradition and identity is fatal to revitalizing indigenous movements in the Americas Culture. In its essence revolutionary culture opposed to custom, for custom, as described earlier is always the deterioration of culture. The desire to attach oneself to tradition or bring abandoned traditions to life again does not only mean going against the current of history but also opposing one’s own people.⁷¹

It begins with a reclaiming of history and culture. Since everything about the colonized is devalued, there is a gap in understanding the history of the oppressed. Devaluation erases and distends significant action since it is almost impossible to understand or assess a given situation without some prior knowledge about previous circumstances.

As Mariscal points out concerning recent efforts at indigenous revitalization “ethnic and national identities in the United States have only begun the dramatic process of transformation whose ultimate conclusion we can only begin to imagine.”⁷² This type of understanding about the

69. Ibid., 238,

70. Bonfil-Batalla, *México Profundo*, 8.

71. Fanon, *Wretched*, 224.

recouping of indigenous ways is becoming increasingly important as the Xicano/a population struggles to maneuver itself down the path of re-Indianization. When viewed through the lens of anti-colonial struggle we see a system of oppression that is “not simply content to impose its rule upon the present and the future . . . emptying the native’s brain of all form and content”⁷³ but must imposed strict physical limitations on the colonized to ensure their rule. We should understand within the Xicano/a Meso-American community the goal is not to struggle with White Americans about multicultural reform or whether Indigenous peoples belong in Anglo society as a part of a greater American multiculturalism. The political and cultural goal is to facilitate an internal dialogue among the oppressed working to build the will of the people to resist dominant colonial discourses like mestizaje. Discourses that argue in favor of cultural submission and against reestablishing indigenous discourses centering on Meso-American and Northern native identity in their multiplicities. Alfred helps us to understand the reasoning behind asserting an indigenous identity:

Bringing it all together, being indigenous means thinking, speaking and acting with conscious intent of regenerating one’s indigeneity. Each indigenous nation has its own way of articulating and asserting self-determination and freedom...as indigenous peoples, the way to recovering freedom and power and happiness is clear: it is time for each one of us to make the commitment to transcend colonialism as a people, and for us to work together as peoples to become forces for Indigenous truth against the lie of colonialism.⁷⁴

Where does the construction of this authentic indigenous identity in the Americas begin? An important part of all of this is to consider Fanon’s statement concerning the dismissive behavior of colonialism toward indigenous cultures: “colonialism did not dream of wasting its time in denying the existence of one national culture after another. Therefore the reply of the colonized people will

72. Mariscal, *Brown Eyed*, 266.

73. Fanon, *Wretched*, 210.

74. Alfred, *Wasase*, 602.

be straight away continental in breadth.”⁷⁵ Winona La Duke in discussing the need for action on the part of indigenous movements who must not only “struggle against something, but they must also struggle toward something.”⁷⁶ This belief in the process of anti colonial continental solidarity is an important one to keep in mind. With the destruction of indigenous civilizations, many aspects (i.e. Education, religion, family structure) important to indigenous development both as a nation and as individuals were lost. Including in the Xicano/a liberation movement the conviction that “action alone can never provide the required answers. Only a unifying theory, a unifying vision of the alternative”⁷⁷ can create the ideas, theories, and beliefs of a pan-indigenous effort strong enough to create an indigenous resurgence. Xicano/as can begin to experience how “human existence is not just an existence of negation but an existence of not-yet-ness.”⁷⁸ One of becoming where the Xicano/a liberation movement can develop into a part of the greater pan-indigenous movement in the Americas through the understanding that “indigenusness is reconstructed, reshaped and actively lived as resurgence against the . . . processes of annihilation that are inherent to colonialism.”⁷⁹

By understanding Xicano/as as indigenous peoples with a national culture, past and colonial legacy, it is clear the onus to prove their humanity was on Indigenous people from the initial contact with Europeans. Fanon points to the ongoing dehumanization of the indigenous in no uncertain

75. Fanon, *Wretched*, 212.

76. Winona LaDuke, “Preface Natural to Synthetic and Back Again,” in *Marxism and Native Americans*, edited by Ward Churchill. Boston, South End Press (1985), vi.

77. Ibid.

78. John Holloway, *Change the world without Taking Power: The Meaning of Revolution Today*, Ann Arbor, Pluto Press, 2005, 152.

79. Alfred & Corntassle, “Being Indigenous,” 612.

terms when he writes “the terms the settler use when he mentions the native are zoological terms . . . the yellow man’s reptilian motions, of the stink of the native quarters, of breeding swarms, of foulness of spawn, of gesticulation.”⁸⁰ It is because of this perceived danger that the colonizer must always place the subjugated colonized in a state of simplicity or nature—which makes denying their humanity and ability to self-govern a responsible act of oversight by the colonizer.

During this moment of self-awareness we find the native “knows that he is not an animal.”⁸¹ At this moment of revelation the colonized subject “realizes his humanity and he begins to sharpen the weapons with which he will secure its victory.”⁸² While Fanon is clear about the violent nature of the decolonizing process it is safe to assume he was speaking both metaphorical and literally. At this moment the oppressed reject their bestial status and resistance begins with a reclaiming of history and culture. We are taught the problem is that “history is also about justice, that understanding history will enlighten our decisions about the future”⁸³ since everything about the colonized is devalued, there is a gap in understanding the history of the oppressed. This gap demonstrates the point that “history is about power. In fact history is mostly about power”⁸⁴ a significant statement since it is almost impossible to understand or assess a given situation without some prior knowledge about previous circumstances. History is so often equated with leveling power in multicultural United States society we sometimes forget most history “is the story of the powerful and how they became powerful, and then how they use their power to keep them in

80. Fanon, *Wretched*, 42.

81. Ibid., 43.

82. Ibid.

83. Smith, *Decolonizing Methodology*, 34.

84. Ibid.

positions in which they can continue to dominate others.”⁸⁵ This ability to control or dominate historical narrative shapes the self-understanding of a group of people is the bedrock of colonial domination.

The political cultural development of a colonized people moving toward national liberation while building political structures and supporting indigenous resistance is the inevitable response to centuries of violent negations by the colonizer. Fanon’s writings present a clear vision of the process of decolonization “national liberation, national renaissance, the restoration of nationhood to the people, commonwealth: whatever maybe the headings used or the new formulas introduced, decolonization is always a violent phenomenon.”⁸⁶

In consideration of the above sentiment Taiaiake Alfred of the Onkwehonwe nation writes that for indigenous people “the challenge is to reframe revolt.”⁸⁷ In a scathing critique of current native leaders who a generation ago was, “positioned at the cutting edge of change” and now find themselves in a position where they have forgotten that the “ancestral movement always sought total freedom from domination and complete revolt against empire.”⁸⁸ Unlike Fanon, Alfred does not advocate armed insurrection and believes it is possible to construct a liberation movement “conceived within Onkwehonwe values” this movement must be “formulated as a spiritual

85. Ibid.

86. Fanon, *Wretched*, 35.

87. Alfred, *Wasase*, 28.

88. Ibid.

revolution . . . a political action . . . to remake the entire landscape of power and relationship to reflect truly a liberated post-imperial vision.”⁸⁹

Alfred calls this movement “Wasase—our warrior dance” his description is compelling. “Wasase is spiritual revolution and contention. It is not a path of violence. Yet, this commitment to non-violence is not pacifism either. This is an important point to make clear: I believe there is a need for morally grounded defiance and non-violent agitation combined with the development of a collective capacity for self-defense, so as to generate within the Settler society a reason and incentive to negotiate constructively in the interest of achieving a respectful coexistence.”⁹⁰

89. Ibid., 27.

90. Ibid., 28.

CHAPTER FIVE—FILMING XICANO/A INSURGENCY

Mestizaje as an ideology has shaped indigenous notions of identity over the past five centuries by privileging Western civilization as the dominant paradigm in Meso-America. This chapter directly interrogates the relationship between the myth of mestizaje and the nation building through a national literature specifically naming mestizaje as anti-indigenous and pro-settler. Also, this chapter deals with cinematic examples of merging resistance theories like those discussed earlier with a burgeoning nationalist identity based on indigenous identity where the destruction of this racial paradigm is fundamental to the political and cultural understanding of Xicano/as.

Arising from the “conquest,” the belief in the fusion of two distinct civilizations, through the mixing of Spanish and indigenous blood, engendered a complicating factor preventing Xicano/as from understanding the recent history of México. Mexican anthropologist Guillermo Bonfil-Batalla characterizes this situation as a “story of permanent confrontation between those attempting toward the path of Western civilization and those, rooted in Mesoamerican ways of life, who resist.”¹

Although the concept of mestizaje has festered in Mexican thought since the children of Cortes and Malintzin (Malinche) were born, mestizaje officially entered the present day Mexican school curriculum in the early part of the twentieth century, as part of a nation building effort coming out of the Mexican Revolution. José Vasconcelos, then National Secretary of Education, provided the driving force for introducing the concept, a giant step down “the path of Western civilization.”²

Any current discussion of mestizaje must include the theory and colonial practice of de-Indianization and attempt to reintroduce an alternative vision for positioning Xicano/a identity.

1. Guillermo Bonfil-Batalla, *México Profundo: Reclaiming a Civilization*, Philip A Dennis, trans, University of Texas Press, Austin, (1996), xv.

2. Ibid.

This newly defined identity would be founded on re-Indianization, along a continuum embodying the total perspectives of Xicano/as as carriers of a Meso-American culture. Re-Indianization is much more suited to the evolving political state of Xicano/as in the United States. For Xicano/a identity to escape the confines of an oppressive European/Indian binary, a discussion of mestizaje must investigate and incorporate multiple subject positions on a spectrum of identity characteristics and possibilities. It must also acknowledge that, as Ronald Niezen argues, “culture is a verb, not a noun, a process or a thing in itself. But the outcome of cultural overlapping and contestation.”³ Culture is a “process of sharpening boundaries, drawing identities more firmly, making unequivocal the division between those who belong and those who do not.”⁴ This sharpening can once the existence, indeed the prevalence of Meso-American culture throughout México and the United States is recognized.

Let us state from the outset as a theoretical and racial framework for understanding Xicano/a identity, mestizaje cannot give Xicano/as or other Meso-American people the key to intellectual or physical freedom. As a meta-narrative rationalizing colonial domination in México, mestizaje functions only to maintain the status quo for Meso-America—colonial subjugation. Mestizaje contextualizes and reinforces the framework of indigenous defeat, conquest, and physical submission to European interlopers. Bonfil-Batalla provides evidence of this, as well the continued resistance to subjugation, in his book *México Profundo*,

If the Indians had stopped being Indians in order to be fully incorporated into Western civilization, the ideological justification for colonial domination would have ended. Segregation and difference are essential for any colonial society. Unification, on the other hand, whether by assimilation of the colonized to the dominant culture

3. Ronald Niezen, *The Origins of Indigenism: Human Rights and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 6.

4. Ibid.

or through the perhaps improbable fusion of two civilizations, denies the root of the colonial order.⁵

By contrast, in *Mestizaje: Critical Use of Race in Chicano Culture*, Rafael Perez-Torres advances a view closer to Vasconcelos' traditionally accepted definition of mestizaje within Chicano Studies, concluding that the

Mestizo and mestiza body in Chicano critical discourse has helped forge an identity that highlights the relational and political dynamics of Xicano/a identity through the recognition of race and race mixture. This is why I believe it is important to emphasize race as foundational for understanding the significance of Xicano/a identity.”⁶

Over the past century the official doctrine of mestizaje is merely a failed attempt to erase the Meso-American civilization and culture from the discourse of resistance, clearly showing that “the presence of two distinct civilizations implies the existence of different historical plans for the future.”⁷ Herein lies the crux of this dispute. What do race and genetics have to do with culture? Perez-Torres espouses a line of racialized reasoning that assumes implicitly the genetic nature of culture. This notion deeply suffuses José Vasconcelos' *La Raza Cosmica*, which served to codify the official doctrine of mestizaje after the Mexican Revolution and has dominated Mexican and Xicano/a dogma since. As practitioners of Xicano/a culture involved in an ongoing confrontation that “does not happen between cultural elements but between the social groups that bear them, use them and develop them.”⁸ Recognition of this status provides a path toward understanding this confrontation and the role Xicano/as occupy within this debate.

5. Bonfil-Batalla, *México Profundo*, 63.

6. Rafael Perez-Torres, *Mestizaje: Critical Uses of Race in Chicano Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2006), 14.

7. Bonfil-Batalla, *México Profundo*, 62.

The film *Pancho Goes to College* examines this clash of civilizations within the framework of a college campus in the Southwestern United States. By examining the film's rhetorical moves through the lens of revolutionary Xicanismo and Third World liberationist Franz Fanon's writings on the colonized creating a revolutionary culture, through the development of literature, arts and writing leads to national liberation, Xicano/as can observe similarities between the politico-cultural anti-colonial struggles of Africa and the Americas. The film supplies a context by which to resolve the question of whether the racialized identity of genetic mestizaje can or cannot offer a viable conduit to national liberation.

Understanding and accepting Xicano/a identity as a carrier of Meso-American civilization in terms of Fanon's theories on the process of national liberation one can clearly see a backlash by the colonizer against a solidifying Xicano/a nation. The evidence includes the explosion of nativist sentiment literature, websites, and newscasts, the presence of Minutemen on the United States-México border, and the enactment of increasingly racist legislation designed to further enfeeble the Xicano/a population.

As mentioned in chapter one, Arizona State legislators in 2008 proposed a bill that reads in part, "Public tax dollars used in public schools should not be used to denigrate American values and the teachings of western civilization."⁹ The lawmakers sponsoring this bill have named as their targets such entities as Chicano/a Studies Programs in the universities and student groups like Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano/a de Aztlán (MEChA). The bill lists activities that would become illegal in the State of Arizona, saying

This state shall not include within the program of instruction any courses, classes or school sponsored activities that promote, assert as truth or feature as an exclusive

8. Bonfil-Batalla, *México Profundo*, xvi.

9. Arizona State Bill 2281, <http://www.azleg.gov/legtext/49leg/2r/bills/hb2281s.pdf>.

focus any political, religious, ideological or cultural beliefs or values that denigrate, disparage or overtly ENCOURAGE dissent from the values of American democracy and western civilization, including democracy, capitalism, pluralism and religious toleration.¹⁰

The legislation demonstrates the continuing attack on Mexicano/as and Xicano/as by colonizers, whose denigrating references to the “Reconquista” and “Aztlán” bear the tone of physical and political challenge.

At this point, we must ask if the need by Xicano/as to maintain centers of education promoting their history, culture, and politics perhaps designates an unconscious tone of defiance or even a desire for confrontation as part of this distinct plan for the future. While *Pancho Goes to College* is not about the growing border conflict between the United States and México, it does provide a glimpse into how the Xicano/a community is increasing in understanding of its Meso-American culture.

Summary of Pancho Goes to College

Tucson based filmmaker Ruben Reyes¹¹ tells the tale of a young Xicano/a caught up in his basic mistrust of other people, what he perceives to be their motives, and ultimately how his worldview positions him in relation to his Meso-American heritage. Pancho, a young college freshman, came straight from the fields of Watsonville, California to attend college in Arizona.¹² In

10. Ibid.

11. Ruben Reyes is originally from Yuma, Az., where he grew up as a farm worker active with the United Farm Workers. He has for many years worked as the chief of staff for Arizona Congressman Raul Grijalva.

12. Watsonville has been the site of tremendous unionizing battles for farm workers over the past forty years. Most recently, beginning in 1997, the United Farm Workers began organizing strawberry pickers in the Imperial Valley. Watsonville was one of the main sites of conflict, not just between the UFW and the growers but also the UFW and their perennial adversary the Teamsters Union.

the opening scenes, Pancho hears his conscience, alternately represented by an imprisoned Cholo¹³ gang-banger and by Pancho's father, who at critical moments provides Poncho advice about the momentary situation. After meeting up with his cousin Bogie and roommate Emiliano, both members of a Movimiento Estudiantil Xicano/a de Aztlán (MEXA)¹⁴ styled group called Chicanos Contra el Mundo, Pancho settles in for his first semester.

Pancho is soon walking a disappointing line between his desire for one of the women in the group (Maya) and his natural inclination toward political apathy and mistrust. Pancho witnesses the conflict between Chicanos Contra El Mundo and the Hispanic College Republicans after surreptitiously following Maya into a Chicano Studies 101 class. Pancho experiences a series of situations with his roommates (male members of Chicanos Contra El Mundo) that test who he believes himself to be and challenge his fundamental ideas of how society functions and his basic notions of friendship.

In the final scene, a community march planned by Chicanos Contra El Mundo during the entire. Pancho had taken responsibility to arrange for United Farm Worker founder Dolores Huerta to speak at the accompanying rally, but his failure reveals to his Chicanos Contra El Mundo comrades his duplicity. In the final scene, his Cholo conscience reveals the depth of his internal conflict.

Chale homes, don't let them get to you like that you had to do what you had to do
and if they don't like it fuck 'em, fuck 'em all. Just come back to me, you and I ese

13. A cholo is a modern day Pachuco. I deal with the cholo mindset, culture and place in Xicano resistance in the fourth chapter.

14. Movimiento Estudiantil Xicano de Aztlán (MEXA) is a national Xicano student group formed in 1969 that has recently come under attack as part of WASP-originated Reconquista scheme in which MEXA is part of a vanguard of Nationalist organizations intent on reclaiming land in the Southwest.

controlamos todo we don't need these fucking changos. This is your home, your barrio you belong to me.¹⁵

As Pancho turns to walk away from the community's march and his friends, there can be no doubt whose voice has won the day. Throughout the movie, a Xicano/a context molds all identities. Interestingly, both groups representing antithetical political positions occupy a space within the Xicano/a community. Although the characters are attending a predominately white University, the struggle of the Xicanada is portrayed in a non-white context.

The film depicts young Xicano/as doing several things part of any nation-building project. First, learning and maintaining the basic myths and legends of the nation; learning how to engage in politics on the community and party level; developing conflicting discourses that coexist with the framework of the nation; recognizing the community is diverse and there is a struggle for control that exists outside of the Xicano/a relationship to other nations.

Read as a coming of age film, *Pancho Goes to College* depicts an identity crisis that reinforces the racial trope of mestizaje and the cultural struggle by a young Xicano against the hegemonic forces of higher education and white society. Yet internal identity battles between Raza provide the momentum of the film. White society, white people, white thought is not in debate; the antagonism within this film is between Xicano/a and Xicano/a. The initial scene in Chicano Studies 101 provides a good example of this internal conversation: the professor attempts an exercise to expose internalized racism by having the students in his class list the many different names by which Raza are known. After a heated exchange that almost results in blows between the Hispanic Republicans and Chicanos Contra el Mundo, the professor tells the class, "this exercise is used to prove how

15. *Pancho Goes to College* directed by Ruben Reyes (2007; Tucson, AZ: Reel Loco Production), DVD.

language is used to divide our Raza, identify these racist themes and cast them away all of you.”¹⁶

This call for understanding and identifying divisive identity myths is one of the most important messages of this film.

I can't stop being brown but I can stop being poor

Pancho is the battleground, as the film depicts a contest for his Meso-American soul. In Pancho, the acceptance of a personal Xicanismo and the rejection of radical political Xicanismo is evident. Pancho is Xicano, but he does not believe Aztlán is possible. The following exchange between Pancho and Maya reveals Pancho's deeply suspicious attitude toward political activity, when he says about Emiliano, “Personally, I think he is in it just for himself, that Chicano rap, it doesn't fool me.” Maya angrily asks Pancho if her “Chicano Rap” fools him. Maya also reminds Pancho at one point that “social justice is not a thing of the past, it is not a fad, it is not a college phase, we all contribute something to the movement.”¹⁷ This way of challenging each other politically, not because of racial and cultural authenticity but through a commitment to the survival of the Xicano/a community, represents forward movement for Xicano/a politics and its participants.

Like the other Xicano/as in the film, Pancho does not attempt to distance himself from his cultural-historical identity of being Xicano. In fact, he attempts to use what he considers an authentic Xicano/a farm worker identity to defend against charges of complacency and *vendidoism* when he says, “I paid my dues working in the fields.”¹⁸ Pancho is not a sellout; he simply inhabits an apathetic centric position on the political spectrum within the Xicano/a community or the Xicanada.

16. Reyes, *Pancho goes to college*, DVD.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

To deal with this Xicano/as must come to a common understanding of what is exactly meant by the term Xicanada. If the goal is to replace racialized descriptions like mestizaje, or at least drastically reconfigure this belief for purposes of political use, it is imperative to find new or different ways of defining the Xicano/a context. The Xicanada, simply put, is the whole of the Xicano/a community. The term Xicanada incorporates mestizaje but in this context privileges the indigenous, the Xicano/a as a carrier of Meso-American culture and all that goes into creating an anti-colonial identity.

Mestizaje, Bonfil-Batalla writes, teaches us that the conquest of the Americas ended via the fusion of two civilizations:

The problem can be understood in different terms: the mestizos are the contingent of “de-Indianized” Indians. “De-Indianization” is a different process from the biological one of racial mixture. To use the term mestizaje in different sorts of situations—for example, “cultural mestizaje”—carries the risk of introducing an incorrect view. It is an inappropriate way to understand non-biological processes, such as those that occur in the cultures of different groups in contact, within the context of colonial domination.¹⁹

Within the Xicanada the battle rages on, from that moment of initial violence and the confrontation of two distinct civilizations struggling against each other, those first penetrative acts infusing European thought with indigenous thought, until the present. The Xicanada, firmly established with Meso-American culture, has mutated, absorbing the totality of whom those invaders thought themselves to be, which for the most part remains intact.

In *Days of Obligation, An argument with my Mexican father* (1992), Xicano author Richard Rodríguez takes on this idea, writing, “I take it as an Indian achievement that I am alive, that I am Catholic, that I speak English, that I am an American. My life began, it did not end in the sixteenth

19. Bonfil-Batalla, *México Profundo*, 17.

century.”²⁰ Rodríguez is right, even though he speaks only in terms of mestizaje. I would take his words one step further and say the day of the mestizo is over. It is time not to restore lost glory but create anew by embracing a new history. Rodríguez himself, whether he likes it or not, can be found within the Xicanada and in some ways cements his own position, when he writes.

Where then, is the famous conquistador?
We have eaten him, the crowd tells me, we have eaten him with our eyes.
I run to the mirror to see if this is true.
It is true.²¹

Through the centuries, the sting of defeat lessens and becomes something different: a readiness to fight again, a will to rise and create, in this struggle of blood and hunger. Rodríguez writes that this is the joke Indians have played on the Spanish who “arrived with missionary zeal had no idea of the absorbent strength of Indian spirituality.”²² Pancho misses the point apparently Rodríguez has gotten: Meso-American culture survives.

Chicano Studies 101

Belief is the foundation of Nation. Pancho arrives at college with knowledge of Aztlán and the Reconquista although it is clear he does not accept or believe these myths. During his first confrontation with Emiliano, over an American flag that is hanging upside down under a Mexican flag, Pancho asks, “What’s up with Old Glory here?” Emiliano immediately responds, “What you know about Old Glory?” “She’s hanging upside down,” says Pancho, who clearly views this as disrespectful. The unstated speaks loudly; Pancho has no disagreement with the American flag being underneath the Mexican flag—just that it flies upside down. The dispute escalates when

20. Richard Rodriguez, *Days of Obligation: An Argument With My Mexican Father* (New York: Viking, Penguin, 1992), 24.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid., 20.

Emiliano declares that the United States is “screwed up” and Pancho replies that México is just as “screwed up.” After he has told Emiliano it is ironic that in México it is illegal to hang the flag upside down, Pancho’s first Chicano Studies lesson ends with this statement from Emiliano: “No, what’s ironic is a Chicano Mexicano, brown-faced brother acting like a flag-waving white imperialist colonizer in my own home, that’s ironic.”²³

This dialogue represents a classic confrontation between Western and Meso-American civilizations, one that is a direct product of *mestizaje*. The privileging of European culture and history also positioned many within the *mestizaje* to view disagreement with the United States (Western civilization) as disrespectful. Pancho, though, reveals a deeper conflict concerning feelings about political confrontation during his first war of words with Chicanos Contra el Mundo, when he says after a dispute with the College Republicans during which he was silent:

That wasn’t my problem back there; don’t even try to make it mine. I’m just not into that, no Xicano/a movement, no down for the brown, no marching, no protesting, that’s it, I paid my dues working in the fields. No Raza.²⁴

Through his silence, Pancho receives constant reminders of his social and political obligation to other Chicanos/Xicano/as through confrontations with the other characters, who espouse a Meso-American point of view.

In one instance, complaining to his Chicano Studies professor about the difficulty of college, Pancho is told he has an obligation, a duty “to carry the load for those of us who are not here, to represent those who didn’t have a choice, los tecatos, the gangbangers, the dropouts, las familias in generational poverty, los del casos, these are all people we once knew. The ones we left behind to

23. Reyes, *Pancho goes to college*, DVD.

24. Ibid.

be here.”²⁵ In this case, he means those victims of colonial structural oppression and domination that are not allowed within the framework of the socially successfully and integrated mestizo.

In the course of their political development, these Xicano/a characters find themselves struggling to situate themselves along a political continuum. The salient point is that they measure their position along this scale against one other. When the professor enters the class with the words “This is Chicano Studies 101, an introduction to Chicano history, culture and politics,”²⁶ it is clear regardless of their attachment to or detachment from the myth of Aztlán or the idea of self-determination, Xicano/as in Xicano/a Studies 101, Republicans, radicals and apathetic Xicano/as alike will be taught and educated on the basic myths and responsibilities of the Xicano/a citizen.

The film script makes constant references to Aztlán and revolution. In the final scene, consisting of a dialogue between Emiliano and Pancho, latter taunts the former about Aztlán, saying, “Revolution? Revolution? So what you gonna do? Take back Aztlán? All right. What are you going to do with it after that? The Indians aren’t going to be happy about that. You don’t get it, it ain’t about Aztlán, it never was. You have no clue.”²⁷

It is not enough to say that Pancho does not believe in Aztlán; the essential point here is that Pancho knows about Aztlán. He knows enough about it to say it will never happen. Pancho’s knowledge about Aztlán hardly seems noteworthy but it is a reflection of the persistence of the Aztlán myth and the growing cultural and political influence of the Xicanada. Perpetually couched in terms of loss, either of physical or cultural identity, literary works about mestizaje have become an accepted framework with which to explain the Xicano/a experience. As a people, Xicano/as face

25. Reyes, *Pancho goes to college*, DVD.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

the conundrum of how to develop an understanding of culture that moves Xicano/as past identity-based literature, dance, and song toward a culture of revolutionary expression and national liberation.

Pancho disputes the Xicano/a ability to reclaim, hold, and govern politically. Pancho separates himself from any responsibility to work toward any collective goals on the part of other Xicano/as, by attempting to make his position a material one: “I can’t stop being brown but I can stop being poor, and that is exactly where you’re going to end up Emiliano if you don’t give up your White Man versus Brown Man fight. Nobody thinks like that anymore bro—the Sixties are over.”²⁸

In this exchange, Pancho speaks with the voice of the colonizer. He characterizes political activity on the behalf of Meso-American culture as a losing proposition, both socially and economically, mimicking the ideological position of the colonizers: “White man versus Brown duality will result in poverty.”²⁹

In his, essay on “Culture and Personhood,” Robert Sipe writes, “Psychological and cultural colonization is an inevitable companion to economic colonization. No primitive or Native American culture opted freely for the American way of life.”³⁰ Pancho’s words, in contrast to Sipe’s, are further evidence of the deeply rooted conflict many Xicano/as feel when first faced with the realization of the clash of civilizations. It is also an indication of the enduring anti-colonial aspects of Meso-American culture that the descendants of the descendants still have open the choice between “opt[ing] freely for the American way of life” or continuing the fight. This fight Bonfil-Batalla would categorize as a new development in the “permanent confrontation.”

28. Reyes, *Pancho goes to college*, DVD.

29. Ibid.

30. Bob Sipe, “Culture and Personhood” in *Marxism and Native Americans*, edited by Ward Churchill. Boston, South End Press (1985), 110.

Party building and political territory

The groups Chicanos Contra El Mundo and the College Hispanic Republicans are both on a very basic level asserting political positions within Meso-American Xicano/a culture. These groups symbolize a growing sophistication in Xicano/a identity politics that is increasingly well represented, particularly on the Internet, where the ever-expanding notion of popular education is having a real impact on the promulgation of the Aztlán myth and on organizations dedicated to advancing or defeating this idea. For Pancho and the others, their place within this evolving debate is unquestioned in their own minds. In one revealing exchange between Emiliano and Omar of the College Republicans begins when.

Chicanos Contra El Mundo appear before the University's student council requesting money supporting their programming for the semester. Omar, a member of this board, begins by identifying himself as "Omar Fuentes, Hispanic Young Republicans," which Emiliano immediately counters, saying, "Emiliano Macemamitli Juarez representing Chicanos Contra El Mundo, the real Chicano student organization on campus." Emiliano clearly uses his indigenous name to align his Xicano/a identity with its Meso-American heritage. Omar sneezes "Bullshit!" loudly in reply.³¹ Omar never denies his own place in the Xicano/a community but he contests Emiliano's claim to authenticity. He in fact claims to the Minority Student Council to be the representative of the Xicano/a community.

The confrontation over who, the mestizo or the Meso-American, speaks with the authentic voice of the people continues as directly following this scene, the members of Chicanos Contra el Mundo make a significant leap in their understanding of party building as they discuss being turned down by the Minority Student Council for funding

31. Reyes, *Pancho goes to college*, DVD.

Maya: I say we forget about the money. I mean it's going to hurt us but it won't kill us. We should just take our events off campus.
Emiliano: Orale, I like the idea. But what can we do that won't cost us much?
Maya: I say we organize a Marcha, in our own barrios away from this place.³²

This conversation represents one of the main narratives for understanding the film and political positions Chicanos Contra El Mundo espouses and attempts to practice. The students are endeavoring to create organization, at the very least mobilize politically away from campus. They have recognized the necessity of engaging the entirety of the Xicanada, not just confining their efforts to the campus where funding might be available. The contrast between the two groups grows after the first confrontation, when Bogie says about the Hispanic College Republicans, "These Locos? They're ruthless. Don't let their yuppie appearance fool you. They'll put you to sleep. Get your girl, drink you beer, fart on your food and then some dude, they're organized bro. We need to get organized."³³

Even though Bogie's comments are humorous, the underlying message is that their mestizo political enemies (organization) are better prepared and perhaps more motivated to defend their beliefs and ideology. As defenders of the dominant colonial discourse, it is only natural for the College Hispanic Republicans to appear ascendant within the framework of a colonial institution. In short, the republicans (mestizos) are building a program in opposition to Chicanos Contra El Mundo (Meso-Americans), which they can clearly articulate to other members in the same colonial condition.

Frantz Fanon profiled this confrontation between colonized people when he wrote, "The last battle of the colonized against the colonizer will often be that of the colonized among

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

themselves.”³⁴ Certainly, the political crisis of a colonized people moving toward national liberation while building political structures and supporting indigenous resistance to colonization is the inevitable violent outcome of drawing borders.

Both the mass media and academic literature create stereotypical political portraits of Xicano/as that shape the contemporary vision of the Xicanada. These portrayals assume increasing importance as the Xicano/a population maneuvers through the complexities of re-Indianization. The Xicano/a Meso-American community must reach an understanding not to squander precious energy contending with Euro-Americans about reform or whether Xicano/as belong in Anglo society as a part of a greater American multiculturalism. Rather, as a goal the promotion of an internal dialogue that shakes the will of the people to reject colonial discourses around mestizaje in favor of Meso-American identity should be embraced.

It is time to dispense with cultural and racial identifiers like mestizaje as means to build solidarity throughout the community to oppose social and economic oppression. Mestizaje as a racial paradigm conceived by Europeans that privileges European conquest, and indigenous defeat and racial and cultural subjugation. Batalla urgently points out that for many Meso-Americans the loss of a group’s “original collective identity” involves de-Indianization but “does not necessarily imply the loss of Indian culture.”³⁵ For many Xicano/as, attempting to imagine themselves as sovereign people, the question “How do I decide between my Spanish or indigenous heritage?” initially may hold some validity. However, as discussed earlier, the process of self-discovery is itself an indication of the need for further development.

Positioning mestizaje as a racialized historical theory Perez-Torres writes:

34. Sartre, “Colonialism,” 88.

35. Bonfil-Batalla, *México Profundo*, xviii.

Mestizaje occupies a valued position in Chicana critical discourse because, as a descriptive term and cultural practice, it helps embody the idea of multiple subjectivities. Moreover, mestizaje signals the embodiedness of history. . . . At the same time, it signals how the body is tied to a colonial history of racial hierarchy whose power relations already constrain and guide the body.³⁶

Accepting and internalizing mestizaje limits Xicano/as to a specific colonial discourse, which constantly reminds and reinforces national defeat and impurity. Living as mestizos in the milieu of racial and cultural defeat means building Xicano/a struggles and organizing on a foundation of deficiency, disaster, and racial impurity—rather than on accomplishments as carriers of a Meso-American culture and identity. As a term, mestizaje implies a settling of differences, a cessation of hostilities; the mestizo ideal embraces the European and the European conquest in a final act of absolution. Embracing mestizaje demands acceptance of colonial domination.

Having analyzed shortcomings of mestizaje, the question remains: is it possible to learn, maintain, and propagate the basic myths and legends of a Xicano/a within that framework? Can Xicano/as engage in resistance politics on the community and—a future—party level, while recognizing the diversity of the Xicano/a community and the concomitant struggle for control within that community, a struggle independent of the Xicano/a relationship to White America? Viewed within the historical context of mestizaje, the cultural and racial schizophrenia of the Xicano/a community makes sense, the given the massive energies exerted by United States cultural and political forces to enforce its domination over indigenous culture and politics. The rich political complexities Reyes offers and the experiences of diverse communities across the country do not correlate with the story that Mexicans and other Latinos arise somehow from a simple fusion of Spanish and indigenous people.

36. Perez-Torres, *Mestizaje*, 3.

Emiliano, Pancho, and the College Republicans (as members of the Xicanada) interact with one another as members of an oppressed group participating in an embryonic nation-building project. While it may seem strange to include the College Republicans in this equation the reality of nation building is the existence of conservative forces. The spectrum of the Xicanada is always intact. The paramount question becomes: whose politics during the national liberation movement will become ascendant?

Mestizaje and literature of combat

No colonial system draws its justification from the fact that the territories it dominates are culturally non-existent. You will never make colonialism blush for shame by spreading out little-known cultural treasures under its eyes. . . . Culture has never the translucidity of custom; it abhors all simplification. In its essence it is opposed to custom, for custom is always the deterioration of culture.³⁷

In her article on “Born in East LA,”³⁸ Alicia Gaspár de Alba postulates that Cheech Marin, as the writer, director, and main character (Rudy Robles), uses the device of “mistaken identity as [a metaphor] for a state of cognitive disorientation, a psychological effect of colonization . . . call[ed] cultural schizophrenia.” She suggests that, “cultural schizophrenia is the presence of mutually contradictory or antagonistic beliefs, social forms, and material traits in any group whose racial, religious, or social components are a hybrid (or mestizaje) of two or more fundamentally opposite cultures.”³⁹ While her definition of cultural schizophrenia is helpful, at least on the psychological

37. Fanon, *Wretched*, 223, 224.

38. This film was written and produced by comedian Cheech Marin in the late 1980s. The basic premise of the film is that Marin, a Los Angeles Xicano, is caught up in an immigration raid and in spite of his being an United States citizen he was sent back to México. The film chronicles his humorous attempts to cross the border.

39. Alicia Gaspár de Alba, “Born in East LA: An Exercise in Cultural Schizophrenia”, in Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, eds. *The Latino/a Condition: A Critical Reader*, New York University Press, New York, 1998, pp 226-227

level, in understanding the colonial condition, it helps the reader understand how academia has viewed and shaped mestizaje for the past century.

Pancho Goes to College represents Fanon's final "fighting phase" by engaging in a direct discourse with the community about social, political, and economic conditions. Xicano/as who came of age while in college in the 1980s and 90s experienced an explosion of indigenous/Meso-American thought, philosophy, and culture that challenges the prevailing Mestizo discourse in the Chicano Movement, even to the point of beginning to re-inscribe it as an re-Indianized Xicano/a Movement. Perez-Torrez associates this period with the term Indigenismo, which "enabled an identity of resistance, one deployed in response to a profound sense of disempowerment and alienation. Although the particular articulation of identity is extremely problematic, it nevertheless exemplifies a type of tactical subjectivity that responds to discrimination and political exclusion."⁴⁰

When in play with terms like Indigenismo and Meso-American, the identifier Xicano/a transcends the colonial expectation of mestizaje by opening the path to a different awareness of where Xicano/as, as carriers of Meso-American culture journey in a political sense. It evinces a broader significance that recalls Fanon's words concerning the role of academics and culture for oppressed peoples

The cultured native should not concern himself with choosing the level on which he wishes to fight or the sector where he decides to give battle for his nation. To fight for national culture means in the first place to fight for the liberation of the nation, that material keystone which makes the building of a culture possible. There is no other fight for culture which can develop apart from the popular struggle.⁴¹

The ultimate use of literature, poetry, media, and academia produced by the colonized should be, according to Fanon, in the struggle of national liberation. If Fanon is correct in asserting, "Custom

40. Perez-Torres, *Mestizaje*, 16.

41. Fanon, *Wretched*, 233.

is the deterioration of culture,”⁴² then as a politico-cultural community the most obvious of all Xicano/a ideological customs, the mestizo, must be sorted out. Because, as Perez-Torres puts it, mestizaje “embeds identity within systems of asymmetrical power relations, and it suggests mutability as mestiza and mestizo bodies enact new relational subjectivities arising from a history of racial conflict.”⁴³

An aspect of mestizaje, according to Perez-Torres, is an implied “sense of loss, a gulf between the potential and the possible [where] the social and historical exigencies of the mestizo body bind it to inequitable discourses about racial, class, gender, and sexual hierarchies.”⁴⁴ This appears to be the fatal flaw of mestizaje, since it can only help explain Xicano/a consciousness from a disadvantaged point of view. Based on Perez-Torres and Gaspár de Alba, there is no sense of creation outside of this ideological custom called mestizaje, since it embodies a totalizing self-vision for Xicano/as within the colonial paradigm: Xicanos and Xicanas exist because of mestizaje. So either they are the culturally schizophrenic children of the Chingada⁴⁵ doomed to walk the earth wailing in sorrow, overcome by a sense of loss of culture and nation—or Xicano/as are in fact carriers of a Meso-American culture, in permanent confrontation with Western civilization and colonial domination.

The final scenes of *Pancho Goes to College* provide excellent examples of both the mestizo sense of loss and the Fanonian push for national liberation as they come into direct conflict with

42. Ibid., 224.

43. Perez-Torres, *Mestizaje*, 7.

44. Ibid., 195.

45. The Chingada (literally the fucking) is a reference to the rape of Indian woman by Conquistadors specifically this legend begins with Malinche, Hernan Cortes female slave and interpreter and their sexual relationship.

each other. After running from a fight with the Hispanic College Republicans, Pancho finds himself walking home with Emiliano. They stop at a bar to get a drink, where Pancho immediately begins arguing with Emiliano

Pancho: Man what is it with you? You've had it in for me since the first day we meet. Only because I don't subscribe to your Raza bullshit, well you know what? Take a look; take a good look that's your Raza right there. (pointing toward a group of men drinking in the corner).

Again, Pancho emerges as the voice of the colonizer, as he has throughout the film, by challenging Emiliano's ideas about the nobility of Xicano/as. Pancho attempts to identify the men present in the bar as politically apathetic; he questions their readiness for political action of any kind, at the same time questioning Emiliano's intelligence for claiming other Xicano/as as his own. The question of nation and mestizaje leads to an irreparable separation:

Emiliano: I don't get it, I mean I know Raza does that to each other all the time pointing at everybody, I can deal with prejudice, I can deal with being poor and being brown, I can even deal with being disabled, but what I can't deal with is vendido a like you. I just don't play that.
Pancho: Well maybe you should, give it up Aztec Warrior, we lost, you lost a long time ago.
Emiliano: Take a good look in the mirror; you'll notice your skin is as brown as Cuauhtémoc himself and if that doesn't work slit your wrist te que corre la sangre de Indio cabron. I'm done with you Pancho. Find your own way home.⁴⁶

With the above exchange, the film speaks directly to the issue of nation. Pancho's final slurs against Emiliano speak to their indigenous heritage: "give it up Aztec Warrior, we lost, you lost a long time ago."⁴⁷ Pancho acknowledges their common indigenous Meso-American heritage; the European conquest of the Americas, and ultimately what he believes is the inescapability of mestizaje and colonial domination. Pancho's apathy is deeply rooted in the indigenous defeat over

46. Reyes, *Pancho goes to college*, DVD.

47. Ibid.

five centuries ago. He finds himself cemented like so many others in his place by the breach of colonialism. Emiliano's reply also invokes their common indigenous heritage, but his final words to Pancho emerge from a Fanonian context of a culture of national liberation, in direct conflict with the concept of cultural mestizaje. Fanon explores this notion as follows: "The claim to a national culture in the past does not only rehabilitate that nation and serve as a justification for the hope of a future national culture. In the sphere of psycho-affective equilibrium it is responsible for an important change in the native."⁴⁸

Pancho has refused that change at every turn. He sees no future in working toward a national culture. In Pancho's mestizo mind, Xicanos have lost. He has fallen to victim to Fanon's warning about the twisted nature of colonial domination, "a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it." Emiliano's admonition to Pancho to "slit your wrist te que corre la sangre de Indio cabron" (slit your wrist and let the blood of the Indian flow, fucker) has a double meaning. First as an admonition to suicide, in recognition of the cultural ruin Pancho so eagerly accepts, and second as the only possible way for Pancho to release the Indio within that he works so hard to repress. Emiliano finally tells Pancho to find his "own way home" and he leaves. Emiliano is clear where home is, and equally clearly Pancho is lost on both the physical and spiritual levels.

Fanon writes "at the beginning the native intellectual used to produce his work to be read exclusively by the oppressor, whether with the intention of charming him or of denouncing him through ethnic or subjectivist means, now the native writer progressively takes on the habit of addressing his own people."⁴⁹ In the exchange between Pancho and Emiliano, Pancho takes the

48. Fanon, *Wretched*, 210.

49. *Ibid.*, 240.

position of the native intellectual who seeks accommodation through mimicry. In contrast, Emiliano continues to devise new ways to interact and speak to his community. Along with Reyes and his cast, the viewer is moving toward a period in Xicano/a intellectual development as a colonized people that Fanon calls the “literature of combat, in the sense it calls on the whole people to fight for their existence as a nation.”⁵⁰ In the case of Xicano/as, one aspect the combat would consist of moving away from, or at least challenging mestizaje.

In the final scene, the spectrum of the Xicanada is mobilized in the community march organized by Chicanos Contra El Mundo. Pancho watches, finally brought face to face with his lies, contradictions, and failures as a friend. As he sits by the side of the road after walking all night trying to find his “own way home,” a mass of Xicano/as moving toward him on the street and chanting “Si Se Puede” calls Pancho back to reality. In the crowd, Maya, Xochitl, and Emiliano file by Pancho, and make eye contact. One by one, the characters in the film emerge reminding Pancho where he has gone wrong.

Now Pancho is literally standing on the sidelines, as he has throughout the film, witnessing the movement of the people toward social and political consciousness. For a critical moment, Pancho steps away from the sidelines and begins to walk with the people; a dawning awareness, as the power of the Xicanada draws him out of himself. It is at this point the words of his Cholo conscience, quoted at the beginning of this paper, resound in his head

Chale homes, don't let them get to you like that you had to do what you had to do and if they don't like it fuck 'em, fuck 'em all. Just come back to me, you and I ese controlamos todo we don't need these fucking changos. This is your home, your barrio you belong to me.⁵¹

50. Ibid.

51. Reyes, *Pancho goes to college*, DVD.

Pancho falters and comes to a stop; he turns his back and walks away, away from his people and his nation. Like so many others today, Pancho chooses to ignore the palpable evidence of a growing resistance, however small; he literally turns away from the reality of a nation founded on Meso-American culture and civilization articulating liberation rhetoric strictly in terms of identity and sexual politics.

Both the intellectual and the nation play roles in creating culture and resistance because, as Fanon writes, “the nation by its manner of coming into being and in the terms of its existence exerts a fundamental influence over culture. A nation which is born of the people’s concerted action and which embodies the real aspirations of the people while changing the state cannot exist save in the expression of exceptionally rich forms of culture.”⁵² Pancho fails to comprehend this core concept. Nation and culture go hand in hand, two parts of a dynamic process that is moving Meso-American Xicano/as toward their goal of national liberation.

Machete: Making the case for Insurgent Aztlán

“Geography is the bones of strategy.”⁵³

“To prepare for war demands, then, exercise of the imagination.”⁵⁴

Queer poet Cherie Moraga, a Xicana nationalist and a prominent voice in the Fourth World feminist movement, writes about the development of the nation of Aztlán through recognizing and acknowledging the limitations of past resistance movements. In her writings she expounds on the necessity of acceptance and openness in matters of gender, sex, and sexual equality (queerness) within a larger political space she calls nation and nationalism. She does this by injecting the

52. Fanon, *Wretched*, 246.

53. Theodore Ropp *War in the Modern World* (Macmillan Publishing Company, 1962), 5.

54. Guilio Douhet *Command of the Air*, 119-120. Rockefeller Brothers Fund, *Prospect for America* (their collected reports, Garden City 1961) 103-104

politico-cultural irredentist position of an Aztlán homeland into the Xicano/a political discourse of the twenty-first century. Moraga's engagement of Aztlán as a literal space struggling to make a return to history through anti-colonial cultural resistance asserts a political potential within the Xicanada (the continuum of the community) that exceeds the current use of the Border as a metaphor for anti-colonial struggle and defines the present use of the concept as facile,

The border is not the idealized metaphorical site of a new hybridity. Laredo, Nogales, Juarez, Mexicali, Calexico, Tijuana, National City are not figures of speech. They are first and last physical locations of great economic, social, and cultural strife. Still, it is all for a purpose: this facile use of language. The "border" as a metaphor poses no threat to the cultural and economic dominance by Euro-America.⁵⁵

The importance of this position to Xicano/a resistance literature is that Moraga reestablishes the border between the United States and México as a real place of politics and struggle and not simply a site of rhetorical identity building. Moraga's essay "Queer Aztlán" (1992), locates the nation of Aztlán as a place of physical struggle. The idea of Aztlán as a nation of justice for all people is anything but rhetorical. In Moraga's definition, Aztlán is a nation of fair dealings, where Xicano/as work out issues of homophobia, gender, and patriarchy based on a just and sincere desire to include all who desire to be included. Moraga writes, "I cling to the word 'nation' because without the specific naming of the nation, the nation will be lost."⁵⁶ According to Moraga the political journey to Aztlán is ongoing and based on an expanding understanding of Meso-American culture that brings with it the need to challenge the cultural and economic dominance of Western civilization in the Americas.

Moraga's writings about Aztlán is access to the intimate thoughts of the Xicanada; translating those thoughts into the public voice of calling for nation through evolving public displays

55. Cherie Moraga, *Loving in the War Years lo que nunca paso por sus labios* (####: South End Press, 2000), 177.

56. Cherie Moraga, *The Last Generation* (Boston: South End Press, 1993), 150.

of political and cultural resistance. On the reality of Aztlán and Xicano/a nationalism she writes, “I don’t know if we can ever take back Aztlán from Anglo-America, but in the name of a new Chicano nationalism we can work to defend remaining Indian territories.”⁵⁷ She goes on to say that it is important to understand “that our freedom as an [indigenous] people is mutually dependent and cannot be parceled out.”⁵⁸ In other words, the will to resist cannot be divided, or acted upon in pieces with the national liberation movement. National resistance is a totalizing force that affects or draws from every component of the colonized. The organization of resistance ideas within the space of insurgency moves the Xicanada toward the return to history when implemented through the public voice.

Finally, Moraga draws upon the dialectic model to finish her point, saying new attempts at Xicano/a nationalism must integrate “both the traditional and revolutionary, the ancient and the contemporary. It requires a serious reckoning with the weaknesses in our mestizo culture,”⁵⁹ or, as she puts it, later in *Loving in the War Years*, through the exposure of “the facile use of language.”⁶⁰ She vocalizes the secret desire of the Xicanada to see a physical Aztlán by reminding us that many great empires have dissolved in moments of collective catharsis, “Few Chicanos really believe we can wrest Aztlán away from Anglo-America. And yet, residing in those Southwestern territories especially those areas not completely appropriated by gringolandia we instinctively remember it as Mexican Indian land and can still imagine it as a distinct nation. In our most private moments, we

57. Ibid., 174.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid.

60. Moraga, *War Years*, 177.

ask ourselves, if the Soviet Union could dissolve, why can't the United States."⁶¹ Here Moraga challenges the imagination and truthfulness of her readers when she asks Xicano/as to, "look into your heart, and deny, if you can, that you have also wondered the same thing?"⁶² When placed against the monumental demands, rewards, and violence of the national liberation movement, it is easy to understand how Moraga can characterize discussions of the border as facile. Like the other writers, artists and poets considered earlier, Moraga is looking away from the University as the source of the national liberation movement and toward the nonacademic community,

If the study of insurrection must occur within the conceptual framework and economic constraints of the patron-university—e.g., tenure tracking, corporate-funded grants and fellowships, publishing requirements, etc.—insurrection can never be fully conceived and certainly never realized. Lessons and strategies for sedition can be partially garnered from the texts made available at the university, but our most defiant thoughts—those profoundly intuitive insights, those flights of the unrestrained imagination—generated through life's lessons and remembered history can never be fully explored or expressed in their original tongue at the university. By the time we have succeeded in translating 'revolution' to adhere to appropriate academic standards, it ceases to be revolutionary. Then where *do* we find the teachers and students of revolution?⁶³

In response to Moraga's question, "where *do* we find the teachers and students of revolution?"

Apaxu Máiz provides at least a partial answer in his 1997 speech titled *Nationalism*, presented at the National MEXA Conference held that year at Michigan State University. Máiz' offers concrete clues to the world outside the university,

Nationalism is a tool; it has no mind of its own. It depends on who applies it and how. Don't let people convince you that it's a terrible, ugly word, get away from it. Remember when in the earlier days when you were effective in organizing, the press would call you a communist or radical. They would contaminate you so people would get away from you. Well, when you use the word nationalism or the concept

61. Moraga, *Last generation*, 169.

62. Ibid., 169.

63. Moraga, *War years*, 173.

of nationalism they've contaminated that because they know it's a powerful tool. And when you discover it's a powerful tool, you are dangerous.⁶⁴

Máiz here speaks directly to the development of the *will* to resist oppression. Like Moraga he takes his ideas to the next step by offering examples of “nations in exile,” particularly looking at the Palestinian Liberation Organization and their history. Máiz advises Xicano/as to “centralize policy, leadership, and activities”⁶⁵ and through his interpretation of Xicano/a nationalism Máiz lays out one possible political pathway that others have successfully followed toward independence. Like Moraga, Rodríguez, and others, Máiz calls for the development of the public voice and with it the public practices of nation that promote and build political power. What they intellectually encourage moves past resistance to address oppression, directly to the removal of oppressive structures. It rejects academic appropriation by imagining a space (the Xicano/a nation) that is large enough to subsume the multiplicity of identities, genders, sexualities, and political tendencies simultaneously alive within the Xicanada, organically reformatting these identity spaces into a new public voice that does not demand equality but rather sovereignty and an end to settler colonialism. All of this stands in striking contrast to the process of homogenization Moraga describes that is involved in overuse of the border theory in Chicano Studies:

Academic appropriation of Anzaldua's 'border' metamorphosed the concept of 'border' and 'borderlands' into a kind of 1990s postmodern homeland for all displaced peoples of mixed blood and mixed affinities; a mythologized location, much easier to inhabit, ideologically and much more comfortable politically than that oh-so-70s Nation of Aztlán, the realization of which would mandate armed conflict.⁶⁶

64. Apaxu Máiz (1997) *Nationalism* keynote address for the National MEXA Conference April 9-12, 1997 Michigan State University

65. Apaxu Máiz (1997) *Nationalism* keynote address for the National MEXA Conference April 9-12, 1997 Michigan State University

To understand the relationship of this body of knowledge around the national liberation movement to the Xicano/a community, and what it could ultimately mean for Xicano/as to understand the development of physical resistance (insurgency), is a legitimate aspect of Xicano/a Studies. The national liberation movement in its various manifestations is a common and popular topic of academic discussion, debate, and dialogue by legitimate governmental powers around the world. Why is it not a branch of study within Chicano Studies? As an academic movement, Chicano Studies publicly announces its roots are based in the revolutionary Third World student movements that took place across the globe in the latter part of the twentieth century. I believe this has not happened because the current emphasis in Chicano Studies centers on the individual, the individual as the site of transformation, recognizing the “border” as the one that separates Xicano/as strictly through sexuality, gender, and mestizaje (mixed blood relationship to the dominant structure). This is what Moraga means by the use of facile language that has produced no challenge to Euro-American domination.

Plot summary of *Machete*

Machete takes place somewhere on the border between the United States and México. The action of the film centers on the problems of the border and the cultural and political turmoil on both the Mexican and United States side, problems that result directly from the laws enforced (or not enforced) at this geography. The protagonist Isador “Machete” Cortez (played by Xicano actor Danny Trejo) is a Mexican Federale supposedly assassinated while tracking down Rogelio Torres, his former partner turned ruthless drug lord (played by white actor Steven Segal). As the film opens, Machete fights his way past Torres henchmen guarding a brothel, where the young beautiful and naked woman he came to rescue betrays Machete.

66. Moraga, *Loving in the war years*, 177.

Immediately following this betrayal and his capture, Torres decapitates Machete's wife while Machete watches, then forces him to listen on the phone while Torres' henchmen gun down his young daughter. Torres leaves Machete cut badly, shot, and dying in a burning building. Fast-forward three years to the United States, where a recovered and escaped Machete is now working as an undocumented day laborer. At the pickup site for day laborers, Machete meets Luz (Michelle Rodríguez), who we later learn is SHE, the leader of an underground operation helping undocumented workers cross into the United States, locating work and lodging. This work, she accomplishes through an organization named The Network. Luz also operates a taco truck, making and selling tacos "to the workers of this world [because] it fills their bellies with something other than hate."⁶⁷ After Machete cleverly wins a fistfight for money at the day labor site, Michael Booth (Jeff Fahey), who it is later revealed works as a top aide to hard-line anti-immigrant Texas state senator John McLaughlin (Robert DeNiro), hires Machete to assassinate McLaughlin in an attempt to solidify McLaughlin's anti-immigrant position and secure his reelection to the Texas state senate.

Unbeknownst to Machete, the assassination attempt is a setup by Booth who hopes to secure McLaughlin's reelection through a surge in anti-immigrant sentiment after a second shooter who works for Booth shoots Machete and wounds McLaughlin in the legs at his campaign rally. At this point the film reveals the backroom deals between Booth, McLaughlin, Torres and Von (played by Don Johnson), the leader of a white nativist border vigilante group, to build an electrified fence on the border, allowing both the Torres Cartel and Senator McLaughlin to control the flow of the drug trade into the United States.

This plan comes into direct conflict with the work of SHE and The Network. This moment exposes the true loyalties of Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent Sartana Rivera (Jessica

67. Rodríguez, *Machete*, DVD.

Alba), a young Xicana torn between a desire to better her own economic situation and allegiance to her community. The film climaxes with a pitched battle between Von's border vigilantes and underground insurgent Xicano/as, including a duel to the death between Machete and his former partner Torres.

A surface reading of the film makes it appear to be a simple exploitation film much like the Blaxploitation films of the 1960s and 1970s with gratuitous violence and sex an overarching political theme. However, given the extreme anti-Mexican mindset dominating the country for the past forty years, several points in the film construct an alternative resistance paradigm in terms of Xicano/a organizational ability and the eventual outcome desired by those organizing. The first is that Xicano/as with guns are not shooting or threatening each other. Second, Xicano/as are shooting back at white people who are shooting at Xicano/as, which is significant in terms of political development. Third, Xicanas run a clandestine insurgent organization that performs a variety of services, including the stockpiling of weapons, building political education programs, and cultural organizations. Finally, the film reveals an articulated political agenda beyond immigration reform, including a critique of U.S. legal colonialism as a broken, failed system that guides a corrupt military effort.

Settler colonialism, through oppressive racism and classism, fixes meaning for both the colonizer and the colonized. Xicano/a resistance writing is a part of the liberation struggle that works to undo, redefine, and reconstruct the meaning formed through oppression. This writing unravels colonial authority by producing material culture through revolutionary action.

Understanding the necessity for resistance and refusal to go along with settler colonial occupation is a complex process challenging that colonial oppression. The Xicano/a challenge is to nurture through culture and politics the drive toward liberation as an accessible, concentrated, and coordinated effort across the Xicanada.

Xicano/as create meaning to deliberately avoid definitions that confuse Xicano/a resistance and delay response to the unrelenting physical, mental, and cultural subjugation of Meso-American people. The Xicano/a return to history must expose and reject colonial history and definitions that are not a part of a developing national consciousness or resistance movement. Xicano/a resistance, like all politico-cultural resistance, is the physical production of nation, steeped in myth, folklore, and the need to build material networks that support liberation efforts on the part of the colonized. Xicano/as create and continue to create the base of this confrontation as they watch, plan, and participate in acts, both mental and physical, challenging the hegemonic power of the colonial system. Cultural anti-colonial activity takes on new life when codified through resistance writing and other cultural works made by the colonized and shared with and disseminated to the community at large.

The numerous non-state actors competing for political control of the contested border between two sovereign states clearly demonstrate the postmodern nature of the film by suggesting that each political player has the ability to impact the outcome of the film's political struggle. As civil structures in México come under attack by narco-organizations like the one represented by the Torres Cartel (Segal), the expansion of contested territory between the two sovereign nations of México and the United States becomes more defined and less controlled.

In *Machete* two types of insurgencies operating with relative impunity, the first is a highly developed criminal insurgency. The situation in México represented by the Torres Cartel shows how a small group can “amass resources from illicit means and economics and gain influence far out of proportion to typical non-state groups and non-governmental organization (NGOs) and, ultimately become politicized.”⁶⁸ Experts define a criminal insurgency as “criminal enterprises

competing with the state . . . [not] for traditional political participation within state structures, but rather to free themselves from state control so they can maximize profits.”⁶⁹

Since the introduction of Aztlán to the United States/Xicano/a dialogue in 1969, this Meso-American idea has spread like a virus into the political body of the United States. Even the choice of Trejo as the actor visually emphasizes Indigeneity. Machete tells Rivera she can trust him because they are both cops. This reads as a confirmation of a broader allegiance to the preservation of the State. Machete kills Torres and in doing so destroys the criminal insurgency threatening both México and the United States, by ending the partnership of Torres, Booth, and McLaughlin. Machete restores law through the extreme application of violence and in the end, as a result, Machete gains citizenship and the former law enforcement officer is once again safely within the limits of the law.

Who has the right to enforce law? The inability of either State to enforce the law, or in this case a representative of the state (McLaughlin) acting to subvert the legal authority of the state place the Cartel run by Torres and the Network run by SHE in line for the creating dual power structures that if left unchecked will pose a threat to the legal foundation of the state. The State in *Machete* is under severe duress (there are many laws).

Sartana:	How deep does your operation go?
Luz/SHE:	Deep. All types, all races. Lawyers, priests, doctors, homeboys. That's why they call it The Network. The way we see it, people risked everything to get here but the system doesn't work. It's broken, so we created our own. ⁷⁰

68. Bunker, Robert J. 'Grand Strategic overview: epochal change and new realities for the United States' *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, Vol. 22. No. 5, Dec. 2011, 728-741

69. Sullivan, John P. & Bunker, Robert J. 'Rethinking insurgency: criminality, spirituality, and societal warfare in the Americas' *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, Vol. 22, No. 5, Dec. 2011, 742-763

70. Rodriguez, Machete, DVD.

The emergence of a new state's relationship with colonized people lays the return to history and the reinstatement of a national memory; however, fragile it may be in the beginning. As established earlier, national liberation struggles are by definition insurgent; otherwise, they would be civil wars. The argument that all revolutions have failed is no more compelling than the argument that the current political structure works because it prevents wide scale, unsanctioned death, at least within the borders of the United States. Much like the scholar warriors of the Third World, who argue the only the colonized can make the decision to fight for national liberation. Resistance in *Machete* results from politico-cultural organizing that leads to indigenous nation building. This message of anti-colonial resistance provides emotional and intellectual support for a return to history.

Tyranny of the word: this is the crux of Fanon's statement, the destruction of the signified, surpassing the attempt to fix meaning through the recreation of the signified. How do these men and this literal return to history create or destroy the signified, in this case the mental image of the Mexican? This act of creation is basic to the idea of history, the return that heralds the destruction of the imperialist project, which created the prison of the word IMMIGRANT.

Machete and the insurgent model

As a work of resistance literature, *Machete* envisions an organized, armed, Meso-American response to the United States system of coercion. It shows Meso-American nationalists building clandestine structures of dual power seeking to create a system that works for their needs. When Agent Rivera asks Luz/SHE how deep The Network goes, Luz/SHE responds, "Deep. All types, all races. Lawyers, priests, doctors, homeboys. . . . But the system doesn't work. It's broken. So we created our own (system)."⁷¹ Here Luz/SHE speaks with the voice of the insurgent building parallel systems within dominant power (Capitalist/Colonial System) to both supplant and provide

71. Ibid.

assistance within a criminal organism that exists solely to subjugate an entire group of people for profit. Parallel Government is defined as,

In the broadest sense of the term . . . a) parallel structures of governance have been created that exist side by side with old official state structure and that b) these alternative structures compete with the state structures for power and for the allegiance of the people and that c) the old state is unable to crush these alternative structures, at least for a period of time.⁷²

The political message of insurgency in *Machete* remains intact. The message is clear: the system is broken, the laws are unjust, and if Xicano/as want justice then they have to create it, even if that means acting outside the mainstream political currents, even if it means armed resistance. This film is about SHE as the organizer of a network of people who have laid the foundation of a parallel governmental structure in opposition to the existing social framework. They have established a command structure that includes the caching of weapons and holding individuals responsible for future action. This structure engages in armed resistance against political adversaries, doing so because they have concluded that the “system is broken” and can only be fixed by armed revolution conducted by an organized resistance movement. This film is a vision of such political moments every bit as much as it is about Machete’s revenge. Political action and personal revenge are for the moment synonymous, a clear indication that the film is primarily about the political action.

The political and cultural message of *Machete* is not about suffering non-violently for a future reward but rather about Xicano/as organizing resistance networks to build alternative systems of cultural and political power. SHE, along with co-conspirators around the country, has organized an underground movement for passing across the border, directing and participating in armed combat while conducting an embryonic educational campaign that history has shown, as Giap says, “builds

72. Day, Christopher. “Dual power in the Selva Lacandon” *Love and Rage Federation Bulletin*. San Cristobal, 1998.

the will of the people to resist.”⁷³ This indigenous reconstruction and resurgence of will begins with “people transcending colonialism on an individual basis.”⁷⁴ Such transcendence means a fundamental shift in understanding the reality of the Xicano/a situation and rejecting the language and attitudes of colonial oppression and colonization used to support the hegemony of European superiority. The internalization of that language of oppression, through education and mass media creates and solidifies in Xicano/a minds, culture, and society specific personality stereotypes that work against indigenous people organizing for liberation.

A successful liberation movement demands the creation of space for the development of an indigenous identity. Alfred writes about “zones of refuge” that in many ways are reminiscent of Mao’s base camps existing in liberated zones. He sees these zones as “powerful conceptualizations of a strategic and cultural objective that remains consistent with traditional goal”⁷⁵ of indigenous communities. How do indigenous people begin to organize around these “zones of refuge and other breaks from colonial rule that creates spaces for freedom.”⁷⁶ How this might occur can be visualized by theorizing organizing opportunities within the United States as potential revolutionary situations instead of reform movements. Alfred explains it thus; “it is time for each one of us to make the commitment to transcend colonialism as a people, and for us to work together as peoples to become forces for Indigenous truth against the lie of colonialism.”⁷⁷ Answering the question of how these problems can be resolved using revolutionary methodology addresses this issue.

73. Giap, “Inside the Vietminh,” 147.

74. Alfred & Corntassel, “Being Indigenous,” 612.

75. Ibid., 605.

76. Ibid.

When oppressed people talk about resistance and the form resistance will take, they often have a hard time concretely expressing opposition to oppression in anything but intellectual terms. Therefore, in addition to understanding the larger physical concerns of how to organize for liberation, there must be clarity on the theoretical aspects of liberation. Most people understand the concept of warrior, although many may feel uncomfortable using this term. Nevertheless, when understood in the light of a growing Xicano/a indigenous liberation movement, Xicano/as begin to see where this idea could possibly fit what Alfred calls the reinvention of this fighting spirit “Wasase—our warriors dance.”

This merger of cultures happens as a response to the cultural degradation experienced by the destruction of indigenous civilizations, the colonized losing many aspects (e.g. education, religion, family structure) necessary to development both as a nation and as individuals. By including in the Xicano/a liberation movement the ideas, theories, and beliefs of a pan-indigenous effort of “resurgence,” Xicano/as begin experiencing their own liberation movement. Xicano/as return to their indigenous history as a part of the greater pan-indigenous movement in the Americas through the understanding that “indigenusness is reconstructed, reshaped, and actively lived as resurgence against the . . . processes of annihilation that are inherent to colonialism.”⁷⁸

The myths that created national awareness and cohesion are by nature open-ended and uncertain, given to multiple interpretations until one emerges ascendant. This ascendancy signifies the end of resistance, the death of the struggle. It may signal the beginning of a new struggle but it will be a struggle of the people for self-definition with themselves as the measuring stick. Then Xicano/as become alive, no longer corporeal specters of faltering traditions and a broken history

77. Ibid.

78. Taiaiake Alfred & Jeff Corntassel, “Being Indigenous: Resurgences against Contemporary Colonialism” *Government and Opposition*, Ed. Richard Bellamy (2005) , 612.

but a people embracing its entirety within the Xicanada. Resistance is alive and changing. Definition is static and dead. X, representing the unknown is alive. Mestizo representing the known is dead. Just as the insurgent must resist, as a rule of survival, the temptation to openly confront superior forces, the Xicano/a and the Xicano/a movement must resist definition, until the last possible second.

Machete and the myth of non-violence

“Listen to me! Yes I am a woman of the law and there are lots of laws but if they don’t offer us justice then they aren’t laws. They are just lines drawn in the sand by men who will stand on your back for power and glory. Men who deserve to be cut down, it is time to erase their mierda lines and show these cabrones the meaning of true law! We didn’t cross the border, the border crossed us.”⁷⁹

The widespread and oft repeated argument against the use of physical force or violence in oppositional politics, and instead for nonviolent direct action, goes something like this, “Direct nonviolent action can be the catalyst for change in a civil society and through the practice of non-violent direct action transformative actions will occur that challenge the existing social order.” This assertion assumes the belief that morally based nonviolent resistance is or can be foundational or transformative in society, with the power to establish law and order.

In his reading of Walter Benjamin’s classic essay “Critique of Violence,” Jacques Derrida agrees with Benjamin’s basic premise that a society can only be initiated by the use of force that upholds law and establishes “the foundation of all states . . . in a situation that one can thus call revolutionary. It inaugurates a new law; it always does so in violence.”⁸⁰ The question then must be

79. Rodriguez, *Machete*, DVD.

80. Derrida, Jacques (2002) “Acts of Religion” “Force of Law: The mystical foundation of authority” ed. Gil Anidjar; Routledge, New York: pg. 269

asked: if all society is founded in force or violence then what role can nonviolence possibly play in founding a new society, even if that nonviolence is based in a determined struggle?

Can the type of force that Derrida and Benjamin define as “the dominance of legal power, the authorizing or authorized authority: the force of law”⁸¹ be exerted by nonviolent means?

Derrida goes on to explain there are two different outcomes with the use of this type of force. One he calls a “distinction between the two kinds of violence of law, in relation to law: the founding violence, the one that institutes and posits law and the violence that preserves, the one that maintains, confirms, insures the permanence and enforceability of law.”⁸² Clearly, the undercurrent of *Machete* places the debate about law, the enforcement of law and the foundational violence of the state at the feet of the lumpen masses when Agent Rivera exclaims from the top of a car while rallying illegal day laborers to fight for Machete, “Listen to me! Yes, I am a woman of the law and there are lots of laws but if they don’t offer us justice then they aren’t laws. They are just lines drawn in the sand by men who will stand on your back for power and glory. Men who deserve to be cut down!”⁸³ How can this call to violence be understood in terms of the legality of insurgent movements and their ability to challenge the power of the state for political and cultural control?

Fanon’s opening gesture in *Wretched of the Earth* confirms the right to violence as a pathway to freedom when he writes, “national liberation, national renaissance, the restoration of the nationhood to the people . . . decolonization is always a violent phenomenon.”⁸⁴ The colonized cannot win the fight for self-realization in terms of national existence through the application of

81. Ibid., 265.

82. Ibid., 264.

83. Rodriguez, *Machete*, DVD.

84. Fanon, *Wretched*, 35.

peaceful protest. Indigenist scholar Ward Churchill challenges the notion of pacifism and how it relates to social movements, in his extended essay “*Pacifism as Pathology*.” In this work, from an Indigenist perspective, Churchill writes, “there simply has never been a revolution, or even a substantial social reorganization, brought into being on the basis of the principles of pacifism. In every instance, violence has been an integral requirement of the process of transforming the state.”⁸⁵ This understanding about the nature of political change takes *Machete* out of the realm of machoist fantasy and places it within the political reality of national liberation writing. Guns and the use of weapons as political instruments are not simply extensions of penises and patriarchy. They can be, but far too often that simplistic definition diverts the Xicano/a political analysis away from relevant discussion about colonialism, power, and indigenous nation building. Churchill continues,

Pacifists, no less than their unpacifist counterparts, are quite aware that violence already exists as an integral component in the execution of state policies and requires no provocation; this is a formative basis of their doctrine. What is at issue then cannot be a valid attempt to stave off or even minimize violence per se.⁸⁶

Machete tells us force must meet the force of law. There are no pacifists in *Machete*. These Xicano/as have embraced the necessity of violence either through exploring their relationship to the force of law by upholding the law or subverting it. As stated earlier by Sartana Rivera, Luz/SHE has also reached the point where “it is time . . . [to] show these cabrones the meaning of true law!” The following exchange between Machete and Luz/SHE, after she picks him up from his unsuccessful assassination attempt on Senator McLaughlin, claims the necessity of physical struggle.

Machete:	Are you SHE?
Luz/SHE:	If I were SHE, do you think I'd be operating a taco truck? SHE brings hope. SHE rights the wrongs. Unfortunately, SHE is a myth,

85. Churchill, *Pacifism as pathology*, 57.

86. Ibid., 70.

just someone I made up to lead The Network. At first I just wanted to help the people get settled. Give them food. Find them work. Now there's a war against us. Von and his border vigilantes hunting us down like dogs. And there's no one there to stop him.

Machete: You can. You're a fighter.

Luz/SHE: Only when there is something worth fighting for. (Luz/SHE pulls her hand away)

Machete: Is there?

Luz/SHE: Always.⁸⁷

This exchange raises the logical question of what is worth fighting over. After men chasing Machete blow up her house, Luz/SHE meets the two young cholos outside the burned out structure and takes the two cholos to a garage where she has hidden a stockpile of weapons.

Luz/SHE: It's beginning my little chingones. I got something I want to show you come on. I told you they were gunning for us. Who knows what they are going to do next.

Julio: Holy Shit Luz/SHE I didn't know you were this loaded. You got more heat than the po-pos

Luz/SHE: It's a good start but we'll need a lot more.

Julio: Need it for what?

Luz/SHE: La Revolución.⁸⁸

Clearly, Luz/SHE is preparing for a violent confrontation. She expects that the law implemented by the state through lawmakers like McLaughlin and upheld (in part) under the direction of Von, his border vigilantes and the criminal insurgency of the Torres Syndicate will continue to violently assert itself against her revolution, more specifically, the dual power structures she is organizing through the subversion of the United States immigration law. Western nativist rhetoric of Mexican eradication at the border traditionally centers on the execution of "illegal's" entering the country. This spilling of indigenous blood is certainly a nativist longing to culturally relive the old days of complete European domination over the land. While some may argue that this scene exaggerates the problem at the border, in fact it is more likely a dramatization of real life events. In performing

87. Rodriguez, *Machete*, DVD.

88. Ibid.

this execution Von and the others take the authority of the state to make decision concerning life and death on themselves. The issue is one of belonging. Who has the right to travel freely? Who has the right to be a citizen? The question that comes through clearly centers on the use of violence to draw life and death distinctions. In the following case, exclusion literally means the end of life.

Von:	Hablas ingles
Pregnant Immigrant	
Woman:	(shakes head no)
Von:	I don't speak much Mexican either. You know you are trespassing on my Daddy's land. (Von flicks his cigar away into the dirt then pulls his handgun and shoots her)
Sen. McLaughlin:	Jesus Von can't you see she's with child?
Von:	If it's born here it gets to be a citizen. No different than you or me. I know most people don't like us. Call us vigilantes. But it's really about vigilance. Somebody's got to keep watch on this great nation of ours. Otherwise, Texas will become México once again. Who's going to stop them Senator?
Sen. McLaughlin:	(Picking up hunting rifle and aiming it at the pregnant woman's husband) I am. Welcome to America (He shoots the Mexican man) you catch all that? Burn me a DVD, my high dollar supporters are going to like that. A lot. ⁸⁹

This execution dramatizes the question of citizenship: who has the right to draw the lines of inclusion and exclusion? The opening scene of *Machete* deals with the question of what are legitimate state authority and the execution of that authority. When white nativist patrol the border and execute undocumented workers entering this country are they operating outside of the strictures of the law or is their action a support to the integrity of the state? Since the state reserves for itself to decide between life and death, it appears Von and his vigilantes are acting on behalf of the state. The presence of Senator McLaughlin only serves to buttress that position, as does his decisive action against 'foreign invaders' as a duly elected representative of the law.

This high tech hunting of indigenous peoples is reminiscent of the gap between modern and primitive the colonial process creates. This scene reads the border as a site of simultaneous death

89. Ibid.

and national creation. What is shown very clearly here in the preceding discussion is a type of nativist reimagining of how to kill that creation. Here nativist can begin to explore not only the immutability of the border but also the fantasy of reenacting the murder of conquest so deeply imbedded within the psyche of Western civilization. At this crossing of the border, the differences between separated territories diffuse to the point non-state actors routinely use lethal violence as a means of defending the integrity of the state. That violence helps Xicano/as to understand the implicit threat indigenous people pose to the myth of the United States. The state rests on its possession of power, force, and the exclusive right to inflict violence as a protective measure. The history of colonial struggles shows us the most successful way to challenge that power is by following the example of SHE.

CONCLUSION—THE NEW INDIAN WARS

Bringing it all together, being indigenous means thinking, speaking and acting with conscious intent of regenerating one's Indigeneity. Each indigenous nation has its own way of articulating and asserting self-determination and freedom. . . . As indigenous peoples, the way to recovering freedom and power and happiness is clear: it is time for each one of us to make the commitment to transcend colonialism as a people, and for us to work together as peoples to become forces for indigenous truth against the lie of colonialism.¹

When I started this project I set out to prove that Xicano/a anti-colonial resistance literature was produced, written, and enacted outside of academia. I thought that Xicano/a academics had compromised the Xicano/a movement because of their desire to succeed and be accepted by Anglo-American academia. In my mind, the only active vein of Xicano/a resistance today was on the grassroots level—whether as artistic expression, political struggle, or the promotion of a revolutionary Xicano/a culture.

I was wrong, both about the above ideas and a few other things.

First, I erroneously believed that politics, culture, and resistance were disconnected from each other and placed within separate categories. As I learned and have discussed in Chapter One, this is not true. These categories are three trunks of the same tree, a tree rooted in the colonized nation. The theory and practice of insurgency, guerrilla warfare, protracted struggle, the national liberation movement—whatever name you choose to use—unmistakably positions the phrase “cultural production” as the catch-all for the effects of the process. Particularly important is the literature produced by the colonized as a part of the national liberation movements. This literature of the oppressed is the physical manifestation of the voice of desire for national liberation through the articulation of political expression and cultural national identity, which, once again, constitute the humus in which resistance grows and flourishes. I think this point cannot be repeated enough.

1. Alfred, *Wasase*, 614.

I draw heavily from Franz Fanon's work, *The Wretched of the Earth*. It is vital to understand that the experiences with revolution that Fanon writes about are not rhetorical. He was writing about and encouraging armed resistance to colonialism that leads to national liberation and the overthrow of the colonial system. This cannot be ignored. In the case of Fanon's Algeria, the cultural, the physical, and the political could not be separated; the same is true of Xicano/as in the twenty-first century. Within the national liberation movement, the border is not a site of rhetoric creation as much as it is the boundary of history. This is what makes it problematic to think of the political and cultural as two separate ideas. That they have been treated as separate is, in and of itself, an example of how Western thought has served to separate and classify arbitrarily two actions of human society—the political and cultural. With the understanding of politics and culture as the same thing, we see the national liberation movement as the framework for struggle, the foundational vehicle that not only challenges European hegemony but also challenges it with a political and cultural alternative that can provide a foundational violence great enough to return to history.

Since the public voice within the United States context is the exercise of sovereignty, the work of the organic intellectuals we have examined provides, with its strong nationalistic rhetoric, the closest example of public speech by Xicano/as. Their insistence on the function and form of the national liberation movement brings to life an idea that continues to emerge. We see this step toward the future most developed within the Tucson Unified School District Mexican American Studies Program. Its success can only be examined within the context of the Xicano/a public voice, because what does a Xicano/a public life look like? What functions do we imagine are the roles of the Xicano/a nation at this date?

Second, I incorrectly believed it was possible to say one type of cultural or political production was more rooted in national resistance ideology than another. I was grievously mistaken about this. I now think that since 1848 politico-cultural production by Xicano/as has been leading

to a Xicano/a national liberation movement. The Xicano/a movement is an anti-colonial movement against settler colonialism. If you write about Xicanos or Xicanas, then you are writing about the Xicano/a nation. And the more Xicano/a-centric writing that takes place, the more likely it is that Xicanos and Xicanas as a politico-cultural group will follow the path of Fanon, Cabral, Mao, and Guevara. Is it inevitable? No, but the longer Xicano/as argue with each other and the system of settler colonialism about what it means to be Xicano or Xicana, the more probable it is that this protracted struggle will blossom into a real struggle for national independence—the return to history.

Below are three points I believe are vital to understanding the nature of Xicano/a resistance. First, I now believe that all Xicano/a literature is resistance literature. In other words, whatever the intentions of their authors, all of these written productions fall somewhere on the timeline of development presented by Fanon and all of these works serve some purpose within the long arc of the national liberation movement. Second, I think that Xicano/a culture is revolutionary culture. It is anti-colonial and pro-Xicano/a nation. This may seem like an outrageous claim, but I think it speaks to the depth and complexity of what it means to be Xicano or Xicana in the United States today. Third, I conclude that community level intellectuals (organic intellectuals) provide the hard evidence of the depth and commitment of the Xicano/a community to national liberation. My fourth conclusion is that there is no one-way to resist oppression. Fanon writes that “each generation must out of relative obscurity discover its mission, fulfill it, or betray it.”² It is from the same type of obscurity that each nation must emerge. The pathway to national liberation has many twists and turns and Xicano/as have a right and duty to explore as many of these as possible on their return to history. Leave no stone unturned when it comes to national liberation.

2. Fanon, *Wretched*, 206.

It is important for all parties to understand that this dissertation is in no way a call to violence of any type. It is an in depth study of the responses to the violence initiated in the fall of 1492 when Cristobal Colon renamed the island of Guanahani—San Salvador. This violence has continued for the past five hundred years dehumanizing, murdering, and seeking to destroy in perpetuity indigenous people in the Americas. Xicano/a writing is resistance and this is resistance literature.

The role of the intellectual in creating nation, culture, and resistance is important; as Fanon writes, “a nation which is born of the people’s concerted action and which embodies the real aspirations of the people while changing the state cannot exist save in the expression of exceptionally rich forms of culture.”³ This is the core concept: nation and culture go hand in hand. If you are involved in the creation of Xicano/a culture, you are integral to the creation of the Xicano/a nation. These are dynamic processes that move the Xicano/a people toward their goal of liberation.

Since 1848 Xicano/as in the United States have created spaces of national resistance through national discussion, political and cultural activity in opposition to assimilation under the settler colonial system in the United States. Rhetorically, Indian, Mexican, Latino, Hispanic, Mexican-American, Xicano/a are first and foremost sophisticated and complex politico-cultural responses to colonial subjugation. These sites of rhetorical political and cultural resistance are important because in the Americas physical conquest makes it impossible to yield more space. Indigenous geographic space has been taken. The manifestation of “WE” as a defined politico-cultural group moving toward national liberation through insurgent spaces both rhetorical and physical permeates the entire body of Xicano/a literature. Now as conquered people Xicano/as are creating insurgent space

3. Fanon, *Wretched*, 246.

through the political and cultural development of whom they are as a people emerging from under colonialism.

As discussed in previous chapters, *mestizaje* is a space of intellectual cooptation that has been provided for Xicano/as as a way of thinking and understanding political situation of settler colonialism in the United States. In a different way, Third World feminism has used the female body as a site of explanation for the physical subjugation of indigenous peoples in the Americas. These rhetorical spaces (Hispanic, Latino, Xicano) create a mental refuge similar to what Mao and other Third World insurgents call “rear areas,” the physical spaces usually in neighboring countries where insurgents can retreat that provide shelter and safety to the insurgent; a space from which to carry on the fight. They are to the Xicano/a unassailable spaces of culture and identity that allow the regrouping and re-strategizing of future action staving off political and cultural assimilation. Instead of making futile last stands against Western civilization, these spaces allow Xicano/as to escape the final colonial confrontation of culture and identity by reframing and situating the Xicano/a subjugated position in a way that makes possible continued struggle against assimilation and colonial domination.

These actions are parallel to those of the guerilla fighter who advances and retreats, only engaging the enemy when victory is sure. Within each of these rear area spaces the critique is valid and understandable for its time. The common sense underpinning each space limits understanding and in doing so limits what is achievable politically and culturally during that period. The development of Xicano/a resistance literature within each of these respective spaces acts as a catalyst of understanding for politics and culture and allows understanding to move forward. It is through this movement that colonial domination ends one of two ways: either with the triumph of the national liberation movement or with assimilation of the indigenous population.

Creating space for the development of an indigenous identity is paramount to the success of this liberation movement. Taiaiake Alfred writes about “zones of refuge” that are reminiscent of Mao’s base camps present in liberated zones. He sees these zones as “powerful conceptualizations of a strategic and cultural objective that remains consistent with traditional goals”⁴ of indigenous communities. How Xicano/as begin to organize around these “zones of refuge and other breaks from colonial rule that create spaces for freedom”⁵ finds a theoretical partner in the idea of low-intensity organizing. One-way of thinking about this is to theorize organizing opportunities within the United States as potential revolutionary situations. If this is done correctly, then the question of how problems should be addressed can be resolved using revolutionary methodology.

Since the oppressed create these spaces to reestablish control over their identity during the return to history, it would be incorrect to think that any one of these identities represents the totality of Xicano/a identity. Indeed, the presence of a final or ultimate Xicano/a identity would represent the end of Xicano/a history, not a return to history. With meaning fully present, the need for liberation and the evolution of identity and struggle becomes obsolete. These spaces as sites of political and cultural creation and knowledge building are vital to the protracted struggle for indigenous liberation.

For Xicano/as, and other indigenous peoples, there is no post-racial, post-colonial, or post-brown. Descendents of Meso-Americans in the United States continue to be The Other in this equation, where certain facts are real. Brown culture, without brown bodies, is welcome. Brown labor, without permanency, is welcome. Brown self-determination and thought is not. The system

4. Alfred & Corntassel, “Being Indigenous,” 605.

5. Ibid.

of settler colonialism wants Xicanos and Xicanas to be strong, pliable, and most importantly SILENT.

Acuña writes about what this pseudo race neutrality means to Xicano/a Studies and confronts what it means to dismiss race in the United States when he says

as in Plessey, the courts today have created a doctrine—the color-blind test—that effectively avoids judgments and defers to the status quo. The policy of color blindness promotes racial neutrality, prevents race-conscious remediation, and thus encourages racial discrimination. It expresses the concern that affirmative action creates unfair advantages for minorities. Then, paradoxically, it stereotypes minorities, promoting tribal politics and restricting genuine opportunity.⁶

The point we find ourselves in now brings the issue of the survivability of Xicano/a Studies rightfully to the forefront. Even with the seeming victory of identity-based politics within the academy, there still remains a vibrant thread within Xicano/a Studies advocating the overturning and examination of the Xicano/a colonized state (instead of allegedly miscegenated blood) through an anti-colonial framework that keeps alive the spark of resistance in the Xicano/a community. Of course, those of us paying attention know it is not Mexicans from México who are asserting a claim to the Southwest United States. The real culprit promoting this irredentist position is Xicano/as born in the United States. Remember these words?

With our heart in our hands and our hands in the soil, we declare the independence of our mestizo nation. We are bronze people with bronze culture. Before the world, before all of North America, before all our brothers in the bronze continent, we are a nation, we are a union of free pueblos, we are Aztlán.⁷

Aztlán? Who believes in that Xicano/a hippie stuff anymore? I will tell you who—Samuel P. Huntington, Glenn Beck, Rush Limbaugh, Bill O'Reilly, Tom Horne, John Huppenthal, ICE agents, and the people who run Homeland Security, to name a few.

6. Acuña, *Sometimes*, 32.

7. Alurista, *Espiritual*, 84.

What we should be asking ourselves is why these self-appointed representatives of White America takes Xicano/as learning their history and culture as so threatening to their sovereignty as settlers, and so much more seriously than Xicano/as seem to? Euro-American lawmakers in Arizona have certainly proven how seriously they take the teaching of Chicano/a Studies in school.

The Americas are the last and greatest stronghold of Western colonialism. The colonial settler system in North America has assumed and maintains its hegemonic position as a historical homeland for white Europeans. A radical historical revision by white nationalists, made possible by the disintegrated condition of indigenous culture, history, and resistance both on a personal and national level, has allowed a version of history to be taught and presented as canon to generation after generation of invaders that glorifies the colonizer.

With the destruction of indigenous civilizations, many political and cultural aspects of those civilization (i.e. education, religion, family structure) that would have been important to Xicano/a development both as a nation and as individuals were lost. By including in the Xicano/a liberation movement the ideas, theories, and beliefs of a pan-indigenous effort of “resurgence,” Xicano/as can begin to experience how their own liberation movement can become a part of the greater pan-indigenous movement in the Americas through the understanding that “indigenouness is reconstructed, reshaped and actively lived as resurgence against the . . . processes of annihilation that are inherent to colonialism.”⁸

This indigenous reconstruction and resurgence begins with “people transcending colonialism on an individual basis.”⁹ It entails a fundamental shift in understanding the reality of the Xicano/a situation and a rejection of the language and attitudes of oppression and colonization used to

8. Taiaiake Alfred & Jeff Corntassel, “Being Indigenous: Resurgences against Contemporary Colonialism” *Government and Opposition* ed. Richard Bellamy (2005), 612.

9. Ibid.

support the hegemony of European superiority. The internalization of that language of oppression through education and mass media creates and solidifies in Xicano/a minds and society in general the very specific personality stereotypes that work against indigenous people organizing for liberation.

Given the inherently oppositional nature of these competing paradigms, Xicano/as as Meso-American people need to decide what they want. Is it really “Occupied America,” as Professor Acuña has stated? Is there really “Pedagogy of the Oppressed,” as put forward by Paulo Freire? Because if the answer is YES and if it really is YES—then that is a fundamental challenge to the right of rule by the descendants of Western Europeans on this continent. Even trying to express these ideas as part of a multi-cultural project that seeks greater inclusion through understanding poses a danger for the United States that lies in the unreconciled treatment and history of indigenous people.

The way Xicano/as think of organizing their communities for political struggle, the way it has been taught and explained, must be reexamined and rethought; the question that must be on the minds of Xicano/as as they enter into this next phase of struggle centers on desires for a nation. There are some things I agree with Lou Dobbs, Bill O’Reilly and Samuel Huntington about. Xicano/a Studies does smack of rebellion. Occupied America makes people want to fight. There is a tone of disavowal in the title alone that makes it dangerous.

University presidents’ statements to Xicano/a students trying to better their programs that “Xicano/a Studies does not belong to [Xicano/as]; it belongs to the university” are further proof of the deep contradictions of inclusion that continue to work against Xicanas and Xicanos by blocking the idea of ownership in their studies programs. And, as long as Xicano/as refuse to accept that nation and culture go hand in hand, this lack of ownership will never facilitate a return to history.

Xicano/as are trapped forever in the past, a conquered people studied by their colonizers with no future.

The spaces of identity talked about above that Xicano/as have moved through to this point cannot provide room for a full critique of the Xicano/a colonial situation because they are a product of its formation. Just as race is a construct, culture is a construct. Culture, though, presents alternatives, especially when we understand that to some extent Xicano/as are responsible for upholding the hegemony of settler colonialism they find themselves laboring under. It is this system of oppression that Xicano/as confront through resistance writing and insurgency. If colonialism is a three-legged stool, one leg of which is Xicano/a acquiescence—think how quickly it becomes unbalanced when that support is withdrawn.

It is not Mexicans who are dreaming of Aztlán, it is Xicano/as born, raised, baked brown, and fired rock-hard in this oven of “colorblind racial neutrality” who are dreaming of a new and better world. The real issue here is who controls the minds and hearts of the people. Who gets to tell their story, how do they get to tell it, and how does that story inform future struggles? My question is this, and I feel it is an important one: once laws banning ethnic studies start passing all over the country as the affirmative action propositions have—then what? Are Xicanos and Xicanas living in the United States as serious as their opponents about developing the will of the people to resist?

I conclude with the words of Xicano poet Marc Pinate who, in his 1995 poem “The Truth” (a.k.a. “Fuck you Pig!”) writes, in part,

. . . THE TRUTH, Yo’ man The Truth
is that their time as king shit is almost over.
They know it, I know it, shit we all know it.
Yeah that’s why Mr. Racismuthafuckin’ Pig
always be reaching for his
phallic-gun
every time he seez me,
makes him feel good, makes him feel strong

reminds him of the good old days
when you could just shoot us
and no one gave a damn. . . .¹⁰

Pinate's conclusion is inexorable, "their time as king shit is almost over." But it will not happen without a fight. Xicano/as are a conquered people and are treated daily like subjugated prisoners of war. The space of the national liberation movement provides the ability to reorder the understanding of this treatment as Xicanos and Xicanas gaze inward then outward to shake the will of the people, to provide a context for resistance.

National liberation is not simply anti-state violence, but rather a foundational violence that seeks to establish a new hegemony—in the case of Xicano/as, hegemony based on indigenous politics and culture. It is a foundational violence that reshapes the reality of those who subscribe to its logic; this Xicano/a national liberation movement exists inside the story of settler colonialism in the United States. It is the base contradiction to systemic oppression that feeds 500 years of Indigenous resistance.

C/S.

10. Piñate, *Para La Gente*, CD.

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